

Transparency International and Transparency Maldives call on Prosecutor General to dismiss the case against Gasim Abdul Kareem

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Gasim Abdul Kareem, a former manager at the Bank of Maldives, is being prosecuted for disclosing customer information that revealed details related to a multi-million dollar corruption scandal in the Maldives, where money that should have gone to the state was allegedly siphoned off into private accounts.

Transparency International and Transparency Maldives are calling on the Prosecutor General to dismiss the case because the information disclosed is not only in the public interest, but such disclosures are protected under the Maldives Banking Act.

“Kareem is a man who has taken action against what he believed to be a corrupt practice. This behaviour should be praised not punished. If money that should be used to benefit the people of the Maldives – to fund public services, for example - is being siphoned off to fund the luxury lifestyle of the corrupt, the people have a right to know,” said Cobus de Swardt, managing director of Transparency International. “The prosecutor general should dismiss this case. Kareem’s actions deserve admiration and he is entitled to protection, not prosecution.”

“This is a test case for the Maldives and its whistleblower protection laws. The questionable financial transactions revealed from Kareem’s actions should have raised alarm bells a long time ago and yet no one had the courage to do what Kareem did. Instead of encouraging whistleblowing, Kareem’s persecution simply sends a signal to others who witness corruption that speaking out has severe consequences,” said Mariyam Shiuna, Executive Director of Transparency Maldives.

Under Section 44 of the Maldives Banking Act “actions taken in good faith in the course of the implementation of measure for the prevention of corruption and countering money laundering and financing of terrorism pursuant to laws or regulations dealing with such matters” cannot be considered unlawful.

Kareem was arrested on 18 February. He was held without a charge for over 4 months, and his detention extended 14 times until 30 June 2016 when he was released under house arrest.

The case is linked to a complex multi-million dollar grand corruption scandal that has involved the selling and leasing of islands and lagoons for tourism and is linked to former and current public officials.

On 1 September the president of the New York City Bar John S. Kiernan wrote to the prosecutor general on Kareem’s behalf pointing out the protections that whistleblowers are entitled to protection under law in the Maldives.

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