

Newsletter

Maldivian Democratic Party

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MDP under attack

Since the inception of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), the government of Maldives, headed by Mr. Gayoom, in his 27th year in power, has been relentlessly intimidating, harassing, arresting and ill-treating its members.

Mr. Gayoom has blocked and banned access to the party website from the Maldives, arrested many of its members, got his Home Minister to announce that all party activities are illegal. As the MDP has reiterated many times, the party is an association of Maldivians who came together to work by legal means, to establish a contemporary law-based liberal state; to establish an effective form of market economy and a civil society.

MDP condemns and denounces any and all forms of violence, and it is regrettable that the regime of Mr. Gayoom is bent on associating this party with different forms of violence;

nevertheless, MDP will stand by its word with all its vigor. We shall not relent in our resolve.

It is perhaps timely and important to note that, given the present context in the Maldives, when its polity is highly volatile and the situation is at an explosive juncture, it is the MDP with its hopes and aspirations for peaceful change that is maintaining the fragile peace in the Maldives.

MDP will never become violent but it will neither remain silent when General Council and Ordinary Members are framed as subversives and charged under the prevention of Terrorism Act, or any other such tool of oppression.

Councilor Jennifer Latheef has been charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act for her part in wearing a T-Shirt saying "Stop Police Brutality". Ordinary Member Ziya Abbas has also been charged under the same

count. Councilors Abdulla Saeed and Ahamed Nazim were detained for more than thirty days in solitary confinement and heavily interrogated for their part in trying to organize a petition to Mr. Gayoom and organise a peaceful demonstration. Aminath Najeeb, Ahamed Falla and Ismail Zilah, all party Members have been treated in the same manner. The National Security Service (NSS) is also demanding statements from Councilors, Mohamed Mahir and Ahamed Abbas, while Ordinary Member Ismail Shihab has been given the same treatment.

The regime of Mr. Gayoom is further harassing party members and their family through most irregular means. Their telephones are tapped and private mails are intercepted by the NSS. They are also being constantly harassed through hate mails and nuisance telephone calls.

AISHATH NAJEEB

M. Nedunge',Male', Maldives

It was around 2.00 a.m. suddenly around 20 policemen entered the house. My son Hadhin Ahmed and I were reclining on the *joalifathi* in the garden at M. Nedhunge. They asked for my sister Aminath Najeeb. I told them that she did not live with us. We were scared so we then went inside the house, in to our room and closed the door. They told us to open the door. I told them that this was not Aminath Najeeb's house and that they should leave.

The police forced the door open and entered the room. My daughter woke up and started crying. The police grabbed onto my arms, head and anywhere else they felt like grabbing and tried to handcuff me. My son Hadhin shouted for them stop doing that to mom and to let her go. They did not stop and pushed me towards a wardrobe. While they were grabbing me about some of them even fondled my breasts. Then they handcuffed me and violently dragged me outside the room.

MDP in India

MDP Spokesman Mr. Mohamed Latheef, on March 29, 2004, delivered a speech to lecturers and post-graduate students of the School of International Studies, at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Following a brief introduction of Maldives, the discussions then centered on the current socio-political situation of the country. The aspirations and the continuing struggle of Maldivians for a more free and democratic society was highlighted along with the role of India as a potential catalyst for change. The after speech discussion was lively and interactive.

As MDP supporters and general readers would remember, Mr. Latheef's visit to India comes in the aftermath of a targeted attack by the Maldivian Government to suppress MDP activism in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo. It is also encouraging to report here, that the Sri Lankan Government has now extended its protection to MDP activists fighting to bring

democracy to Maldives. Mr. Latheef's visit to India further indicates the gathering support in South Asia for establishment of democracy in the Maldives.

India, which saved Mr. Gayoom's presidency in 1988, has a moral and ethical imperative to encourage Maldives towards democratic, transparent and accountable good governance based on respect for Human Rights and the Rule of Law.

During this visit Mr. Latheef also met with Mr. Mani Dixit the former High Commissioner for Sri Lanka, who played a pivotal role in thwarting the Tamil separatist People Liberation of Tamil Elam's (PLOTE) attempt to overthrow President Gayoom in 1988. In discussions regarding the evolving political situation in the Maldives, Mr. Latheef pointed out that in the 15 years following the Indian intervention; Mr. Gayoom has not institutionalized any significant progress in introducing democratic governance in the Maldives.

Mr. Latheef emphasized that, on the contrary, Mr. Gayoom has further consolidated his illiberal, repressive rule at the expense of blatant abuse of fundamental, constitutionally guaranteed civil and political liberties. Mr. Dixit agreed that India, which saved Mr. Gayoom's presidency in 1988, has a moral and ethical imperative to encourage Maldives towards democratic, transparent and

accountable good governance based on respect for Human Rights and the Rule of Law.

With Indian assistance, MDP plans to conduct seminars and awareness programmes focused to sensitise professionals, academics and think tanks.

MDP is determined to continue with this carefully worked out strategy, aimed for South Asia, the European Community and the international media. Mr. Latheef is continuing his key role in Sri Lanka, and will venture out to other key capitals to carry the MDP message to the wider world.

Letters

20th September saw the Maldivian people in their true colour. What did it take? A cruel murder that led to a secret burial.

Hushed up imprisonments will no longer remain secret in this time and age. People that once remained silent to all the activities of the Maldivian Mafia will no longer turn a blind eye to what's going on.

The president is becoming weak; no longer as young or sharp as he used to be. How long can he keep fighting? How long can he keep stretching the lines on his face- with the help of expert doctors. It seems the president is fighting, endlessly reaching out in his wake to do everything it would take to hold his ground. The change in constitution that now allow women to run for presidency - is this to yet another ploy to make way for his daughters? ■

There are different moments in time that change the lives of our people. We have stayed silent for years, if not decades. Some of our countrymen have tried to make a difference by giving us the chance to make history. They have given us the opportunity to stand up for ourselves as Maldivians. We are the future generation of our nation. We have been given the chance to take part in this political revolution and create history together. We all want a future where each and every one of us has a voice in society. Remember, in no nation's history has there been an easy struggle for freedom. There are always hard times and some will suffer for the sake of their people's freedom.

These people become heroes to our nation while those who ally with the government will be lost in history as traitors to their nation. Let us all be remembered in the future by our children and our children's children, as heroes of our nation. The future is in the peoples hands.

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