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Maldives: Amnesty International welcomes release of opposition leader and accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Amnesty International welcomes the release of Mohamed Nasheed, Chairperson of the opposition party, Maldivian Democratic Party. He was arrested in August 2005 during a peaceful protest in the main public square in the capital, Malé, and was later charged with “sedition”.

Amnesty International considered his detention to be politically motivated and was concerned he would not receive a fair trial. Mohamed Nasheed attended several court hearings but the court did not come to a decision. Amnesty International is very concerned that despite release, Mohamed Nasheed’s “sedition” charges have not been withdrawn and is urging the government to ensure that these charges are not used in any way to detain him again on politically motivated grounds.

Mohamed Nasheed’s release came after a series of meetings hosted by the UK High Commissioner in Sri Lanka between government officials and the opposition to map out a shared approach towards reforms. Prior to the talks, resistance from conservative elements within the government and disruptive moves from the opposition appeared to be threatening to derail the political and judicial reforms which have been underway in the Maldives in recent years. Following these talks, most political prisoners have been released.

Amnesty International hopes that the ongoing dialogue will pave the way for strengthening institutional mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Amnesty International also congratulates the Government of Maldives for its move to accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Optional Protocol to International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The government announced that it had deposited instruments of accession to these covenants with the UN yesterday. The Maldives also pioneered the signing of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture in Asia in 2005.

These are very positive developments, but reforming the political system and achieving maximum human rights protection requires continued determination, resources and political will. Amnesty International calls upon the Government of Maldives to incorporate the provisions of these international instruments in the national law of the Maldives and to strengthen the judicial system to enable it to safeguard their implementation in practice.

