

## Press Statement

International Human Rights Day 2021

Maldives: Legislative changes have no impact when applied selectively.

As we mark the International Human Rights Day this year, we stand in solidarity with human rights defenders around the world who continue to fight for the rights of the people, despite the many challenges and risks. We remember those who lost their lives for the cause of human rights and demand justice.

The Maldives, despite having made some progressive steps in governance, must acknowledge that the fundamental principle of human rights that is *the indivisibility and universality of rights*, has deteriorated significantly over the recent years.

President Solih must stop protecting his cabinet ministers accused of gross human rights violations and corruption. The failure to remove such persons from top government positions after repeated suspensions demonstrate great inequality in the application of the law and is in stark contrast with the Article 20 of the Constitution of the Maldives: *everyone shall be equal before the law*.

Similarly, the impunity with which tourist establishment conduct their activities that destroy the delicate environment of the Maldives such as tree grabbing, sand removal and garbage dumping does not align with the pledges that the Government of Maldives make for climate action.

The findings of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in December 2021 of poor prison conditions and human rights violations within prisons is especially worrying. The government-led prison audit in early 2019 resulted in over 180 recommendations which have failed to be implemented. Almost three years later, it raises serious questions of sincerity of the audit.

We call on President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih to re-establish equality and the rule of the law in the Maldives. The many pledges that the government has made to protect human rights and democracy remain as empty, unfulfilled promises to mislead the international community.

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ENDS.