

Maldives

European Parliament resolution on the political situation in the Maldives

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the EU's fact-finding mission to the Maldives following the imposition of a state of emergency,
 - having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) which the Maldives signed in May of this year,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the announcement of a state of emergency and the subsequent mass arrests (194 people, including 10 MPs) are a disproportionate reaction by the authorities to what was a largely peaceful demonstration,
- B. noting that President Gayoom uses imprisonment to suppress parliamentary democracy and that he is currently holding the leadership of the Maldives Democratic Party in prison, including Dr Mohamed Munavvar MP (former Attorney General), Ali Faiz MP, Ilyas Hussein MP, Ahmed Shafeeq MP, Ahmed Adil MP, Dr Hussein Rasheed Hassan MP (member of the National Human Rights Commission), Ibrahim Hussain Zaki (the widely respected diplomat and former Secretary-General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Ibrahim Ismail MP, Mohammed Naseem MP, Ahmed Athif MP and Gasim Ibrahim MP, (former President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and the pro-reform candidate for the post of Speaker in the Maldivian Parliament),
- C. whereas the following public figures are being held in incommunicado detention and have reportedly been subjected to torture: Husnoo Alsnood (lawyer and member of the National Human Rights Commission), Fathimeen Nisreen, Mohammed Niyaz, Ahmed Ibrahim Didi, Mohamed Zaki, Ibrahim Zaki, Maria Manike, Jennifer Latheef, Aminath Najeeb, Mohammed Naseem and Asad Whaeed,
- D. having regard to the Commission's most recent Country Strategy Paper, which listed the following as problems known to exist in the Maldives: 'arbitrary arrest', 'incommunicado detention', and the 'lack of an independent judiciary', and which noted that 'individual freedoms are restricted',
- E. whereas the protest was to demand constitutional reform and the release of political prisoners,
- F. whereas this small island nation in the Indian Ocean has been ruled over the past 26 years by a tough totalitarian regime,

- G. whereas the election system in the Maldives is fundamentally flawed due to the one-party system, and the judicial system is also biased,
- H. whereas the reform process in the Maldives is at a crucial stage,
- I. whereas President Gayoom has suggested a change to the constitution which would limit his powers and permit political parties in the country, although opponents of the regime are very sceptical of any proposed changes,
- J. whereas the EU delegation which visited the islands was denied access to detainees,
- K. noting that the Maldives signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 13 March 1991, yet continues to detain minors in prison,
- L. noting that the Maldives declared its international commitment to eliminating all forms of gender discrimination by signing the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on 31 July 1993,
- M. whereas in this atmosphere of intimidation, the citizens of the Maldives do not enjoy freedom of expression, as the President controls the media,
- N. whereas the Maldives has a special relationship with the European Union and benefits from development assistance,
- O. whereas trade with the Maldives has increased, with imports from the Maldives into the EU reaching EUR 38 million in 2002,
- P. noting that the Commission has made available a cooperation budget of EUR 2 million for the Maldives ,
- Q. whereas the Maldives belongs to the group of least developed countries and is heavily dependent on the outside world for its development,
- R. whereas European Union aid is not given to corrupt regimes who ignore their international commitments, but is conditional upon the recipient's record as regards good governance, the rule of law and human rights and its commitment to reform,
- S. whereas the EU will be paying close attention to future developments, in accordance with human rights stipulations laid down in the Cotonou Agreement and related agreements,
- T. whereas President Gayoom has in the past been successful in establishing a thriving tourism industry, he has also established what can only be described as a thriving family business and political network throughout the country,
- U. whereas last year 106 451 Italians, 77 642 Germans and 71 440 Britons, not to mention visitors from other Member States, travelled to the Maldives unaware of the lack of respect shown by the Maldivian authorities for fundamental human rights and of the number of people who are detained without trial,

1. Calls upon President Gayoom forthwith to repeal the state of emergency in the Maldives, guarantee the fundamental human rights of its citizens, and release the pro-democracy reformers he had arrested on 14 August 2004;
2. Calls on the Government to press ahead with an open and thorough reform process, which will be the best way to ensure stability in the country;
3. Expresses the hope that the democratic process that has been promised will take place, leading in particular to political pluralism and freedom to choose the country's leaders;
4. Calls for the early conclusion of an agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on prison monitoring;
5. Calls on the Commission and Member States forthwith to cease all non-humanitarian aid to the Maldives and to impose an immediate travel ban in order to prevent members of the Government and other officials of the Maldives from entering the Member States of the European Union;
6. Calls on the EU and Member State governments to determine where Maldivian government funds are being banked overseas;
7. Calls on the European Union to issue thorough warnings about the Maldives' human rights record to all tourists planning to go to the country;
8. Calls on the Commission to initiate an official, longer term, European Union educational programme whereby tourists are made aware of countries' human rights records when choosing their travel destinations and are warned of countries where these are not in accordance with internationally agreed standards;
9. Calls on the Government of the Maldives to give its authorisation for a European Union delegation to meet the activists who demonstrated in support of democracy;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the Government of the United States, the World Tourism Authority and all tourism-related bodies, IATA- and ATOL-licensed tour operators and airlines, the Government of India and the governments of SAARC countries.