

## **Transparency Maldives calls on the President of the Maldives to consider concerns raised by various actors before ratifying the Anti Defamation Act**

### **PRESS RELEASE - August 09, 2016**

Transparency Maldives (TM) strongly condemns the passing of the Anti Defamation and Freedom of Expression Act without addressing the serious concerns raised and amendments suggested by media organisations, Maldives Media Council, journalists, political parties, civil society organisations, and international actors. The new provisions that were included in the Act were not opened for public review and restricts freedom of expression even further.

The new Anti Defamation Act now compels journalists to reveal their sources to prove the veracity of their published articles, news reports or comments. Article 18(c) of the Act clearly contravenes Article 28 of the Constitution that offers complete protection to journalists from having to reveal their sources under any circumstance. TM notes that the Constitution proactively refrains from including any enabling provisions which may curtail that right.

Article 33(a) of the Act allows for media licenses to be cancelled in addition to the criminal liability faced by specific journalists. Similarly, Article 36 gives way to disrupt the functioning of any particular media during a live event and compels the determination of the broadcast content by almost anyone. TM believes these provisions greatly hinder the functioning of an independent media devoid of intimidation and fear as guaranteed by Article 28 of the Constitution.

Furthermore, while people should be protected from false and harmful accusations, the Act is less about providing redress for victims of defamation. Defamation laws should also be free from manipulation by public authorities and officials, and it should not act as a means to curtail any provisions of the rights prescribed in the Constitution and the International Bill of Rights.

TM calls on the President of the Maldives to consider concerns raised by various actors before ratifying this Act. TM also call on the public to persevere in their fight for freedom of expression as enshrined in Article 27 of the Constitution. Freedom of expression, like all human rights, is not one that is given but rather one that cannot be taken away.

ENDS

For all media queries, please contact Senior Project Coordinator, Ahmed Tholal (796 7600).