



1 October 2014

His Excellency President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom
The President's Office
Boduthakurufaanu Magu, Male 20113
Republic of the Maldives
info@presidencymaldives.gov.mv

Your Excellency,

I am writing on behalf of the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD), an international human rights NGO that specialises in providing legal and policy expertise to promote foundational rights for democracy, including freedom of expression.

I am writing to express grave concern over the disappearance of journalist Ahmed Rilwan and the generally deteriorating security situation for journalists in the Maldives. Mr. Rilwan has been missing since 8 August in what appears to be an abduction related to his work as a journalist. Prior to his abduction, he received multiple death threats which were reported to the Maldives Police Service (MPS). Unfortunately, Mr. Rilwan's disappearance fits into a broader pattern of violence and intimidation directed towards the media in the Maldives, including numerous assaults, vandalism of two television stations and arson attacks against two more.

International human rights law places an obligation on States to create an environment in which the media can do its job effectively. This includes, where necessary, providing protection for the physical security of journalists and media outlets and ensuring effective investigations of attacks when they do occur. This duty was recently reaffirmed by the United Nations in General Assembly Resolution 68/163 *The safety of journalists and the issue of impunity*, which calls on Member States to "do their utmost to prevent violence against journalists and media workers, to ensure accountability through the conduct of impartial, speedy and effective investigations into all alleged violence against journalists and media workers falling within their jurisdiction and to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice and ensure that victims have access to appropriate

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remedies”.

Attacks on the media represent attacks on freedom of expression and indeed democracy itself, since they chill the broader public discourse and hinder the ability of members of the public to obtain accurate information about the country’s affairs.

The Maldives needs to do more to fulfill its obligations under international human rights law and, in particular, under Article 19 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, which the Maldives ratified in September 2006. CLD calls on the government of the Republic of Maldives to do everything within its power to rescue Mr. Rilwan and to bring the perpetrators of this and other crimes against the media to justice. CLD further calls on the Republic of Maldives to redouble its efforts to protect the country’s media and to create a free and secure space for journalists to operate in line with their obligations under international law.

Yours Sincerely,



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CC:

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