



**Capital  
Punishment  
Justice  
Project**

**ANTI  
DEATH  
PENALTY  
ASIA  
NETWORK**



**REPRIEVE**

**The Maldives' Compliance with The International Covenant on Civil and Political  
Rights**

**Suggested List of Issues Prior to Reporting Relating to the Death Penalty**

**Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights**

a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1996

**The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty**

**Capital Punishment Justice Project**

**Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network**

and

**Reprieve**

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**The Advocates for Human Rights** (The Advocates) is a volunteer-based non-governmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law. Established in 1983, The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact finding, direct legal representation, education and training, and publications. In 1991, The Advocates adopted a formal commitment to oppose the death penalty worldwide and organized a death penalty project to provide pro bono assistance on post-conviction appeals, as well as education and advocacy to end capital punishment. The Advocates currently holds a seat on the Steering Committee of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty.

**The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty**, an alliance of more than 160 NGOs, bar associations, local authorities and unions, was created in Rome on May 13, 2002. The aim of the World Coalition is to strengthen the international dimension of the fight against the death penalty. Its ultimate objective is to obtain the universal abolition of the death penalty. To achieve its goal, the World Coalition advocates for a definitive end to death sentences and executions in those countries where the death penalty is in force. In some countries, it is seeking to obtain a reduction in the use of capital punishment as a first step towards abolition.

The **Capital Punishment Justice Project** (formerly Reprieve Australia) has been advocating for a world without the death penalty since 2001. We strive to be practical and effective by drawing upon networks of lawyers and experts in related disciplines to support local advocates who are working for change. Our projects began in the USA where we continue to assist lawyers in capital

proceedings. In 2012, the scope of our work expanded to Asia in recognition of the persistence of the death penalty in our region. We are now an experienced participant in litigation, advocacy and professional development within Asia. We are committed to developing legal and policy solutions that will make a difference for people at risk of execution and create the conditions for abolition.

**Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network:** Founded in 2006, the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) is a regional network of organizations and individuals committed to working towards abolition of the death penalty in the Asia Pacific, with members from approximately 22 countries within the region. Our role is to create wider societal support for abolition of the death penalty in the Asia Pacific region through advocacy, education and network building. ADPAN maintains that the death penalty violates the right to life, that it is the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and that the death penalty should be entirely abolished internationally.

**Reprieve** is a charitable organization registered in the United Kingdom (No. 1114900), and in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Reprieve provides free legal and investigative support to those who have been subjected to state-sponsored human rights abuses. The key beneficiaries of Reprieve's work belong to some of the most vulnerable populations in the world, as it is in their case that human rights are most swiftly jettisoned and the rule of law is cast aside. In particular, we protect the rights of those facing the death penalty and deliver justice to victims of arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killing.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This submission addresses the Maldives' compliance with its human rights obligations with regard to its use of the death penalty. The Maldives retains the death penalty and has not ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

### **The Maldives fails to uphold its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**

#### **I. The Maldives has not yet ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at the abolition of the death penalty and maintains the death penalty as a legal form of punishment.**

2. In its 2012 Concluding Observations, the Human Rights Committee noted that, while the Maldives has observed a moratorium on the death penalty, it has not yet abolished the death penalty *de jure*. The Committee expressed concern that a draft amendment to Section 21 of the Clemency and Pardoning Act would oblige the Supreme Court to uphold death sentences for certain crimes and prevent the President from granting clemency under article 115 of the Constitution. It recommended that the Maldives consider abolishing the death penalty, ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant, and remove the mandatory death penalty from its statutes.<sup>1</sup>
3. During the interactive dialogue for the Maldives' second Universal Periodic Review, representatives of the Maldives stated that the death penalty "would not be resorted to unless it was endorsed by all court tiers and was in line with all regulations."<sup>2</sup> The Maldives received 25 recommendations to ratify the Second Optional Protocol or adopt a *de jure* moratorium on the death penalty.<sup>3</sup> It noted all of these recommendations.

<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee, adopted by the Committee at its 105<sup>th</sup> session (July 9 – 27, 2012)*, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/MDV/CO/1, ¶ 13-14.

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Maldives* (July 13, 2015), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/8, Section B., ¶ 94 Replying to the advance questions and recommendations made regarding enforcement of the practice of flogging and of the death penalty, Maldives wished to ensure all partners that it remained committed to strengthening the legislative and judicial framework involved in cases of flogging, informed them that the Government remained dedicated to further strengthening those systems and processes and looked forward to any kind of support from partners. Similarly, with regard to the enforcement of the death penalty, Maldives stated that such punishment would not be resorted to unless it was endorsed by all court tiers and was in line with all regulations and procedures.

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Maldives* (July 13, 2015), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/8, ¶¶ 144.9 Banish from its Penal Code the provisions related to corporal punishment, including flogging for sexual intercourse outside of marriage, and death penalty (Albania); 144.10 Place an absolute ban on death sentences against persons below the age of 18 at the time when the offence was committed (New Zealand); 144.11 Do not sentence minors to capital punishment (Spain); 144.12 Extend the moratorium on the death penalty with a view to its abolition and take immediate measures to prohibit absolutely the application of the death penalty to persons under the age of 18 years at the time of the offence, in compliance with the international legal obligations of Maldives, in conformity with the commitments made during the first universal periodic review (Belgium); 144.13 Review and reform its legislation in order to abolish the death penalty and, in the meantime, maintain the *de facto* moratorium, with a view to abolishing the practice in the future, avoiding, in particular, the possibility of children being sentenced to death (Brazil); 144.14 Ensure that the death penalty is not applied to persons below the age of 18 years, in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Maldives (France); 144.15 Retain the

4. The death penalty remains an available punishment for murder, treason, *hudud* offenses (including apostasy), and terrorism-related offenses resulting in death.
5. The Maldives seems to have observed a de facto moratorium on executions for more than six decades.<sup>4</sup> Its last execution was in 1954. In 2016, the Maldives changed the official method of execution from lethal injection to hanging.<sup>5</sup> Based on Amnesty International's reports, there were at least three finalized death sentences recorded during 2019 and 19 individuals known to be on death row at the end of 2019.<sup>6</sup>
6. In early 2014, the government of President Abdulla Yameen announced intentions to resume executions.<sup>7</sup> In April 2014, the Maldivian Government enacted a "Regulation on Investigation & Execution of Sentence for Willful Murder," providing for execution by lethal injection for premeditated murder and "deliberate manslaughter."<sup>8</sup> That regulation removed the power of the executive to grant pardons or commutations in intentional murder cases.<sup>9</sup> According to that regulation, after trial, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs must conduct a mediation session involving the person convicted of the crime and the family of the victim. Family members have ten days to decide whether to pardon the person, sometimes with the payment of "blood

moratorium on the death penalty in all circumstances, in particular for juvenile offenders, and work towards the de jure abolition of capital punishment (Latvia); 144.16 Study the possibility of ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Ecuador); 144.17 Consider ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Rwanda); 144.18 Consider ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with a view to total abolishment of the death penalty (Namibia); 144.19 Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Norway); 144.20 Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, relating to the abolition of death penalty (Paraguay); 144.21 Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with a view to the abolition of death penalty (Madagascar); 144.22 Take all necessary steps to introduce a de jure moratorium on capital executions with a view to fully abolish the death penalty, and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Italy); 144.23 Revive the former six decade-old moratorium on the death penalty with the clear objective of complete abolition (Germany); 144.24 Maintain the moratorium in the application of the death penalty (Spain); 144.25 Maintain the moratorium aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Argentina); 144.26 Maintain a long-standing de facto moratorium on the death penalty, with a view to its abolition (Montenegro); 144.27 Maintain the moratorium on the application of the death penalty with a view to its definitive abolition (France); 144.28 Continue the longstanding de facto moratorium on death penalty and further consider its legal abolition (Nepal); 144.29 Continue retaining the moratorium on the use of the death penalty (Ukraine); 144.30 Establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty (Slovenia); 144.31 Establish a moratorium on the application of the death penalty with a view to its definitive and permanent abolition and commute existing sentences (Uruguay); 144.32 Consider abolishing the death penalty and eliminate mandatory death penalty sentences (Sierra Leone); 144.33 Remove the regulations which enable the implementation of the death penalty for intentional murder and remove the power of the President to commute death sentences, and renew its commitment to a moratorium on the death penalty (Australia).

<sup>4</sup> Maldives Independent, *Maldives death penalty delays will be resolved by October 8*, Oct. 4, 2017, <https://maldivesindependent.com/politics/maldives-death-penalty-delays-will-be-resolved-by-october-8-132897>.

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International UK, *Death penalty to resume in the Maldives*, Jan. 12, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/death-penalty-resume-maldives>.

<sup>6</sup> Amnesty International, *Death Sentences and Executions 2019*, ACT 50/1846/2020, 2020, also available online at <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ACT5018472020ENGLISH.PDF>.

<sup>7</sup> Amnesty International UK, *Death penalty to resume in the Maldives*, Jan. 12, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/death-penalty-resume-maldives>.

<sup>8</sup> Euan McKirdy, *Children could get death penalty as Maldives brings back executions*, CNN, 1 May 2014, <https://www.cnn.com/2014/05/01/world/asia/maldives-death-penalty/>.

<sup>9</sup> *Maldives: Halt first execution in more than 60 years*, Amnesty International, 20 July 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/07/maldives-halt-first-execution-in-more-than-60-years/>.

money.” Thereafter, if no family member issues a pardon, a “death penalty committee,” consisting of the Prosecutor General, the Chief Justice, and the Commissioner of Prisons, must send a written confirmation to the President to show that the proper procedure had been followed in the case. Within three days, the President must send an execution order to the Commissioner of Prisons. Within seven days of receipt, the Maldives Correctional Service must carry out the execution.<sup>10</sup> The Maldivian Democracy Network challenged the constitutionality of the regulation.<sup>11</sup>

7. In 2016, the Home Minister Umar Naseer stated that the government wished to resume executions within 30 days of a ruling from the Maldivian Supreme Court.<sup>12</sup> In July 2016, the Supreme Court of the Maldives lifted a stay order that had been based on the lower court’s view that the implementing regulations were unconstitutional.<sup>13</sup>
8. In August 2017, President Yameen announced plans to carry out executions of three men, Ahmed Murrath, Mohammed Nabeel, and Hussain Humaam Ahmed, who had received death sentences for murders committed between 2009 and 2012 and who had reportedly exhausted all their legal options.<sup>14</sup> Due to sustained local and international pressure, including from the Human Rights Committee, the executions did not take place. In September 2018, Yameen lost his bid for re-election to Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, leader of a coalition of opposition parties.
9. In December 2018, despite the new government’s pledge to support the moratorium resolution in the UN General Assembly, the Maldives voted against the resolution.

10. **Suggested questions** relating to the death penalty

- What steps have Maldivian authorities taken to reduce the number of crimes eligible for the death penalty and to limit the availability of the death penalty to the “most serious” crimes in accordance with Article 6 of the Covenant?
- How many people are currently under sentence of death? What are the crimes for which they were convicted? How long have they been imprisoned on death row?
- Please provide disaggregated data broken down by age (including current age and age at the time of the offense), race and ethnicity, nationality, and sex relating to all persons sentenced to death during the reporting period, including: the crimes of conviction; location and date of arrest; duration of pre-trial detention; date legal counsel was provided or obtained; location, date, and duration of trial; date of

<sup>10</sup> Constance Johnson, *Maldives: Supreme Court Decision Allows Executions to Proceed*, U.S. Library of Congress, 28 July 2016, <https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/maldives-supreme-court-decision-allows-executions-to-proceed/>.

<sup>11</sup> Constance Johnson, *Maldives: Supreme Court Decision Allows Executions to Proceed*, U.S. Library of Congress, 28 July 2016, <https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/maldives-supreme-court-decision-allows-executions-to-proceed/>.

<sup>12</sup> Maldives Independent, *Maldives forges ahead with preparations for death penalty despite criticism*, June 29, 2016, <https://maldivesindependent.com/politics/maldives-forges-ahead-with-preparations-for-death-penalty-despite-criticism-125107>.

<sup>13</sup> Constance Johnson, *Maldives: Supreme Court Decision Allows Executions to Proceed*, U.S. Library of Congress, 28 July 2016, <https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/maldives-supreme-court-decision-allows-executions-to-proceed/>.

<sup>14</sup> Amnesty International UK, *Death penalty to resume in the Maldives*, Jan. 12, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/death-penalty-resume-maldives>.

sentencing; status of any applications for clemency; and location of post-trial detention.

- Please describe the legal conditions under which a person who has been sentenced to death may seek clemency or pardon. Under what circumstances is a person barred from seeking such relief?
- Please describe the procedures for imposition of the death penalty after a court sentences a person to death.
- How do authorities ensure that the system payment of blood money for murder does not result in the arbitrary application of the death penalty for people who are not able to make such payments?
- What procedures are in place to promote public transparency with respect to criminal proceedings in which a person may be sentenced to death and with respect to death sentences?
- Please identify the ways in which conditions of detention for people under sentence of death differ from detention conditions for other people in the prison population.

## **II. The State maintains the death penalty for juvenile offenders.**

11. During its second Universal Periodic Review, the Maldives received six recommendations to abolish the death penalty for juvenile offenders.<sup>15</sup> The Maldives noted all of these recommendations. The Maldives also received nine recommendations to strengthen national legislation on the rights of the children and to complete the enactment of the draft child protection act.<sup>16</sup> It accepted all of these recommendations.

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Maldives* (July 13, 2015), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/8, ¶¶ 144.10 Place an absolute ban on death sentences against persons below the age of 18 at the time when the offence was committed (New Zealand); 144.11 Do not sentence minors to capital punishment (Spain); 144.12 Extend the moratorium on the death penalty with a view to its abolition and take immediate measures to prohibit absolutely the application of the death penalty to persons under the age of 18 years at the time of the offence, in compliance with the international legal obligations of Maldives, in conformity with the commitments made during the first universal periodic review (Belgium); 144.13 Review and reform its legislation in order to abolish the death penalty and, in the meantime, maintain the de facto moratorium, with a view to abolishing the practice in the future, avoiding, in particular, the possibility of children being sentenced to death (Brazil); 144.14 Ensure that the death penalty is not applied to persons below the age of 18 years, in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Maldives (France); 144.15 Retain the moratorium on the death penalty in all circumstances, in particular for juvenile offenders, and work towards the de jure abolition of capital punishment (Latvia).

<sup>16</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Maldives* (July 13, 2015), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/8, ¶¶ 141.21 Further promote and protect the rights of vulnerable groups of the population, including children, persons with disabilities, women and older persons (Russian Federation); 141.24 Consolidate measures taken to protect and promote the rights of children (Equatorial Guinea); 141.25 Further strengthen the child rights protection system by bringing the national legislation in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Kazakhstan); 141.26 Complete the adoption of the new children's act in line with the obligations of Maldives under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Qatar); 141.27 Complete the enactment of the draft child protection act and incorporate in the act provisions to counter child, early and forced marriage (Republic of Moldova); 141.28 Enact the draft child protection act and ensure its compatibility with the respective obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and strengthen cooperation with relevant national stakeholders in the area of eliminating child abuse and victims' rehabilitation (Egypt); 141.29 Complete the enactment of the draft child protection act (Jordan); 141.30 Complete the process of adoption of the child protection act (Lebanon); 141.31

12. In its State report for its third Universal Periodic Review, the Maldives asserts that the newly passed Child Rights Protection Act prohibits the imposition of the death penalty against minors and raises the age of criminal responsibility to 15 years of age.
13. According to Amnesty International UK and the United Nations, in 2018 there were at least 5 individuals on death row who had been convicted and sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were younger than 18 years of age.<sup>17</sup>

**14. Suggested questions relating to juvenile executions:**

- What measures are in place to ensure that no person is sentenced to death or executed for a crime committed when they were under 18 years of age?
- Please provide data about the number of people in detention for offenses committed while under the age of 18 and the number of juvenile offenders under sentence of death.
- Under what circumstances does the Child Rights Protection Act prohibit imposition of a death sentence on a person for an offense committed while under the age of 18?
- What steps have authorities taken to commute the death sentences of people currently under sentence of death for offenses committed while under the age of 18?

**III. Civil society organizations and human rights defenders, including critics of the death penalty, face threats, harassment, and violence at the hands of police and security forces, as well as private parties who act with impunity.**

15. In its 2012 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed its concern that some individuals who have provided information to the Committee for the consideration of the State Party's report had experienced retaliation, in the form of threats and intimidation, for their submissions.<sup>18</sup> The Committee recommended that the State party fully guarantee the right to freedom of expression in all its forms.<sup>19</sup>

Complete the enactment of the draft child protection act in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child by including provisions to counter child, early and forced marriage (Latvia).

<sup>17</sup> Amnesty International UK, *Death penalty to resume in the Maldives*, Jan. 12, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/death-penalty-resume-maldives>.; Shihar Aneez, *Maldives to restore death penalty after 60 years-official*, Reuters, Aug. 22, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-maldives-deathpenalty-idUSKCN1B20VY>.

<sup>18</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee, adopted by the Committee at its 105th session (July 9 – 27, 2012)*, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/MDV/CO/1, ¶ 26.

<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee, adopted by the Committee at its 105th session (July 9 – 27, 2012)*, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/MDV/CO/1, ¶ 23.

16. During its second Universal Periodic Review, the Maldives received 18 recommendations to protect freedom of expression and guarantee the safety of human rights defenders and civil society.<sup>20</sup> It accepted all of those recommendations.<sup>21</sup>
17. Despite these assurances, President Solih’s government has engaged in a crackdown on civil society and political dissent. In 2019, authorities shut down the Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN), the oldest working human rights organization in the Maldives and one of the only organizations in the country to speak out against the death penalty, contending the organization was “contrary to the tenets of Islam.”<sup>22</sup>
18. There are also widespread reports of extremist groups harassing and attacking media and civil society groups, especially organizations and individuals who criticize the government on social media, publish material deemed offensive to Islam, or promote the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals.<sup>23</sup> Individuals associated with MDN have faced harassment, stalking, and death threats by organized extremist groups, and authorities have not held offenders accountable or protected these human rights defenders from this harassment.

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Maldives* (July 13, 2015), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/8, ¶¶ 141.82 Ensure respect for freedom of opinion and expression (France); 141.83 Uphold freedoms essential for a stable democracy, including freedoms of speech and assembly (Australia); 141.84 Take concrete measures to guarantee freedom of expression and the media and to address limitations in the existing law governing the operation of civil society organizations (Netherlands); 141.85 Increase measures to promote and protect freedom of expression in the country (Spain); 141.86 Create an environment of freedom of the media and encourage media outlets to project positive images of women and of the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres (Slovenia); 141.87 Strengthen efforts to protect freedom of expression, including the safety of journalists (Greece); 141.88 Guarantee freedom of expression in all its forms and ensure investigations into attacks against journalists and the media and bring those responsible to justice (Switzerland); 141.89 Develop and implement specific laws, policies and mechanisms that recognize and protect the work of civil society, human rights defenders and journalists (Norway); 141.90 Ensure a safe environment for civil society participation, particularly the protection of persons contributing to the work of the Human Rights Council (Paraguay); 143.57 Take concrete measures to reinforce domestic democratic institutions through the strengthening of judicial independence and of the freedom of opinion and expression, the investigation of recent detentions with alleged political motivation, as well as through the guarantee to opposition parties of the right to peaceful protest (Brazil); 143.58 Reaffirm its commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law immediately and ensure that security forces exercise restraint in the face of peaceful and democratic protests and cease intimidation of the media (Canada); 143.60 Develop and implement laws, policies and mechanisms that ensure full protection of all journalists and human rights defenders against attacks and reprisals (Latvia); 143.61 Take appropriate measures to fully guarantee the safety of journalists and human rights defenders so that they can carry out their activities without fear of persecution or restriction (Republic of Korea); 143.62 Ensure an enabling environment for the activities of journalists, human rights defenders and the other civil society actors (Tunisia); 143.63 Create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment, in which human rights defenders and civil society can operate free from hindrance and insecurity, in accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 22/6 and 27/31 (Ireland); 143.64 Protect human rights defenders and ensure their right to exercise their work without restrictions (Timor-Leste); 143.65 Take measures aimed at diminishing threats and intimidation against journalists and civil society, as well as opponents against the Government (Trinidad and Tobago); 143.66 Take urgent action to protect human rights defenders, nongovernmental organizations and journalists, and to investigate and prosecute all who threaten them (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Council, *Addendum to Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Maldives* (Sept. 18, 2015), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/8/Add. 1, ¶¶ 143.57-143.66.

<sup>22</sup> Press Release, Maldivian Democracy Network, Press release: Regarding Maldives rapid regression from democratic norms (July 2020), July 17, 2020, also available online at [https://mvdemocracy.org/press-release-regarding-maldives-rapid-regression-from-democratic-norms-july-2020/?fbclid=IwAR2rzj8Z2IN\\_59xekfMvx9QPYPQKZogDfRTKYgzaHd\\_z\\_ds0BfS4369KgvWM](https://mvdemocracy.org/press-release-regarding-maldives-rapid-regression-from-democratic-norms-july-2020/?fbclid=IwAR2rzj8Z2IN_59xekfMvx9QPYPQKZogDfRTKYgzaHd_z_ds0BfS4369KgvWM).

<sup>23</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Maldives: Events of 2018,” accessed Aug. 13, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/maldives>.

Another civil society organization has faced escalating harassment in 2020 from religious groups as a result of its engagement with the United Nations.

19. In July 2020, the Commissioner of Police met with an organization of clerics to update them on the investigation against MDN, and over 30 clerics organized an online discussion regarding both MDN and the second civil society organization, focusing attention on the lack of legal action against those organizations and their associates.

**20. Suggested questions relating to human rights defenders and freedom of expression:**

- What protections are in place to ensure that civil society organizations and human rights defenders who provide information to this Committee will not face reprisals from Maldivian authorities?
- What steps have authorities taken to ensure protection for freedom of expression of non-governmental organizations like the Maldivian Democracy Network?
- Please describe the status of all proceedings against the Maldivian Democracy Network and its affiliates.
- What policies and procedures are in place to support human rights defenders and watchdogs in their work, to guarantee their safety, and to hold accountable individuals who threaten, harass, or stalk them?