



PRESS STATEMENT

Joint Press Statement by Civil Society Organisations in the Maldives regarding International Workers' Day 2016

The peaceful walk to mark the International Workers' Day, organized by civil society organisations will go ahead as planned.

After the rally was publicly announced, the Maldives Police Service notified the public that the planned rally would not be facilitated by the authorities, in contravention of Constitution of the Republic of Maldives 2008, Police Act 2008, and Peaceful Assembly Act 2013.

Article 32 of the Constitution states that everyone has the freedom of peaceful assembly without prior approval of the State. The Police Act 2008, under Article 7, states that when fulfilling police duty and using police powers, law enforcement personnel must act with equality and fairness without any bias. We believe illegally banning this rally prematurely demonstrates a bias, as Maldives Police Service allowed previous May Day rallies. Furthermore, according to the Peaceful Assembly Act 2013, law enforcement authorities are obligated to ensure expression of free speech in a peaceful environment.

We highlight that the decision to ban the planned rally was made in excess of the principles stipulated under the Act that allow police restrictive powers over peaceful assemblies. When restricting rallies, authorities must refer to the specific law and provisions that empower such actions. However, we highlight that the Maldives Police Service made no reference to any legal provision when notifying that the rally would not be allowed to go forward.

We are marking International Workers' Day to highlight the various, multitude of grievances faced by local and foreign workers in the Maldives. We call upon authorities to enable a working environment where workers have a voice, and are able to express their views without intimidation and fear. Additionally, migrant workers and other vulnerable members of society must be given adequate opportunity, time and facilities to defend themselves against criminal proceedings under an efficient criminal justice system. Decisions adjudicated by employment tribunals and courts must be implemented effectively. We would like workers in the Maldives to be granted a living wage to ensure that they live a dignified life. We call upon the authorities and employers to recognise human rights of migrant workers,

and afford them full legal protections prescribed under domestic and international law. All forms of discrimination perpetrated against migrant workers must come to an end in the Maldives.

As mentioned previously, the peaceful walk is to go forward on 1 May 2016, from the Social Centre, between 16:00 to 18:00.

This rally is organised by the 8 civil society organisations mentioned below and the Malé City Council's Women Empowerment Committee.

1. Tourism Employment Association of Maldives (TEAM)
2. Teachers Association of Maldives (TAM)
3. Maldivian Port Workers' Union (MPWU)
4. Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN)
5. Transparency Maldives (TM)
6. Dhi-Youth Movement (DYM)
7. Youth Integrity Network (YIN)
8. Maldives Association for Physical Disabilities (MAPD)

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