

## **Transparency Maldives Strongly Condemns Use of Disproportionate Force Against Journalists by the Police on Wednesday Night.**

Transparency Maldives strongly condemns disproportionate use of force against the journalists of Raajje TV and Sangu TV by the Police during the coverage of protests organised by the opposition parties on Wednesday afternoon and evening outside MDP campaign center.

A total of 7 journalists from Raajje TV and Sangu TV were arrested by the Police on Wednesday night. Journalists have reported police beating, pepper sprayed at close range and damage to their equipments during the arrest..

In addition to journalists, members of the public were indiscriminately pepper sprayed without warning while disproportionate force was used to arrest individuals. Furthermore, police entered MDP campaign center without a court order and locked people inside after pepper spraying into the hall. A total of 11 individuals were reportedly detained, taken to the police HQ and released.

Transparency calls on the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives and The National Integrity Commission as well as the Prosecutor General's Office to fully investigate the actions of the police and ensure that in addition to holding the Institutions to account, the individual police officers be brought to justice.

We are concerned by the continued breakdown of democratic institutions and processes and the continued impunity of law enforcement agencies. We are currently seeing an unprecedented level of suppression of the freedom of media and at a time when freedom of assembly and expression are unconstitutionally curtailed.

We reiterate our call on the government, security services and other key democratic institutions to respect democratic principles and the Constitution of the Maldives. Furthermore, we call on the authorities to cease the intimidation of journalists, citizens and political opponents.

ENDS.