

# Malediven: Religionsfreiheit

Schnellrecherche der SFH-Länderanalyse

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# 1 Einleitung

Einer Anfrage an die SFH-Länderanalyse sind die folgenden Fragen entnommen:

- Welche gesetzlichen Grundlagen regeln die Religionsfreiheit auf den Malediven?
- Wird ein Abwenden vom Islam bestraft?
- Welche Religionen gibt es auf den Malediven und wie werden diese in der Gesellschaft toleriert?
- Gibt es dokumentierte Fälle über Personen, die dem Islam öffentlich abgeschworen haben?
- Wie ist die Situation für Christ\_innen?

Die Informationen beruhen auf einer zeitlich begrenzten Recherche (Schnellrecherche) in öffentlich zugänglichen Dokumenten, die der SFH derzeit zur Verfügung stehen, sowie auf den Informationen von sachkundigen Kontaktpersonen.

## 2 Religions- und Meinungsfreiheit

### 2.1 Rechtlicher Rahmen

**Der sunnitische Islam ist die einzige Staatsreligion.** Gemäss der Verfassung sind die Malediven eine auf den Grundsätzen des Islams basierende Republik. Die staatliche Religion ist der sunnitische Islam (USDOS, 15. August 2017). Staatsangehörige haben die Pflicht, die Staatsreligion zu bewahren und zu beschützen. Der Verfassung zufolge erhalten nicht-muslimische Personen die maledivische Staatsbürgerschaft nicht. Nur sunnitisch-muslimische Staatsbürger\_innen können sich an den Wahlen beteiligen (*Freedom House*, Januar 2016).

**Keine Erwähnung der Religionsfreiheit in Verfassung.** Religions- oder Meinungsfreiheit kommen nicht in der maledivischen Verfassung vor (USDOS, August 2017). Diskriminierung «jeglicher Art» wird gemäss der Verfassung zwar verboten, Religion wird allerdings nicht als Grundlage für Diskriminierung erwähnt. Laut Verfassung hat jede\_r das Recht auf Gedankenfreiheit und freie Meinungsäusserung, solange diese nicht gegen die «Grundsätze des Islams» verstösst (USDOS, August 2017).

**Bis zu fünf Jahren Gefängnisstrafe wegen Verstoss gegen die «religiöse Einheit».** Gemäss den gesetzlichen Bestimmungen im «*Religious Unity Act*» von 1994 müssen sowohl die Regierung als auch die Bevölkerung die religiöse Einheit schützen (USDOS, August 2017). Jede Aussage oder Handlung, die gegen dieses Vorhaben verstösst, gilt als kriminelle Straftat. Dies umfasst Diskussionen oder Aktionen zur Förderung religiöser Unterschiede sowie religiöse Predigten, welche die Unabhängigkeit und Souveränität des Landes verletzen oder die Rechte einer spezifischen Gesellschaftsgruppe einschränken. Wer das Gesetz verletzt, kann mit einer Busse von bis zu 20'000 Rufiyaa (zirka 1255 Schweizer Franken,

Wechselkurs vom 31. Mai 2018) oder mit einer Freiheitsstrafe von zwei bis fünf Jahren bestraft werden. Ausländische Personen können des Landes verwiesen werden (USDOS, August 2017).

**Konversion vom Islam zu einer anderen Religion und Missionierung sind nicht erlaubt, die Staatsbürgerschaft kann entzogen werden.** Muslimischen Personen ist der Übertritt zu einer anderen Religion gesetzlich verboten (USDOS, August 2017). Nichteinhaltung wird mit dem Entzug der Staatsbürgerschaft bestraft. Ausserdem können Richter gemäss der *Shari'a*-Rechtsprechung eine härtere Strafe auferlegen. Die Verbreitung einer nicht-islamischen Religion gilt als eine Straftat. Das Bekehren zu einer anderen Konfession innerhalb des Islams sowie das Missionieren bei Muslim\_innen seitens Angehöriger anderer Religionen sind illegal und werden, je nach Ausmass des Verstosses, mit zwei bis fünf Jahren Gefängnisstrafe oder Hausarrest bestraft (USDOS, August 2017).

**Gebetshäuser werden vom Ministerium für Islamische Angelegenheiten kontrolliert.** Muslimische Gebetshäuser stehen unter Kontrolle des Ministeriums für Islamische Angelegenheiten (MIA) (USDOS, August 2017). Das maledivische Gesetz verbietet nicht-muslimischen religiösen Gruppen die Errichtung von Gotteshäusern.

**Neues Gesetz zu Verleumdung und Meinungsfreiheit, welches die Meinungsfreiheit stark einschränkt, wurde im August 2016 verabschiedet.** Am 9. August 2016 verabschiedete das Parlament ein neues Anti-Diffamierungsgesetz («*Anti-Defamation and Freedom of Expression*») (USDOS, 15. August 2017). In diesem Gesetz werden Reden, welche islamische Grundsätze verletzen, mit sozialen Normen brechen oder die nationale Sicherheit gefährden, verboten. Dem neuen Gesetz zufolge ist die Meinungsfreiheit ein Grundrecht, «solange sie mit den Grundlagen des Islams übereinstimmt». Religiöse Predigten oder Bemühungen, den Islam zu unterrichten, müssen den Standards des «*Religious Unity Act*» von 1994 entsprechen. Wenn der Inhalt einer TV- oder Radio-Sendung gegen die Bestimmungen verstösst, kann die Regierung Live-Übertragungen einstellen und den Sendern die Lizenz entziehen. Publikationen und Webseiten, die «diffamierende» Kommentare enthalten, kann ebenfalls die Lizenz entzogen werden (USDOS, 15. August 2017). Der UN-Sonderberichterstatter für das Recht auf freie Meinungsäusserung, *David Kaye*, verurteilte das oben genannte Anti-Diffamierungsgesetz (auch «*Protection of Reputation and Good Name and Freedom of Expression Bill*» genannt) (OHCHR, August 2016). Das Gesetz beschränke das Recht auf freie Meinungsäusserung dermassen, dass dieses Recht selber in Gefahr sei. Dabei sei insbesondere der Gebrauch von Religion als Grundlage zur Einschränkung der freien Meinungsäusserung besorgniserregend (OHCHR, August 2016).

**Im neuen Gesetz sind Bussen und Gefängnisstrafen für Verleumdung verankert.** Gemäss dem im August 2016 verabschiedeten Gesetz wird für Verleumdung sowie für den Verstoss gegen die gesellschaftlichen Normen eine Busse zwischen 50'000 und zwei Millionen Rufiyaa (zwischen zirka 3136 und 125'460 Schweizer Franken, Wechselkurs vom 31. Mai 2018) erhoben (USDOS, August 2017). Wenn jemand die Geldstrafe nicht bezahlen kann, kann eine Gefängnisstrafe von drei bis sechs Monaten verhängt werden. Zeitungen oder Medienbüros können bei Nichtbezahlung der Geldstrafe geschlossen werden. Für das «Brechen mit den Grundsätzen des Islams» gilt gemäss dem neuen Gesetz dieselbe Strafe, welche im bestehenden Strafgesetzbuch auch für das «Kritisieren des Islams» vorgesehen ist. Dies kann mit Gefängnis bis zu einem Jahr bestraft werden. Es betrifft Personen, welche den Islam öffentlich diskreditieren, islamkritisches Material produzieren, verkaufen oder

verteilen, «Götzenbilder» verbreiten, die «religiöse Einheit der Bürger\_innen gefährden» und/oder «religiöse Segregation» verursachen (USDOS, August 2017).

**Shari'a gilt für Fälle, die das Gesetz nicht regelt.** Gemäss Verfassung wird die *Shari'a* beziehungsweise das islamische Gesetz in Fällen, die weder in der Verfassung noch im Gesetz geregelt sind, angewendet (USDOS, August 2017). Für einige Straftaten wie Unzucht wird laut Strafgesetzbuch Auspeitschung vorgeschrieben. Bei Verbrechen, die als *Hadd* (Kapitalverbrechen) oder *Qisas* (Vergeltung) gelten – Mord, Übergriffen, Diebstahl, homosexuellen Handlungen, Ehebruch, Sachschaden, Alkoholkonsum oder Apostasie – können Richter nach eigenem Ermessen *Shari'a*-Strafen auferlegen (siehe auch *UN News*, April 2014).

**Wiedereinführung der Todesstrafe. Kinder ab sieben Jahren können wegen Apostasie zum Tode verurteilt werden.** Der Präsident der Malediven hat laut AI (Februar 2018) die Wiedereinführung der Todesstrafe für Ende September 2018 angekündigt. Die Hinrichtungen würden die ersten nach über 60 Jahren sein. Die neue Verordnung schreibt die Todesstrafe bei vorsätzlicher Tötung vor, in gewissen Fällen können allerdings auch Blasphemie und Apostasie mit der Todesstrafe bestraft werden (*Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture* OMCT, Januar 2018). Dies gilt auch, wenn das Verbrechen von einer minderjährigen Person verübt wurde – in diesem Fall würde die Todesstrafe nach Erreichen der Volljährigkeit vollstreckt (*UN News*, April 2014). Laut AI (Februar 2018) waren mindestens fünf der 17 zum Tod verurteilten Häftlinge minderjährig, als sie die Straftat begangen hatten. Die Strafmündigkeit auf den Malediven liegt bei zehn Jahren, bei einem *Hadd*-Verbrechen können Menschen bereits ab sieben Jahren haftbar gemacht werden (*UN News*, April 2014). Die Sprecherin des OHCHR, *Ravina Shamdasani*, stellt fest, dass gemäss der neuen Verordnung Kinder ab sieben Jahren zum Tode verurteilt werden können (*UN News*, April 2014).

## 2.2 Rolle der Religion in der maledivischen Gesellschaft

**Keine zuverlässigen Schätzungen über die religiöse Zusammensetzung auf den Malediven.** Die Religion der einheimischen Bevölkerung ist offiziell der Islam und die grosse Mehrheit scheint laut USDOS (August 2017) dem sunnitischen Islam anzugehören. Es gibt allerdings keine zuverlässigen Schätzungen über die faktische religiöse Zugehörigkeit der Bevölkerung. Ausländische Arbeitskräfte sind laut USDOS mehrheitlich muslimisch, buddhistisch, hinduistisch und christlich. Einer Studie des in Jordanien ansässigen Forschungsinstituts *Royal Islamic Strategic Research Centre* zufolge war das Land 2010 zu 99.41 Prozent muslimisch (*Royal Islamic Strategic Research Centre*, 28. September 2010). Die christliche Initiative *Joshua Project*, welche die ethnischen Gruppen mit dem geringsten Anteil von Christ\_innen weltweit dokumentiert und bei diesen «*unreached people groups*» missioniert (ohne Datum, Zugriff am 1. März 2018), schätzt den Anteil der Angehörige des Islams auf den Malediven auf 98.2 Prozent. Die Aufteilung der weiteren Religionen wird von derselben Quelle folgendermassen geschätzt: Hinduismus ein Prozent, Buddhismus 0.7 Prozent, andere kleine Religionsgemeinschaften 0.1 Prozent und Angehörige des Christentums auf beinahe null Prozent. Die christliche Organisation *Open Doors* (ohne Datum, Zugriff am 28. Februar 2018) geht von einigen Tausend Christ\_innen auf den Malediven aus.

**Atheismus wird stärker verabscheut als die Konversion zu einer anderen Religion.** Laut Angaben eines *Mitarbeiters der International Humanist and Ethical Union* (IHEU) (E-Mailauskunft vom 9. März 2018 an die SFH) fällt Atheismus in die Kategorie der Apostasie.

Den Einschätzungen der Kontaktperson zufolge würde Atheismus auf den Malediven als «schockierender» und «abscheulicher» eingestuft als ein Übertritt in eine andere Religion wie das Christentum.

**Fortschreitende Islamisierung und zunehmender Fundamentalismus.** Laut Angaben von verschiedenen NGOs gegenüber USDOS (August 2017) ist ein Zuwachs des religiösen Radikalismus und des Fundamentalismus auf den Malediven zu beobachten. Auch die Menschenrechtsorganisation *Human Rights Without Frontiers International* (HRWF) berichtete am 21. Juli 2017 von einer Expansion des radikalen Islams. Zudem seien die Malediven eine Rekrutierungsquelle für die Organisation «Islamischer Staat» (IS): Laut Regierungsangaben waren mindestens 49 Malediver\_innen in den Kampf mit dem IS nach Syrien gereist, eine Studie von 2015 gab eine Anzahl von 200 Personen an (*New York Times*, 23. April 2017). Die Regierung sei «äusserst besorgt» über diese hohen Zahlen (*Straits Times*, März 2016). Zum Vergleich: Die Bevölkerungszahl auf den Malediven lag im Juli 2017 bei ungefähr 392'700 Personen (CIA, 24. April 2018).

**Übergriffe gegen islamkritische Personen.** Wie nachfolgend mit Verweis auf verschiedene Quellen belegt, wurden islamkritische und säkulare Personen in den Malediven in den letzten Jahren regelmässig zum Ziel von gewalttätigen Übergriffen und Drohungen durch unbekannte Dritte.

## 3 Situation für islamkritische Personen

**Zunehmende Gefahr, in der Öffentlichkeit säkulare Ansichten zu vertreten.** Gemäss *Freedom House* (Januar 2016) hat der Zuwachs der konservativen Strömungen des Islams in den vergangenen Jahren zu strengeren Interpretationen der Gesetze sowie zu einer verschärften Rhetorik und gar physischen Übergriffen gegen Angehörige anderer Religionen und gegen Personen mit toleranten Ansichten des Islams geführt. Laut Angaben von *Luke Heslop*, Experte zu Südasien an der *London School of Economics* (E-Mail-Auskunft an die SFH vom 13. März 2018) ist es auf den Malediven zunehmend gefährlich, sich politisch für den Säkularismus einzusetzen oder in der Öffentlichkeit säkulare Ansichten zu vertreten.

### 3.1 Repression und Strafverfolgung von staatlichen Akteuren

**Aussagen von offiziellen Staatsvertretern, dass sie keine anderen Religionen akzeptieren.** An einer politischen Kundgebung der *Progressive Party of Maldives* im Januar 2017 sagte der maledivische Präsident *Abdulla Yameen*, dass er keine anderen Religionen auf den Malediven akzeptiere als der Islam (USDOS, 15. August 2017). Der Minister für Verteidigung und nationale Sicherheit *Adam Shareef Umar* sagte ebenfalls im Januar 2017, dass Wege gefunden werden müssen, um die Malediven als vollständig islamischen Staat zu erhalten (USDOS, 15. August 2017).

Nachdem der Blogger und Menschenrechtsaktivist *Yameen Rasheed* im April 2017 ermordet wurde (siehe dazu Abschnitt 3.2), verurteilte der maledivische Präsident *Abdulla Yameen* die Aktivitäten von *Rasheed* als eine «Verhöhnung des Islams» und sagte dazu: «Das ist was passiert» («*this is how it happens*») (USDOS, 20. April 2018). Aktivist\_innen interpretierten diese Aussage als eine Rechtfertigung von *Yameen Rasheeds* Tod (USDOS, April

2018). Nach dem Mordversuch auf den Blogger *Ismail «Hilath» Rasheed* im Juni 2012 verurteilte die Regierung zwar die Attacke, *Mohamed ‘Mundhu’ Shareef*, der Minister für *Human Resources, Youth and Sport*, sagte allerdings, dass *Hilath* hätte wissen sollen, dass er zur Zielscheibe einiger Extremisten werden würde (*Minivan News*, 2. Juli 2012).

**Strafverfolgung von säkularen und vom Islam abtrünnigen Exil-Malediver\_innen in Abwesenheit.** Gemäss der unabhängigen Zeitung *Maldives Independent* (ehemals *Minivan News*) wurden im Mai 2017 drei im Ausland ansässige «liberale» Blogger von der maledivischen Polizei vorgeladen (*Maldives Independent*, 29. Mai 2017; siehe auch *Muju Naeem*, 29. Mai 2017). Ihnen wurde Strafverfolgung in ihrer Abwesenheit gedroht, falls sie nicht innerhalb von zwei Wochen in die Malediven zurückkehrten. Bei den drei Personen handelt es sich um *Dr. Azra Naseem*, *Muzaffar «Muju» Naeem* und *Hani Amir* (zu *Muzaffar «Muju» Naeem*: siehe Abschnitt 3.2). *Naseem* und *Naeem* sind Blogger und kritisieren die religiöse Radikalisierung, *Amir* ist Umweltwissenschaftler und Künstler. Die Vorwürfe gegen die drei Personen wurden nicht näher angegeben. *Muzaffar «Muju» Naeem* zufolge sei diese Aufforderung Teil einer «Hexenjagd» gegen Säkularisten und religionslose Malediver\_innen. Auch *Hani Amir* sei davon überzeugt, dass die säkularen Ansichten der drei Personen der Grund der Strafverfolgung sei (*Maldives Independent*, 29. Mai 2017).

**Beispiel einer Person, die sich öffentlich als nicht-muslimisch erklärte und im Gefängnis zum Islam «umerzogen» wurde:** *Mohamed Nazim* gab im Mai 2010 im Rahmen einer öffentlichen Fragerunde mit dem islamischen Prediger *Dr. Zakir Naik* an, dass er «maledivisch aber nicht muslimisch» sei (HRWF, Juli 2017). Gemäss *Human Rights Without Frontiers International* (HRWF, Juli 2017) war *Nazim* der erste maledivische Staatsbürger, der öffentlich bekannt gab, kein Muslim zu sein. Die lokale Nichtregierungsorganisation *Islamic Foundation* forderte, ihn mit der Todesstrafe und dem Entzug der Staatsbürgerschaft zu bestrafen, falls er nicht bereue und zum Islam zurückkehre. Laut HRWF war *Mohamed Nazim* fünf Tage im *Dhoonidhoo*-Gefängnis auf einer Insel nahe der Hauptstadt *Malé* inhaftiert und erhielt dort «Beratung» von religiösen Gelehrten, bevor er schliesslich zum Islam zurückkehrte (HRWF, Juli 2017). Das *Dhoonidhoo*-Gefängnis sei für seine Folterpraktiken berüchtigt (*Muju Naeem*, November 2017). Gemäss USDOS (November 2010) hatte Berichten zufolge das Ministerium für Islamische Angelegenheiten (MIA) zwei Gelehrten zu *Nazim* geschickt. Angaben des MIA zufolge kehrte *Nazim* aus eigenem Willen zum Islam zurück (USDOS, November 2010). Gemäss dem Malediven-Experten *Xavier Romero-Frias*, der lange Zeit auf den Malediven gelebt und über die lokale Kultur geforscht hat, ist *Nazim* nicht aus Überzeugung zum Islam zurückgekehrt (E-Mailauskunft vom 11. März 2018 an die SFH). *Luke Heslop*, Experte zu Südasien an der *London School of Economics* zufolge, sind die Umstände von *Nazims* «Umerziehung» unklar (E-Mail-Auskunft vom 13. März 2018 an die SFH).

**Demonstrationen werden unterdrückt, Demonstrierende festgenommen und/oder entlassen.** Gemäss AI (Februar 2018) wurde eine Demonstration zum dritten Jahrestag des Verschwindens des islamkritischen Aktivisten *Ahmed Rilwan* am 8. August 2017 von Spezialeinheiten der Polizei unterdrückt, neun Personen wurden verhaftet. Einige Tage später wurde der Neffe von *Ahmed Rilwan* sowie die Schwester von *Yameen Rasheed* von ihren Stellen als zivile Unterstützungsmitarbeitende bei der maledivischen Polizei entlassen, weil sie sich an der Demonstration beteiligt hatten (AI, Februar 2018).

Bevor er im April 2017 in seiner Wohnung niedergestochen wurde, hatte *Yameen Rasheed* in seinem Blog *The Daily Panic* (29. Juni 2015) berichtet, wie er zusammen mit 200 weiteren Personen an einer Demonstration gegen die Regierung am 1. Mai 2015 in der Hauptstadt Malé verhaftet wurde. Er sei 21 Tage ohne Gerichtsverfahren gefangen gehalten worden, davon fünf Tage in Hausarrest. Zum Zeitpunkt der Veröffentlichung des Blog-Eintrags, beinahe zwei Monate nach den Verhaftungen, befanden sich laut *Rasheed* weiterhin verschiedene Demonstrant\_innen ohne Prozess im Gefängnis.

### 3.2 Übergriffe durch unbekannte Dritte

**Verschiedene Berichte weisen auf Übergriffe, Todesdrohungen und Cybermobbing von Banden und Mobs hin.** USDOS (August 2017) weist auf verschiedene Fälle von säkularen Bloggern hin, die Opfer von Todesdrohungen oder Cybermobbing wurden und von mutmasslichen Bandenmitgliedern («*individuals with records as criminal gang members*») auf der Strasse verfolgt wurden. Die ehemalige maledivische Online-Zeitung *Minivan News* (später zu *Maldives Independent* umbenannt) berichtete am 10. Juni 2014 von einem Regierungsangestellten, der in einem Café in der Hauptstadt Malé von acht Männern angegriffen wurde. Er sei der Homosexualität und des Atheismus beschuldigt worden. *Minivan News* habe ausserdem verschiedene Berichte von Entführungen erhalten, die von einem religiös extremistischen Überwachungsmob («*vigilante mob*») verübt wurden, um Online-Aktivist\_innen, die den Säkularismus oder Atheismus propagieren, zu identifizieren (*Minivan News*, 10. Juni 2014).

**Aktivist\_innen vermuten die Regierung hinter verschiedenen Attacken. Oft ist unklar, ob die Verfolgung politisch oder religiös motiviert ist.** Gemäss dem Mitarbeiter der internationalen Organisation *International Humanist and Ethical Union* (IHEU) wurden Drohungen, Tötungen und Entführungen von nicht-muslimischen Personen dem ersten Anschein nach von extremistischen islamistischen Gruppen durchgeführt (E-Mail-Auskunft vom 9. März 2018 an die SFH). Weil die betroffenen Personen abgesehen von ihren säkularen oder islamkritischen Einstellungen oft gleichzeitig die Regierung kritisieren, spekulierten lokale Aktivist\_innen, dass die maledivische Regierung in diesen Aktionen involviert sei. Weil Staat und Religion auf den Malediven so eng miteinander verwoben seien, sei nicht immer klar ersichtlich, aus welchem Grund jemand ins Visier gerate. Dem Aktivist und Blogger *Ismail «Hilath» Rasheed* zufolge arbeite die Regierung mit islamistischen Extremisten zusammen (*Minivan News*, Juli 2012).

**Tötungen und Übergriffe gegen Personen mit moderaten Ansichten des Islams und Personen, die öffentlich dem Islam abschwören.** Gemäss dem Mitarbeiter der internationalen Organisation *International Humanist and Ethical Union* (IHEU) (E-Mail-Auskunft vom 9. März 2018 an die SFH) werden Personen, die als nicht-muslimisch identifiziert werden, bedroht, entführt oder sogar getötet. Verschiedene Personen, die den Islam kritisieren oder moderate Ansichten des Islams vertreten, wurden getötet oder zu Opfern von Tötungsversuchen. Personen, die sich vom Islam abwendeten, sahen sich wegen Todesdrohungen gezwungen, aus dem Land zu fliehen, eine Person beging Selbstmord.

- *Yameen Rasheed*, ein bekannter maledivischer Menschenrechtsverteidiger, Blogger, Social Media-Aktivist und Koordinator der Kampagne *Find Moyameehaa* zur Auffindung von *Ahmed Rilwan*, wurde am 23. April 2017 in seiner Wohnung in Malé niedergestochen und getötet (AI, Februar 2018; USDOS, 20. April 2018). *Rasheed* hatte



laut *New York Times* (23. April 2017) auf seinem Blog *The Daily Panic* auf satirische Art die maledivische Regierung sowie die Verbreitung des radikalen Islams kritisiert. Vor seinem Tod hatte *Rasheed* verschiedene Todesdrohungen erhalten (USDOS, April 2018).

Nach der Tötung von *Yameen Rasheed* sind verschiedene Journalist\_innen und Social Media-Aktivist\_innen wegen Drohungen einer Inhaftierung seitens der Regierung oder wegen Angst vor Selbstjustiz seitens religiösen Extremisten aus dem Land geflohen (USDOS, 20. April 2018).

- *Shahindha Ismail*, Geschäftsleiterin des *Maldivian Democracy Network* (MDN) und Aktivistin gegen den religiösen Fundamentalismus, wurde Opfer von Todesdrohungen und Schikanen (OMCT, 5. Januar 2018). Im Dezember 2017 hatte sie auf der Kurznachrichtenplattform Twitter auf die Aussage des Präsidenten, dass er keine andere Religion als der Islam erlauben würde, kritisch reagiert. Ausserdem hatte sie die Untätigkeit der Strafverfolgungsbehörden im Zusammenhang mit dem Verschwinden von *Ahmed Rilwan* und der Tötung von *Yameen Rasheed* scharf kritisiert. In zwei Zeitungsartikeln wurde sie der Gotteslästerung beschuldigt und als Apostatin dargestellt.
- *Ahmad Rilwan*, ehemaliger Journalist bei der unabhängigen Zeitung *The Maldives Independent*, hatte über Beziehungen zwischen religiösen Extremisten und kriminellen Banden berichtet und verschwand 2014 unter ungeklärten Umständen (USDOS, August 2017). Vor seinem Verschwinden hatte er Todesdrohungen erhalten, wurde gemobbt und verfolgt. Ungefähr zwei Jahre nach dem Vorfall bestätigte die maledivische Polizei, dass *Rilwan* vor seiner Wohnung mit vorgehaltenem Messer entführt wurde (*Maldives Independent*, 2. April 2016). Die Polizei gehe von einem Zusammenhang zwischen *Rilwans* Verschwinden und der Bande *Kuda Henveiru* aus. Verschiedene Mitglieder dieser Bande waren gemäss der britischen Zeitung *The Guardian* (Februar 2015) nach Syrien gereist, um für die Organisation «Islamischer Staat» zu kämpfen.
- Der Blogger und Aktivist *Muzaffar «Muju» Naeem*, der sich als «ex-muslimischer Atheist» bezeichnet, verfasst auf seinem Blog *Muju Naeem* Beiträge zu verschiedenen Themen inklusive Säkularismus und Extremismus (*Muju Naeem*, November 2017). 2013 verliess er die Malediven aufgrund zunehmender Drohungen und lebt seit 2017 in Kanada (*Muju Naeem*, Januar 2017 und November 2017). Bereits vor seiner Ausreise verfasste *Naeem* online regierungskritische Artikel und war in seinem Heimatland politisch aktiv (*Muju Naeem*, November 2017). Er sei mehrmals von Bandenmitgliedern – welche Verbindungen zu politischen Personen hätten – sowie islamischen Fundamentalisten bedroht worden (*Muju Naeem*, Januar 2017). Die Drohungen reichten von Mord bis hin zu Verschwindenlassen. Selbst sein zehnjähriger Sohn sei bedroht worden. Auch nach seiner Ausreise aus den Malediven erhielt *Naeem* weiterhin Drohungen (*Muju Naeem*, Januar 2017).
- Der gemässigte islamische Gelehrte *Afrashim Ali*, damaliges Mitglied des maledivischen Parlaments, wurde am 2. Oktober 2012 erstochen aufgefunden. Gemäss *Luke Heslop* wurde er spezifisch aus religiösen Gründen umgebracht (E-Mail-Auskunft an die SFH vom 13. März 2018). Laut BBC war *Afrashim Ali* damals der «stärkste Kriti-

ker» des ehemaligen maledivischen Präsidenten *Mohamed Nasheed* (BBC, 2. Oktober 2012). Gemäss Aussagen von Kolleg\_innen und Freund\_innen gegenüber BBC war er einer der wichtigsten Verfechter von moderaten Ansichten auf den Islam. Er habe sich dafür eingesetzt, als muslimisch-gläubige Person Musik hören oder keinen Bart tragen zu dürfen. Laut BBC war der Grund der Tat unbekannt, gemäss *Maldives Independent* (Juni 2016) war die Tat politisch motiviert. Seinen Kritiker\_innen zufolge hatte er seine Befugnisse während seiner Amtszeit überschritten (BBC, Oktober 2012).

- Im Juni 2012 wurde der maledivische LGBTIQ-Aktivist, Blogger und Journalist *Ismail «Hilath» Rasheed* Opfer verschiedener Angriffe und eines versuchten Mordes (*Minivan News*, 2. Juli 2012; *Muju Naeem*, November 2017). *Rasheed* hatte Tabuthemen angesprochen, insbesondere religiöse Toleranz und die verfassungsrechtliche Bestimmung, wonach alle Malediver\_innen sunnitische Muslim\_innen sein müssen. Bei einer Messerattacke, wo ihm die Kehle aufgeschlitzt wurde, kam er beinahe ums Leben. Als *Rasheed* sich unter Narkose im Spital befand, sei eine fremde Person, die sich als *Rasheeds* Vater angegeben hatte, ins Spital gekommen, um ihn zu töten – dies konnte jedoch rechtzeitig aufgedeckt werden. Nach dem Angriff flüchtete er aus Angst um sein Leben aus dem Land. Bereits einige Tage vor der Messerattacke sei er auf der Strasse ins Gesicht geschlagen worden. Ihm wurde mit dem Tod gedroht, falls er nicht öffentlich seine Zugehörigkeit zum Islam bekannt gebe. Bereits vor diesem Vorfall wurde er im Dezember 2011 an einer Demonstration für religiöse Toleranz, die er organisiert hatte, mit Steinen angegriffen und erlitt darauffolgend eine Schädelfraktur. Gemäss *Rasheed* wurden die Attacken von islamischen Fundamentalisten orchestriert (*Minivan News*, 2. Juli 2012).
- Am 13. Juli 2010 erhängte sich *Ismail Mohamed Didi*, ein 25-jähriger Fluglotse, am Kontrollturm des internationalen Flughafens der Malediven, um so der Verfolgung aufgrund von seiner Ablehnung der Religion zu entfliehen (*Minivan News*, 14. Juli 2010). Er hatte in Grossbritannien Asyl beantragen wollen. In zwei E-Mails an eine internationale humanitäre Organisation, die er vor seinem Tod verfasste, habe er sich als Atheist bezeichnet und um Hilfe für sein Asylgesuch gebeten. Auch stand in seinen E-Mails, dass er «dummerweise» seine Einstellung zu Religion gegenüber Arbeitskolleg\_innen zugegeben hatte und sich diese Information «wie ein Lauffeuer» verbreitet habe. Auch hatte er verschiedene anonyme Telefonanrufe erhalten, in denen ihm mit Gewalt gedroht wurde falls er nicht zum Islam zurückkehre.

## 4 Rolle der Justiz, Straflosigkeit

**Untätigkeit der Polizei bei Todesdrohungen oder Einschüchterungen.** Sowohl AI (Februar 2018) als auch die *Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture* (OMCT, 5. Januar 2018) berichten von der Untätigkeit der Polizei bei Todesdrohungen. Opfer von Todesdrohungen, Mobbing und Verfolgungen fühlen sich laut USDOS (August 2017) bedroht, da die Polizei auf ihre Meldungen ungenügend reagiert.

- *Yameen Rasheed*, der im April 2017 ermordet wurde, hatte sich vor seinem Tod mehrmals bei der Polizei über Todesdrohungen beklagt (*New York Times*, 23. April

2017; USDOS, März 2018). Die Polizei habe nicht reagiert und seine Beschwerden ohne weitere Nachprüfung fallengelassen. Später wurden acht Männer im Zusammenhang mit *Rasheeds* Tod verhaftet (USDOS, 20. April 2018). Im August 2017 liess die maledivische Polizei verlauten, eine Gruppe junger Männer habe *Rasheed* getötet, weil diese fanden, dass er den Islam verspottet habe. Die Tötung sei jedoch nicht politisch motiviert gewesen und die Polizei suche nach den verantwortlichen Personen, die den Tötungsauftrag gegeben hätten. Nach dem Tod *Rasheeds* reichte sein Vater eine Zivilklage gegen die Polizei ein. Diese habe *Rasheed* zu Lebzeiten nicht ausreichend geschützt und habe seinen Tod mangelhaft untersucht. Das Zivilgericht erklärte im September 2017 die Klage für ungültig (USDOS, 20. April 2018).

- Auch *Ismail «Hilath» Rasheed* berichtete gegenüber *Minivan News* (2. Juli 2012), dass er Todesdrohungen an die Polizei gemeldet hatte, jedoch ohne Erfolg. Nachdem er an einer Demonstration mit Steinen beworfen wurde, reichte er Fotos des Täters ein, allerdings wurde niemand strafrechtlich verfolgt.
- Im Fall von *Afrashim Ali*, der 2012 erstochen wurde, wurde der Mörder zum Tode verurteilt, die Drahtzieher des Mordes seien jedoch dreieinhalb Jahre nach der Attacke nach wie vor nicht identifiziert (*Maldives Independent*, 23. Juni 2016).

**Mangel an einer unabhängigen Justiz, unfaire Verfahren.** Gemäss AI (Februar 2018) wird die Meinungsfreiheit von politischen Oppositionellen, Menschenrechtsverteidiger\_innen, Journalist\_innen und der Zivilgesellschaft vom Justizsystem eingeschränkt. AI stellt fehlende Unabhängigkeit der Justiz fest. In verschiedenen Fällen von politischen Oppositionellen verletzen die Behörden laut AI das Recht auf ein faires Verfahren. AI zeigt sich besorgt über die Fairness der Verfahren von drei Männern, deren Hinrichtung unmittelbar bevorsteht. Eine dieser drei Personen sei zu einem Geständnis gezwungen worden, welches sie später zurückzog.

**Überfüllte Gefängnisse, mangelhafte hygienische Standards und medizinische Versorgung.** Gemäss USDOS (20. April 2018) entsprachen im Jahr 2017 maledivische Gefängnisse zwar den internationalen Standards, sie sind aber überfüllt und die medizinische Versorgung ist ungenügend. Gemäss *Human Rights Commission of Maldives* dürfen die Gefangenen in den meisten vom *Maldives Correctional Service* und vom *Maldives Police Service* überwachten Gefängnissen ihre Zellen nicht verlassen, ausser wenn sie Besuch empfangen (USDOS, April 2018). In Zellen des Dhoonidhoo-Gefängnis seien die Lüftung und Stromversorgung mangelhaft. Im Maafushi-Gefängnis würden Gefangene ohne Lüftung oder Strom für längere Zeitabschnitte in Einzelhaft gehalten, ausserdem werden ihnen keine Kissen oder Matratzen zur Verfügung gestellt (HRCM, zitiert nach USDOS, April 2018).

## 5 Situation für Christ\_innen

**Laut christlichen Organisationen werden Christ\_innen auf den Malediven verfolgt.** Gemäss der von *Open Doors* zusammengestellten *World Watch List*, eine Rangliste der 50 Länder, wo Christ\_innen am stärksten verfolgt werden, haben die Malediven den 13. Platz inne (ohne Datum, Zugriff am 28. Februar 2018).

**Christ\_innen werden überwacht und werden zu Opfern von Razzien, sie müssen Gottesdienste heimlich durchführen.** Laut *Open Doors* ist es aufgrund der strengen Kontrolle von radikalen islamischen Predigern für christliche Konvertierte unmöglich, ihren Glauben öffentlich zu bezeugen (ohne Datum, Zugriff am 28. Februar 2018). Christliche Migrant\_innen, grösstenteils aus Indien und Sri Lanka, würden streng überwacht. Die meisten von ihnen hätten ihre Treffen eingestellt, weil sie zu viel Aufmerksamkeit der Behörden auf sich lenken würden. Ausländische («*expatriate*») Christ\_innen werden zwar vom Staat anerkannt, können sich jedoch nur in den Botschaften in der Hauptstadt zum Gottesdienst treffen, weil Kirchengebäude und Gottesdienste verboten sind. Christ\_innen, die ausserhalb der Hauptstadt wohnhaft sind, führen ihre Gottesdienste heimlich durch, müssen jedoch mit Polizeirazzien rechnen.

**Unterschiedliche Angaben über die Konsequenzen für Bibelbesitz.** *Open Doors* zufolge führt der Besitz einer Bibel zu einer Gefängnisstrafe (ohne Datum, Zugriff am 28. Februar 2018). *Open Doors* berichtet von Tourist\_innen, die in Probleme gerieten, weil sie eine Kopie der Bibel besaßen. USDOS (August 2017) verweist auf Angaben von Zollbeamten, wonach das Ministerium für Islamische Angelegenheiten (MIA) den Import religiöser Literatur, einschliesslich Bibeln, für den persönlichen Gebrauch erlaubt. Auch erlaube das MIA nach wie vor religiöse Literatur für die wissenschaftliche Forschung. Laut *Human Rights Without Frontiers International* (HRWF, Juli 2017) ist es auf den Malediven illegal, nicht-islamische Bücher oder Schriften in der Öffentlichkeit zu tragen. Auch das Übersetzen von nicht-islamischen religiösen Schriften in die maledivische Sprache Dhivehi sei nicht erlaubt.

**Einfuhr von religiösen Symbolen wird kontrolliert, die Verantwortlichen werden gewarnt. Eine Quelle spricht vom Verbot von nicht-islamischen religiösen Symbolen.** Der Verkauf von religiösen Gegenständen wie Weihnachtskarten wird laut USDOS (August 2017) vom MIA nur den Ferienresort-Inseln gestattet, welche ausländische Tourist\_innen als Stammgäste haben. Laut Angaben der Zollbehörden hatten diese im vergangenen Jahr 18 Fälle in Bezug auf den Import von religiösen Symbolen, darunter ein christliches Kreuz, verzeichnet. Den Zollbehörden zufolge seien alle Fälle zum Zeitpunkt der Veröffentlichung des USDOS-Berichtes abgeschlossen, Warn-Briefe («*letters of caution*») seien an die Ersttäter verschickt worden. HRWF (Juli 2017) zufolge sind die öffentliche Darstellung von nicht-islamischen religiösen Symbolen oder Parolen sowie das «Wecken von Interesse» an solchen Symbolen verboten.

## 6 Quellen

Amnesty International (AI), 22. Februar 2018:

*«The crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly continued. Authorities used the criminal justice system to silence political opponents, as well as human rights defenders, journalists and civil society. **The lack of independence of the judiciary remained a concern. The President reaffirmed that executions would resume after more than 60 years.** (...)*

***Unfair trials***

**The authorities ignored constitutional provisions safeguarding the right to a fair trial, as evidenced by a string of criminal cases against political opponents.** On 18 July, MP Faris Maumoon was arrested during a raid on his house for allegedly bribing law makers to sign the motion of no confidence against the Speaker. He was seeking to cancel the charges, claiming that the evidence was obtained unlawfully.

In April, Qasim Ibrahim, leader of the Jumhooree Party, was sentenced to 38 months' imprisonment after being convicted on charges including plotting to overthrow the government. After repeated requests for medical attention, in September the court granted him permission to travel abroad for treatment.

#### **Freedom of expression**

**In April, popular political blogger and social media activist Yameen Rasheed was stabbed to death in his apartment building in the capital, Malé. The year marked three years since the disappearance of journalist Ahmed Rilwan. By the end of the year, neither of the investigations had resulted in successful prosecutions of perpetrators, and were marred by political interference.**

**In March, journalists from Raajje TV reported to the Maldives Police Service that they had received threats of death if they sent journalists to Faafu Atoll to cover a visit by the King of Saudi Arabia. No additional security was granted by police.** Around the same time, two journalists from the newspaper *Maldives Independent* were taken into "protective custody" by police after receiving threats from members of the ruling party. The journalists claimed that the police read their notes and treated them like suspects.

In July, seven journalists from Sangu TV and Raajje TV were arrested while covering a protest marking Independence Day. They were detained for several hours accused of obstructing police.

#### **Freedom of assembly**

Arbitrary restrictions on peaceful protesters and human rights defenders continued. On 24 July, the military used pepper spray and tear gas to disperse parliamentarians trying to enter the Parliament building. **On 8 August, a march led by relatives and friends of Ahmed Rilwan to mark the third anniversary of his disappearance was blocked by Specialist Operations police officers who used pepper spray, snatched banners, tore up placards and briefly detained nine people. Several days later, Ahmed Rilwan's nephew and Yameen Rasheed's sister were dismissed from their posts as civil support staff at Maldives Police Service for joining the protest.**

#### **Death penalty**

**The government stated that the death penalty was to be implemented "by the end of September". Executions would be the first to be carried out in over 60 years. Three men – Hussain Humaam Ahmed, Ahmed Murrath and Mohamed Nabeel – remained at risk of imminent execution despite serious concerns about the fairness of the legal proceedings. These included the use of an apparently coerced "confession" by Hussain Humaam Ahmed, which he later retracted. The UN Human Rights Committee**

made repeated requests to the government to stay the executions of the three men during 2016 and 2017, in accordance with Maldives' commitments under the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR. **Of the 17 prisoners on death row, at least five were sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were below 18 years of age.** Quelle: Amnesty International (AI): Amnesty International Report 2017/18 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Maldives, 22. Februar 2018: [www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/maldives/report-maldives/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/maldives/report-maldives/).

BBC, 2. Oktober 2012:

**«A member of the Maldives parliament has been stabbed to death near his home.**

*Dr Afrasheem Ali - whose party is a member of the governing coalition in the Indian Ocean archipelago nation - was attacked early on Tuesday.*

*His murder comes at a time of political turmoil. On Monday, the trial of the former president had to be postponed after he defied a court order and left the capital by boat.*

**Police say they are yet to establish a motive for the killing.**

*President Mohamed Waheed called it a "remorseless and foul act" and the president's media secretary sent out a text describing **the murdered MP as the "strongest critic" of ex-President Mohamed Nasheed.***

*Diplomatic sources said, however, that they did not know of any animosity between Mr Nasheed and the victim, reports the BBC's Charles Haviland in Male.*

*The Maldives is deeply politically polarised. Police commissioner Abdullah Riyaz said no-one should blame anyone else, and all should show restraint.*

#### **UN tribute**

*The mood in the capital, Male, has been sombre, our correspondent reports. At the cemetery where Dr Ali was buried, seven members of the military fired shots in his honour in the presence of hundreds of Maldivians.*

*The UN paid tribute to him as an accomplished scholar. **Colleagues and friends said he was a key proponent of moderate stances in Islamic observance, defending the right of believers to enjoy music or not to wear beards,** our correspondent says.*

*Dr Ali was found dead by his wife outside their block of flats, having been stabbed four times in the back of the head and with wounds to his chest and neck.*

*He belonged to the party of another former President, Maumoon Abdul Gayoon, who ruled the Maldives for 30 years from 1978.*

*The United Nations joined politicians from the Maldives in condemning the murder.*

*Mr Nasheed, who defeated Mr Gayoon in the country's first democratic elections, says charges against him relating to alleged abuse of power are politically motivated.*

***His supporters hail him as a reformist moderate but his critics say he overreached his powers while in office.***» Quelle: BBC, Maldives MP stabbed to death outside his home, 2. Oktober 2012: [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-19797538](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-19797538).

CIA, 24. April 2018:

**«Population:**

392,709 (July 2017 est.)» Quelle: CIA, The World Factbook – Maldives, 24. April 2018: [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mv.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mv.html).

Freedom House: 27. Januar 2016:

***«Freedom of religion remains severely restricted. Islam is the state religion, and all citizens are required to be Muslims. Imams must use government-approved sermons. Non-Muslim foreigners are allowed to observe their religions only in private. In recent years, the rise of conservative strands of Islam has led to more rigid interpretations of rules for behavior and dress, particularly for women, as well as an increase in rhetoric—and occasional physical attacks—against other religions and those who espouse more tolerant versions of Islam. (...)***

***The Maldivian constitution and legal framework grant the right to vote and opportunity to contest elections only to Muslim citizens and specifically to adherents of Sunni Islam, thus excluding the Christian minority and other religious groups.***» Quelle: Freedom House: Freedom in the World 2016 - Maldives, 27. Januar 2016: [www.ecoi.net/de/dokument/1320186.html](http://www.ecoi.net/de/dokument/1320186.html).

Human Rights Without Frontiers International (HRWF), 21. Juli 2017:

***«In the last few years, the expansion of radical Islam across the Maldives has been accompanied by the gradual introduction of Sharia law. (...)***

**Protection of Religious Unity Act**

***The Protection of Religious Unity Act of 1994 maintains that “both the government and the citizens of the country must protect the religious unity that they have created”. Despite the 2010 Working Group’s “grave concern” for religious freedom under the religious unity regulations, which enforce the Religious Unity Act, the Maldivian government ratified and published the new draft of the regulations in 2011. The religious unity regulations of the Act make it “illegal in the Maldives to propagate any faith other than Islam or to engage in any effort to convert anyone to any religion other than Islam”. It is also illegal to publically carry or display non-Islamic religious books and writings, and is illegal to translate non-Islamic religious writings into Dhivehi, the Maldivian language. Only the following remain exempt: “articles that disseminate information about various disciplines, intellectual studies carried out, comparative studies between Islam and other religions, description of sayings and expressions about Islam by people of other religions, and dissemination of Muslim expressions on other religions”.***

***Further, it is “illegal to display in public any symbols or slogans belonging to any religion other than Islam, or creating interest in such articles”. This regulation-in addition to***

*the Regulation on the Protection of Religious Unity forbidding the media from publicising material that “humiliates Allah or his prophets or the holy Quran or the Sunnah of the Prophet (Mohamed) or the Islamic faith”-authorised the Maldivian Ministry of Islamic Affairs to block eight websites in 2008 and 2009 “for allegedly publishing anti-Islamic and pro-Christianity content in [] Dhivehi [language]”. (...)*

### **Apostasy Law**

*A major concern to the country is the Islamists’ rising influence. In addition to the constitutional provisions granting equal protection of human rights only to the extent they are compatible with Islam, there has also been talk about fully integrating and implementing Sharia law in the country. Even under current law, however, aspects of Sharia are incorporated into the legal system. **For example, starting at age seven, apostasy is punishable by death.***

***In May 2010, during a public question-and-answer session with Islamic speaker Dr. Zakir Naik, Mohamed Nazim stated that he was “Maldivian and not a Muslim”. Nazim was the first Maldivian to publicly announce he was not a Muslim. The Islamic Foundation, a local religious non-governmental organisation, called for Mohamed Nazim to be stripped of his citizenship and sentenced to death if he did not repent and return to Islam. Nazim’s statement challenged the constitutionality of revocation for renouncing the Muslim faith. The 2008 Maldivian Constitution states that anyone who was a Maldivian citizen at the commencement of the Constitution is a citizen of the Maldives. It also states that “[n]o citizen of the Maldives may be deprived of citizenship”. Thus, Maldives’ adherence to Sharia law, which punishes apostasy with revocation of citizenship, is contradictory to the Maldivian Constitution. Nazim said, “When I did what I did, legally I was absolutely convinced that there was no way I could not be a Maldivian”.***

***Ultimately, Nazim re-embraced Islam, after being detained for five days at the Dhoonidhoo prison where he received counseling from religious scholars. He said, however, “[t]he extremism that was taking hold in the Maldives was increasing so rapidly. . . . I needed to speak about it”. Nazim stated that “[s]omebody had to do it, it needed to be spoken about. The repression of thought, the lack of debate and a lack of a proper public sphere in which such discussion can take place, is dangerous”.***» Quelle: Human Rights Without Frontiers International (HRWF), Religious Freedom in the Maldives: Present and Future Challenges, 21. Juli 2017: <http://hrwf.eu/religious-freedom-in-the-maldives-present-and-future-challenges/>.



Joshua Project, ohne Datum (Zugriff am 1. März 2018):

RELIGIONS ▲	Percent
Buddhism	0.7 %
Christianity (Evangelical 0.0 %)	0.0 %
Ethnic Religions	0.0 %
Hinduism	1.0 %
Islam	98.2 %
Non-Religious	0.0 %
Other / Small Religions	0.1 %
Unknown	0.0 %

«Notes:

**Major Religions:** Religion percentages are derived from summing Joshua Project's data for all people groups who live in each country. The number of individuals who practice each religion, by people group, are summed. This number is divided by the country's total population to derive the religion's percentage.» Quelle: Joshua Project, Country: Maldives, Religion, ohne Datum (Zugriff am 1. März 2018): <https://joshuaproject.net/countries/MV>.

Maldives Independent, 29. Mai 2017:

**«The Maldives Police Service has summoned three liberal bloggers living overseas and threatened to seek prosecution in absentia if they fail to return to the Maldives within two weeks.**

**The MPS told Dr Azra Naseem, Muzaffar 'Muju' Naeem, and Hani Amir** via separate press releases posted on Twitter today to present themselves to speak in their defence against unspecified allegations.

The police will ask the Prosecutor General's office to press charges and try them in absentia if they refuse, the statements warned.

The police spokesman declined to provide any details about the charges.

Dr Azra Naseem, 45, works as a research fellow at the Dublin City University in Ireland. **She is the author of Dhivehi Sitee, a site presenting critiques of Maldivian society and politics with a special focus on "the religious radicalisation of people and the actors and actions that make possible the ongoing regressions in the Maldivian people's right to a self-governed life of dignity and liberty."**

Muju Naeem, 37, who describes himself as an activist for secularism, has been living in self-imposed exile at an undisclosed location. **Hani Amir, 27, an environmentalist, artist and photographer, is studying in Australia.**

*“I really have no idea what the summons are about. I have not done anything illegal,” Dr Naseem told the Maldives Independent.*

*“As far as what to do next, I really don’t know yet. The press release requires me to present myself at the police station in Malé within 14 days. I know for certain that I will not be able to do that. **I have been living in Dublin, Ireland since 1998.**”*

*“I have a life here, a family, and commitments that I cannot just abandon to respond to a summons which does not even tell me why I am required, what they want to question me about. I am not rich. I don’t have the financial means to buy a ticket to travel to the Maldives just like that. Even if I did, why should I drop everything and travel half way across the world to satisfy the unspecified whims of a police force that are known to knowingly act against the constitution of the Maldives?”*

**Muju Naeem called the summon part of “an ongoing witch hunt for secularists” and suggested that it was prompted by Majority Leader Ahmed Nihan’s call for *legal action against secular or irreligious Maldivians.***

*The parliamentary group leader of the Progressive Party of Maldives was reported as saying at a ruling coalition rally last Tuesday that Maldivians who insult Islam should be prosecuted and punished to the fullest extent of the law.*

*“This so-called ‘irreligiosity’ has been used in the past also to silence calls for universal human rights and civil rights in the country,” said Naeem.*

*“It’s a tool frequently used to silence ongoing violations of human rights and the bastardization of democracy in the country. I do not intend to hand myself into the police for whatever investigation they are conducting. It’s pretty clear at this point, this is persecution based on my beliefs.”*

**Hani Amir also believes the three were targeted “because we promote secularism.”»**

Quelle: Maldives Independent, Police summons issued to liberal bloggers with threat of trial in absentia, 29. Mai 2017: <http://maldivesindependent.com/society/police-summons-issued-to-liberal-bloggers-with-threat-of-trial-in-absentia-130891>.

Maldives Independent, 23. Juni 2016:

«Family members of a murdered MP have asked the supreme court to delay the death penalty for the 22-year-old man convicted of killing him. (...)

**The police said the murder was premeditated and politically motivated. But three and a half years on, the masterminds behind the killing have not been identified.»** Quelle: Maldives Independent, Family of murdered MP asks supreme court to delay death penalty for killer, 23. Juni 2016: <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/family-of-murdered-mp-petitions-supreme-court-to-delay-death-penalty-for-killer-124985>.

Maldives Independent, 2. April 2016:

*«The Maldives police say they have established links between the disappearance of The Maldives Independent reporter Ahmed Rilwan and an abduction reported outside his apartment on August 8, 2014, some 600 days ago.*

**Chief Inspector Abdulla Satheeh confirmed today allegations made by human rights NGO, the Maldivian Democracy Network, in a 2014 comprehensive report into Rilwan's disappearance, and said that members of Malé's Kuda Henveiru gang had followed Rilwan for over two hours on the night he went missing.**

**The police now believe Rilwan was abducted at knifepoint outside his apartment and taken into a red car that belongs to Aalif Rauf, a senior member of Kuda Henveiru, Satheeh said.**

*DNA analysis of hairs lifted from the trunk of Aalif's car matched that of Rilwan's mother, Satheeh said.»* Quelle: Maldives Independent, Rilwan was abducted, confirms police, 2. April 2016: <http://maldivesindependent.com/crime-2/rilwan-was-abducted-after-hostile-surveillance-police-confirm-123185>.

Minivan News, 10. Juni 2014:

**«Government employee, Adam Ghafoor\*, was attacked on Sunday in a Malé cafe by a group of eight men accusing him and his friends of homosexuality and atheism.**

*'You homosexual atheists are destroying our country – we will not stand back and watch you do it,' Adam reported the group as saying.*

*After being accused of being atheists, Adam asked the men to leave, prompting his interrogators to launch an attack – raining blows on him as onlookers watched without offering assistance.*

**Details of this attack follow further reports received by Minivan News today of abductions made by a vigilante mob attempting to identify online activists advocating secularism or professing atheism.»** Quelle: Minivan News, Perceived atheists and homosexuals targetted as campaign of attacks continues, 10. Juni 2014: <https://minivannewsarchive.com/politics/perceived-atheists-and-homosexuals-targetted-as-campaign-of-attacks-continues-86753>.

Minivan News, 2. Juli 2012:

**«Ismail 'Hilath' Rasheed got out his mobile phone and called for a taxi, but no sound came from his throat.**

**Instead the Maldivian blogger, journalist and former Amnesty prisoner of conscience, infamous for his willingness to tackle taboo subjects, particularly religious tolerance – felt air escaping from his neck.**

*“A very bad kind of panic came at that moment. I knew my trachea was cut. I knew it was a deep cut, and not just on the surface of the skin,” the journalist told Minivan News, **prior to fleeing his own country in fear of his life.***

*Moments before, on the **evening of June 4**, Rasheed had turned into the dark alleyway leading to the door of his apartment block to find a man in a yellow shirt waiting for him. (...)*

*“My father later told me that I happened to go into the hospital when the new shift was coming in All the old shift doctors stayed on – there were 6-8 of them. **My father said at that moment they told him that I had a less than one percent chance of survival**, but that they would try everything they could.” (...)*

*“**While I was under anesthetic, I was told by a friend of a friend – a gang member – that someone had been sent into the hospital to kill me – to pull the plug.** Nobody would have noticed,” Rasheed says.*

*“**This bearded guy came into the Intensive Care Unit posing as my father. While he was near me a doctor who knew my father just happened to come into the ICU. The doctor was suspicious, and asked him who he was – he said he was my father. The doctor said ‘I know Hilath’s father, you are not his father,’ and called security to have him thrown out. He’s on the hospital’s CCTV footage.**” (...)*

*Rasheed has no doubt in his mind as to the motivation behind his attack – the third in just a few months. The attack was unusual in that most of the wave of recent gang stabbings in the Maldives have involved multiple stab wounds to different parts of the body – targeted throat slashing is new. (...)*

*“**Ever since I reported the story on my blog I have received death threats.** Things like: ‘If we see you on street we will slash your throat’, ‘we will behead you’, ‘don’t walk in a dark alley,’ things like that,” says Rasheed.*

*One of only several Maldivian bloggers to write under his own name, **Rasheed courted controversy by continuing to tackle taboo subjects in the Maldives – particularly religious intolerance, and the constitutional provision that all Maldivians were required to be ‘100 percent Sunni Muslim’.** This was at odds, Rasheed argued, with the country’s Sufi history and new-found commitment to freedom of expression – which had ironically, he argued, also given a voice to more extreme interpretations of the religion.*

***The attitude of many to Rasheed’s work was summarised in comments made by spokesperson for former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and newly-appointed Minister for Human Resources, Mohamed ‘Mundhu’ Shareef, who told AFP following the attempt on the blogger’s life that while the government condemned the attack, “Hilath must have known that he had become a target of a few extremists.”***

*“We are not a secular country. When you talk about religion there will always be a few people who do not agree,” Shareef said.*

*Both the administrations of Nasheed and Waheed showed little interest in prosecuting those who threatened and attacked Rasheed – regardless of the number of photos and witnesses.*

***“I reported the threats to police. In fact an intelligence officer met me after the concubine story. Nothing came of it. The man who attacked me with the stone on December 10 – there were photos of him, I gave his identity and everything. Police never arrested him, and as far as I know he’s still roaming free around Male.”***

*Police are investigating the latest attack on Rasheed, but despite claiming to have access to CCTV footage of the area, no arrests had been made at time of press. Police Sub-Inspector Hassan Haneef told Minivan News that while the investigation was proceeding, the case was “sensitive”.*

*The reason for that, Rasheed says, “is very obvious.”*

***“This coup government is collaborating with Islamic extremists. The extremists together with the Adhaalath party are now in power. I don’t think they will arrest my three attackers, even this time, and I don’t think I will get justice as long as Waheed’s coup government is in power,” the blogger says.***

*Days before the attempt on his life, Rasheed and a friend were passing the Furqan mosque in Male’ on their way to the swimming tracks. Six members of the same gang who attacked him on December 10 – who were inside setting up a sermon – came out and began punching him in the face.*

***“They cornered me, and pushed me into the wall. And started punching my face. As they were punching me I told them I had repented and was a Muslim. One of them said: ‘We don’t know that. You have to make a public announcement that you are a Muslim. Otherwise we will kill you.’” (...)***

***“People linked to these groups hit him with stones in December 2011, fracturing his skull, because he had arranged a rally to call for religious tolerance. Although that attack took place in front of onlookers and there is photographic evidence that can be used to identify the attackers, no one has yet been brought to justice for that attack,” Amnesty said.***

*For his part, **Rasheed is no longer in the Maldives and has said he has no specific plans to return.***» Quelle: Minivan News, Slashed journalist claims attack was targeted assassination by Islamic radicals, 2. Juli 2012: <https://minivannewsarchive.com/society/slashed-journalist-claims-attack-was-targeted-assassination-by-islamic-radicals-40078>.

Minivan News, 14. Juli 2010:

***«Hanged air traffic controller sought asylum for fear of religious persecution***

***Ismail Mohamed Didi, the 25 year-old air traffic controller who was found hanged from the control tower of Male International Airport at 4:00am on Tuesday morning in an apparent suicide, was seeking asylum in the UK for fear of persecution over his lack of religious belief.***

*Islamic website Raajjeislam reported yesterday that Ismail “was a person inclined to atheism” and had “declared his atheism to his friends.”*

*The website alleged that Ismail had refused to follow religious sermons.*

*“This is an issue that a Muslim government should consider,” the website said. “Because when these types of people die, they are buried in the same [cemetery] where Muslims are buried. Their funeral prayers and body washing are also conducted as for Muslims. It is questionable as to whether this is allowed according to Islam.”*

**Over two emails sent to an international humanitarian organisation on June 23 and 25, obtained by Minivan News, Ismail admits he is an atheist and desperately requests assistance for his asylum application, after claiming to have received several anonymous threats on June 22.**

**In the emails, he says he “foolishly admitted my stance on religion” to work colleagues, word of which had “spread like wildfire.”**

*“A lot of my close friends and girlfriend have been prohibited from seeing me by their parents. I have even received a couple of anonymous phone calls threatening violence if I do not repent and start practising Islam,” he said.» Quelle: Minivan News, Hanged air traffic controller sought asylum for fear of religious persecution, 14. Juli 2010: <https://minivannewsarchive.com/society/hanged-air-traffic-controller-sought-asylum-for-fear-of-religious-persecution-9381>.*

Muju Naeem, 22. November 2017:

*«An essential element of my story is that **I am an ex-Muslim atheist**. In the language of Islam, an apostate. My leaving of Islam wasn't a decision made lightly nor was it made in ignorance of what some have argued with me was the lack of my understanding of what “true Islam” is. (...)*

*After some intense questioning at the police station, I was then transferred to another prison on the same day. I spent eleven days in solitary confinement again, this time in **Dhoonidhoo Prison, well known and notorious for torture**. (...)*

**The same year I would start a news website called Dhivehi Observer. It was my first entry into the Maldivian political landscape. (...)**

*In the middle of 2012, Hilath Rasheed, by now a close friend, was attacked by Islamist thugs, and his throat was slashed with a box cutter while outside his home in the capital. He was also a journalist and a blogger. **Being gay himself, he was also one of the very first LGBTQ activists in the country**. Miraculously he survived the attack. Emotionally and mentally he would never recover, and Hilath would later retire from public life. He disappeared without being in touch with anyone in our activist community. (...)*

**However, whenever I was back in Male' during weekends or for any other reason, I would still end up joining the protests – staying away from politics as I had originally intended was next to impossible. (...)**

*After launching Secular Maldives, realizing that the Maldives was no longer safe for me I quietly relocated myself to Kuala Lumpur in January 2013. (...)*

*Early in June, our refugee application was granted by the UNHCR in record time – two months since the application was made. Our case file first went to the Americans, which*

*promptly bounced because of President Trump's refugee ban. Then it was passed over to the Canadian embassy in Colombo. We had two meetings with the embassy. The first meeting was for an interview which lasted for 3 hours. We were informed after the interview that we were being placed in the federal government's Urgent Protection Program and being resettled in Vancouver. The second meeting was to get our passport stamped with a Temporary Resident Pass. After an anxiety-laden airport process with the International Organization for Migration officials (they take care of refugee transit on behalf of the UNHCR) **we landed in Vancouver on June 22 of this year. From application to resettlement it all happened just under 3 months.***

***This week, we became permanent residents of Canada.***» Quelle: Muju Naeem, 22. November 2017: <https://mujunaem.wordpress.com/2017/11/22/from-islam-to-atheism-and-a-struggle-for-democracy-and-secularism-in-the-maldives-talk-at-bcha/>.

Muju Naeem, 29. Mai 2017:

*«Maldives Police Service issue arrest warrant for me after podcast*

*May 29, 2017 · by Muju Naeem*

*After my appearance on a podcast with "The Secular Jihadists of the Middle East", the Maldives police service issue an arrest warrant for me. (...)*

***The text of the warrant reads;***

*"Muzaffar Mohamed Naeem (age 37) of M. Velidhooge, K. Male' is wanted for an investigation the Maldives Police Service is carrying out.*

*Since we have information that Muzaffar Mohamed Naeem is currently living abroad, he is asked to present himself to the Maldives Police Service within 14 days to respond in his defense to accusations against him in our investigation.*

*If Muzaffar Mohamed Naeem doesn't present himself to Maldives Police Service within these 14 days, we will be forwarding evidence against him in our investigation to the Prosecutor General of the Maldives to proceed with prosecution in his absentia. This notice has been issued to inform Muzaffar Mubeen Naeem of this matter.»* Quelle: Muju Naeem, Maldives Police Service issue arrest warrant for me after podcast, 29. Mai 2017: <https://mujunaem.wordpress.com/2017/05/29/maldives-police-service-issue-arrest-warrant-for-me-after-podcast/>.

Muju Naeem, 3. Januar 2017:

***«Ever since I have been an activist, I have attracted various forms of threats. The threats were being made by both gang members (sometimes connected with political figures) and Islamists in the country. These threats vary from murder, stabbing, hacking, being stoned, thrown off buildings and enforced disappearance. There was at least one time when my 10 year old son was threatened. (...)***

***It is because of these threats, I left my home country in January 2013. Today I currently reside at an undisclosed East Asian country in self exile. While leaving my home country***

*hasn't reduced the amount of threats I have received, but it certainly has helped my anxieties. I no longer watch over my back when I leave the house.»* Quelle: Muju Naeem, All threats will be documented and made public – #FikuryIngilaab, 3. Januar 2017, <https://mujunaem.wordpress.com/2017/01/03/all-threats-will-be-documented-and-made-public/>.

New York Times, 23. April 2017:

**«A liberal blogger who wrote satirical critiques of the Maldivian government and the spread of radical Islam died Sunday after being stabbed in the stairway of his apartment building.**

**The blogger, Yameen Rasheed, 29, had complained repeatedly to the police about receiving death threats, he said in an interview with The New York Times this year, adding that the police often failed to return his calls or dropped his complaints without investigation.**

*“In my case, I get multiple kinds of death threats from different people, because I write and do the campaign,” he said. Mr. Rasheed was a coordinator of a campaign to find his friend Ahmed Rilwan Abdulla, a journalist for The Maldives Independent who was abducted in 2014.*

*The police said that Mr. Rasheed was found with multiple stab wounds in his apartment building in the capital, Malé, shortly before 3 a.m. He was rushed to Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital and died soon after.*

*The Republic of Maldives, a nation of nearly 1,200 islands southwest of India, is best known as a spectacular vacation destination. But the country, with fewer than 400,000 people, has also become a **source of recruits for the Islamic State. The government said at least 49 Maldivians had traveled to Syria to fight with the group, also known as ISIS; a 2015 study by an international security firm said the number was about 200.***

*The population, which is predominantly Sunni Muslim, has traditionally been liberal in its interpretation of Islam, with women rarely covering their heads. But a more conservative strain of Islam has spread in recent years under the increasing influence of Saudi Arabia, which sends religious leaders to the Maldives and offers scholarships to Maldivian students to study at Saudi universities.*

*A spokeswoman for the hospital, Zeenath Ali Habeeb, said Mr. Rasheed had been brought in at 3:15 a.m. with multiple stab wounds, having lost a lot of blood. He was unconscious and had a very weak pulse, she said, and he died while being treated.*

*His father, Hussain Rasheed, told the local news media that his son had been stabbed 16 times in the chest, neck and head.*

**Mr. Rasheed was best known for satirical Twitter posts and weekly posts on his popular blog, The Daily Panic, which riffed on the week's headlines, often criticizing the government's use of religion to appeal to the public.**



**He was also a coordinator of the Find Moyameehaa campaign, which was started after Mr. Abdulla was abducted almost three years ago.»** Quelle: New York Times, Outspoken Maldives Blogger Who Challenged Radical Islamists Is Killed, 23. April 2017: [www.nytimes.com/2017/04/23/world/asia/yameen-rasheed-dead-maldives-blogger-dead.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/23/world/asia/yameen-rasheed-dead-maldives-blogger-dead.html).

Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), 10. August 2016:

**«The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, David Kaye, deplored the adoption on 9 August of the “Protection of Reputation and Good Name and Freedom of Expression Bill” by Parliament in the Maldives, warning that it limits the right to freedom of expression to such a degree that the right itself is in jeopardy. (...)**

**“The use of religion as a ground for limiting free speech is particularly worrying. International human rights law protects individuals from discrimination and violence based on their religion or belief, but it does not protect from comment or criticism religion or belief as such,” Mr. Kaye noted. “Moreover, limitations on expression based on morals cannot be derived exclusively from a single tradition or religion.”»** Quelle: Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), Bill’s adoption threatens freedom of expression in the Maldives, UN expert warns, 10. August 2016: [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20359&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20359&LangID=E).

Open Doors, ohne Datum (Zugriff am 28. Februar 2018):

- **«Leader: President Abdulla Yameen**
- **Population: 376,000 (A few thousand Christians)**
- **Main Religion: Islam**
- **World Watch List Rank: 13**

**All citizens are expected to be Muslims and these close-knit homogeneous island communities act as natural watchdogs for any deviation from this.**

**Conversion can lead to being reported to Muslim leaders or authorities. Radical Islamic clerics exert strong control, making it impossible for converts to show their faith in any way. Migrant Christians (from India and Sri Lanka) are strictly monitored, too. Reportedly, most have ceased meeting, since it was drawing too much attention from the authorities.**

#### **PERSECUTION IN MALDIVES**

**The government sees itself as the protector of Islam, and the judicial system increasingly reflects Sharia (Islamic law); the death penalty has been introduced as punishment for murder, even for children, and a law banning marital rape was vetoed by the president as 'un-Islamic'. Converting to another religion means losing your citizenship, and **being found to own a Bible would result in a prison sentence.****

**While the state does recognise expatriate Christians, church gatherings and buildings are banned, so they are only able to meet in embassies in the capital. Those who live**

**outside the capital sometimes meet in secret for worship, but these meetings are prone to police raids. Even tourists have reported getting into trouble for having a personal copy of the Bible.»** Quelle: Open Doors, Maldives, ohne Datum (Zugriff am 28. Februar 2018): [www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/countries/maldives/](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/countries/maldives/).

Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture (OMCT), 5. Januar 2018:

**«Description of the situation: The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about death threats and harassment against Ms. Shahindha Ismail, Executive Director of the Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN).**

*According to the information received, Ms. Shahindha Ismail has received several death threats that were posted on anonymous accounts on Twitter and Facebook, following the publication of news articles on the Vaguthu Online newspaper on December 28, 2017 over an alleged anti-Islamic tweet posted by Ms. Ismail on December 21, 2017. Ms. Ismail tweeted in response to President Yameen Abdul Gayoom's statement that he would not allow for any religion but Islam. Ms. Ismail's tweet read: "Religions other than Islam exist in this world because Allah allowed for it. No other religion would exist otherwise, is it not?". The articles published accused her of blasphemy and branded her an apostate, two crimes that carry serious legal penalties in Maldives, including the death penalty in some cases. Death threats were also made through comments posted in response to the Vaguthu Online articles.*

*Moreover, on December 28, 2017, the Maldives police announced that they had launched an investigation against Ms. Shahindha Ismail under the Religious Unity Act, which carries a five-year jail term, in relation to the above-mentioned Twitter post. Shortly before the launching of the investigation, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs had issued a statement calling for anti-Islamic speech to be put to an end. On the other hand, no investigation was carried out into the threats and acts of intimidation against Ms. Ismail.*

*The Observatory fears that Ms. Shahindha Ismail is being targeted because of her criticism of President Yameen Abdul Gayoom's human rights record. **In particular, Ms. Ismail is a strong advocate against religious fundamentalism in Maldives and has been a vocal critic of law enforcement agencies' inaction and impunity regarding the ongoing disappearance of journalist Ahmed Rilwan and the murder of Mr. Yameen Rasheed, a human rights activist and blogger in Maldives.***

*The Observatory strongly condemns the above-mentioned death threats and harassment against Ms. Shahindha Ismail and urges the authorities of Maldives to guarantee in all circumstances her physical and psychological integrity.»* Quelle: Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture (OMCT), Urgent: Death Threats and harassment in the Maldives, 5. Januar 2018: [www.refworld.org/docid/5a6791f97.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/5a6791f97.html).

Royal Islamic Strategic Research Centre (RISSC), 28. September 2010:

**«The Royal Islamic Strategic Research Centre (RISSC)'s report into the global state of Islam has described the Maldives as a 99.41 percent Muslim country.**

**RISSC is an independent research entity affiliated with the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, an international Islamic non-governmental institute headquartered in the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.**» Quelle: Royal Islamic Strategic Research Centre (RISSC), Maldives a 99.41 percent Muslim country, claims RISSC report, 28. September 2010: <http://rissc.jo/maldives-a-9941-percent-muslim-country-claims-rissc-report/>.

Straits Times, 14. März 2016:

**«New Delhi (AFP) - The Maldives government is "extremely worried" about the number of nationals from the tiny troubled honeymoon islands joining the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group, a top official said on Monday (Mar 14).**

**Maldives foreign secretary Ali Naseer Mohamed said as many as 40 people have travelled to the Middle East from the Indian Ocean archipelago, which has a population of just 350,000 - mainly Sunni Muslims.**

**"It is a big concern for us, it is a social concern, it's a security concern and we are extremely worried about it," the country's top diplomatic official told reporters in New Delhi.**» Quelle: Straits Times, Maldives 'extremely worried' about ISIS recruitment: Official, 14. März 2016: [www.straitstimes.com/asia/south-asia/maldives-extremely-worried-about-isis-recruitment-official](http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/south-asia/maldives-extremely-worried-about-isis-recruitment-official).

The Daily Panic, 29. Juni 2015:

**«1st May 2015 saw the largest anti-government protests in Maldivian history, with nearly 20,000 protesters filling the main thoroughfare in Malé. It also saw the largest police crackdown in over a decade, with nearly 200 democratic protesters arrested. I was among those arrested, and was held captive for 21 days, including 5 days of house arrest, without trial. Nearly two months later, several protesters continue to remain in prison without trial.**» Quelle: The Daily Panic, Dhoonidhoo Diaries: Part 1 – Arrest and Incarceration, 29. Juni 2015: <http://thedailypanic.com/2015/06/dhoonidhoo-diaries-part-1-arrest-and-incarceration/>.

The Guardian, 26. Februar 2015:

**«More than a dozen members of the Kuda Henveiru gang, named after the neighbourhood where it is based, are reported to have left for Syria last month. Among them are two men detained in connection with the abduction of Rilwan. Others who travelled in January have a range of charges outstanding against them or have previous convictions for trafficking, assault and murder. At least one has also been linked to the murder of the cleric in 2012, though never charged.**

**The story of the gang is an example of the effect the Isis caliphate and the war in Syria has had thousands of miles away, intersecting with local conditions and small group dynamics to reinforce a resurgence of extremism across the Muslim world.**» Quelle: The Guardian, Paradise jihadis: Maldives sees surge in young Muslims leaving for Syria, 26. Februar 2015: [www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/26/paradise-jihadis-maldives-islamic-extremism-syria](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/26/paradise-jihadis-maldives-islamic-extremism-syria).

UN News, 29. April 2014:

«The United Nations human rights office today voiced deep concern about a new regulation in the Maldives that effectively overturns a 60-year moratorium on the use of capital punishment in the country and **allows for children as young as seven to be sentenced to death for certain crimes.**

“We urge the Government to retain its moratorium on the use of the death penalty in all circumstances, particularly in cases that involve juvenile offenders and to work towards abolishing the practice altogether,” said **Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).**

“We equally encourage the Government to repeal the new regulations and other provisions that provide for the death penalty,” she told reporters in Geneva.

**Adopted on 27 April, the new regulation provides for the use of the death penalty for the offence of intentional murder, including when committed by individuals under the age of 18. The age of criminal responsibility in the Maldives is 10, but for hadd offences, children as young as 7 years old can be held responsible. Hadd offences include theft, fornication, adultery, consumption of alcohol, and apostasy.**

**Ms. Shamdasani noted that the new regulation means that children as young as 7 can now be sentenced to death.**

“According to the new regulation, minors convicted of intentional murder shall be executed once they turn 18. Similar provisions in the recently ratified Penal Code, allowing for the application of the death penalty for crimes committed when below the age of 18, are also deeply regrettable,” she said.

Under international law, those who are charged and convicted for offences they have committed while they were under 18 years of age should not be sentenced to death or life imprisonment without possibility of release, the spokesperson added.

Further, international human rights treaties, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Maldives has ratified, impose an absolute ban on the death sentence against persons below the age of 18 at the time when the offence was committed.» Quelle: UN News, Maldives should repeal new regulation providing for death penalty, says UN rights office, 29. April 2014: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/04/467162-maldives-should-repeal-new-regulation-providing-death-penalty-says-un-rights>.

US Department of State (USDOS): 20. April 2018:

«According to the Human Rights Commission of Maldives’s (HRCM) fourth annual antitorture report released during the year, the Maldives Police Service (MPS) was accused in 17 of the 30 cases of torture submitted to the commission between July 2016 and June 2017. The Maldives Correctional Service (MCS) was accused in 13 cases. In six of the cases alleging police torture, the victims were under the age of 18. The HRCM closed investigations in 29 of the 30 cases and found evidence of torture in one case, which was forwarded to the Prosecutor General’s Office and was in trial as of November. **There were several allegations of po-**

**lice brutality from journalists and opposition protesters, who were routinely arrested during antigovernment protests.** In July independent Raajje TV said one of its reporters arrested while covering an antigovernment rally was kicked by police, following which the International Federation of Journalists in a statement condemned the police for “roughing up” journalists carrying out their professional duty.

Government regulation permits flogging as a form of punishment. The government did not release the statistics on flogging punishments for the year. According to a 2014 Supreme Court guideline, the court must delay the execution of a flogging sentence on minors until they reach the age of 18.

### **Prison and Detention Center Conditions**

**Although overcrowded and lacking adequate medical care, prisons generally met most international standards. (...)**

In February independent MP Ahmed Mahloof, who was serving an 11-month prison term, expressed concerns about prisoners being denied access to medical care, poor quality of food served to prisoners, and harsh detention conditions. **The HRCM reported conditions varied across detention facilities. In most of the facilities overseen by the MCS and MPS, the HRCM reported detainees were not allowed to leave their cells except for visitation. In Male Prison and the maximum security unit of Maafushi Prison, detainees had reportedly not been allowed outside to exercise for more than a year. The HRCM reported poor ventilation and lack of electricity in cells at Dhoonidhoo Custodial Center. Solitary confinement was practiced at Maafushi Prisons in specialized cells without ventilation or electricity. Although inmates were not held in solitary for extended periods of time, they were not provided a mattress or pillow to sleep on. (...)**

### **Political Prisoners and Detainees**

The government asserted there were no political prisoners; however, the opposition, international and domestic NGOs, and members of the international community estimated there were at least four political prisoners and likely many more. The political prisoners identified by these groups were convicted of terrorism, weapons smuggling, or bribery charges. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN officials were allowed access to these prisoners on scheduled visits and upon request.

Former president Mohamed Nasheed, who was leader of the opposition Maldivian Democratic Party and ran against President Yameen during the 2013 presidential election, was subjected to a rushed trial in 2015 on terrorism charges and many of his due process rights were ignored, according to international observers. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions in September 2015 determined Nasheed’s detention was politically motivated and assessed that serious due-process violations indicated Nasheed had not received a free and fair trial. The government announced its rejection of the working group’s findings in a September 2015 press release. In January 2016 the government granted approval for Nasheed to travel to London on a medical furlough. **He remained in London at year’s end and stated he was unable to return due to concerns he would again be arbitrarily detained.** In July former vice president Adeen claimed Nasheed’s 13- year terrorism sentence was “masterminded un-

der direct government scheming and influence” and offered to testify in the Supreme Court to provide evidence of his claims. The authorities had not responded at year’s end. (...)

*Violence and Harassment: Authorities allegedly attacked, harassed, and intimidated media representatives.*

*The most significant incident of violence was the killing of Yameen Rasheed, blogger and social media activist, as cited in section **Some observers claimed police did not investigate the case thoroughly, nor did they respond to or investigate the multiple death threats Rasheed had previously reported to the police, according to Rasheed’s social media accounts and his friends and family. After Rasheed’s killing, several journalists and social media activists fled the country and took up self-exile in Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom due to threats of arrest by the government or fear of vigilante justice by religious extremists.** Journalists believed the government used the investigations as an intimidation tactic to pressure media into not criticizing the government. During the year the government took statements from 11 journalists from three media stations. (...)*

**Yameen Rasheed, a prominent blogger and social media activist who was often critical of the government, was killed on April 23. Eight men were arrested in connection with Rasheed’s death, and the MPS filed charges against seven of the suspects. In August police stated a group of young men, unaffiliated with any organization, had killed Rasheed because they believed he “mocked” Islam. Police also said that the killing was not politically motivated and that they were investigating unspecified persons of interest who may have encouraged the suspects in committing the crime. Rasheed had previously received multiple death threats, which were reported to police, but according to Rasheed’s social media accounts and his friends and family, police had not responded to or investigated these threats. In a public speech on April 27, President Yameen condemned Rasheed’s actions as “mocking” Islam and said “this is how it happens,” which activists viewed as Yameen’s justifying Rasheed’s killing. Rasheed’s father filed a civil suit against police on the basis of negligence to protect Rasheed prior to his death and failure to investigate the killing sufficiently. In September the Civil Court declared the suit invalid.»** Quelle: US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2017 - Maldives, 20. April 2018, S. 2-3, 11, 15, 27-28: [www.state.gov/documents/organization/277531.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/277531.pdf).

US Department of State (USDOS): 15. August 2017:

#### **«Section I. Religious Demography**

*The U.S. government estimates the total population at 393,000 (July 2016 estimate), which includes approximately 110,000 foreign workers from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan. The Maldives government estimates there may be another 15,000 to 20,000 undocumented foreign workers in the country from South Asian countries. **While officially, the religion of the indigenous population is Islam and the vast majority of citizens appear to follow Sunni practices, there are no reliable estimates of the citizenry’s actual religious affiliation. Foreign workers appear to be mostly Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Christians.***

#### **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

## **Legal Framework**

**The constitution states the country is a republic based on the principles of Islam and designates the state religion as Islam, which it defines in terms of Sunni teachings. It states citizens have a “duty” to preserve and protect the state religion of Islam. According to the constitution, non-Muslims may not obtain citizenship.**

*The constitution states citizens are free to engage in activities “not expressly prohibited” by sharia, but it stipulates the Majlis may pass laws limiting rights and freedoms “to protect and maintain the tenets of Islam.” In making a decision about whether a limitation on a right or freedom is constitutional, the constitution states a court must take into account the extent to which the right or freedom “must be limited” to protect Islam.*

**The constitution makes no mention of the freedom of religion or belief. Although it contains a provision prohibiting discrimination “of any kind,” it does not list religion as a prohibited basis of discrimination. The constitution states individuals have a right to freedom of thought and expression, but in a manner “not contrary to tenets of Islam.”**

**The law prohibits the conversion of a Muslim to another religion and specifies a violation may result in the loss of the convert’s citizenship, although a judge may impose harsher punishment per sharia jurisprudence.**

**The law, in the provisions of the Religious Unity Act passed in 1994, states both the government and the people must protect religious unity. Any statement or action found to be contrary to this aim is subject to criminal penalty. Specific infractions include working to disrupt religious unity and discussions or acts promoting religious differences. The list of infractions also includes delivering religious sermons in a way infringing upon the independence and sovereignty of the country or limiting the rights of a specific section of society. According to the law, sentences for violators may include a fine of up to 20,000 rufiyaa (\$1,322) or imprisonment from two to five years, or deportation for foreigners.**

**In August the parliament passed a new law entitled “Anti-Defamation and Freedom of Expression” which criminalizes speech breaking Islamic tenets, breaching social norms, or threatening national security. The new law states freedom of expression is a basic right “as long as it is in line with the tenets of Islam.” It states the expression of thoughts and opinion in writing, in speech, or through another medium is protected, except in cases where such an expression “makes a mockery of Islam,” questions the validity of Islam or one of its tenets, compromises the “religious homogeneity of Maldivians,” or causes “disunity and religious polarization.” The new law further states any religious preaching or efforts to teach Islam shall be in accordance with the standards set forth in the Religious Unity Act. It also states religious teaching in schools and universities shall be carried out in accordance with the Religious Unity Act and only by those authorized by the government to teach Islam.**

**The new law authorizes the government to cut off live feeds and/or suspend a station’s license if it broadcasts content that violates its provisions. Publications, including websites, carrying “defamatory” comments may also have their licenses revoked. The new law specifies fines for defamation and violating social norms ranging between**

**50,000 rufiyaa (\$3,305) and 2 million rufiyaa (\$132,000) and states a failure to pay the fine will result in a jail sentence of three to six months. Failure to pay the fine may also lead to the closure of newspapers and media offices. The verdicts may only be appealed after the fine is paid.**

**The new law states the penalty for “breaking the tenets of Islam” shall be the same as those specified under the existing penal code for “criticizing Islam,” which states a person commits an offense by engaging in religious oration or criticism of Islam in public or in a public medium with the intent to cause disregard for Islam; producing, selling, or distributing material criticizing Islam; producing, selling, distributing, importing, disseminating, or possessing “idols of worship;” and/or attempting to disrupt the religious unity of the citizenry or conversing or acting in a manner likely to cause “religious segregation.” Individuals convicted of these offenses are subject to imprisonment for up to one year. (...)**

**Propagation of any religion other than Islam is a criminal offense. Proselytizing to change denominations within Islam is illegal and punishable by two to five years in jail or house arrest, depending on the gravity of the offense. If the offender is a foreigner, his or her license to preach in the country will be revoked, and he or she will be deported. Proselytizing to Muslims by adherents of other religions is illegal, and the penalty is the same as for intra-Islamic proselytizing.**

**By law, prayer houses remain under the control of the MIA rather than the country’s island councils. The law prohibits the establishment of places of worship for non-Islamic religious groups. (...)**

**The constitution states Islam forms one basis of the law and “no law contrary to any tenet of Islam shall be enacted.” The constitution specifies judges must apply sharia in deciding matters not addressed by the constitution or by law.**

**The penal code prescribes flogging sentences for a small number of crimes, including fornication. Other sharia penalties are not specified, but the code grants judges the discretion to impose sharia penalties for hudood (serious crimes) listed in the Quran and qisas (retaliatory) offenses – including murder, apostasy, assault, theft, homosexual acts, drinking alcohol, and property damage – if proven to a standard of practical certainty. The penal code requires all appeal processes be exhausted prior to the administration of sharia punishments specific to hudood and qisas offenses, including stoning, amputation of hands, and similar punishments. (...)**

**During a January political rally held by the Progressive Party of Maldives, President Yameen stated, “We do not accept that there should be other religions in the Maldives....We do not want another faith in the Maldives.”**

**In January while speaking at an official ceremony to mark the day the country embraced Islam, Minister of Defense and National Security Adam Shareef Umar stated, “We all have to engineer ways to keep Maldives as a fully Islamic nation.” Referring to the educational standards introduced in 2015, he said teachers and parents should follow and implement the new education curriculum, saying the population needed to be “wary of secular ideals creeping into society.” (...)**



**Customs officials reported 18 cases during the year involving the importation of religious idols and a Christian cross. Customs stated all the cases had been closed and letters of caution would be issued to those involved as first-time offenders.**

Customs officials reported they had issued a letter of caution to a work visa holder as a first-time offender involved in the importation of 207 prohibited religious books in 2015. **Customs authorities said the MIA continued to permit the importation of religious literature, such as Bibles, for personal use. The MIA also continued to allow some religious literature for scholarly research. The sale of religious items, such as Christmas cards, remained restricted by the ministry to the resort islands patronized by foreign tourists.** (...)

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

**NGOs reported numerous instances of secularist bloggers receiving death threats, being cyberbullied, and being followed on the street by individuals with records as criminal gang members. Victims stated they felt vulnerable as a result of a lack of police responsiveness to their complaints and because similar events had preceded the 2014 disappearance of journalist Ahmed Rilwan, who had filed reports on reputed links between religious extremists and criminal gangs.** (...)

**NGOs said they continued to see a rise in religious radicalism and fundamentalism.»**

Quelle: US Department of State (USDOS): 2016 Report on International Religious Freedom - Maldives, 15. August 2017, S. 2-4, 6-8, 10:  
[www.state.gov/documents/organization/269180.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/269180.pdf).

USDOS, 17. November 2010:

«On May 28, 2010, Mohamed Nazim declared himself an atheist at a public lecture given by an Islamic scholar. Nazim was assaulted by some members of the crowd and taken by the police into protective custody. A local religious NGO called for him to receive a death sentence if he did not repent. **The Ministry of Islamic Affairs reportedly sent two scholars to counsel Nazim and clarify his misconceptions about Islam.** No charges were filed, and he was released on June 2, 2010, after he made a public apology and declared himself a Muslim. **According to Ministry of Islamic Affairs officials, Nazim embraced Islam of his own free will.**» Quelle: USDOS, International Religious Freedom Report 2010 - Maldives, 17. November 2010: [www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010/148797.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010/148797.htm).