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Press Statement

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President Gayoom has ruled the Maldives for the past 26 years as a police state. The international outcry against his brutal rule, following the torture/killing of an unarmed prisoner last September, forced Gayoom to offer an insincere agenda of reform. His call for open debate was well received by his countrymen who long for greater freedom and participatory democracy. When he realized the people were taking his offer seriously, Gayoom systematically reneged on his promises and clamped down on the people's constitutional rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.

The crackdown culminated in invoking a Proclamation of Emergency yesterday, Friday 13th, following a demonstration started on 12th evening. The demonstrators, estimated to be over five thousand, called upon the Government for the release of the recently detained pro-democracy activists. They also called for the resignation of some of Gayoom's hard-line ministers.

The National Security Service(NSS), assisted by a militia controlled by Gayoom's hard-line brother Minister Yameen, Executive Secretary to the President, Abdullah Shahid and Police Commissioner Adam Zahir is on a rampage of violence against pro-democracy activists. Activists were beaten up in their homes and were also subject to verbal abuse and threats by the NSS. Rubber bullets and tear gas, too, were used. MDP members Muad Zaki and Ziyad were so brutally beaten they are now under intensive medical care.

Among those arrested are leading businessman Hon. Gasim Ibrahim (former President of SAARC Chamber of Commerce), Hon. Ibrahim Hussein Zaki (former Minister of Planning and former Secretary General of SAARC), Hon. Muhammed Munavvar (former Attorney General) and Hon. Ibrahim Ismail. All four are members of the Special Majlis.

The hard-line members of Gayoom's family, led by Minister Yameen, have openly and defiantly indicated that they will maintain their family stranglehold on power using every method at their disposal. This militia is behind the spate of death threats and hate mail being circulated in Male. They act as agents provocateurs and operate openly and freely with total impunity under the protection of the NSS.

The situation in Male' is extremely volatile. The Maldivian Democratic Party earnestly appeals to the international community to take the dangerous developments in Maldives seriously and to take positive and effective steps to ensure that the country does not slide into further chaos and violence.

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