

What has Gayyoom got to do with the constitution? Why should it matter what he wants? He does not have the power to amend the constitution, or does he?

Editorial by A.S.I. Moosa (Sappe') 23rd June 2004

[Constitution of the Republic of Maldives – Article 92](#)

The power to make and amend the Constitution of the Maldives shall be vested in the People's Special Majlis.

It does not state that the power to make and amend the Constitution of the Maldives shall be vested in the President of the Republic of Maldives or Al Usthaaz Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom, does it?

It is time for constitutional amendments in the Maldives. But, why are "we" asked to write to Gayyoom with our suggestions? What gives him the power to even request for that? Why can't we write to the people who have the constitutional power to amend it, the Members of the Special Majlis (Upper House of the Parliament)? According to the Constitution, the power is clearly vested in them.

In less than 7 years after adopting Gayyoom's 'heavenly' constitution, 'world's most democratic constitution', as claimed by the man himself, we are witnessing another of Gayyoom's games to manipulate the people of Maldives and the world at large. The only difference this time is that the world is watching his moves. For what it's worth, **DO** is continuously updating the world media with each and every move he is making.

Gayyoom's brother, Hameed is threatening his staff, practically all the heads of the Atolls and the islands (Katheebis), that unless they get people to write to the President asking not to introduce the party system, they will lose their jobs. He does not stop at that, but goes as far as threatening them with long prison sentences and suspending them. He goes public and asks people to reject the very amendments his elder brother Gayyoom proposed in his speech on the 9th of June 2004, including pluralistic democracy

and separation of powers. Let us repeat once again that according to the above article 92 of the Constitution of the Maldives, it is not up to the President to introduce the party system or any other amendment, but it is the responsibility of the Members of the Special Majlis. Hameed wants people to believe that OPPOSITION means violence and division. Should he not be thrown in jail for rejecting the reforms proposed by his mighty brother, Gayyoom, the longest serving 'illegitimate' Head of State in Asia? He took his first oath in 1978 whilst carrying a gun (he claimed he did), which annuls his oath and makes his rule illegitimate from the very beginning. Paradoxically though, he is still ruling a country when he should be behind bars for committing treason on a daily basis.

Yameen, Gayyoom's other half-brother, goes a step further and even threatens the MPs, Atoll Chiefs as well as Island Chiefs with imprisonment and torture. He proudly claims that "we the Kaaminee clan owns this country and there is nothing anyone can do about it – we have the power to do whatever we want!"

Is it not unconstitutional to let a man who has undermined the existing constitution to be in charge of amending it? What is the use of a Constitution, when the government does not adhere to it and constantly abrogates it?

Why is Gayyoom, through his brother Hameed in particular, trying so hard to elect Seena Zahir, the Justice Minister, who is an appointed Member of Parliament, to be the Speaker of the Special Majlis and Dr. Shaugee, another appointed member to be the Deputy Speaker? One of the longest serving Member of the Parliament informed **DO** that Cabinet Ministers have called him requesting to support and vote for these government candidates. "I told them outright that I will vote for Qasim Ibrahim" he

informed **DO**. This is unprecedented in the Maldives and perhaps a wake up call for Gayyoom.

DO understands, that Gayyoom pays regular visits to this site www.dhivehiobserver.com, which is unlawfully banned by him. We can therefore guarantee that, if not from others, he should be able to read about these illicit activities of his own brothers from this website. **DO** is proud to claim that all its articles are emailed to info@po.gov.mv (the official email of the Office of the President of the Maldives) as soon as it is published on the website to ensure that Gayyoom gets the chance to review and act on it. So, there is absolutely no way that he is not aware of the abuse of power by his brothers and his cronies.

Is it not a little scary that Dr. Shaheed has already told the world (BBC World Asia Today

10th June 2004) that any amendment to the constitution "will" be safeguarded by a public referendum? This is because Gayyoom said that he thinks that it would be a good idea? Does this mean or imply that his words or thoughts constitute as LAW?

We now hear that the roundtable discussions on Television Maldives about constitutional reform, is staged under close supervision of Dr. Shaheed, Chief Spokesman and Dr. Saeed, the young Attorney General of Maldives.

What game is Gayyoom playing, does anyone really know? **DO**'s view is that whatever game he is playing, the outcome is certain. He has awakened the mass, the people of Maldives, and this time round he is bound to loose. His days are numbered and he knows that very well.

Gayyoom's Feckless Legacy

The speech Gayyoom made on the 9th of June 2004, acclaimed only by the President's Office, contains all the reforms that have been called for by political dissidents of Maldives. It is quite astonishing that Gayyoom claims that these thoughts were originally his and has been contended with ever since he came to power; what is even more shocking was his inability to listen to his conscience, supposing that these views had been there in the first place. Instead, Gayyoom ruled the Maldives for 26 long years with pronounced contempt towards the Rights of Citizens and misuse of his Official capacity as the Chief Executive.

The Executive powers in the Maldives are absolutely enormous and the current Constitution is the most compelling evidence to this claim. This basically means, had Gayyoom really wanted to reform the country and establish a democratic state as he had in mind, he could have done that quite easily with the powers granted to him by the current Constitution. For instance, by allowing people to express their will and thoughts rather than handing them down life-sentence for doing so. He also had the opportunity to enforce his support towards pluralistic democracy by avoiding interference in the election process. Methods of such interference includes laying down strict control of the campaigning procedures by candidates (through the Elections Commissioner who he solely appoints) and more importantly by rigging the vote in the islands through hand-picked atoll/island chiefs who were either intimidated or bribed into these illicit practices.

The whole nation, except Gayyoom's brothers, Hameed and Yameen as well as his cronies in the cabinet and higher government posts which in fact amounts to less than 5% of the voting population of the country, are very wary of this sudden change of heart. In a free and fair election, this is the support Gayyoom will get; it will be a matter of pure chance should he manage to scrape over 5% or less of the polls in favour for him. **DO** would like to apologise if the 5% estimate is an overstatement. It might be even lower considering the recent discontent of Gayyoom's own family members (whose names readers can establish for themselves), who are now united with the People in their call to end his brutal reign.

Here is a person who wants to reform a country, to leave a legacy behind by ideas revealed after almost 26 years of absolute tyranny. In a country ranked 77th in the Human Development Index (HDI-UNDP, 2001), Gayyoom has surpassed the conditions necessary to qualify for a text-book example of a totalitarian mad-man; who else can manage to live in multi-million dollar Palaces, Private Island retreats and finally an Office complex equivalent in value to about 20 competent Schools. These are just a few ornaments of an empire Gayyoom has accumulated by swindling the people who he is supposed to serve.

After the speech, his brothers and the rest of his henchmen are busy at work coercing people in the islands to write to the President in protest against pluralistic democracy in the Maldives. According to Hameed and Yameen, it will

generate divisions between the people. Party politics according to them, is nothing but trouble and will only bring despair to the people.

Perhaps it is best left to the reader to ponder over the following questions, which has the potential of verifying whether Maumoon's latest attempt at reverting back to a self-made Democratic Leader is as identical with his feckless legacy

- Why doesn't Gayyoom abide by the existing Constitution and offer the rights of the people already enshrined in it?
- Why has it taken him 26 years to realise the importance of a true democratic state, with clear separation of powers between the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary?
- Why did Gayyoom request to have people send their suggestions addressed to him personally? Why can't the people write to their own elected MPs?
- Why is the period set for the National debate on constitutional reform limited to a mere 15 days, when in the past, Gayyoom could afford to have spent more than 17 YEARS to lag on with cosmetic-reforms?
- Why doesn't he stop interfering with legislative processes? such as his government campaigning to elect a Minister, ideally his brother Hameed or Justice Minister Zahir, to the post of President of the Special Majlis (Upper House of Parliament)? Why can't he let the members of the Special Majlis decide that? Why cannot he allow formidable candidates to do their own lobbying?
- Why is he allowing his brothers to spend public funds on anti-reform campaigns only days after his call for reform? Why are they intimidating officials who support pro-reform candidates?
- Why doesn't Gayyoom lift the ban on the dissident websites and allow press and media to be free from his influence?
- What is he doing to sort out the drugs problems in the country? There are over 15,000 addicts in the Maldives

at present according to a recent study done by UNDP and Fashan.

- Why does he continue to threaten the liberty of people like Naushad Waheed and Zaki, Didi, Nisreen and Nazim? Why doesn't he release them?
- Why does he harass and detain the mother of the Eevan Naseem, who is still mourning the brutal killing of her son by Gayyoom's National Security Servicemen? Has she not suffered enough? Is it a crime to mourn the death of your own child?
- Why does he continue to let the NSS bully the people and why can't he respect the rule of law?
- Why are our utility bills (water, electric, etc.) so high?
- Why are we so reliant on tourism? If something happens to the tourism market worldwide we will be the first to suffer. We could starve? Why is it ridden by corruption and favouritism?
- Why is our education system such a disaster? The O' level results of 2003 was less than 30% pass rate!
- Why are the Atoll Chiefs and Katheeb's (Island Chiefs) mini-Gods appointed or rather blessed by his brother Hameed? Why can they get away with murder?
- Why is there endemic corruption in the Maldives? Have we lost all sense of honour and doing business on true merit rather than under the table bribes? Isn't this problem initiated right from the top?
- Why aren't we getting more investment in the islands for water purification? One of the reasons why our longevity is so low is that the water we drink is so bad.
- Why is our health system so appalling? So little investment? Why aren't there adequate health facilities in each island? We have millions to spend on the palace, the holiday retreat, the yacht, the President's Office? Why?
- Why did he need to employ the services of a PR firm from

the UK, that must have cost Maldivians a fortune, to spin the lies and hide the realities of the nightmare of his regime?

One need not have a fellowship at Harvard University to answer these questions. For Maldivians, who have had to endure and suffer the strangle-hold grip of Gayyoom on their country, it would be even simpler; Gayyoom is buying time to mend his reputation in the international community. His speech is as one pundit said, 40% public relations (local), 30% public relations (international) and 30% legacy and fame.

There can only be one way forward, and that is to let the people of Maldives decide their own future. Gayyoom has left it for far too long and

there is no longer a person in Maldives with even the slightest hint of patriotism who would entrust Maumoon with even a grain of sand from our beaches.

If he sincerely wants to leave a legacy behind, he has to admit to his crimes and apologise to the people of Maldives and resign without any delay. His legacy, if any left would be that of a caitiff academician, who resorted to invest his deception and hypocrisy to swindle a nation of its wealth and to devastate a whole generation in pursuit of his personal agendas. Historians would only be wise not to write a legacy which is not worth the ink its being written with.

All Party Parliamentary Group on the Maldives and the meeting of Mr. Hussain Shihab

David Hardingham, [Friends of Maldives](#), UK, 19th June 2004

It was interesting to see that Mr Shihab told the assembled member of the Parliamentary Group on the Maldives that Associations are prohibited under the existing constitution of the Maldives.

From the existing constitution:

Article 27

Persons shall be free to form societies and associations, unless prohibited by law in the interest of the protection of sovereignty of the Maldives and the maintenance of public order.

Article 31

(1) Where any law, regulation or any principle having the force of law is inconsistent with the fundamental rights stipulated in this Chapter, such law, regulation or principle shall, to the extent of such inconsistency, be void.

(2) The fundamental rights stipulated in this Chapter shall not, temporarily or otherwise, be denied save in accordance with this Constitution

It was also interesting to note that Mr Shihab stated that Parliament had rejected the proposals to introduce political parties on the grounds that it would divide the country.

Mr Gayoom had shrewdly stated that Multi-party politics are not consistent with the norms of a homogenous society like the Maldives and led people into thinking that such political associations would incite discord in religious and Islamic Affairs. With the help of his dependable Majlis the banning of political parties was predictable and the democratic aspirations of many Maldivians were shattered.

Salisbury MP, The Rt. Hon. Robert Key, brought to the attention of Mr Shihab the Maldivians living here in the UK who are in fear of returning to the Maldives. Mr Shihab assured the All Party Parliamentary Group on Maldives that this was not going to happen. Mr Shihab went as far as to say that no members of the MDP in the UK were under suspicion for crimes. The way the regime has incarcerated numerous individuals who have committed no crime over the years on charges bearing no relation to reality brings our Maldivian friends little relief. They are a little safer now that the International Community is taking an interest in the Maldives. However it would be a brave regime that risked upsetting the international community by incarcerating the now very well known dissidents.

The Rt. Hon. Robert Key also made a suggestion of inviting the commonwealth election observers for the elections in September. Mr Shihab said he would consider this. The geographical layout of the Maldives is always going to make this difficult to be effective. However all initiatives aimed at ensuring free and fair elections should be welcomed.

The proposed democratic reforms and liberalisation by Mr Gayyoom released officially in his speech at the Islamic Centre on the 10th of June 2004 was the direct result of pressure generated by the dissidents abroad and the International Community.

The new constitution, however wonderful, would be of little use to the people of the Maldives if Gayyoom and the coercive forces backing him are not prepared to honour such a constitution. It is with deep concern that Mr Gayyoom will make cosmetic changes and try harder to hide the strings he attaches to any transformation he initiates.

Despite the revelation on the package of reforms he neglected to mention certain serious unresolved issues. What to do with the institution known as the NSS who have lost

all honour and credibility with the people of the Maldives and who continue to maintain brutal power and fear over them? Where is the Bill of Rights? And where is the legitimising of freedom of expression?

The pressure on the Regime in the Maldives has been brought to bear significantly in the last 6 months reflecting the desire of Maldivians for change. Changes that allow the Maldivians to live without fear and changes that allow them the choice to evolve their own future. These changes need to happen fast enough to meet the expectations of the people who are becoming increasingly impatient. For Mr Gayyoom's sake these changes should be made soon to enable him the chance to depart from power with some sort of dignity. Maldivians are not always forgiving with their dictators.

The All Party Parliamentary Group on the Maldives continued efforts for the Maldivians and their political, economic and democratic development will sustain the much needed pressure on the regime of Mr Gayyoom. A representation from the UK parliament is planning a visit to the Maldives in October 2004 for monitoring and discussions in the Maldives.

The Abuse of foreign aid in the Maldives

By M. Luthfee - 18 June 2004

At a reception to mark Maldives 38th independence anniversary, president Maumoon A. Gayyoom told his visiting dignitaries that sea level rise is his biggest concern at the moment. The president informed those in attendance, including foreign dignitaries, that it was one of the issues he discussed with every foreign head of state he has ever met. The Japanese Ambassador, according to Gayyoom, insisted that he must be given assurance that the funds his government has provided to protect the islands would not end up being embezzled by corrupt government officials. According to Gayyoom, the Japanese Ambassador said to him "we know that this money belongs to your country, but we want to have a say in the spending of the money because people say the money will go in corruption". Quite instructive, you may say. President Gayyoom fell short of admitting what the whole world knows – that he is running the most corrupt government on earth. But it is ironical of the diplomats, those same diplomats that he meets with on a regular basis, will look him in the eye and tell him he is corrupt and presides over the most corrupted nation in Asia. But Gayyoom didn't see the irony. It is my contention that his family

members wouldn't dare be corrupt if he were not.

Two events in Maldives (which may or may not be related) could have a bearing on what the Japanese Ambassador told Gayyoom in his own office. The first was the arrest of three men and a woman in Male for allegedly publishing opposition views; and the second is a report in another opposition newsletter, published by the irrepressible writers of Maldivesculture.com. In the report captioned "NSS Brutality". After reading the story of this newsletter, my first thought was, when would we see an end to this brutality? Because apart from the brutalities many remain detained without any charges for very minor offences while many of his family members and cabinet ministers openly defy the laws of Islam and the country. What is more interesting about the whole thing is that most of the prisoners are arrested on drug and petty theft charges but later on tortured for unruly behaviour while in prison. Coincidence, you might say. I am sure the Japanese Ambassador may have heard about the growing corrupt practices by the regime and the inhumane treatment of our prisoners in telling our own

president what he has heard from other Japanese living and visiting the country.

The arrest, detention and trial of the three men and a women in Male for allegedly writing about the current regime is a riddle of sorts to, for after all the President and his family members are not known to be modest with their new found wealth. Anybody living in Male can attest to the fact that wealth is now flaunted by the *nouveau riche* with reckless abandon. The existence of such properties around the world; the construction of an island resort; the completion of another resort in Alif Atoll that was started in 1986 and suspended after Ilyas was sent on exile since then and such others recently acquired should raise eyebrows, I believe. Properties are erected on annual basis from Aarah to Feeali and Magoodho, islands in Faafu Atoll. A few minutes trip from where I live in Laamu Isdhoo is another palatial residence of our revered Transport Minister. I have heard through the grapevine that his passion for property acquisition has descended on Kuala Lumpur to Singapore like wildfire. He is discreetly buying off houses for his retirement. Very soon the suburbs of Putra Jaya may also emerge as a permanent address for our dear leader. Yet it is only Gayyoom' and his families names that are invoked in any discourse on corruption as if they are the only culprits. The Japanese Ambassador, I presume is aware that Gayyoom and his brothers are in government, hence he is reluctant to release the "aid money" for fear it may find its way back to Swiss banks instead to protect the people of the Maldives.

All this opulence is in the midst of decaying public infrastructure, social anomie and excruciating poverty. Over 65% of the local population live from hand to mouth yet this *nouveau riche* flaunt their wealth like confetti. A decade and half ago, MLD President Ismail Saadiq reminded his audience "*the extremes of opulence and want are more remarkable, and more constantly obvious, in this country than any other that I ever seen*". He was referring to present day Maldives under Gayyoom. A first time visitor to Maldives may be forgiven to think

the country is just coming out of a heaven while its people linger in neighbouring islands that are built exclusively as prisons and torture chambers. The beautiful waterfront with mirrored buildings and expensive yachts are what these holidaymakers have only seen in places like Monaco and French Rivera. I always have the impression that the sea fronts in Mediterranean coasts may be in a better shape than those in Maldives but many visitors are deceived as we display our luxuries to them.

I recently read a story credited to the government that they want to go to the capital market to look for money to, among other things, build houses in Hulhumale. I couldn't believe the story and was in fact looking forward to a confutation but none was forthcoming. I was wondering how Gayyoom would bring MIFCO, MSL, and Air Maldives into the stock market. All of them are in debt or bankrupt. Is he going to bring STELCO, MWSC and DHIRAAGU as suggested by MLD? Successive board members of these state enterprises have refused to make them accountable to public, while they were been given worldwide trips to attend board meetings and expensive perks in various forms.

Maldives has the unique feature of a town straddling two sides – The islands, yet lacks portable drinking water for the simple reason that there has been no effort in 25 years to provide them the basic utility services. Few residents of Male' earn more than a Swiss national, while the islanders dig shallow wells to get drinking water.

The escapades of the Police Commissioner are well publicised for the whole world to take note; the extravagant lifestyle of the President's family and their disdain for the poor are on all the Internet news portals. I am therefore surprised that Gayyoom found what the Japanese Ambassador told him at the reception worth repeating to his invited guests. Evidence of corruption stares him in the face every morning. He should therefore stop playing the ostrich and be sincere or else forget about his much trumpeted speech on reforms.

Open Forum Message

I warn all of you, that all this talk of reforms is empty promises. Now they are worried about the Special Majlis as they are unable to find a speaker to lead them. I guess Gayyoom was not aware of the constitution and how it works. You can have the best of people in the world, but it won't work unless he is committed to it. He wants to bring all the amendments, without

making him to resign or leave the Presidency. If this is acceptable for all, send him letters praising him for his wisdom. Otherwise, join the struggle to get rid of this murderer and his gang.

Waheed
Male, Maldives - Thursday, June 24, 2004 at 23:21:09 (MDT)

Dhivehi Observer open letter to President Gayyoom.

Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom
Theemuge
Male'
Maldives

20 June 2004

Mr. Gayyoom,

Below are some of the key actions that you are required to take, at the behest of the People, immediately and unconditionally, in consistency with the pledges you made in your speech on the 9th of June 2004.

1. You must immediately halt the illicit activities of Cabinet Ministers, especially your Brothers Hameed and Yameen and Senior Public Figures such as Atoll Chiefs and Island Chiefs from lobbying against the reforms you advocated; and from influencing the Legislative proceeding by lobbying, to appoint a Government minister to the chair of the Upper House Sessions
2. You must relieve your brothers Hameed and Yameen of all their duties and official capacities and submit them to a Court of Justice and report the proceedings under the supervision of a Parliamentary Oversight Committee.
3. Threats and Intimidation to apprehend Reformists must come to an end; there shall be no arbitrary arrests.
4. You must release all Prisoners of Conscience and Political Prisoners
(*Whose names explicated herein are only a few of which the Dhivehi Observer has confirmed the status of: Fathimath Nisreen, Ibrahim Didi, Ibrahim Fareed, Mohamed Zaki, Naushad Waheed*)
5. You must lift the ban on dissident websites/media such as Dhivehi Observer and Maldives Culture amongst other independent web-press organisations.
6. You must cease your repeated equivocations to the International Community/Non-Governmental Organisations/ Media Corporations (including BBC), providing them with false postulations of having ratified the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights.

We will assess and report the situation to all Maldivians and the International Community on the degree of compliance, once these actions have been taken.

Respectfully,

signed

Ahmed Shafeeq Ibrahim Moosa

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Quote

"Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves."

Qur'an 13:11

Maldivians must act now

by Ismail Saadiq, 11th June 2004

It's time to say it again. The patriotic fervor in the days following Sept. 20 prison riots has been reduced to a murmur. Its promise for a new day in media coverage, politics, and civic responsibility has brought almost nothing. But it isn't too late.

There is hard work to do if we choose not to squander the feelings of community activism. But there are no quick fixes. Actions must go deeper, and be more lasting. At the core of the issue is conduct in politics – what is said and done in political life matters, especially as the country approaches the September Majlis elections.

For months following last year's Maafushi uprisings, Maldivians made efforts to contribute to opposition groups and voice their support for a regime change. Public opinion polls showed that Maldivians' trust in government had gone down significantly; opposition websites carried a more serious tone.

When it came to politics, new claims of unity among the opposition groups and civility emerged from the lips of opposition political leaders. Many islanders joined hands and cried for change. The opportunity for change was everywhere. Instead, Maldivians only heard calls to pay more bills to bolster the failing regime. The New Year brought more hardship and more indirect taxes and lower wages.

But this newly discovered call for change has had little or no lasting effect. Despite in a recent survey this May, just months after Sept. 20 uprisings, Maldivians said that they expected the conduct of political leaders, government controlled news media, and citizens to be worse than in previous years.

No wonder voting returns in the recent Special Majlis elections were a bare 14 percent. And just when you thought the situation could not get worse, President Gayyoom, on the heels of his falling poll numbers announced a new set of

reforms, and told his invited guests that he was serious in bringing the reforms enshrined in MLD's DP. Gayyoom will spend millions of rufiyaa on a special Majlis and run a circus to crown another family member who will pretend to be his new prime minister.

Our politics have returned to being acrimonious and shallow, which cheapens public life and makes a farce out of the issues people care so deeply about. No amount of protests, crying of the islanders, Internet websites and any other opposition extravaganzas, or even volunteerism to join opposition parties will fundamentally improve politics in our country.

We still have time to move beyond superficial or simply symbolic patriotic responses. But more politicians must finally decide to stand up and declare their views on issues, explain why they hold them, and set a tone of forthright and passionate debate. More news media must work to help people come to truly know about the issues and to leave room in their coverage for their viewers and readers to form their own judgments.

And citizens must move beyond complaining about the state of politics and take responsibility for informing themselves on the issues, talk with their friends and neighbors, and get involved to make change happen.

In civic forums held by the islanders across the archipelago these past months, people sounded the message that they are seeking a political climate in which opposing viewpoints are allowed, in which character is of genuine concern, and in which all people and all perspectives have a voice.

The challenge is clear: Exercise a deeper form of patriotism, one rooted in an uncompromising devotion and love of country that calls for examining and changing conduct in political life. Each of us must assume responsibility for this task. The time to act is now.

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Mr. Ismail Saadiq, President, Maldivian League for Democracy (MLD)

MLD President Mr. Saadiq calls on Gayyoom to resign immediately

Maldivian League For Democracy - Press Release 9th June 2004

MLD leadership has called its members in and out of Maldives to reject Gayyoom's sudden initiative for reform. It reminded its members that after 26 years of brutality and torturing thousands of its people, it is just too little too late for reform. These ideas were created just a week ago when every Maldivian had access to the Development Program. These so called new ideas of Gayyoom are only to create more instability in the country, thus revoking all his ideas for reform at a day of his convenience.

The President of Maldives League for Democracy Mr. Saadiq called his members to reject this "loose talk" from Gayyoom, as he has never been sincere or honest to the people of Maldives. He also stressed this might be another trick by Gayyoom to stay in power indefinitely as an unelected president. With this new position of a Prime Minister, he could choose another family member to protect him and continue the drain of our limited resources.

He called upon President Gayyoom to resign immediately and not to wait for another 2 terms or 10 years as President, if he really meant what he said yesterday. He called the President to release all political prisoners and to stop the abuse of young people. He reminded Gayyoom, that it is far too important to stop the abuse of drugs in the Maldives. He also called Gayyoom to release all the details of government expenses and to ensure they are available for public scrutiny.

Mr. Saadiq also reminded his members and the people of Maldives, that the President's family is not ready for these reforms and would reject any attempt to include more educated and able people to run the government. Mr. Saadiq called the people to continue their struggle to get rid of this regime once for all. He reminded the people that they would never see any prosperity, so long as Gayyoom is in power.

Hill & Knowlton; Something every Maldivian should know

By a contributor - Monday, June 14, 2004; Male' Maldives

"On October 10, 1990, as the Bush administration stepped up war preparations against Iraq, Hill & Knowlton (H&K), on behalf of the Kuwaiti government, presented 15-year-old "Nayirah" before the House Human Rights Caucus. Passed off as an ordinary Kuwaiti with firsthand knowledge of atrocities committed by the Iraqi army, she testified tearfully before Congress:

"I volunteered at the al-Addan hospital...[where] I saw the Iraqi soldiers come into the hospital with guns, and go into the room where 15 babies were in incubators. They took the babies out of the incubators, took the incubators, and left the babies on the cold floor to die."

Supposedly fearing reprisals against her family, Nayirah did not reveal her last name to the press or Congress. Nor did this apparently disinterested witness mention that she was the daughter of Sheikh Saud Nasir al-Sabah, Kuwait's ambassador to the U.S. As Americans were being prepared for war, her story - which turned out to be impossible to corroborate - became the centrepiece of a finely tuned public relations campaign orchestrated by H&K and coordinated with the White House on behalf of

the government of Kuwait and its front group, Citizens for a Free Kuwait (CFK).

In May 1991, CFK was folded into the Washington-based Kuwait-America Foundation. CFK had sprung into action on August 2, the day Iraq invaded Kuwait. By August 10, it had hired H&K, the pre-eminent U.K. public relations firm. CFK reported to the Justice Department receipts of \$17,861 from 78 individual U.S. and Canadian contributors and \$11.8 million from the Kuwaiti government. Of those "do- nations," H&K got nearly \$10.8 million to wage one of the largest, most effective public relations campaigns in history.

From the streets to the newsrooms, according to author John MacArthur, that money created a benign facade for Kuwait's image:

"The H&K team, headed by former U.S. Information Agency officer Lauri J. Fitz-Pegado, organized a Kuwait Information Day on 20 college campuses on September 12. On Sunday, September 23, churches nationwide observed a national day of prayer for Kuwait. The next day, 13 state governors declared a national Free Kuwait Day. H&K distributed tens of thousands

of Free Kuwait bumper stickers and T-shirts, as well as thousands of media kits extolling the alleged virtues of Kuwaiti society and history. Fitz-Pegado's crack press agents put together media events featuring Kuwaiti "resistance fighters" and businessmen and arranged meetings with newspaper editorial boards. H&K's Lew Allison, a former CBS and NBC News producer, created 24 video news releases from the Middle East, some of which purported to depict life in Kuwait under the Iraqi boot. The Wirthlin Group was engaged by H&K to study TV audience reaction to statements on the Gulf crisis by President Bush and Kuwaiti officials. "All this PR activity helped "educate" Americans about Kuwait-a totalitarian country with a terrible human rights record and no rights for women. Meanwhile, the incubator babies atrocity story inflamed public opinion against Iraq and swung the U.S. Congress in favour of war in the Gulf.

This free market approach to manufacturing public perception raises the issue of:

Whether there is something fundamentally wrong when a foreign government can pay a powerful, well-connected lobbying and public relations firm millions of dollars to convince the American people and the American government to support a war halfway around the world. In another age this activity would have caused an explosion of outrage. But something has changed in Washington. Boundaries no longer exist. One boundary which has been blurred beyond recognition is that between "propaganda"-which conjures up unpleasant images of Goebbels-like fascists-and "public relations," a respectable white collar profession. Taking full advantage of the revolving door, these lobbyists and spin-meisters glide through

Congress, the White House, and the major media editorial offices. Their routine manipulations-- like those of their brown shirted predecessors--corrode democracy and government policy. H&K's highly paid agents of influence, such as Vice President Bush's chief of staff Craig Fuller, and Democratic power broker Frank Mankiewicz, have run campaigns against abortion for the Catholic Church, represented the Church of Scientology, and the Moonies. They have made sure that gasoline taxes have been kept low for the American Petroleum Institute; handled flack for Three Mile Island's near-catastrophe; and mishandled the apple growers' assertion that Alar was safe. They meddle in our political life at every turn and apparently are never held accountable. Not only do these PR firms act as foreign propaganda agents, but they work closely with U.S. and foreign intelligence agencies, making covert operations even harder to control.

In the 1930s, Edward Bernays, the "father of public relations," convinced corporate America that changing the public's opinion--using PR techniques--about troublesome social movements such as socialism and labor unions, was more effective than hiring goons to club people. Since then, PR has evolved into an increasingly refined art form of manipulation on behalf of whoever has the large amounts of money required to pay for it. In 1991, the top 50 U.S.-based PR firms billed over \$1,700,000,000 in fees. Top firms like Hill and Knowlton charge up to \$350 per hour."

I WONDER HOW MUCH MONEY (MONEY BELONGING TO THE PEOPLE OF MALDIVES) THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS POURING INTO THEM TO SELL US THESE LIES? WE THE PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW!!

Gayyoom's killing spree set to rise

DO is receiving news from Male' that there are two persons undergoing heavy torture in Male' at the moment. Mr. Ahmed Falah is being interrogated for taking a video of a recent victim who died under suspicious circumstances. Mr. Falah has been detained in Male' police headquarters and heavily tortured to obtain copy of the video tape and also his phone, which he is refusing to surrender. He is being tortured in the famous *Fengolhi* or "Water Cell" and is reported to be quite weak. His family has not been allowed to visit or is not given any information about his condition.

The other person undergoing torture is the brother of Eevan Naseem who is being tortured in jail in front of other prisoners, to admit that he intended to assassinate Maumoon on the

instructions of some prominent people in Male', who Maumoon wants out of his way. According to very reliable sources, Evan's brother, Wales Naseem was outraged when his mother told him how she was treated during her recent detention.

DO calls on Maumoon to show restraint and to treat our brothers with respect. The world will be told of your brutality and don't forget that we are not alone today. You have the blood of Maldivians in your hand and you will be found guilty of those charges very soon. Mr. Gayyoom is an absolute dictator and a murderer, who is ruling Maldives by the power of guns. His rule is illegal and he must step down immediately.

Mr. Gayyoom, listen to the people. You are no longer the legitimate leader of Maldives and it is time you accept that.

Fengolhi or the Water Cell is a very popular method of torture Gayyoom government uses to extract information from people in Custody. It is a small watertight sealed room (5" by 5") equipped with pressure sprinklers and industrial standard high speed pressure fans. Extremely cold water is sprayed at the victim for about 10 minutes followed by 20 minutes of extreme cold air from the high pressure fans. In the cases of physically strong victims, there is no time frame for how long the person is subjected to and is done until the person is weak from the extremely cold freezing condition. This process is continuously continued till the victim "breaks

down" and is ready to confess for anything the state wants them to confess or is ready to give information.

People have been subjected to this extremely cruel method of torture for weeks on end. The NSS considers this method to be an effective and acceptable means of torture as it doesn't leave visible marks on the victim's body.

Victims have been known to suffer from frostbite, pneumonia and in rare cases death resulting from heart failure due to the extreme cold.

A member of the **Dhivehi Observer** editorial board was subjected to this method of torture for speaking his mind against the government.

Maldives Student spills her heart hoping for change

Juway - Male, Galolhu Maldives - Wednesday, May 26, 2004

Dear Ismail Saadiq,

I am student at CHSE and I want to share my life with you, **DO** readers and other organizations, which are trying their best to help the Maldivians to get out of the iron grip of this cruel leader and his followers.

I lost my father five years ago, when I was in Aminiyya. I had a sister and a brother who were younger than me. My mother worked hard by sewing clothes, baking cakes and helping other neighbourhood kids to learn Qur'an. It was an uphill struggle everyday. Whether it is to pay the exorbitant utility bills or to purchase much needed books. We never got birthday presents or new dresses for *Eid* (major Muslim holiday) or for any other holiday for that matter.

We were confined to our rooms and constantly reminded about the hardship my mother is undergoing, to make ends meet. We had no choice, but to study hard and hope to have a better life in the future.

2 years ago, our life changed when my mother wrote a letter to Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom, claiming that my Islam results at Aminiyya was not fair. I had all A's from grade 7 onwards, but my final result was a C. I was disappointed and I told my mother it was not right. She complained to Dr. Latheef who never even bothered to reply.

After few days my mom wrote a letter to Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom, after two days, she was picked up by the Police and taken to Ministry of Defense and National Security. She was questioned by one civilian staff and was told that her letter to the President contained "inappropriate Dhivehi language" and such words are not suitable for His Excellency the President. My mother insisted that she be told those particular words, so that she could withdraw them and apologize. They never told what those words, but instead kept her inside the NSS police headquarters overnight, while we three remained at home all alone wondering what happened to our mom. We had no one else to help us or to provide us anything. My mother had the keys of her drawer, so we had no access to any money or anything.

My mother was sent home after two days, and placed under house arrest. During this time she wrote again to Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom and told him how she was treated inside NSS. Next day my mother was again taken to the police station and sent to Dhoonidhoo and after a week sent to Maafushi jail.

She was sent home after 30 days at Maafushi. During her detention, the police interrogated her several times. My mother was desperate to get home, so she was upset and angry, why she was tortured and "fondled" by the interrogators. She was held with hardcore drug dealers and users and forced to smoke cigarettes by the Police. She was asked for sexual favours to get a telephone call across to us.

After she came home (she was released after 90 days under house arrest), we found her completely

different. She started smoking and numerous police officers visit her and spend hours with her in the room. All we were told were to shut up and keep quiet. Today my mother is a drug user and forced to provide sex to Police officers. Her life has changed completely. We (my sister and myself) also receive calls from Police officers with suggestions of sexual nature. We have no choice today but to live under this government who had changed our lives forever.

Last week, I heard of **DO** website from a class mate and she told me to share this story with you at least for the record and bring some healing to many others who are undergoing these types of humiliation.

I feel responsible for my Mom's change of behaviour, as it was my Islam results, which initiated all these problems. My sister has tried to commit suicide and she is failing in her school and will end up, like my mother. My life is no better, but I am struggling to complete my A' levels, without offering "my body" to the Police.

I hope your hard work will bring some change to this country. How many innocent families must go through these humiliations, before we find another leader. I cannot provide you anything, nor I am able to vote for you (I am just 18), but all I could do is to pray for you and remember you and your family in my prayers.

Respectfully,
Juway

From the Editors

DO encourages other readers to tell their stories of how Gayyoom's policies has directly affected their lives. Let the world know of the *Monster* that claims to be "A Man for All Islands". We would also like to keep a file of these accounts, so we recommend you give your actual name and address and contact details which will only be held on our record. It will not be shared and we will use a different name unless the write requests to do otherwise. As it happens in many occasions, with these kinds of stories, the government can say that it was "simply not true!" despite in spite of the fact that many hundred of Maldivians have been subjected to such inhumane and degrading treatment.

DO calls upon Gayyoom for the immediate lifting of the ban on all dissent websites and allow free media and press to take its course in shaping the future of our country

For the creation and implementation of a proper democratic state, it is absolutely vital for the state laws or the constitution to embody equality and compassion. It must be compiled and adopted only after exhaustive debates and deliberations. It must also be passed by a truly representative body not hand picked by any one person or group. It must also consist of people who are capable, learned and diligent. Representatives of the people must have strong moral principles and must be able to transcend the selfishness and greed that comes with power. They must have the well being of the people at their hearts and must thrive on a humane agenda to create a just society that can prosper and protect its future generations. Therefore, it is paramount that the rights of the people to be preserved with strong and clear set of laws as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example.

It is now absolutely clear that the current constitution of the Maldives does not give us (the people) clear guidelines to protect our rights. It allows dictatorial regimes to remain in power for as long as they wish and subject the people to heinous hardship and despair.

Let us be very clear about one thing, it is not only our future that we must be concerned with; it is also the future of our children and our grand children.

Dhivehi Observer will ensure that your voice is heard in the Maldives and we will exhaust all possible means to reach out to the people.

Dhivehi Observer calls upon the Maldivian Government to uphold the constitutional right to freedom of expression and association in the Maldives and to remove the restrictions on the media. The practice of blocking the websites of

the opponents and critics of this government must come to an end. Critics and opponents must not be classed as traitors and enemies of the state. Without such intentions, all attempts to "consolidate the democratic institutions" will be seen as nothing but gimmick and tricks, in clear violation of the laws of the country.

Dhivehi Observer does not incite violence but inform the people to make the right decisions, promote democracy and the rule of law.

DO will today launch a new section for debate on constitutional amendments. In this debate,

we shall outline of the key shortcomings of the constitution of Maldives and propose amendments. This debate shall become a treasure for the law makers in the Maldives and we must hope that they will make note of the suggestions in this forum. We call upon Maldivians working and studying in the fields of law, politics, economics and administration to contribute to this debate.

We call upon Gayyoom for the immediate lifting of the ban on all dissident websites and to allow free media and press to take its course in shaping the future of our country.

Open Forum Messages

Is Gayyoom as evil as people are making him out to be or is he a victim of circumstance? Is it him that keeps making all these decisions that are atrocious or is it his advisors, his ministers and cronies? All I know is that as a man, Gayyoom is very decent in terms of what is being projected to the public unlike some of his ministers or family members (Hameed comes to mind). So if Gayyoom is serious about reform, then he should replace these people, make sure reform happens, and resign with the little dignity he has left and then we will make sure history remembers that. Otherwise he will be always known as the "Brutal Dictator that savaged the people of Maldives".

Ashfaq
Male', Maldives - Sunday, June 20, 2004 at 01:30:40 (MDT)

I will support President Gayyoom if he introduces the reforms and resign within the next year. He must openly declare that he is going to leave the Presidency and let someone else other than a member of his family take over. I wish he realizes that we have too many of his family members in the government now. Give others a chance. They too are patriotic and educated enough.

Fareesha
Male, Maldives - Saturday, June 19, 2004 at 12:27:59 (MDT)

My husband who is an employee at PO has been requested to write to the President stating that the reforms he has proposed is not suitable for the Maldives. They continue to label MDP as "drug addicts", but my husband says they are finding it difficult to label MLD. According to him, Saadiq had been very aggressive to press anyone within the administration to come out and accuse him. He is armed with unlimited

resources from late 70s to date about this administration and his ability to manoeuvre several key cabinet members, and military officers are raising eyebrows everywhere.

My husband decided to make his intentions clear and will make his comments, but he says it is time for us to listen to Saadiq's call for action. My husband told me he will lose his job...in few weeks, but he is going to take it with stride and return to his island. We have two small kids and he told me that they have no future under this administration, and he reminds me that life in our small island is going to be much better than going through these hardships defending a leader who has completely lost touch with his people.

Saadiq/Sappe/Anni help my girls, as they want to see a world where they can go to school and go abroad and become clever people like many of you. Today, I am packing to go home knowing very well my children's future is doomed forever.

As a young mother, I enjoyed reading your website, but soon we will return to our island where electricity is a luxury and running water is a dream.

Fathun
Male, Maldives - Thursday, June 17, 2004 at 23:39:10 (MDT)

The promises he makes to the people are merely lies. He will introduce new changes in the constitution which will cater his personal goals. Perhaps he will try to bring amendments that will allow him to transfer power to one of his family members. Maldivians need to take constructive actions to get rid of this regime at whatever cost it involves for the benefit of every single person of the country. Even now Gayyoom does not act on what the existing

constitution dictates to him but it is what he feels "right" at the particular scenario upon which he acts. Hence, we need somebody else to be in charge of bringing the needed changes to the constitution but not Gayyoom or his inner circle members. It is sweet and glorious to die for one's country.

Torturephobia
MLE, K MDV - Tuesday, June 15, 2004 at 23:14:55 (MDT)

I think we must all call for Gayyoom to show his books. He must come out open and tell the people how much he spent for his dream airline "Air Maldives" and how much he paid out of our money to obtain release of Ghassan. Unless he comes out clean, we should reject all his proposals and push him out one way or the other. The only thing he cannot defend is gala life style using our money. After 26 years he has just formed a committee to look into poverty in the islands when he spend over 100,000 rufiyaa a day for his family.

Salma
Wellington, NZ - Sunday, June 13, 2004 at 15:52:49 (MDT)

The only things new about these reforms are that it came from Gayyoom's own mouth and as an address to the International community. But we have heard so many things from him already. According to PO version of Gayyoom's interview with BBC, he still says our constitution is not clear whether to allow political parties or not. The question is not that we are upset with Gayyoom, but the fact that people have lost their trust in him. People won't believe a word he says now. He has fooled us for too long to take his word anymore. He is not going to commit how he is going to do this, instead will drag this pass 2008 elections. Now that he is getting old, he needs a prime minister to work and pay all his debts. Today Maldives is paying over 14% of its revenue to pay its debts. In 2010 we will pay over 30% of our projected

revenue to pay the debts. In 2020 our grand children we will pay over 50% of our revenue to pay for his extravaganza in the 80s and 90s. He has bankrupted our nation.

Sameer (Finance Ministry staff)
Male, Maldives - Sunday, June 13, 2004 at 09:33:05 (MDT)

I am really glade that many people are interested in the political developments in Maldives. Looking at the new changes proposed by the president, I basically have two thoughts. The very first observation is off course that its nothing new. people have been calling for this changes for many years now, but as always Maumoon with his "ultra vision" thought it's all new. The more important and perhaps expected observation is that the changes seems all talk but no action. I mean I was expecting Mr. President to give us a time line in which these changes can occur and how he is going to do it.

In this same tone I would like to ask people who are writing, consider and suggest ways in which some of these changes can be implemented. I guess we already have enough discussions about what changes are need so I am looking forward to read more on how these changes can be achieved.

One final comment to some of the people who are writing in Sandhaanu or other "Political" articles please can you minimise personnel attacks on our president or others, because some times it seems like some of the writers are not really interested in bringing positive changes to Maldives instead it seems like these are people who are pissed of with Maumoon , due to some personnel reason.

So please bring some credibility to political discussions.

Zoom
Perth, Australia - Sunday, June 13, 2004 at 02:18:49 (MDT)

Quote

"If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State."

Joseph Goebbels, German Minister of Propaganda, 1933-1945