



**30th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 6: Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Plenary on the Maldives**

**Oral Statement Delivered by R. Iniyani Ilango
On behalf of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

Thursday, 24 September 2015

Mr. President. FORUM-ASIA makes this statement together with our member Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN). We appreciate that the Maldivian government has fully accepted 198 recommendations out of the 258 recommendations it received. These include commitments to implement all recommendations related to the protection and promotion of the freedoms of expression, assembly and association. This includes, in particular, ensuring the safety of journalists and human rights defenders.¹ We are, however, concerned that despite these and past commitments² violent attacks against journalists, media and political activists have increased significantly over the past three years. These attacks are perpetrated with complete impunity. Enforced disappearance of journalist Ahmed Rilwan is emblematic of attacks against journalists. While failing to conduct a credible investigation into Rilwan's disappearance, the police have attempted to thwart demands for accountability, as demonstrated most recently by the violent crackdown on a rally that marked one year of his disappearance.³

The Terrorism Prevention Bill currently before the parliament and the proposed Freedom of Expression Bill add to our concerns. These two bills contradict several recommendations the government has accepted and if enacted, will add severe restrictions on freedom of expression and political dissent. We urge the government to review these proposed bills in line with commitments made during the UPR.

Furthermore, we note that the government has accepted all recommendations to ensure the independence of the judiciary and strengthen the rule of law.⁴ Lack of judicial independence remains a major challenge to realising human rights in the Maldives. We emphasise that mere acceptance of recommendations does not absolve the government of its responsibility to ensure an independent judiciary. We urge the government to take all necessary steps to implement these recommendations.

Lastly, we are disturbed by the government's rejection of all recommendations to reconsider its decision to end the moratorium on death penalty.⁵ Serious concerns about the competence of the judiciary further aggravate these concerns. We urge the government reinstate the six decade-long moratorium.

FORUM-ASIA calls upon the government of Maldives to publicly set out a comprehensive, measurable and time-bound action plan for the implementation of UPR recommendations, in cooperation and consultation with civil society. Thank you, Mr. President.

- 1 Recommendations 141.82, 141.83, 141.84, 141.85, 141.86, 141.87, 141.88, 141.89, 141.90, 143.58, 143.60, 143.61, 143.62, 143.63, 143.64, 143.65 and 143.66
- 2 A/HRC/30/8/Add.1
- 3 Maldivian Democracy Network (9 August 2015), Condemning violation of Freedom of Assembly and Expression on 8 August 2015 marking one year to the disappearance of journalist and HRD Ahmed Rilwan
- 4 Recommendations 141.74, 141.75, 141.76, 141.77, 141.78, 141.79, 141.80, 141.81, 143.45, 143.46, 143.47, 143.48, 143.49, 143.50, 143.51, 143.52, 143.53, 143.54, 143.55, 143.73 and 143.74.
- 5 Recommendations 144.9, 144.10, 144.11, 144.12, 144.13, 144.14, 144.15, 144.16, 144.17, 144.18, 144.19, 144.20, 144.21, 144.22, 144.23, 144.24, 144.25, 144.26, 144.27, 144.28, 144.29, 144.30, 144.31, 144.32, and 144.33.