URGENT ACTION

SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVIST RELEASED FROM PRISON

Maldivian social media activist Thayyib Shaheem was released on 17 April after spending almost one month on remand in Dhoonidhoo island prison. He was accused of "spreading panic" on social media after he criticised a development project in Maldives.

On 17 April 2017, **Thayyib Shaheem** was released from prison after the High Court overturned the Criminal Court's detention order against him. Despite never being formally charged with a crime, he is released on the condition that he ceases his criticism of the government on social media and that he remain in the country for a period of 60 days.

Thayyib Shaheem is a prominent social media activist in Maldives and supporter of the opposition Maldives Democratic Party (MDP). He was arrested on 16 March. The police claimed the basis of his arrest was his spreading of panic and disinformation on social media through his tweets about the recent swine flu (H1N1) outbreak in Maldives. Amnesty International, however, believes that he was detained for his public criticism of a proposed large-scale development project, which involves Saudi Arabia.

In early March, authorities launched a disturbing crackdown against media, opposition parties and activists who opposed the development project. The Criminal Court in Malé threatened "legal action" against journalists who "disrupt the peace and stability of Maldives", while police raided the MDP headquarters to seize banners and other material. On 16 March, just hours after tweeting criticism against the Faafu deal, Thayyib Shaheem was arrested. He was remanded into custody by a Malé court a day later, and moved to a prison on Dhoonidhoo island.

Amnesty International will continue to monitor the case and re-open the case if necessary.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

Name: Thayyib Shaheem
Gender m/f: m

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