

**International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
and
Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN)**

Joint statement

Maldives: Arbitrary dismissal of judges undermines independence of the judiciary, separation of powers

Paris, 19 May 2025: The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and its member organization Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN) express concern over the recent decision by Parliament to dismiss two Supreme Court judges in an apparent attempt to prevent a judicial review of a key amendment to the Maldivian Constitution, which was adopted last November. This action greatly threatens judicial independence and the separation of powers in the Maldives and sets a dangerous precedent in a country where democracy and the rule of law remain at risk.

On 11 May 2025, the Judiciary Committee of the Majlis, the Maldivian Parliament, voted to dismiss two Supreme Court Justices, Justice Azmiralda Zahir and Justice Mahaz Ali, following a rushed investigation by the Judicial Service Commission (JSC). Both the JSC investigation and the actions of the Judiciary Committee raised significant concerns over the lack of due process, including the refusal of the JSC to acknowledge evidence provided in defense of the judges, the refusal of the Judiciary Committee to give the judges' a right of reply, and the secrecy in which all decisions have been taken. The decision by the Judiciary Committee was taken in closed chambers, despite the judges' request for an open review.

The two Supreme Court Justices had been suspended on 26 February 2025 by the JSC, which is a constitutionally mandated body tasked with overseeing the judiciary. Justice Husnu Al Suood, who was also suspended on the same day, resigned in protest on 4 March. The suspension occurred on the heels of an extraordinary meeting of the JSC, which was held without the presence of JSC members representing the judiciary. The JSC stated that its decision was made under Section 25(p) of the Judicial Service Commission Act – a legal provision which is fundamentally inconsistent with the principle of due process.

The suspension and ultimate dismissal of the three Supreme Court Justices is tied to the Supreme Court's planned review of the sixth amendment to the Constitution. Enacted in November 2024, the amendment states that Members of Parliament (MPs) who change political affiliation must be removed from office. It was proposed and passed by Parliament and ratified by the President in under 36 hours. The amendment was subsequently challenged at the Supreme Court by former MP Ali Hussain and preliminary hearings were held on 17 February 2025; the three Supreme Court justices were suspended minutes before a hearing on a stay order of the enforcement of the amendment commenced.

FIDH and MDN remind the Maldivian government and Members of Parliament that the Maldivian Constitution provides protection to judges against unfair dismissal in line with international standards. The fact that these constitutional safeguards have been so blatantly ignored by the JSC and the Majlis should be firmly denounced by the Maldives' international partners, including the European Union, who should urge the Maldivian government to uphold the rule of law and ensure judicial independence by reversing the dismissal.

FIDH and MDN also call on the Maldivian Parliament to amend Section 25(p) of the Judicial Service Commission Act to ensure the right to due process and the right to the presumption of innocence in investigations involving members of the judiciary.