

JOHN MCCAIN, CHAIRMAN



JACK REED, RANKING MEMBER

UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
**ARMED SERVICES**

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**SENATORS MCCAIN AND REED CALL FOR RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE MALDIVES**

*Washington, D.C.* — U.S. Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Jack Reed (D-RI), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and Secretary of State John Kerry last week expressing deep concern about the deteriorating situation in the Maldives and the implications of recent events for the democratic process, human rights and U.S. national security policy in South Asia. Senators McCain and Reed urge the United States to press for the release of all political prisoners, including President Mohamed Nasheed.

Senators McCain and Reed filed an amendment today to the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016* that expresses the sense of the Congress that the Government of the Maldives should immediately release former President Nasheed and all political prisoners in the country, and guarantee human rights for all the citizens of the Maldives.

The text of the letter appears below.

*Dear Secretary Carter and Secretary Kerry:*

*We are writing to express our deep concern about the deteriorating situation in the Maldives and the implications of recent events for the democratic process, human rights and U.S. national security policy in South Asia. As you are aware, the political space in the Maldives is quickly closing as democratically-oriented opposition political parties, civil society groups and journalists have come under increased pressure. Opposition political activists, including former President Nasheed, have been subject to criminal proceedings with no due process. We are also concerned about the prison conditions in which these opposition figures are being kept.*

*Secretary Kerry, we appreciate that you raised these issues in Sri Lanka in May when said there were “troubling signs that democracy is under threat in Maldives, where former President Nasheed has been imprisoned without due process.” You added this “is*

*an injustice that must be addressed soon.” We agree with this assessment and urge the State Department to increase high level engagement with the government of the Maldives and send a strong message that the country should abide by its international commitments, especially to the rule of law.*

*On May 1st, some 20,000 protesters in Male marching for the freedom of all political prisoners were met by security forces dressed in riot gear with tear gas and stun guns. More than 100 protesters were arrested. Both of these developments are very concerning and we would respectfully request that you reemphasize the importance of the rule of law in the Maldives the damage this is causing to the U.S.-Maldives bilateral relationship. It will greatly impact our ability to work with the Government of Maldives and to engage on a host of issues, including military to military activities.*

*In short, while the Maldives may be a small island nation, there are big principles at stake. The United States should work with India and other democratic countries to impress upon the Maldives that its decisions are having serious adverse consequences on its relationships abroad. And the United States must also urge the Maldives to release all political prisoners, including President Nasheed.*

*Sincerely,*

*John McCain  
Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee*

*Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee*

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