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Co-Chairman



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Co-Chairman

One Hundred and Fourteenth Congress  
**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**

July 31, 2015

President Abdulla Yameen  
c/o Embassy of the Republic of Maldives to the United States  
800 Second Avenue, Suite 400E  
New York, NY 10017

Dear President Yameen,

We have watched your country move dramatically to enact democratic reforms since 2005, when the Maldives began to allow for the establishment of political parties, and in 2008, hold elections. Although the Maldives has made some real progress in a short time, we are concerned by several recent events that call into question your government's commitment to democracy and the rule of law.

In particular, we are concerned by the February conviction of former President Mohammed Nasheed on a "terrorism" related charge, the recent removal of Vice President Mohamed Jameel Ahmed, and the general appearance of the closing of democratic space in the Maldives.

While we take the threat of terrorism very seriously, we are troubled by the misuse of that term as the basis for the charges brought against President Nasheed. Also troubling are allegations that the Court denied President Nasheed a free and fair trial. For example, we understand that the Court denied President Nasheed adequate time to prepare a defense, limited his ability to question the prosecution's witnesses and to call any witnesses in his own defense, and withheld the prosecution's evidence until it was formally introduced.

Beyond these serious procedural problems, two of the members of the three-judge panel hearing Mr. Nasheed's case had clear conflicts of interest. And yet, a request to remove both judges from participating in the trial was denied.

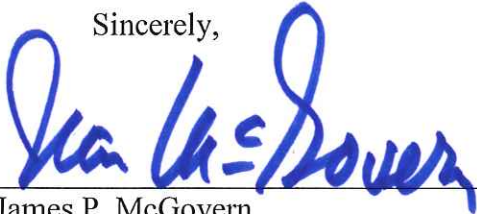
In addition to the troubling aspects of President Nasheed's case, the recent steps taken by your government to remove Vice President Jameel from office on charges of treason are also of serious concern. This move, so soon after Mr. Nasheed's conviction, only adds to the impression that the commitment to democracy in the Maldives has diminished.

We are also concerned about what appears to be a broader deterioration of democracy in the Maldives, as evidenced by the March 25 arrest of Maldivian journalists for allegedly obstructing police duties. In addition, we are disturbed by independent reports of the use of violence, tear gas, and stun guns against non-violent protesters by police in riot gear during demonstrations held on May 1, 2015. As you know, peaceful dissent, and freedoms of speech, association and the press are all hallmarks of a democratic system.

Mr. President, we applaud the democratic reforms that began in 2005, and we want to help ensure that your country lives up to the reform process envisioned in your Constitution.

We think it is important for your government to take steps to restore confidence in the Maldives's commitment to democracy and the rule of law, including judicial independence and freedom of the press. We take note of the recent decision to commute President Nasheed's sentence to house arrest. While that decision is a welcome step forward, we urge you to go further by immediately and unconditionally releasing President Nasheed and other political prisoners, and guaranteeing the rights of all your citizens to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Taking these steps will help demonstrate to your citizens and the international community that the Maldives remains on a path to democracy.

Sincerely,



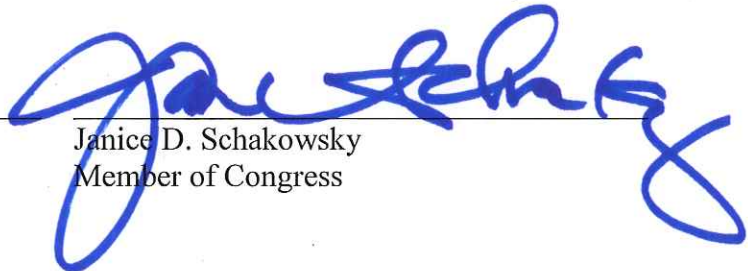
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Joseph R. Pitts  
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel  
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