



Joint Press Release by Civil Society Organisations calling on the Government to remove individuals charged with corruption from key leadership positions.

9 May 2024 - The appointment of individuals charged with corruption to key leadership positions calls into question the commitment of the State to combat corruption and end the culture of impunity. **These decisions may lead to coercion, hinder the investigative process of holding corrupt officials to account, and lower public confidence and trust in state institutions, judicial system, and investigative bodies in tackling corruption.** Concerning high-profile appointments include:

- Appointment of Former Supreme Court judge Abdullah Didi as the Legal Counsel of the President's Office in April 2024. He was dismissed from the Supreme Court bench following an appeal submitted by the Judicial Service Commission to Parliament in 2019. The appeal was made by the JSC based on the accusations of accepting bribery distributed by the individuals implicated in the case of MMPRC in exchange for altering the verdict. Didi was dismissed from his position by the Parliament, with 72 votes in favor of his dismissal. According to media reports citing the Prosecutor General's Office, a bribery case against Didi remains lodged and deliberations are ongoing on whether charges will be enforced.
- Appointment of Former Vice President and Minister of Finance Abdulla Jihad as the Chairman of the newly formed Maldives International Finance Service Authority In May 2024. In 2020, the Prosecutor General's Office filed a corruption charge against Abdulla Jihad for using the influence of his position as the Minister of Finance through signing a joint venture agreement for the development of K. Fushidhiggaru that only awarded 25% of the shares to the state instead of the 50% shareholding initially agreed on through the Cabinet Ministers' decision, contravening section 13 (a) of the Act of Prevention and Prohibition of Corruption and resulting in a loss of MVR 9.32 billion to the State in land rent alone. The case is still ongoing.

Abdulla Jihad was also charged with illicit enrichment in 2020 for failing to vacate the apartment granted to him during his tenure as Vice President. The State sought to recover MVR 1,109,227 from Jihad as part of rent, maintenance and utility costs. The charges were withdrawn in January 2024.

Similar concerns have also been raised regarding the appointment of individuals with allegations of corruption and clear conflicts of interest as board members and to key positions of State-owned enterprises.

These appointments pose serious governance risks and weakens public trust in the system.

The Maldives ranks 93 out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perception Index 2023 released by Transparency International, putting Maldives in the lower end of the scale with high level of perceived corruption in the public sector. As this year's theme for the CPI highlights, there is **increasing impunity for corruption, and corruption is seen to be encouraged by eliminating consequences for criminals**. The CPI scores for Maldives reflects impunity for corruption cases and the slow progress in the investigation and prosecution of corruption cases of high-ranking members of the government, judiciary and the parliament. This in turn lowers the confidence and trust of the public in state institutions and investigative bodies in tackling corruption.

We call on the State to **immediately remove individuals charged with corruption from key positions and enact statutes hold high-ranking political officials accused of corruption to account**. We further reiterate our demands to:

- Ensure a merit based and transparent appointment process for political appointees, especially those who are entrusted with financial responsibilities
- Strengthen anti-corruption efforts and ensure an independent judicial system that can hold individuals to account.
- Introduce anti-corruption legislation that would allow for effective recovery of assets and proceeds that have been illegally obtained by high-ranking public officials through corruption.
- Create and enforce a clear & transparent system to address allegations & acts of corruption by public officials.
- Adopt a comprehensive conflict of interest policy across all government institutions and State-owned enterprises to ensure transparency and accountability.

To hold corrupt officials to account, and bolster public confidence, **the Government to commit to an effective zero-tolerance for corruption policy and practice and end the culture of impunity**.

-ENDS-

Association for Democracy in the Maldives
Save Maldives Campaign
Transparency Maldives
Zero Waste Maldives