

Transparency Review

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Yameen Rasheed
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Transparency Maldives, national contact for Transparency International, is a non-partisan organization that promotes collaboration, awareness and undertakes other initiatives to improve governance and eliminate corruption from the daily lives of people. Transparency Maldives views corruption as a systemic issue and advocates for institutional changes that will punish and prevent corruption.

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Yameed Rasheed stood for justice, humanrights, equality and anti-corruption. But most importantly he stood for his best friend Ahmed Rilwan (@moyameeha) who was abducted three years ago. He spoke volumes through his writings and inspired many through his ideals. He raged against apathy and fostered courage and hope. On 23rd April 2017, he was murdered on the stairwell of his home. But contrary to what the killers intended, the strongest and bravest voice for justice will not be silenced. His passion will not be killed. His ideals will not be erased and his hopes will not go unrealized.

#WeAreYaamyn

Executive Director's Note

This issue of Transparency Review is published to celebrate and remember a human rights hero from the Maldives – Yameen Rasheed. A prolific writer, blogger, human rights defender and IT technician, Yameen was the brightest of us all.

In the early hours of 23 April 2017, at the age of 29, he was stolen from his loved ones when he was brutally murdered at the stairwell of his home. His family, friends, and his followers woke up to this news in shock, and the painful realization that this young man had sacrificed his life in pursuit of justice and human rights for all.

Yameen Rasheed held a fort on his own, defending human rights with the might of his pen, despite the barrage of threats he was receiving. He was relentless in his advocacy for human rights in the Maldives, and in pursuit of justice for his disappeared friend and fellow liberal blogger, Ahmed Rilwan. He chose to stay on the ground because for him being quiet was not an option in the face of grave injustice.

Using satire, he blogged and tweeted about corruption, government failures, religious extremism and politics in the Maldives. He was not afraid of whom he angered and always spoke truth to power.

The last time TM met with Yameen Rasheed was when he visited our office to suggest a digital security training for our staff, and to share some of his concerns due to the lack of police response to the death threats he received. Only a man of his character would seek to help others despite having his own security concerns. Yameen also participated at our Human Rights Conference in December 2016, where he spoke so eloquently and passionately on civil and political liberties.



At the conference, he also highlighted the findmoyameecha campaign for his friend, Ahmed Rilwan.

For Transparency Maldives, it is an honor to dedicate this issue to Yameen Rasheed and the values and principles he gave his life for. This issue is a compilation of poems, articles and expressions written by Yameen's family, friends and colleagues, along with a selection of writings from Yameen's popular blog, The Daily Panic. I hope this issue inspires you to carry the torch Yameen has passed onto us. Transparency Maldives will continue to fight for justice for Yameen Rasheed and Ahmed Rilwan, and all others who put their lives at risk so that we can all live in a just society.

Mariyam Shiuna
 Executive Director
 Transparency Maldives



#WeAreYaamyn



#FindMoyameeha





“Freedom starts with
freedom of conscience.
Without that
fundamental freedom of
the mind, what would
you do with the other
freedoms?”

-Yameen Rasheed-

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“Expect nothing but
the unfiltered truth,
the sickening facts, the
gruesome details, and
– because this is the
Maldives – the painfully
obvious.”

-Yameen Rasheed-

Writings of Yameen Rasheed



The Daily Panic
Maldives' only news website

Maldives: Perverse Pleasures

Yameen Rasheed, 23 November 2016

“Deriving perverse pleasure from blowing up a ten-thousand year old coral reef may seem excessively pornographic. But when accompanied by tea and refreshments, it is a downright adventure.”

Last week, the Maldivian regime decided to blow up a reef in the southern island of Meedhoo in Addu Atoll.

They then decided to organize a viewing party, complete with tea and snacks. Pictures of the local islanders celebrating the wanton destruction of their own island’s natural reef sparked some outrage on social media.

I was momentarily outraged too. How could people be so.. evil? clueless? completely utterly moronic?

But then I thought about it, and realized it actually makes a lot of sense in the proper context.

Welcome to Maldives. Our people hop on their motorcycles and ride around

the narrow streets of Malé for no reason, jostling for space with thousands of others who had the same idea – and they do this for “fun”. Especially on dull Ramadan evenings.

Speaking of Ramadan, every year during this holy month of f(e)asting, there’s a special night market that comes up in Malé. It is like a rock concert but without the stage, lighting or music. Just the mosh pit. Thousands of frenzied Maldivians go and dive headlong into this sea of humanity, rubbing up against thousands of other sweaty bodies, while shopping for shitty goods.

And they think this is “fun”.

So what, you ask? Festival markets are crowded everywhere in the world! That

“What we need is
#tharahgee of the
mind. May the giant
cranes inside your
head help you aspire
towards higher
ambitions than a futsal
ground”

-Yameen Rasheed-

doesn't mean anything!

Well, fine. Now listen to this, and listen carefully:

Not very long ago, there was a major garbage crisis in Malé. Tons of rubbish were piling up in the capital faster than anybody could transfer them to Thilafushi.

Lorries loaded with stinking heaps of rotten vegetables, spoiled fish, kitchen refuse, poopy diapers, rotting carcasses of stray cats and rats, and other vile filth would pass through the West Harbour area of Malé early in the morning, making customers in the nearby cafes gag and regurgitate their breakfast.



The lorries would deposit their putrid cargo on a waiting barge near the Vilingili ferry terminal, where waiting passengers would retch and go green with sick depending on the wind direction.

My office at the time happened to look outwards on this sight, on the fifth floor of a building situated a few hundred yards away, and I had to keep my windows

firmly shut because of the overwhelming stench.

Despite this, the foul stench would somehow still leak in, putting me in an equally foul mood. This nightmare lasted for weeks.

One such day, I happened to look outside my window and – honest to god, I shit you not – here's what I saw: a steady stream of motorists on their motorcycles kept riding right up to the godawful, reeking barge.

There they would halt, sometimes with their kids in tow, carefully observing the tedious monotony of garbage being loaded on a barge.

The fetid contents of the trucks were oozing some kind of gross, stinking juice that spread across the ground all the way up to the motorists feet, but it did not seem to deter them in the least. They'd just sit there on their bikes, watching on in dazed wonderment.

After several minutes, they would leave seemingly satisfied – and then even more curious motorists would arrive to take their place.



It was a moment of sobering realization: the island offered so little in terms of recreational options, that citizens were forced to derive what little morsels of entertainment they could from (literally-) watching garbage pile up.

And that's in Malé, the capital city. The rest of the country probably has even less to do.

I still remember the first time I visited my hometown of Addu, as a six year old. Internet and cable TV weren't quite a thing yet, but a fancy new speedboat had recently arrived; all the neighbourhood children would excitedly go and sit by the docks, staring and waving for hours at the sleek, white boat with deep black windows that allegedly held tourists inside.

Occasionally they would take a break from waving at the boat, and go find some alternate thrill – such as strangling a cat with a rope and hanging it from a tree, while middle-aged adults watched on bemusedly.

And when they finally got bored of waving at inanimate objects and torturing cats, guess what they did?

They went to watch dynamite explosions.



The land reclamation for the Addu Link Road was going on at the time. Not far from my grandma's backyard, you could sit by the sea and watch frequent dynamite explosions. A shockwave followed by foaming jets of water and sand (and dead corals, presumably) spraying into the sky. It was quite a thrill.

There was one political party in 2013 that promised recreation in its manifesto – birakaanulaa majaa kurun – but many Maldivians mocked the very idea; I don't quite know why even until this day.

But I do know that instead, we find our own ghastly forms of entertainment – not entirely unlike the Restaurant at the End of the Universe.

Deriving perverse pleasure from blowing up a ten-thousand year old coral reef may seem excessively pornographic. But when accompanied by tea and refreshments, it is a downright adventure.

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<http://thedailypanic.com/2016/11/maldives-perverse-pleasures/>



The Daily Panic
Maldives' only news website

The Rilwan Story

Yameen Rasheed , 9 February 2015

“I have come to understand what makes Rilwan such a rare human being. He knew a better way, and tried to guide the lost hordes. For me, the search for him has become a search for the nation’s very soul – and I can’t find it any more than I could find Rilwan.”

I remember the exact moment when I first saw Ahmed Rilwan. It was late 2009, and I had just arrived in the Maldives. Some bloggers had gotten together to sort of welcome me and get introduced. We were sitting in a sea-side café at night, when he walked in with two other well known bloggers.

We hit it off instantly – and met several times in the subsequent weeks. I remember it all. The free flowing conversations; his brilliant mind brimming with ideas; his incredible knowledge and insight into Dhivehi culture and language; his unique, delightful sense of humour; the silver

caps visible when he grinned. I became immediately hooked.

Looking back, I’m reminded of the great Jalaluddin Rumi’s teacher who once prophesied to him:

‘...a great friend will come to you and you will be each other’s mirror

He will lead you to the innermost parts of the spiritual world..‘

That lyrical foreshadowing of Rumi’s momentous encounter with the mysterious Shams of Tabrez, could just as easily have applied to my first encounter with Rilwan.



Right from some of our earliest conversations, he has been my moral compass. Over long coffees – tea for him – he would deconstruct Maldivian society for me, a clueless outsider who had just set foot on his own homeland after over two decades.

He shoved me straight into the deep end.

Revelation after shocking revelation hit me like a pile of bricks.

It was Rilwan who first told me about a well known pedophile sexual predator, whose horrific crimes family and neighbours were fully aware of, but had chosen to turn a blind eye to.

Why?

It so happened that much to society's admiration (and presumably in those endless, dull moments when he wasn't fucking children-), the man had also managed to memorize the entire Qur'an.

I was aghast. At the time, I simply couldn't wrap my head around the idea. 'How on goddamn Earth,' my naïve self asked then, 'could any decent society tolerate the rape of children?!'

Rilwan just shrugged. 'It is fucked up here. You will learn eventually.'

One day, I did. The answer struck me as I saw the same paedophile qari walk out of a house, hop on a motorcycle, and speed away nonchalantly into the arms of a welcoming society.

As he sped past, free as a bird, I happened to be carrying in my hands a heavy bundle of posters with Rilwan's photograph on them, with the word 'MISSING' on top in large bold type.

It is now six months since Rilwan disappeared.

Over these difficult months, I have finally learned what Rilwan had meant. It is simple, really.

We do not live in a decent society.

Alt+Ctrl+@moyameehaa

Until I met Rilwan in person, I knew him as moyameehaa – (mad man) – the

pseudonym he adopted on the Internet. I knew him from his wonderful blog, and the insightful comments he would leave on other blogs, including mine.

In his avatar as moyameehaa, Rilwan is a pioneer of Internet activism in the Maldives, and one of the earliest and most popular bloggers in the country.

It was clear very early on that Rilwan never got the memo about swimming together with the rest of the school.

In the early 2000's, when the Gayoom dictatorship had a vice grip on the country – and Gayoom's version of "moderate" Islam was rigidly enforced by the state, Rilwan's idealism, sense of rebelliousness and search for truth led him towards radical Islamism.

He once told me that his slide into – and out of – Islamist Jihadism followed a smooth gradient.

He had sworn his allegiance to the Islamist cause along with others, including H. Moscowge Ali Jaleel, who was subsequently involved in the 2009 Lahore bombings.

But unlike them, Rilwan was unable to let go of his love for poetry.

He found himself unable to obey the stringent orders to avoid reading 'forbidden' material. His thirst for knowledge was too strong, and he continued reading, and gradually – he told me – he began to see that Islamism

was not just morally bankrupt, but dangerous and evil.

It was, he said, a tool to prey on the young and vulnerable, who became foot soldiers in a political power struggle between corrupt forces – one made even more distasteful to him because it invoked the name of God and employed it for the basest of human desires. He came to realize that, just like Gayoom, the Islamists had been invoking God and religion to pursue selfish political goals.

So with the same courage that it took to voice out against Gayoom in his heydays, Rilwan spoke out fervently against religious extremism and politicization of religion.

Empathy.

Ignorant critics try to paint him as anti-religious, but Rilwan has always been a highly nuanced commentator. He defended faith and morality with the same vigour that he defended the rights of others to pursue their own paths. Indeed, if there is one driving force in his life, it is his eternal quest for morality.

“Maldives no longer has a value system”, was one of his most common complaints. “Our people have completely foregone all morality”

Rilwan was self-confessedly lazy when it came to meeting calendar appointments, but his morality wasn't the sort of lazy 'donate-to-Gaza-then-go-back-to-watch-football' brand of concern that Maldivians have gotten accustomed to.

He actively, passionately invoked and practiced his values in everything he did.

I have yet to hear anyone speak up for expatriate rights as passionately and forcefully as Rilwan did, even over casual meetings with friends. His empathy for the downtrodden and underprivileged is universal. His love for simplicity, his scorn for unfairness, his angst at injustice pretty much defined him.

Only complete idiots think his demand for freedom of religion in the Maldives was led by some kind of aversion towards Islam. Quite the opposite.

He couldn't stress enough that Islam and its Prophet guaranteed that all men have freedom of conscience, and that no one – and certainly not the Maldivian state – could take that away.

When literalism collided with principles, he discarded the former in favour of the latter. Like me, he found literalism hollow and devoid of any depth, spirituality or beauty.

Using his trademark humour, he once illustrated his disdain for literalists by interpreting William Blake's *The Tyger* as:

Rilwan @moyameehaa

@yaamyn a scary tiger commits self immolation in a dark forest. Stars were throwing spears at it. It was horrible! :(

Rilwan's courageous writing, his unwavering stand for what is right, sadly, didn't go over well in a land where the reality is toxic, and facts burn.

He received threats, and reported being followed by known local, religiously radicalized criminals.

Disappearance

At 00:44 hrs on 8th August 2014, after having spent the evening with family and friends, Rilwan walked into the Hulhumalé ferry terminal to go home.

5 days later, I got the phone call.

"Have you seen Rilwan?"

"No. Why?"

"Nobody seems to know where he is"

"What do you mean nobody knows where he is?"

"Nobody has heard from him. His family called his office to find out if they had heard from him"

My heart began racing. A dozen explanations sprang up immediately to try ease my mind that this was all probably harmless.

Surely, it was going to be okay.

I immediately checked his twitter – he had gone silent 5 days ago.

I then learnt that nobody – not his friends or family – had heard from him in

a few days.

This was wrong. Somebody knew.

Somebody always knew.

It wasn't unusual at all for Rilwan to drop out of touch for extended periods.

He craved solitude and often took time-out from socializing. But somebody always knew.

As the day progressed with no more news of his whereabouts, I desperately clung to this hope that he had just taken off to some island. Or was at a friend's place.

Nothing bad could happen to him. It just could not be allowed to happen. Not to Rilwan, of all people.

A police report was made. Everything went by in a daze. The nightmare was just beginning.

100 days of nightmares

That night, I saw him in a dream. I had found him – grinning sheepishly, obviously embarrassed by all the commotion he had inadvertently caused. Waves of relief swept over me and I was glad that it was all over. I pretended to be mad, and wanted to playfully punch him for his cheekiness.

But Rilwan was fine. He was safe and I could see him, and it was all that mattered.

And then, cruelly, painfully, the mists of



sleep lifted – and a harrowing, unbearable reality sank in.

He was still missing. Family and friends were desperately, separately, searching for him everywhere. It became impossible to sit in peace. If he was taken away, I wanted to take him back.

The next day, I sent out a call for volunteers on twitter with a hashtag #FindMoyameehaa. Another concerned friend and I sat down and made a map. If he was abandoned somewhere, I would find him.

Rilwan's employer, Minivan News, made a public appeal to help in our efforts. That night, dozens of volunteers turned up at a park in Malé to help with the search. We organized, set up a communication channel, distributed maps, and agreed to meet at daylight. As I was briefing those who had come to support us, I saw out of a corner of my eye the slight silhouette of an old lady silently watching from a little bit afar in the dark.

I dared not look more closely at Rilwan's devastated mother that night.

On 15th August 2014, friends, fans, and well wishers gathered at Hulhumalé. Organized search teams went out with maps, and scoured the whole island and all its inaccessible areas. The HDC and MTCC generously offered their assistance.

We did aerial surveillance.

We left nothing unexplored.

We didn't find him.

Police investigators in charge of Rilwan's case came to meet us at the end of the day – and spoke words of appreciation. Then they feigned to share some information that we had, by then, already established wasn't accurate.

The Red Car

The search in Hulhumalé was still in progress when we first started hearing rumours about an abduction. Eventually, the rumours were confirmed.

Early on August 8th, at around the time Rilwan would have reached home, eyewitnesses reported to the police that a man was abducted at knife point from near his front door, and taken away in a red car.

Police had arrived at the scene and even recovered a knife.

Somehow, the police had failed to mention any of this to us, or to his family.

The time of the abduction neatly coincides with the time Rilwan abruptly stopped responding to a chat conversation he was having with a friend. We found out later that the police even intercepted a car, but the Sergeant on duty didn't authorize a search.

The police made no attempts to identify the victim.

They made no attempts to seal the exits from the island.

They made no public announcement about the abduction – so his family and friends could have been alerted.

They didn't mention this abduction at Rilwan's doorstep to his family, even after his disappearance was reported.

Instead, what followed instead was a week of inexplicable silence.

A week after his disappearance, we came to the realization that Rilwan hadn't just disappeared. He was abducted by criminals – and the police had the opportunity to stop it, but they didn't.

#FindMoyameehaa

Over the next hundred days, we explored every avenue that we could humanly think of. We tracked down eyewitnesses and sent them to the Police to give statements.

We identified Rilwan from CCTV footage when the Police couldn't. Friends willingly sacrificed all their free time for him, meeting every day – comparing notes, planning public events.

We got thousands of posters printed, and plastered them all over Malé. We made social media kits, and hung banners. We created a website, findmoyameehaa.com, to share news, information and resources.

We made video spots and aired appeals on TV.

We spoke on TV programs and to people on the streets. We reached out to media and arranged press conferences. We distributed fliers and information about him. We arranged funds to declare an MVR 200,000 reward for information, which to this day, remains unclaimed.

We reached out to other grieving families dealing with loss of their loved ones to serious, violent crime. We met every single political party, and MPs and youth leaders from all of them. We gathered at the Majlis to ask for answers.

We wrote letters to the Human Rights Commission, to the Police Integrity Commission, to the Parliament, to every state institution that we could think of that could possibly help.

Every Friday we gathered at the Artificial Beach in Malé, and told people about Rilwan. We shared his poetry, his verses, his humour. We told the public of this kind, gentle soul who craved nothing more than the simple life – for black tea, for joospetty. We printed t-shirts and gave them away. We had artists create artwork to raise awareness.

We created a petition to the Majlis that over 5000 citizens lend their signatures to. We rallied on the streets with hundreds of other citizens demanding answers and accountability.

International media – from Al Jazeera to BBC to Forbes and the Guardian – picked up on the story. Journalists associations worldwide released



www.findmoyama.com
#findmoyama
www.findmoyama.com



statements. Diplomats and foreign embassies made noises expressing concern.

And despite everything, it feels like we have done too little.

How could we have possibly done enough if he still isn't back with us?

None of this matters until he is returned to us.

Rude Awakenings

Six months later, I still haven't found Rilwan.

But I have seen and observed closely all the ugliness of Maldivian society that Rilwan spoke of.

I have experienced the depths of despair dealing with an all pervading immorality that I couldn't previously imagine, but Rilwan was fully aware of and spoke about.

To this day, the President has 'no comments' to make on the first enforced disappearance of its nature in the Maldives. He has rudely turned down every request from the family to meet him – but still finds time to pose with random street gangs and open local restaurants.

Similarly, the open mockery by some MPs when asked about Rilwan is cartoonishly evil – the sheer crassness of it beggars belief. A petition with 5055 signatures – more votes than any single

MP got in any election – was callously thrown out.

One would have expected the media to rally together to the aid of a disappeared journalist. Well, they did. But it took them 12 days. And then, the united face of solidarity they put up didn't exactly last long.

The state broadcaster MBC, funded by the taxpayers, steadfastly refuses to give coverage to the Rilwan case, or the #FindMoyameehaa campaign.

Nevertheless, I did see them dedicate significant screen time one day to air a report about their failed attempts to gain an interview with an Indian actress who was on holiday. (They never sent a journalist to speak to Rilwan's family or our campaign)

The taxpayer funded mosques, (that usually doesn't need any encouragement to pack say, crude anti-Semitism into their Friday sermons) have not once mentioned Rilwan or offered a simple prayer for him.

After six months of 'investigation', the Maldives Police Service has nothing to show but its contempt for Rilwan's family and friends.

Their primary concern (and actual stated request to the family-) was to 'not make the Police look bad' – this ridiculous plea being made to a family suffering for 6 endless months.

In a series of curiously defensive statements, the police has repeatedly patted itself on the back for the wonderful job it is doing – going so far as to label itself the ‘best police force in the region’ – while asserting that family and friends have hindered their efforts.

The statements are laughable. The Maldives Police Service has a horrifying near 100% failure rate on solving serious crimes, with nearly 40 unsolved murders, hundreds of stabbings and now, at least two more unexplained disappearances.

Their highly odd response to the Hulhumalé abduction is, at best, severely negligent, and – at worst – reeks of active complicity.

After we reported his disappearance, it took the best police force in the region over 29 hours to arrive at his apartment, and over 11 days to search his office for clues.

The best police force in the region somehow also allowed two known individuals implicated in Rilwan’s disappearance to leave the country’s shores to go fight in Syria. A third one was intercepted by Malaysian authorities and sent back.

Lost people

But it is not just institutional incompetence. I have also seen repeated validation of Rilwan’s analysis of the general Maldivian population.

Once, while we were marching down Majeedhee magu led by Rilwan’s grieving family, this man sitting on a motorbike inexplicably found the scene rather amusing, and made what I’m sure he thought was a hilarious remark about Rilwan.

I confronted him, and asked him what kind of fucked up upbringing he suffered to make such a crass comment to a grieving family. He didn’t answer – and hid his face when a camera was pointed at him.

What disturbed me even more was that he made this crude, insensitive remark, while his own five year old son was sitting right behind him.

Such remarks are not uncommon either.

Wherever we went, putting up posters, carrying out marches, some fuckwit would inevitably pass by engaging in some crude mockery.

I really, really do not understand why.

What has failed Maldives so bad? Why are these people so completely unable to empathize with people? What leads them to such wanton acts of uninvited viciousness?

And then I remember what Rilwan said: We have lost all morality. Our people are lost.

Agony

It is hard to overstate the toll a tragedy

of this magnitude takes on friends and family.

The general public only sees the measured statements from family members in press conferences. It is close friends who hear the painful, soul-shattering sobbing echoing in the empty halls long after the cameras and journalists have left.

I have seen remarkable strength and resilience in Rilwan's family. His mother, in particular, has been a pillar of strength for the family, as well as me and other friends.

I had never met Rilwan's mother until after the misfortune struck. But I remember him speak fondly about her.

When I asked him about his impressive dhivehi vocabulary, his seemingly encyclopedic knowledge of obscure dhivehi idioms and phrases, he gave all credit to his mother ("Mom used it at home all the time when I was growing up")

One time, I had to wait for him outside his apartment while he finished praying. He told me afterwards that his mom had asked him earlier if he had prayed. He hadn't really, but he'd told her he did, just to make her feel better. Moments later, guilt got the better of him, and he did all his prayers for the day to compensate. He said he felt much better for it.

These memories sweep over me when I see the strong, stoic lady holding posters of her missing son. Seeing her on the

streets makes me picture my own mother in such despair, and that drives me even more to do all I can.

I think I held myself together pretty well the first few days. I didn't report to work and set aside all my time for the single pursuit of trying to right this grievous wrong.

Then one day, it happened.

In the midst of the online storm raging on social media about the much beloved blogger's disappearance, I saw a lone photograph tweeted by Rilwan's elder brother.

Rilwan @rilvarn

U r braver thn u believe,strongr
thn u seem,smarter thn u thnk
and loved more thn u know
#FindMoyameehaa
@moyameehaa

I immediately choked up, overwhelmed by memories of the times Rilwan had spoken to me of his brother; I recollected Rilwan's struggles with his depression, his loneliness, his need to feel loved; and I broke down helplessly.

During this time, we met other families who have been denied justice.

It was heart breaking to see them having given up all hope, deciding instead to carry the burden of their injustice to their graves, in the vague hopes of some balm

in the afterlife.

That is what Maldives has reduced to. A country without hope. A country drowning in “religion”, but where the merest hint of justice withers and dies in the face of unrelenting evil.

Ultimately, a country with no soul.

Dreams and Interludes

In the few hours of tortured sleep that I could cobble together in the first few weeks, I continued to dream of him every single night. In every single one of them, I see him healthy, smiling and being his usual delightful self; every single time the immeasurable joy and relief of finding him first overwhelms me and then gets cruelly snatched away as the mists of sleep clear away and I wake up to a cold harsh reality.

When I am awake, I remember the times he would excitedly tell me about some book he had read that had greatly moved him. Some work of Sufi philosophy that he had, no doubt, spent hours reading, absorbing and relishing. Some verse of Urdu poetry that had deeply resonated with him. Some eBook about the Prophet’s life or such, that he eagerly wanted to share with me. His passion for art, literature and knowledge, absolutely infectious.

I still do frequently dream of Rilwan. Even now, waking up from these dreams is a sickening jolt each time.

I have been waking up to this nightmare for six months now. I cannot even begin to imagine what his family – his old mother and father – must be going through.

I have met some excellent people – Rilwan’s friends and well wishers – who continue to work tirelessly, selflessly, to find answers. Working with them, talking to them, has been therapy that helps me deal with the loss, the frustration, the rage.

I have encountered some touching moments of compassion from strangers too. The pickup driver who refused to accept money for transporting a giant billboard. The complete strangers who offer assistance, lend a hand, lend their voices.

But the search for Rilwan has also forced me to confront the full force of the contempt the Maldivian state has for citizens, the virulent hatred that permeates our society.

I have come to understand what makes Rilwan such a rare human being. He knew a better way, and tried to guide the lost hordes. For me, the search for him has become a search for the nation’s very soul – and I can’t find it any more than I could find Rilwan.

Even as I continue to search for him, I can’t help but recall the eternal Rumi’s words that I know Rilwan, more than most people, would appreciate coming from a friend:

“Why should I search?
I am the same as he is.
His essence speaks through me.
His essence speaks through me”

—

#FindMoyameehaa

**To stay up to date about the search
for Rilwan, and to find out how
you can help, please visit [www.
findmoyameehaa.com](http://www.findmoyameehaa.com)**

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<http://thedailypanic.com/2015/02/the-rilwan-story/>



The Daily Panic

Maldives' only news website



Who are you afraid of?

What happened to Rihva?

When did you check the car?

Who are you afraid of?

What happened to Rihva?

Who are you afraid of?

Who are you afraid of?

Who are you afraid of?

Who are you afraid of?

Who are you afraid of?

Who are you afraid of?

Slave Labour: A Ticking Time Bomb

Yameen Rasheed , 30 March 2014

“I fear that if their inhuman conditions are left to fester for much longer, it might be that this dissatisfaction and resentment might boil over one day in the form of street riots or worse, and bring our economy grinding to a halt. That is a day I do not want to see.”

I just read a piece in the Dhaka Tribune by Prof. Selina Mohsin, the former Bangladeshi High Commissioner to Maldives, about the plight of migrant Bangladeshi workers in the Maldives.

Most of the information was not new to me; there is a reason why the Maldives has consistently been placed on the US State Department’s Tier-2 watch-list for Human trafficking for four consecutive years, and the reason is plainly visible if you look around in any direction on the streets of Malé. However, there was one shocking statistic she points out that I

was not previously aware of.

“...on an average one Bangladeshi worker died each week. For instance one died from poisonous fumes while cleaning a well. He was just 22 years of age. While Bangladeshi labourers were constructing a resort villa, over a lagoon, a wooden pole fell over one of them and he died from head injury. Such events occurred regularly”

Another staggering statistic reported earlier in Minivan News is that the trafficking industry is worth almost

as much as the the country's fishing industry, which ranks second behind Tourism.

I remember that the High Commissioner had been outspoken about the issue during her assignment in the Maldives. In 2010, she mentioned that 30-40 stranded workers turned up at her embassy every day. "without passports and in very dire straits".

At the time, she demanded tighter immigration control. The Immigration Department, however, pleaded that it was not possible to screen workers at the time of arrival "as we do not have a Bangladeshi speaker". (As a side note: It should be "Bengali", not "Bangladeshi". Also, this is a terrible excuse, because the Immigration department should know better than anyone that there are 70,000-90,000 Bengali speakers in the Maldives, and I hear some of them are looking for jobs)

Indeed, while compiling a report a couple of years ago, I learned that there were an estimated 70,000 Bangladeshi workers in the country, with up to 20,000 more undocumented workers. This, in a country with a population of a little over 360,000 and a 28% unemployment rate!

I've heard defensive arguments from Maldivians that "Sure they are treated poorly, and paid little in the way of wages, but hey – nobody asked them to come here! Surely, it is better here than what they have back home. If they



were so unhappy, they would return to Bangladesh!"

This argument is not only factually incorrect, but also displays a staggering ignorance of the meaning of the term 'exploitation'.

Many workers often sell their land or take large loans to pay agents to go abroad on the lure of high paying jobs, only to discover upon arrival that they have been swindled and left on their own. Many have their passports confiscated by unscrupulous employers and agents.

They are often crammed a dozen or more men to tiny, humid rooms where they sleep in rotating shifts. I've had too many Bangladeshi workers and waiters tell me that they haven't been paid wages for months on end – and are forced to do odd jobs on the streets to make a living. Others do hard labour for ridiculously small wages to make barely enough to eat and have some left over to support their families back home. I've seen waiters do shifts that begin at 6 in the morning and end at 2 the next morning. There are workers in Thilafushi wading through

stinking sludge and breathing in toxic fumes from that ecological disaster of a garbage island, while making less per day than what you would pay for a coffee at a half-decent café in Malé.

Worker in Thilafushi. (Photograph by Hani Amir)

I was once walking on Majeedhee magu with a visiting researcher of Maldives, when we witnessed an accident. Some reckless asshole on a speeding motorbike came crashing into a Bangladeshi man on a bicycle. The handle of his bicycle was twisted, and he stood there mute and in shock, holding his hand. I grabbed his hand and examined it. His thumb was completely crushed flat through the nail.

The asshole on the bike just grinned like a fool, waved and sped away. The moment I told the injured man he ought to go straight to the hospital, he flat out refused and seemed to be in a sudden hurry to get away. Before I could insist any further, he got on his broken bicycle and pedaled off in the opposite direction.

I realized that the man likely had no health insurance, and was almost certainly an undocumented worker who could not approach either law enforcement or a court or an employer or a hospital for aid, and would rather suffer in silence with a painful thumb than face deportation.

There are the tens of thousands of people like that in the Maldives, who are forced to suffer inhuman conditions and live with no dignity. In spite of the suffering

and humiliation these workers go through every day, they are also frequently scapegoats for whatever issue is plaguing society. The economy is weak? Because expat workers are shipping away our dollars. Crime rates high? Blame foreign labourers. Somebody in the hospital got infected with HIV? Blame foreign lab technician. Maldivians education system is a complete fucking shambles? Blame foreign teachers with their stupid, unintelligible accents.

Local media and society jump on any chance to alienate and stigmatize expatriates. And this is despite it being self-evident that these workers, labourers and teachers contribute more than what they get back in meagre incomes by way of productivity and building infrastructure. I would go so far as to say they're the glue that's holding together an otherwise ravaged, unsustainable economy.

In December last year, President Yameen signed into law a bill criminalizing Human Trafficking. It came late in the day, but is arguably a reasonable first step. My problem with it is, it doesn't go far enough.

As things stand now, these terrible human rights abuses are not of interest to any political party in the Maldives and they simply do not figure in any political discussion.

When a third of the resident population of country lives in such oppressive

circumstances, I think they need better representation to lobby for their rights and fair living conditions. I have previously thought on the possibility of a local community-based NGO or association of migrant workers, perhaps backed by their country's respective embassies, to better protect these vulnerable, disaffected workers politically.

I strongly feel that Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and Indian workers should have as much rights, freedom and dignity on Maldivian soil as we enjoy in their countries – and this can come about only with organized pressure groups and representative lobbying to improve their situation.

I fear that if their inhuman conditions are left to fester for much longer, it might be that this dissatisfaction and resentment might boil over one day in the form of street riots or worse, and bring our economy grinding to a halt. That is a day I do not want to see.

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<http://thedailypanic.com/2014/03/slave-labour-a-ticking-time-bomb/>



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Tributes

Murder in the Time of Social Media: Homage to the Work of Yameen Rasheed

Ahmed Tholal

“The very injustice, violence and intolerance
Yameen voiced out against, caught up
with him and gave him a lethal doze of its
venom.”

Yameen Rasheed was a soft spoken young man with a loud and reverberating voice. His message and what he stood for was his penvoice, and unlike politicians and orators who use their decibel prowess to drive their points home, Yameen simply used the potency of his cause.

He stood for fundamental human rights. He spoke out against oppression of thought and mind and called out religious fundamentalism for what it is; a repressive social control mechanism to create and foster hatred and fear amongst people. He believed in equality and a society that respected everyone, regardless of what they believed in or how they chose to live their lives. He wrote about

serious issues with an unparalleled wit and humour that you often forget about your daily grind when you submerge yourself in his aptly titled blog ‘The Daily Panic’. Even at a time when I can barely close my eyes without breaking down, I am still unable to control my laughter when I see posts like this:

Yameen Rasheed@yaamyn

“Police: willing to investigate
Katie Price’s topless photos

Me too, guys. Me too.”

(<http://thedailypanic.com/2017/04/1873/>)

He also found interest in science and humour and international politics. He was your average fun loving, simple human being and then some.

He had a knack for capturing the essence of stories and sharing them in the simplest language. He had the ability to liberate information from complexity and sieve the important from the useless. He would detail an entire week with the same waggishness in every event he detailed. From political happenings, to the idiosyncrasies within the society and yes also to issues highlighting the dangers of religious fundamentalism.

He stood against fundamentalism like a sore thumb to those who couldn't fathom what he was saying. But unlike the hatred spewed on social media against him, Yameen did not use hatred or vile language to respond to his adversaries. He used logic and a gentle sense of sarcasm that hit home his point harder than all the hatred in the world. He was labeled as anti government, unpatriotic to irreligious. And always his response is worthy of a smile.

Yameen Rasheed @yaamyn

Yameen Rasheed Retweeted LOUD-MOUTH

You're right. The Illuminati agents were happy. But then the Lizard People and the aliens got together in 2012, and the rest is history.

And yet he continued unfazed to talk

about what he believed in. What he considered important above all the hatred and violence. He was not irrational and illogical in his ideals. He knew many of his views would be challenged both for its lack of political worth and because in many cases it stood squarely opposite to what many religious fundamentalists preached. And yet he persisted.

Yameen Rasheed @yaamyn

Freedom starts with freedom of conscience.

Without that fundamental freedom of the mind, what would you do with the other freedoms?

Yameen Rasheed @yaamyn

What do dhivehin need?
Change. What do dhivehin fear?
Change.

He had a knack for capturing the essence of stories and sharing them in the simplest language. He had the ability to liberate information from complexity and sieve the important from the useless.

He believed in the development of the people and he was not secretive about it. He wanted good for this country and he was never one to shy away from his disdain about the path that the government had chosen for the people.

Yameen Rasheed @yaamyn

What we need is #tharahgee of the mind. May the giant cranes inside your head help you aspire towards higher ambitions than a futsal ground

To those who think and continue to be convinced about him deserving the violence that ended his young life because of the opinions he held, I do not have much to say. But to those on the fence, it is important to know the person he was and continues to be through the calls for justice and equality and fairness and compassion.

Above everything else he was a loyal friend. And more than anyone else, he was dedicated to his best friend Ahmed Rilwan. Since 2014, Yameen has found only one reason to do what he does. And that is to find out what happened to his friend and to bring those responsible to justice. He was driven by that single goal.

Yameen Rasheed @yaamyn

Reasons to wake up in the morning. Exactly one.

Yameen Rasheed @yaamyn

Ahmed Rilwan.984 days since this brave, kind, selfless young man was abducted.
#FindMoyameehaa

Rilwan was more than a friend to him. They were kindred spirits who shared values and opinions and philosophies as one would share a cup of tea. He saw in Rilwan the kind of friend Jalaluddin Rumi saw in the Shams of Tabrez.

Looking back, I'm reminded of the great Jalaluddin Rumi's teacher who once prophesied to him:

'...a great friend will come to you and you will be each other's mirror

He will lead you to the innermost parts of the spiritual world..'

That lyrical foreshadowing of Rumi's momentous encounter with the mysterious Shams of Tabrez, could just as easily have applied to my first encounter with Rilwan.

(<http://thedailypanic.com/2015/02/the-rilwan-story/>)

Since Rilwan's abduction, Yameen has been frantically searching for answers. Either by organizing protests and marches or delving into the evidence and raising key questions or just by being there for his family in times of an unprecedented crisis. And through it all he never gave up. He relentlessly pursued

justice for his friend with an unwavering dedication and a difficult optimism. He held onto the cause for which Rilwan stood and moved on undeterred. Despite the strength he found through a common desire for justice, Yameen was devastated by Rilwan's abduction and his fight for justice was not always emotionally easy. easy emotionally.

"Over these difficult months, I have finally learned what Rilwan had meant. It is simple, really.

"We do not live in a decent society."

(<http://thedailypanic.com/2015/02/the-rilwan-story/>)

He was angry and sad and frustrated by the lack of action to find the truth about his friend. He spoke out against the state inaction and he was vehemently advocating for a proper investigation to find out what happened to Rilwan. For his sake and for the sake of the plea of Rilwan's mother.

Yameen Rasheed @yaamyn

975 days of this bullshit by
@PoliceMv

Harassment, obstruction, denial
of justice. #FindMoyaMeehaa

And despite all the odds he persisted. He continued to fight until the morning of the 23rd of April 2017 when he was brutally knifed to death inside the

stairwell of his home. He had multiple stab wounds on his face, neck and body and he breathed his last as doctors were trying to revive him. Yameen had been receiving innumerable death threats and he had reported them to the Police. However, there was no action taken. He was openly being harassed and intimidated by people and yet there was no action taken by the authorities.

It was ironic that freedom of expression was being so systematically curtailed by the State for everyone except those who spewed hatred and incited violence against human rights activists. About a month ago a social media activist Thayyib Shaheem was arrested and held in detention for many days for simply tweeting about the recent H1N1 epidemic. He was seen as inciting fear amongst the people and yet those who threatened Yameen with death and beheadings were not. And eventually while no one paid attention to the threats, human rights activist, blogger, news media journalist and a gentle human being was brutally slain at his home. The very injustice, violence and intolerance Yameen voiced out against, caught up with him and gave him a lethal doze of its venom. The message was loud and clear; this is not a country for those who speak out for justice. If you want to have your freedom then speak out for hatred and injustice and intolerance. Or else...

There is an interesting and poignant tweet from Yameen on the 19th of April

2017, just three days before he was killed.

Yameen Rasheed @yaamyn

“Under the spreading chestnut
tree I sold you and you sold me:

There lie they, and here lie we

Under the spreading chestnut
tree.”

It’s the lyrics of a song played at the Chestnut Tree Café when Winston Smith remembers seeing Jones, Aronson and Rutherford in Chapter 7 of George Orwell’s dystopian novel 1984. To many it will just be a beautiful lyric with a multitude of interpretations. But I am inclined to believe that Yameen was referring to the rather insistent symbolism of the Chestnut tree as a symbol of justice and honesty as it has often been referred to. Given his ideals, he might just be giving us an unwitting final message about the situation we, in this country are.

And as his friends and those who know him through his writings, all we can ever hope to do and do we must, is to remain faithfully under the spreading chestnut tree and make sure that it does not wither away and die. and through our actions we must make sure that the cause for which Yameen fought remains radiantly alive even while we mourn his untimely demise.

—

““We want freedom.”
dhivehin say.

And yet, dhivehin
are almost
unanimous in saying
that we do not want
freedom to think”

-Yameen Rasheed-

The Sister's Keeper...

Aishath Rasheed

You were my first baby
And I couldn't do anything to save you.
I insisted for long,
Please don't come home late. Please don't
tweet stuff.
Understand that this is Maldives.
A land where no one seems to care.
A land of cowards.
And you stood out.
So very brave and so very gentle.

Why don't you get a bike?
But you were conscious of your carbon
footprint.
'I don't want to contribute to the already
congested city.'

Why do you write stuff against the
system? They will get you.
'But it won't sit well with my conscience,
if I bite my tongue,
Someone has to stand for what is right.'

Please be safe.
Please come home early.
Please take a taxi.
'Dhontha, if they want to get you they
will, even if you are inside the house.
One place is not safer than the other.'

You were so brave with your words.
When they couldn't break your spirit
When they couldn't stop your fight for
human rights
When they couldn't stop you from giving
up on your best friend,
They took you.

Too brave for this country..
Too gentle; too kind; too selfless; too
good for us all.
Always standing up for what is
right despite the multitude threats.

You are my hero.
You were what the country needed the
most but did not deserve the least.
They failed you. They failed the dreams of
a family.
They failed hope, goodness and humanity.

The loss is not just of a father or a mother
or a sister.
A loss too desperate for one to bear
The loss is of this nation

As a Child



My brother was a perfect child. He was one of those annoying siblings who ate fruits and veggies. Who never threw tantrums. Who never shouted or screamed. He was always a perfect child to mom and dad. He was always kind and gentle and witty. Always thoughtful. He wasn't loud ever but very firm in his soft-spoken way. I was in awe of him although he was 4 years younger to me. He was a natural writer. I remember waiting for his English answer sheets, eager to read his composition and story. I was his earliest and biggest fan. He was my pillar. He was different in a good way. He didn't enjoy huge family gatherings. But he always was there for us. He just didn't like the noise. He was the son who was ever so gentle with mom and dad. I have never heard him complain about the food. He would always say "it's good" I have never heard him voicing his disapproval towards mom or dad.

We shared the closest bond. He was my best friend. We grew up playing together. We fought too. But loved each other and took care of each other. When I look back, we have never made any decisions without discussing with each other first. Last month, he returned from London, he told me he was in love. I was very happy for him. Maybe finally my brother would leave this dangerous place. Maybe finally he would go to a safe place.

Unfortunately he didn't get the chance.

He was too innocent and too trusting. He believed in the innate goodness of the human heart. He didn't realize that there were animals waiting to pounce.

I shudder at what that they did to him, he who was so very gentle. My brother, who never hurt anyone. My brother... my little baby.

—

#WeAreYaamyn

Ish

I understand that covering up the blood stains on the walls is important to you, as it is tragic to walk through a crime scene every day.

But let me make this clear.

Even if you wash away his blood a thousand of times, you cannot stop our hearts from bleeding all across your lies again. Even if you repaint the walls splattered with his blood, you cannot hide the thirty plus wounds from which Yameen Rasheed died.

Over thirty-six wounds!

You think it's normal for someone to have been killed so mercilessly? You think it's justified for him to choke to death on his own life? You think it's a beautiful job that he's laid to rest beneath the ground now?

His heart may have stopped beating, but he lives on in all of us. When we breathe, we feel the many ways you sliced into him - over and over, over and over, over and over again.

I don't sleep well anymore. But let me assure you, we will not let you sleep in peace either. You took away a light that was searching for this nation's soul, and now we rise a thousand torches to light the way so we can find his best friend the way he always wanted to. We light a thousand torches to light the way, because he burns in us.

This time last week, on an early Sunday, between two and three, you stole a life from us. Butchered it in the darkness, slit his throat, broke his skull –

You will not break his will.
You cannot steal his heart.
You cannot silence his voice.
You will NEVER kill his spirit.

We are Yameen.

We will stand. Slay us again, if you dare.
Wash away the stains. Draw a white curtain and refuse to answer questions.

It will not be enough.
We will fight.
We will #FindMoyameehaa.

#WeAreYaamyn

“.....if they want to get
you they will, even if you
are inside the house.
One place is not safer
than the other.”

-Yameen Rasheed-



“The test for right and wrong isn't "did the Parliament vote for it?"

Sometimes it's useful to have a conscience.”

-Yameen Rasheed-

Our Identity: One of Yameen's Big Questions

Azim Zahir

“Our national self-understanding of the *sathain satha muslim qaum* (“100% Muslim nation”) with its image of a united (*ebbaiwantha*) and one (*ehbaehvantha*) people, has collapsed.”

The brutal murder of Yameen Rasheed evoked deeply unsettling reactions and profound questions over who we are as a nation. Those reactions and questions also show a rethinking is required for our very identity.

Our reactions and question

We heard the news of the brutal murder of Yameen Rasheed with deep shock and torment. And many of us were tormented by the brutal murder of Afrasheem Ali and the abduction of Ahmed Rilwan. Our shock and torment was not necessarily because we know what really happened.

Whatever happened, the torment partly arose from the troubling questions we asked over those tragedies.

How could the tragedies be normalised based on what those individuals believed in? How could the tragedies be justified based on what they expressed and longed for? How could that happen for who they were?

Some of us, in fact, did (and continue to) attempt to normalise and justify such tragedies.

Some of us have expressed deep rage over the deviations of others from “pure belief” (*sabha aqida*), “pure methodology” (*sabha manhaj*), and from a fixed identity. A few of us expressed elation following those tragedies.

Many of us were, and continue to be, perplexed by such reactions.

It is exactly those troubling questions

and the reactions that tell us the murders of Yameen, Afrasheem and abduction of Rilwan mark a new type of violence in the country.

The big transformation

Those questions and reactions – and the violence – tell us that we live in deeply unsettling times in the modern Maldives. The ugliest face of the times – the killings, the gore – does not tell us the full story about the larger transformation that has taken place in the society.

There are indeed other mid-range, normal, reactions over this transformation.

Thus, many amongst us may share the angst at the “Western currents” expressed in the following lines by our great thinker and literary giant Aminath Faiza:

*Thahzeebva zamaana nugulbey mifenna
manzaru
Aburen hitun halake kurani Divehi mi
mathivaru
Dhivehinge ulhuma akhlaqves nagai lai
Mi vesheege goiy uvaalai hulhanguge
thafaathu oivaru
Aburen hithun halaake kurani Dhivehi mi
mathivaru*

Many amongst us may also share the genuine pain and harm at the derisive expressions of some of us towards cherished religious beliefs and religious relationships. Only a believer would really experience the real pain, and the harm caused to their affective relations

with religious personalities (such as the Prophet Muhammad) and entities (such as God).

All these deeply unsettling emotive and emotional reactions show there is no longer an escape from the cross-pressures we now face from the diverse beliefs, diverse discourses, and diverse lifestyles in the modern Maldives.

This diversity includes both intra-religious differences and inter-belief (religious) differences. From varieties of Salafism to secular Islam, from Islam to exclusive humanism and atheism, our modern ideological landscape is fragmented.

A new settlement for our identity

With those fragmentations, our old national self-understanding has faced deep fissures. Indeed, our national self-understanding of the *sathain saththa muslim qaum* (“100% Muslim nation”) with its image of a united (*ebbaivantha*) and one (*ebbaevantha*) people, has collapsed.

In its place, a new settlement for our identity is urgently required.

That, I believe, was one of the biggest questions with which Yameen’s brilliant mind grappled.

Azim Zahir is a PhD student in political science at the University of Western Australia. He is also a student of philosophy.

Remembering Yameen

Hawwa Lubna

“Yameen was one of the most brilliant young writers the Maldives has ever seen. He was a passionate advocate of human rights, justice and democracy.”

When I woke up in the morning of April 23, there was a long list of missed calls and unread messages sent from the Maldives. It was strange and confusing. “Lubu, I am so sorry. Call me it’s about Yameen,” the first message I read, several hours too late. And then I opened another, which hit me with three cruel words that I will never forget: “Yameen is dead”.

I can’t recall the first time I met or talked to Yameen Rasheed, but we saw each other last time about a year ago when I visited home for summer holidays. We met couple of times for late evening coffees and early morning *mashuni* breakfasts, to talk politics, society, and make plans to go swimming and island-

hopping that never seemed to work out. When it was time for me to go back to Sweden, he insisted on coming to the airport with me. “To make sure you leave the country,” he joked. He was caring like that, and always more concerned about others than himself. At the airport, we had some extra time before the flight, so we went to the Post Office boutique to buy some souvenirs for my university friends. While I was trying to choose between a turtle and dolphin key chain, Yameen had sneakily bought me a postcard as a farewell present, and wrote the sweetest message on the back of it before giving it to me in person (to save on postage, obviously). It is lying here on my table right now. When the check-in started, I gave him one last hug him and

hurried to catch my flight. Outside, I saw him give me a big smile, wave and head back to Male'.

Last month Yameen was found murdered outside his home in Male'. I have read what his attackers did to him, I won't repeat it here. It is impossible to comprehend the evil that drove them to so brutally take the life of the most kind-hearted, generous, and gentle person I knew.

My mind keeps springing back to conversations I had with my friend, wondering what more could I have said to convince him to leave the Maldives too. I am overwhelmed by the guilt, anger, sadness and pain. It is difficult to find the right words.

Yameen was one of the most brilliant young writers the Maldives has ever seen. He was a passionate advocate of human rights, justice and democracy. He also bravely spoke out against religious and political extremism, in a time when most, including myself, resorted to self-censorship out of fear of persecution and physical safety.

In recent years, the Maldives has become a dangerous place for journalists, bloggers and activists who face a full blown offensive on two fronts; first by the government that continues to restrict free speech using criminal defamation charges, arrests and jail sentences, and secondly, from the radicalised vigilantes who threaten to kill anyone holding

liberal secular beliefs, who they consider as *laadbeenee* (anti-Islamic). Once a person is branded as *laadbeenee* and accused of insulting Islam, there is no guarantee for life or security. "Anything can happen", just as the country's strongman president remarked about Yameen's murder, alluding to his secular views.

It is a terrifying reality that there's absolutely nothing the government, police or courts would (or perhaps could) do to stop the increasing religious fundamentalism and violence in the Maldives. The religious orthodoxy that fuels radicalism, also helps to reinforce the regime's power by legitimising it as the only bulwark against so-called 'western imperialism' and 'attempts to wipe out Islam' from the islands. Years of vigorous political campaigns to invoke Islamic nationalism has led to deep fear and intolerance towards outsiders and other faiths amongst Maldivian public - who today tacitly or openly, condones violent punishment against anyone who breaks this Islamic group ethos.

In the middle of this madness, Yameen remained adamant about preserving a safe space for debate and peaceful coexistence between people of different beliefs. Perhaps he came to appreciate the importance of embracing diversity from living in India, a multicultural and multi-religious society where he spent most of his life surrounded by classmates, friends and neighbours who came from various backgrounds. He had little

patience towards bigotry, intolerance and nationalism.

Upon moving back to the Maldives in 2009, Yameen found himself deeply disturbed by the sheer lack of freedom of conscience, and the toxic combination of amnesia and ignorance that most people seemed to suffer from on the islands. Without much thinking, he picked up his pen, and took the first jab at the society's hollow morals. Perhaps he hoped that he could search for the sense of community and humanity that seemed to have been lost somewhere in history.

On his blog 'The Daily Panic', Yameen routinely posed questions about why regular island folks who called themselves 'good muslims' could so ferociously prey on people with different beliefs and opinions, when they have done absolutely no harm to anyone else. He questioned why the same level of anger and condemnation is never directed at actual criminals who rape children, harass women, or steal from the poor and exploit the most vulnerable.

Yameen also persistently lampooned the vain, greedy, corrupt and self-righteous band of politicians and sheikhs to reveal their moral perversion. He exposed the absurdity and hypocrisy reeking everywhere within the political and religious establishments, disassembling their dominance; picking apart their facade, with words and a smile alone. On Twitter, @yaamyn became a master of quick political squibs and humorous take-

downs, and happily positioned himself as a stubborn-thorn in the side of the pompous, pretentious, and power-hungry.

Naturally, it did not take long before he had gathered a significant following, which included people who admired his eloquent and funny writings, and also those who were angered by it. One death threat after another came in from ignorant critics who misread his satirical criticism of religious orthodoxy and mullahs as mocking of Islam. He reported the threats to the police, they willfully ignored it - instead at one point even detained him for several weeks on bogus obstruction charges.

The risks were real and apparent, and Yameen often joked about it. This does not however mean that he was absolutely fearless and willing to die for the cause of justice. Family and friends close to him knew how much he was tormented by the constant death threats, especially when those making these threats did not even bother to hide their identities after a while. He was being cautious, and actively lobbied for international support to pressure the Maldivian authorities to step up efforts to provide a safe space for journalists, bloggers and activists.

However, there appeared to be near-total impunity to anyone out for his blood, in large part due to the lack of any genuine commitment from the police to investigate death threats. The failure to arrest and prosecute perpetrators behind other politically motivated attacks in

“In recent years, the Maldives has become a dangerous place for journalists, bloggers and activists who face a full blown offensive on two fronts; first by the government that continues to restrict free speech using criminal defamation charges, arrests and jail sentences, and secondly, from the radicalised vigilantes who threaten to kill anyone holding liberal secular beliefs, who they consider as *laadheenee* (anti-Islamic).”

the past - including the heinous murder attempt on blogger Hilath Rasheed in 2012, brutal slaying of moderate religious scholar Dr. Afrasheem Ali in 2012, and the senseless abduction of journalist Ahmed Rilwan in 2014, who is still missing - had also raised serious concerns about police complicity in these crimes.

Silence was though not an option for Yameen. The fight against the abhorrent injustice and intolerance had become deeply personal for him after Rilwan's abduction. Rilwan was his close friend, and his disappearance had left Yameen heart-broken and feeling utterly helpless.

Despite the overwhelming loss of a good friend, Yameen showed that we cannot counter violence with sadness. From the very beginning, he made sure no one will forget Rilwan, and the moral values they

mutually shared. Go to Yameen's Twitter today and you will still find the story of Rilwan, that he had written to remind us of the incredible person we had lost, still pinned to the very top, under a picture of Rilwan embracing his mother. To his very last day on Earth, Yameen pressured the police to bring Rilwan's abductors to justice, rallied for international and local support to find answers, and stood patiently beside Rilwan's grieving family, providing love, hope and support.

Now many of us are left with broken hearts, wondering how to remember and honour our friend Yameen. During the moments I miss him the most, I look for comfort in a message he shared with me last year, after a close friend of mine passed away.

He wrote: “This goes without saying..

But it's rare that you have people like that in your life. Celebrate the fact, it makes dealing with the loss easier. I learned from a wise lady once that you should engage with thoughts at times like this. It sucks, but you're smart and I can see you will deal with this well... Just the trick is not to dismiss thoughts, but to embrace them. Your friend sounds like someone who deserves to be remembered and missed a lot. So do that!"

Everyone who had the chance to know Yameen is today sharing stories of how profoundly they have been touched by him. Yameen's true value is that he was loved and admired by so many people. We have to hold on to the best memories of him. Picture him making funny faces with friends and family, getting all excited and giddy about Curiosity landing on Mars, brainstorming and programming with computer nerds at work, trying to read almost every good book on the planet, running to offer help at the first sight of a crisis, and staying up late at night writing 'unfiltered truth' for all of us to read, laugh and reflect.

Yameen was not only a blogger and human rights defender. He was a good son who made his parents puff up with pride, a caring brother who brought lots of joy to his siblings, a true friend who remained always loyal. He was the kind of conscientious and empathetic person a struggling, directionless community like ours desperately needed. He dared to dream for a more tolerant and peaceful Maldivian society, where people have the

freedom to think, be different, creative and curious, and live a safe and happy life. It is this dream they tried to take away by killing him. But we can't let them.

Though Yameen's soul may have been ripped from his body, luckily for us, he left most of it in his writings.

"So, chin up. Good friends are an inspiration. Live a life that would make him proud of you" - his words, not mine.

-

“Sometime we claim to want transparency and openness.

Sometimes we want the state to enforce the official truth.”

-Yameen Rasheed-

You Remain, We Remain

Namgay Zam

I see sunflowers swaying to a warm breeze.

There is a sun in the sky.

Hundreds of little suns below.

I see sunflowers crashing into each other in an unexpected hailstorm.

No sun in the sky.

Hundreds of little suns below.

Whether sunshine or hail, the sun remains

(just briefly hidden) as do sunflowers

(even if a little weather-beaten).

It's been hailing.

It's been hurting.

We cannot see you anymore.

But like the sun, you remain.

And like sunflowers forever facing the sun,

we remain.

“After a determined struggle all night, I have abandoned the battle to try and fall asleep.

Going to have to caffeined my way through today.”

-Yameen Rasheed-

Yameen's Activism

Forme

Yameen was never afraid of a challenge. He was quick to identify the fundamental challenges in our weak democratic system and brought those issues out into public discourse.

I met Yameen Rasheed three years ago in August 2014. Being an activist myself, I was always eager to meet other activists in the Maldives, especially a prominent blogger like Yameen who had wide following on Twitter. 13,000 followers to be precise.

When Ahmed Rilwan went missing in August 2014, Yameen, myself and many of Rilwan's friends and family went to search for him in Hulhumale. Most of us were clueless of the task ahead of us and the pain ahead of us. We bonded immediately and were determined to find Rilwan.

Yameen's activism was not just on social media; he was a well-organized and creative activist who was able to

sustain the campaign for the search for Rilwan, his dear friend. He was relentless in his campaign. He initiated and organized several meetings with relevant individuals, institutions and other stakeholders including Maldives Police Service (MPS) and Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF). For the findmoyameeha campaign he met with journalists, updated media regularly, and worked with various people to collect over 5000 petitions to submit to the parliament. He organized walks, and he spoke at several international events for his friend. He literally carried the banner for the findmoyameeha campaign.

His activism did not just stop at finding Rilwan and seeking justice for him. He was a social media warrior where he

continuously fought for justice for anyone facing human rights violation and was engaged in debate and discussion on human rights and the status of democracy in the Maldives.

Yameen was never afraid of a challenge. He was quick to identify the fundamental challenges in our weak democratic system and brought those issues out into public discourse. Since 2005, starting from the age of 17, Yameen had been blogging about various issues, demonstrating his satirical writing skills.

His activism was also full of compassion for the people he sought to help and he never had his own agenda. He remained close to Rilwan's family and pictures of him consoling Rilwan's sister are images we will remember forever.

Three days before he was murdered, my last conversation with him was also on freedom of expression, and about an article he wrote where he wanted to use a photo of mine. I mentioned that I'd be going to the Maldives in June and he was delighted that we were going to meet soon. Unfortunately, I will not see him again and he'll be deeply missed. He'd always remain in my heart.

I wish I could turn back time but I know I cannot. But I will carry forward his messages and pick up what he has left for us. His activism and his determination will continue to inspire more people to engage in activism to seek justice in the Maldives.

I'll fight for him, for his friend and for their families to seek justice.

—





It is a rebellious act to
refuse to rebel the way
they expect you to.

-Yameen Rasheed-

You and I

Isb

“And yet for you, staying at home is enough.
 You are my reality, I am yours.
 One day my voice will be stolen.
 And you will continue with your life.”

We live two different lives, you and I.

You have a curfew imposed at eleven because it's traditional that girls don't stay out that late. I come home by ten and have someone walk me up the stairs because I worry about the men yielding knives who could attack me in the safety of my own home.

We live two different lives, you and I.

You worry about a fight you had with your friend. I know it's important too, and of course you ought to worry, but I'm afraid that I might not see my friends alive again every time I say goodbye to them.

We live two different lives, you and I.

You're back to the distraction on the television as soon as you hit the sofa but I'm scrolling through threats made to people by people who don't even bother to have an anonymous identity, and I am sick with worry and I don't know how to enjoy the sublime reality shows so far removed from our realities again.

We live two different lives, you and I.

Sometimes you encounter the police on the streets, standing out in blues, and you know they caught that boy down the street who was selling drugs on the street corner, so you endure them because they keep you safe. In my reality, they harass and belittle those fighting for the cause of the murdered and the disappeared, dispensing blame from themselves

through snide remarks and comments while they play lapdog to those in power and refuse to serve the safety of the citizens.

We live two different lives, you and I.

How many times have you looked the other way while a girl got harassed on the streets? How many times have you scrolled past someone issuing death threats, and went to sleep peacefully allowing them to retain corrupt power of intimidation? How many times have you walked past Rilwan's mother and didn't recognize her grief? How many times have you driven past Yameen's friends and believed he deserved what he got?

We live two different lives, you and I.

You continue to support the corrupt with your signature on a paper alleging yourself to a party of significance, staying at home and entertaining your friends because you know they will not touch your family. Because you believe you've warranted a life you deserve. Because you think that what's happening in this country is to a minority, and they had it coming, and they should've kept their voices shut.

We live two different realities, you and I.

When they tell us to run, you run. When they tell us to hide, you hide. When they tell us they're doing all they can, you're reassured. When they tell us they'll take care of it, you find no reason to fight. When they tell us to let it go, you forget.

When they tell us it's none of your business, you stop bleeding for it. When they tell us to look away, you close your eyes.

We live two different realities, you and I.

We live within the same small radius. We walk in the same circles. We pass each other on the streets. We meet our friends in the same cafes. We have the same people in power. We work within the same system of injustice. People we know have been tortured in jail. People we know have been defeated by dysfunctional courts. People we know have struggled to make ends meet.

And yet for you, staying at home is enough.

You are my reality, I am yours.

One day my voice will be stolen.

And you will continue with your life.

—

“Silencing me is not winning”

– Yameen, August 2014

Shahu Kareem

“How unfair it is that you can’t walk peacefully with your friend without fearing that you will be attacked. How cruel it is you can’t have a conversation with your friend even in a public place without fearing for your life”.

It has been more than a month since I last saw you. It was on your birthday (10 April), when we met up for evening tea. I wasn’t able to get you a proper cake, so I bought you a slice of cheesecake instead. Our conversation lasted for hours like it always does. I sat there, as usual, listening to you.

You told me about your trip to London. You showed me pictures from your trip, and told me the stories behind each one. Where and why it was taken. All about your Sandoz-Hack experience. How nice startups in the hackathon in London were. How helpful everyone was, and how happy they were for your success because

they understood what it means to get the funding.

You told me that you had come to realize that your basic instincts were, after all, not so bad. That people kept telling you about the little things you did that made you a nice person. I pointed out the same, like your habit of keeping your companions away from traffic while walking with them on the road. I pointed out how you tend to hold the person while crossing the road. To this you replied, “Yes I trust myself, I don’t trust those assholes”.

I told you that day that I’m going on a

road trip next week. Naturally you had to point out the semantics of it all - it was hardly a road trip, you said, since I would not be driving. You reminded me that I get sick after a 5-minute car ride in Male' and Delhi to Agra is a 5-hour ride. I assured you I will take meds. You didn't like the idea of me traveling alone. You tried to tell me that it wasn't safe. "Out of nowhere, traveling with a random driver, where nobody can help you. I do not approve of this". I tried to convince you that I would be fine, that I booked a tour from a reputable tour agency, that the trip might turn out great, which it most certainly did. It was one of the best trips I have ever been on. I was eager to tell you all about it; I thought I would message you as soon as I returned to Malé, that I could tell you all about it.

Instead, on the last day of my trip, I got the news that I would never be able to talk to you again.

I still remember the day we met like it was yesterday. One fine day in March of 2012, at your favorite bookshop, the Blossom Bookhouse in Bangalore. You bought me a book and we went out for coffee afterwards. I thought it would be the one and only time we would meet. I was wrong. You turned out to be such a pleasant surprise. We hit it off instantly. I found you to be someone who was very knowledgeable, a person I could have deep, meaningful conversations with.

I was still studying back then. I couldn't decide on a career path as I had no

previous experience in IT industry. My options were spread out between statistics, mathematics or computer science. You encouraged me to pursue a career in programming; you said you were on a mission to increase gender parity in the IT industry.

Back in Malé I applied for a job that required programming in C# (C Sharp). I hadn't studied C# before, and you were the one that taught me the basics. You introduced me to all the right tools and resources. You were there when I got stuck in a difficult problem; even when Stack Overflow couldn't help me you always could. I remember being completely stressed out during the early days - not being able to get around difficult programming tasks. You always told me that it's completely normal, and that no one really knows everything when they start, that everyone learns eventually by solving real world problems. You always believed in me and kept reminding me that I was doing great. (It's really important to have someone who believes in you in the early days of your career).

Looking back over the years we have had endless hours of conversations about almost everything. Life, the universe, programming, science, technology, mathematics, social issues, movies, series, podcasts, songs - the list goes on. It was always intellectual, and thought provoking. You gave me many things to think about over the years.

Every year after Google I/O we would

“Rilwan’s abduction
isn’t about an
individual. It’s was an
attack on everything
Rilwan stood for -
tolerance, peace, justice
#FindMoyameeha”

-Yameen Rasheed-

discuss everything that was announced. We would talk about things we found exciting. Products that were announced at CES that we found interesting, or those that were so ridiculous that you can't even fathom what people might use it for (there's always one to talk about). We would discuss why there isn't a good enough laptop for developers. You were looking forward to the MacBook, but you found it a little disappointing.

I remember the conversations we've had over dinner, about your little social experiments. How users are reacting to new technology, how you were trying to get people to be more security conscious and use software like lastpass. You thought that the best way to get people to adopt was to install it for the person first, and then explain what it is and teach them how to use it. By example. We agreed that we might have a problem understanding end-users. You wanted to organize a workshop for journalists on security measures, and to explain the importance of using e2e (end to end) encrypted messengers. You preferred Signal above them all, adamantly insisting on using it.

Another night last October we were reading Paul Thurrotts' short take on tech and laughing. You said you wanted to do something similar and you have been thinking about it. I told you that you should and that we need it here in Maldives. You were very excited about the idea, but you said one just can't do satire on Maldives because Maldives is a satire

of itself. The next day you sent me link to the first article of the series. I loved it and I was proud of you.

I miss hearing you go on and on about your work. Every single detail of it. How much you love AWS. How a python script saved your life. You always sent me cool controls and other things you think that I might like and find useful. Like Vivaldi browser, for instance. We both set it up and discussed what we liked and didn't like about it. I was happy I had someone to talk to about all the geeky stuff. Someone who understands. You are that someone I could discuss routers with, past 1 in the morning.

Whenever you find a good series you would tell me about it. I still haven't gotten around watching 'The Expanse' - the last series you suggested. I, in turn, recommended movies and series that I thought you would like. I took you to movies just so we could discuss it afterwards. We would discuss each episode of GOT for hours. Never have I met anyone who was so invested in the characters.

You introduced Charlie Brooker to me. I watched his shows and immediately became a fan. We both loved 'Black Mirror'. We found it thought provoking. There was this one episode, 'San Junipero', that I had trouble understanding, and you explained it to me in a way I would.

You were never very good at

“I still remember the day we met like it was yesterday. One fine day in March of 2012, at your favorite bookshop, the Blossom Bookhouse in Bangalore. You bought me a book and we went out for coffee afterwards. I thought it would be the one and only time we would meet. I was wrong. You turned out to be such a pleasant surprise.”

remembering dates, though - yet you managed to surprise me last November with a birthday cake. Last February, when I was unwell, you would message me every two days asking “How are you feeling now?”, “Are you taking medicines regularly?”, “Can I bring you juice?”, “How can I help?”. Every time before visiting, you always message asking if I needed something. Even after I insisted that I was quite alright, you still brought chocolates and cakes.

You used to say you were not afraid to die and you always took measures. Every time you left past 12 or 1 am, I always called a cab for you, and nervously waited for your message. Sometimes you would message “Home. And I didn’t even die once” or “I’m home. Safe and sound”, and I would send a relieved “Thank God you are alive”. Last new year’s eve, we couldn’t

get a taxi and you were going to walk home. I offered to walk you home. You thought it wasn’t necessary since I’m tiny and probably couldn’t protect you. You tried to convince me it’s okay, “It’s new year’s Eve and all the paatays must be out of Malé drinking and celebrating New Year. This is the safest night to walk”.

I distinctly remember our strolls down the hectic streets of Male’ and peaceful streets of Villingili. How scared for your life I had to be each time, thinking you might get attacked. Do you remember that night from last December, we decided to go for a walk since our movie night got cancelled? We walked all the way from Schwack to Rasfannu. We ended up settling in one of those undhoali. While analyzing the whole area, you noticed a guy across us in one of joali who looked increasingly suspicious. I

couldn't help staring at the suspicious guy and you were analyzing his movements. We decided to leave and then walked towards the tsunami monument area. We were standing there talking when I saw your face tensed and you gave me that signal. I turned around and saw a group of guys, all at once got up and walked towards us. I can never forget that gut wrenching feeling I had and how panicked I got, thinking something really bad was about to happen. You too thought that they were going to attack you. Again that night, you said you don't want anyone to see it when you are attacked and that you were tensed because I was there. Luckily, they walked right past us. You were safe that night. But it didn't feel safe as scary scenarios of what might have happened ran through our minds. We left immediately. It got me thinking, "How unfair it is that you can't walk peacefully with your friend without fearing that you will be attacked. How cruel it is you can't have a conversation with your friend even in a public place without fearing for your life".

I never felt that you held back from me, and I was happy that you felt like you could talk to me about anything. I remember the sombre, increasingly frequent, moments when we talked about death threats. You said if you get killed I'm only allowed to be sad until next Tuesday. You tried easing everyone into accepting that you might not be here one day. Despite this, I guess it's not something we would ever have been prepared for. Even after the many "this might be the last time we talk.", "this might be the last time we meet.", "this might be the last time I sleep".

The last memory of you I have is a very happy Yameen; all excited to see those notes, cards, photos and letters inside S. by J.J abrams & Doug Dorst. I'm glad I got to do one last nice thing for you like you have done a thousands of times for me.

—

Under the Orwellian Chestnut Tree

Ahmed Tholal

Under the Orwellian Chestnut Tree,
A cool breeze blows.
A just blade of grass grow from the darkened earth,
From where you left your mark on the hollow ground.

It is friendship's valiant song,
Lyrical in Rumi's devastating love.
That led the just blade of grass grow from the darkened earth,
From where you left your mark on the hollow ground.

It's freedoms' call at liberty's dawn,
The open mind is a dreamy canvass
As a just blade of grass grow from the darkened earth
From where you left your mark on the hollow ground.

The shackles of falsehood,
Have died a silent death.
Letting a just blade of grass grow from the darkened earth
From where you left your mark on the hollow ground.

Under the Orwellian Chestnut Tree,
The breeze continues to blow,
And we in your memory have forgiven the tears that befell,
To allow the blade of grass to grow from the darkened earth
From whence you lie still now but never silent,
As Facebook lives give a million virtual births,
That from where you left your mark on the hollow ground.

Loabi. My Humsafar.

Celine Peroni

“You were everything I could wish for. In no time, you had me fall desperately in love.

But it happened.

And so, we lost it all. All our hopes, dreams, fantasies. Broken. Our future. Crushed.”

I'm staring at this blank page with wet eyes and tears running down my face.

You often say that words matter, and indeed they do. But you are the virtuoso in crafting ideas and feelings into carefully chosen words, not me. And right now, words fail me.

They've been failing me for ten days now. Ten horrifying, atrocious, sickening days since that sleepless night and the moment when that freezing darkness fell on me. I had been calling you all night. I knew something had gone awfully wrong. You would never, never have let me without news for more than a few minutes, let alone several hours.

Tonight our countdowns to the 1st July would mark 59 and 58 days, respectively. Countdowns, yes, because we could never agree on how to count the remaining days until that moment of thrilling joy when you would have held me again tight. You would fiercely insist that the last morning shouldn't count. Because, for you, on that day, there would be no more mornings to wait until the next one, when you would finally set foot on that ferry to come and meet me at the airport.

You would probably be ten minutes late, you warned me. Because, as you say, “the Universe malfunctions when you approach; space-time starts bending a bit”.



But you'll be there, you said. "So long as ferries operate, and the sea hasn't turned to fire."

"Or something just super catastrophic happens."

And it happened.

You brightened up my life in countless adorable, astonishing, unexpected ways. With thousands of delicate, light subtle touches, you simply brought in magic. Your never-ending curiosity, your calm, cute stubbornness, your childish innocence, your thoughtfulness, selflessness and generosity inspired me deeply. But mostly, you were such a caring and humble person. You were everything I could wish for. In no time, you had me fall desperately in love.

But it happened.

And so, we lost it all. All our hopes, dreams, fantasies. Broken. Our future. Crushed.

I lost you. I lost my breath. I lost my smile. I lost everything which truly mattered. On the bright side, now I've got a nice red balloon outside my balcony. When the guy at the shop asked me when the party was, I didn't quite have the heart to tell him that you had been stabbed to death a few days before. And that red balloons are not always meant for parties.

We often talked about the threats you kept receiving. Certainly, you were

not afraid to die. Amongst the things that made you anxious or just mildly uncomfortable were spreadsheets, invoices, gossip, heat and humidity combined. Not death.

But because lately, you occasionally felt you were "a real person", you started to look at things differently. You said you would have been pretty annoyed if they suddenly decided to jail you before I came. You took cabs at night as "part of your greater conspiracy to stay alive until you meet me". You were finally able to picture yourself more than two or three weeks ahead.

And because forever sounded like a pretty optimistic timeframe, you decided we should rather settle for 400 years instead.

Turns out, we didn't have 400 years at our disposal. We didn't even have one. Yet, we did make the most of the little time we had. Thinking of it, our story was constantly punctuated by a sense of urgency. That irresistible urge to hold your hand, at the very beginning. That mood of urgency when you first kissed me, because hadn't you done so, "the Universe would have fallen apart". Endless calls late at night. Hours sharing our mutual excitement, stories, planning ahead, discussing books and poetry, more than often ending up laughing to tears.

The tears that flood my eyes are of a very different kind today. And the excruciating pain takes my breath away.

We will never get to see the whale sharks in Dhigurah, for which you had secretly planned to take a diving course. You, the water-averse type who can barely float. Just because you would have done anything to make this holiday perfectly right.

I will never get to learn these fascinating Urdu words which you were keeping for me, “one for each day that we would spend together”.

We will never get to board that plane to Lanka. And those two seats which we picked together so that I could rest my head on your shoulder will remain desolately empty.

We will never find out about that Original Rocket Burger place in Galle, which made us laugh so much.

I will never get to hear you whisper all those secrets in my ears, which you kept repeating you were struggling to keep.

And you will never get to hold this little Sofia in your arms, as you so dearly wished.

Recollecting the sweetest moments we

spent together, you used to say that your gravity went off and that “I attached a thousand helium balloons to your spirits”.

No one will ever know for sure, but I like to think that your last tweet was meant to reflect that feeling of weightless, fragile happiness.

What I know for sure, loabi, is that I love you. In the purest, deepest, and most inalienable way. And I always will.

May 2nd, 2017

—

We are Yameen.

We will stand.

Slay us again, if you dare.

Wash away the stains.

Draw a white curtain and refuse
to answer questions.

It will not be enough.

We will fight.

We will #FindMoyameehaa.

#WeAreYaamyn

-Ish-

#WeAreYaamyn





