

Release of Maldives whistleblower Gasim Abdul Kareem welcomed; he should now be exonerated

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Transparency International and Transparency Maldives welcome the release of whistleblower Gasim Abdul Kareem from prison but are disappointed that the prosecution and sentencing went forward this week. They now call for him to be exonerated.

“Kareem should be exonerated and praised not punished. He disclosed information that is critical for exposing corruption. The sentencing means he will have a criminal record that will make his future employment difficult,” said Cobus de Swardt, managing director of Transparency International. “Kareem is an anti-corruption hero.”

Kareem was sentenced on 15 November to eight months and 12 days in prison. He was released on 17 November as he had already spent the required amount of time in detention. Kareem was dismissed from employment in February, spent 133 days in Dhoonidhoo Prison, and spent 138 days under house arrest.

Kareem’s sentencing came amidst calls by the public and local and international organisations, including the New York City Bar Association, urging the Prosecutor General of the Maldives to dismiss the case against him.

Kareem should never have stood trial in the first place. His disclosure of account transactions of a private company that was used to reroute embezzled money relating to a multi-million dollar corruption scandal in the Maldives was in the public interest.

Kareem is also one of the four anti-corruption heroes shortlisted for Transparency International’s 2016 Anti-Corruption Award.

Whistleblowers play a critical role in exposing corruption and other wrongdoings. They should not be subjected to any form of retaliation as a result of exposing wrongdoings or corrupt behaviour.

“The sentencing of Kareem sends the message that whistleblowers in the Maldives will not be protected nor commended. They will, instead, pay a high price while those alleged of wrongdoing will continue to engage in corrupt behaviour with absolute impunity,” said Thoriq Hamid, programme manager of Transparency Maldives.

Transparency Maldives and Transparency International are calling for an effective whistleblower protection system in the Maldives.

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