

For Immediate Release

Maldives: Withdraw Proposed Death Penalty Bill

Proposed Law Could Result in Imminent Executions

(London, April 17, 2026) – The [Maldives](#) government should withdraw [plans](#) to introduce a bill to end the longstanding moratorium on the death penalty in the country, 10 Maldivian and international human rights organizations said today. The authorities should also seek to repeal [recent amendments](#) to the Drugs Act of 2011 that allow capital punishment for drug-related offenses, maintain the moratorium on executions, and move to fully abolish the death penalty.

The groups are Advocates for Human Rights, Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network, Capital Punishment Justice Project, ECPM: Together Against the Death Penalty, International Federation for Human Rights, Harm Reduction International, Human Rights Watch, Maldivian Democracy Network, Parliamentarians for Global Action, and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

The proposed death penalty legislation would violate the Maldives' international human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Maldives acceded in 2006. It would also be contrary to United Nations General Assembly resolutions that call for respecting international standards that protect the rights of those facing the death penalty, progressively restricting its use, and reducing the number of offenses that are punishable by death. The human rights groups oppose the death penalty unconditionally, for all cases and under any circumstances.

During a media briefing on March 23, 2026, President Mohamed Muizzu [announced](#) that the government intended to submit a bill aimed at facilitating use of the death penalty to the national assembly, the People's Majlis, during the current parliamentary session, scheduled to end in mid-May. The Attorney General's Office is [reportedly](#) in the process of finalizing the draft legislation.

President Muizzu said that once the bill is ratified, capital punishment would be enforced without delay against convicted individuals who have already passed all stages of the judicial process in the Maldives.

These actions follow recent amendments to the Drugs Act, ratified on December 6, 2025, that expand capital punishment in the Maldives to include drug trafficking. Under the amendments, individuals convicted of trafficking large quantities of drugs, including [more than](#) 350 grams of cannabis, 250 grams of diamorphine, or 100 grams of any other Schedule 1 drug, into the country may now face capital punishment. The legislation also includes [harsher penalties](#) for trafficking smaller quantities of drugs, importing or exporting drugs, and facilitating the movement of controlled substances.

Prior to enacting new amendments to the Drugs Act, human rights groups in a [joint letter](#) urged the Maldives government and members of the People's Majlis not to pursue such amendments or to expand provisions for the death penalty. The groups also said that the

authorities should take prompt steps to abolish capital punishment and urgently commute all existing death sentences.

Introducing the death penalty for a crime that was not previously punishable by death is contrary to the goal of abolishing the death penalty, as set out under article 6(6) of the ICCPR. Article 6 also states that countries that currently retain the death penalty in law should restrict its use to only “the most serious crimes,” which UN [experts](#), including the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), widely agree do not include drug-related offenses.

Since President Muizzu’s government first [announced](#) plans to reinstate the death penalty at the beginning of his presidency in December 2023, international and domestic human rights organizations have raised serious [concerns](#), including at the [country review](#) of the Maldives during the 61st session of the UN [Human Rights Council](#) Universal Periodic Review. The proposed law is of special concern due to the Maldivian judiciary’s history of [corruption](#), [politicization](#), and failure to [provide justice and accountability](#) for past crimes.

The Maldives has had a moratorium on the death penalty since 1954. Carrying out executions would set the Maldives against regional and global trends that have seen 113 countries fully abolish the death penalty. When the UN General Assembly considered its most recent [resolution](#) on a death penalty moratorium in December 2024, 130 countries, more than two-thirds of all UN member states, voted in its favor.

Recent developments in several Asian countries suggest that there is momentum in the region to significantly decrease the resort to the death penalty. On June 25, 2025, [Vietnam’s](#) parliament voted to repeal the death penalty in the penal code for [eight crimes](#), including drug transportation. In September 2024, [Taiwan’s](#) top court [upheld](#) the constitutionality of the death penalty but introduced greater restrictions, including strengthening due process rights.

In 2023, [Pakistan repealed](#) the death penalty for drug-related offenses. [Malaysia](#), also in 2023, [repealed](#) the mandatory death penalty for all applicable offenses, including drug trafficking, murder, treason, and terrorism, and abolished the death penalty in full for seven others; these changes resulted in the commutation of more than 1,000 death sentences.

The Maldives government, recognizing the global goal of abolishing the death penalty and the violations of human rights inherently associated with its use, should withdraw plans to pursue the proposed death penalty law, the organizations said. Should the bill proceed to the People’s Majlis during this parliament session, lawmakers should reject the bill, take steps to abolish the death penalty for all crimes, and commute all existing death sentences.

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