

PREVENTING THE REINSTATEMENT OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN THE MALDIVES





Findings from a preliminary study concerning the local abolitionist movement, risks to related civil society organizations and the identification of capacity building opportunities.

Status	Abolitionist de facto (last execution was in 1954)
Ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	2006 : YES
Ratification of Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR	2018 : NO
Crimes punishable by death	Murder, Treason, Hudud offenses, Terrorism offenses resulting in death
19*	Number of people currently sentenced to death (as of December 2019)

* Amnesty International, Global Report, Death Sentences and Executions 2019. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/1847/2020/en/>

	
United Nations General Assembly Moratorium Resolution	
2007 and 2008	: NO
2010	: YES
2012 and 2014	: Abstained
2016 and 2018	: NO again

▶ Early 2010	▶ 2013	▶ 2014	▶ 2016
<p>Politicians start raising the issue of bringing back executions.</p> <p>Bills are drafted but are ultimately unsuccessful in Parliament.</p>	 <p>President Abdulla Yameen is elected as President of the Maldives and makes sustained attempts to resume executions.</p> <p>Many point to the political motivation of this platform: that the death penalty “gets votes” in the context of increasing religious radicalization.</p>	<p>President Abdulla Yameen vows to resume executions.</p> <p>A new regulation is passed that clears the way for executions to restart.</p>	<p>Maldivian Supreme Court upholds the death sentence against Hussain Humaam Ahmed, and President Yameen vows the hanging will take place within 30 days.</p> <p>Thanks to pressure from local and international civil society, the execution did not take place.</p>

▶ July 2017	▶ September 2018	▶ Déc. 2018	▶ October 2019
<p>Abdulla Yameen’s government pledges again to begin executions within two months and announces that construction of an execution chamber has been completed. 3 prisoners were considered at imminent risk.</p> <p>Again, due to sustained local and international pressure including from the UN Human Rights Committee, the executions never took place.</p>	<p>Abdulla Yameen loses re-election in 2018 to Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, leader of a coalition of opposition parties.</p>  <p>President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih</p>	<p>President Solih’s new government pledges to support the UN General Assembly vote on a universal moratorium.</p> <p>They renege on the pledge and vote ‘No’.</p>	<p>In October 2019, active civil society organization Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN) is banned, which has had a chilling effect on wider NGO participation.</p> <p>Now:</p> <p>While the question of resumption of executions has been temporarily put on the backburner, treatment of civil society has worsened along with their ability to monitor government activity.</p>



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[Introduction

The risk of the resumption of executions in the Maldives has been a continuous struggle for the abolitionist community in recent years. Fighting against this have been various local civil society organizations and international NGOs, working to monitor and combat the ever-present risk. At the request of the **World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, South Asia Fellow for Reprieve, Nasheen Kalkat** conducted interviews with these actors and compiled the results into a confidential report, which this 2-page document summarizes. The aim was to better understand the threats facing local civil society efforts and the risks involved in combating the resumption of executions in the Maldives.

[Key Findings

The **risks abolitionist human rights defenders** face in the Maldives cannot be overstated. The following threats were repeatedly reported amongst civil society advocates:

Online harassment and threats that arise in response to any work that may be regarded as anti-Islamic—including abolitionist activities. Attempts to use social media as an advocacy tool are usually first targeted by extremists which has a cooling effect on wider participation because others do not feel safe disputing extremist claims about Islam. These posts have been reported to Facebook and Twitter, but no action was taken due to a myriad of excuses, one of which is that they do not have capacity to

translate Dhivehi to determine if a post violates their guidelines. Twitter has been particularly active in preventing human rights defenders from promoting tweets that claim that uses have violated Twitter community rules.

Organized extremist groups have also physically targeted human rights defenders. These groups circulate an activist’s personal information and start surveilling or following them home to intimidate. Even though these extremist groups are very well known, the culprits responsible continue to go unpunished.



Protests in the Maldives. <http://thecircular.org/maldives-a-paradise-with-death-penalty-for-children/>

A lack of police protection has discouraged many who are being harassed. Activists see police services as not reliable and perceive that those services have themselves been infiltrated by extremist sentiments,

sometimes making it unsafe to report allegations. Police brutality, while becoming less rampant under the new government, is still an ever-present threat.

Official censorship and investigation into civil society organizations has reduced the space for them to work in, particularly after the public banning of MDN. In 2015, MDN published a report on radicalization in the Maldives. Over three years later, extremist groups began a smear campaign against the report and labeled it blasphemous. For reasons still unknown, the government caved to this pressure by extremists in October 2019 when they suspended and subsequently shut down MDN on grounds related to being “contrary to the tenets of Islam.” The report’s four authors have been charged with blasphemy and the criminal investigation is ongoing.

These grave issues, coupled with donor disengagement, contributes to a reduced space for abolitionists act. While the question of the resumption of executions has not been as high a priority for this government as it has been in the past, human rights defenders are of the opinion that **the risk is still present.**

With the shrinking space for human rights defenders and the seemingly uncontrolled extremist organizations, should the government take steps to bring back executions, the ability to combat those steps will be reduced. ■

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