

PRESS RELEASE

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A misery prolonged – Rilwan’s family deprived of justice for eight years

It has been eight years since journalist, human rights defender, and blogger, Ahmed Rilwan Abdullah, was violently taken from his family and friends. Despite a change in government commitment in November 2018 to resolving Rilwan’s forced disappearance and despite the establishment of the Deaths and Disappearances Commission (DDCom), justice appears as an afterthought for those in positions of power.

As a well-known blogger and investigative journalist, Rilwan covered a multitude of social issues afflicting Maldivian society, from corruption and the rights of migrant workers to gang crime and animal rights. He gained notoriety in particular for his reporting on the convergence of gang crime, corruption, violent extremism and political actors who perpetuate such criminal activities.

The prosecution has yet to appeal the 2018 acquittals of two people implicated in his abduction. We note the progress DDCom made in June this year by arresting three suspects involved in the atrocity. It is outrageous that well-connected perpetrators with the ability to manipulate evidence and intimidate witnesses evaded the police investigation for eight years, with full denial from the previous government for over three years. Furthermore, the lack of investigation into those who planned and funded the forced disappearance proves that policymakers and decision-makers are not invested in appraising the root causes of such atrocious crimes.

We urge the Maldivian government and the state to to end its exploitation of Rilwan’s family for political gains and appeal the case in an open, thorough, and impartial trial that meets international fair trial standards. The denial of justice for the family contributes to a hostile climate for dissidents in the Maldives.

ENDS.