

UA 04/00

Arbitrary detention/fear of torture

6 January 2000

MALDIVES

Umar Jamal]	
Ibrahim Ahmed Maniku]	parliamentary candidates
Abdul Rasheed]	

Three parliamentary candidates detained in the run up to last November's elections have reportedly been tortured and ill-treated in custody.

All three were detained solely on account of their peaceful campaigning against candidates closely associated with the government, in violation of their right to freedom of expression and assembly. They are not reported to have committed any recognizably criminal offence: Amnesty International has written to the government to ask why the men were arrested, but has received no reply. Amnesty International is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

Umar Jamal, a well-known politician and parliamentary candidate for the southern GD Atoll, was detained at his house on 29 October 1999 at 3am, after an argument with a rival candidate closely linked to the government. He was taken to Dhoonidhoo detention centre without being told why he was being detained. There are fears that he is being tortured there.

Ibrahim Ahmed Maniku and Abdul Rasheed, two parliamentary candidates from Thaa Atoll, have been detained since early November, when they were arrested because of their peaceful campaigning. According to reports they were first taken to Dhoonidhoo detention centre, where they were deprived of sleep for several days, being forced to sit on stools in rain and storms and beaten every time they fell asleep. Recent reports suggest that they have been transferred to house arrest and told that they will be charged with instigating unrest against the government, a charge that carries a maximum penalty of 15 years banishment [exile to a remote island]. They may be at risk of further ill-treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A presidential election in October 1998 endorsed Maumoon Abdul Gayoom as president for the fifth term in office. In the partyless parliamentary elections of 19 November 1999 a number of independent candidates ran against candidates known to be close to the President. Amnesty International received persistent reports from around mid-November that people were being detained either for carrying out peaceful campaigning in support of independent candidates or for expressing views critical of candidates closely associated with the Government of Maldives. Estimates of the number of detainees vary from a dozen to over 100. A significant number of the detainees are still believed to be held without charge or trial. Some have reportedly been ill-treated.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- expressing concern at the arbitrary detention of parliamentary candidates Umar Jamal, Ibrahim Ahmed Maniku and Abdul Rashid;
- expressing concern at reports that they have been tortured and ill-treated;
- appealing for their immediate and unconditional release;

- urging that any torture or ill-treatment of these men stops immediately, that an impartial, independent and competent inquiry is initiated and those responsible are brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom
The President's Palace,
Maafannu Theemuge,
Male 2002
Republic of Maldives

Telegrams: President Gayoom, Maldives

Faxes: + 960 32 55 00

Salutation: Dear President Gayoom

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of the Maldives accredited to your country. If there is none, to: Maldives High Commissioner, 25 Melbourne Avenue, Colombo, Sri Lanka, **Fax: + 94 1 581 200.**

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 February 2000.