



Press Release

27 July 2017

Arbitrary Arrests, Use of Excessive Force, Violence Against Journalists, Members of Parliament and the Public and Disregard for Legal Boundaries by the Maldives Police Service

We condemn the recent actions by members of the Maldives Police Service and call on the police to remain within the ambits of the Constitution and the laws at all times.

On the 26th July 2017 we have observed that the police deployed around the rally venue of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP Haruge') has acted in violation of the legal boundaries prescribed by the Constitution, the Police Act and the Regulation on the Use of Force by the Police. In addition to forcing media to move away from the rally venue and thus obstructing their news coverage of the event, the police have entered the premises without a warrant, used excessive pepper spray and violent force against those gathered at the rally including journalists, damaging media equipment, arrested members of the public and at least 7 journalists from the area including those from Raajje TV and Sangu TV.

Further the police attempted to enter the main activity centre and rally venue of the Maldives United Opposition and the headquarters of the Jumhooree Party (M. Kunooz) without a warrant, following a search conducted at the premises the previous night.

On the 25th July 2017 we have observed the police obtain a search warrant for M. Kunooz, conducting the search until 2am in the morning, failing to find any unlawful activity on the premises.

While the Constitution states that the law enforcement shall oversee the security of the Parliament premises, House Procedures specify this to be the Maldives National Defense Force. On the 24th July 2017 we observed the police enter the Parliament House, manhandle Members of the Parliament and forcefully remove MPs from the parliament chambers. Furthermore, we observed that the police used excessive force, including pepper spray on MPs and those gathered outside.

We urge the Maldives Police Service to act within the laws and remind the police that their role is strictly civil [section 5(b), Police Act] and that the police must remain impartial and act without discrimination in the delivery of authority [section 7(3), Police Act].

ENDS.