Transparency Maldives (TM), in its submission to the UN Human Rights Council’s (HRC) Universal Periodic Review (UPR), notes with concern the declining human rights situation in the Maldives and calls on the State to immediately initiate reforms to prevent further deterioration and commit to a path that is in line with the Maldives’ international obligations.

In its 2014 submission, TM noted a marked decline in civil and political rights protection, resulting in the constriction of democratic space afforded to civil society. There exist significant threats to freedom of association, expression and media during the review period as the State has become increasingly intolerant of dissent. Of note are the attacks to parliamentarians, journalists, and media outlets, resulting in the murder of a parliamentarian and the maiming of another, as well as the deadly attacks on journalists and the disappearance of one journalist, and arson and other attacks to media houses. The 2013 Presidential elections further underlined the delicate and unpredictable nature of the right to participate in public affairs and democratic government, where interference in electoral processes by State institutions led to multiple delays of scheduled elections and annulment of elections, which were widely reported as free and fair.

Additionally, TM also notes the Maldives’ Human Rights Commission are currently on trial via a Suo Motu case initiated by the Supreme Court, as a result of critical comments on the state of the country’s judiciary in its submission to the 2014 UPR.

To prevent further deterioration of the HR situation, TM calls on the State to: 1. Cease intimidation of civil society and State independent institutions; 2. Put in place mechanisms to protect freedom of association and ensure protection of journalists and media houses; 3. Address legal discrepancies and inconsistencies due to the Supreme Court annulment of Presidential Election 2013, which could in the future, hamper electoral processes; 4. Address the governance and human rights issues faced by migrant workers by ratifying ICRMW, including all ILO conventions; and 5. Implement recommendations put forth by the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers.

Since the initial recommendations from the 2010 UPR, the Maldives has taken positive steps to improve the human rights situation on the ground in some areas. It has made positive changes to key legislation such as the passing of the Anti-human Trafficking Act and Right to Information Act.
Despite commitments for reform following the 2010 UPR process, we observe that key institutional failures have stifled democratic consolidation and the Government has failed to fully implement many accepted recommendations. This has resulted in the Maldives lagging behind in adherence to international human rights standards.

TM hopes that its submission proves useful to the Maldives in implementing and reviewing recommendations, and also to UN member states, international and domestic organisations working to protect and promote human rights in the country. TM looks forward to constructively engaging with the Maldivian Government and civil society partners in the implementation of recommendations from the second cycle.

TM’s first engagement with the UPR was in 2010, with a joint civil society submission to the Maldives review. The UPR is a UN lead mechanism that takes place every four years to review the human rights situation of all UN member countries. This is the second cycle of review for Maldives and will take place on 6 May 2015 at the 22nd session of the UPR Working Group.

ENDS.

For media queries, please contact Legal Assistant, Ibrahim Riza (967 6060) or Senior Project Coordinator, Ahid Rasheed (974 1443).