

**Joint Press Statement: Transparency Maldives and Maldives Journalists Association  
express concern regarding the proposed amendments to the Election (General) Act  
11/2008**

We are greatly concerned by the government's proposed amendments to the Election (General) Act 11/2008 that will potentially restrict the scope of journalists monitoring elections, just six months ahead of this year's presidential elections.

According to the proposed amendment to Section 41 of the Act, only registered journalists will be allowed to cover elections and registered journalists are defined as "any person engaged in providing news in any registered media or place providing broadcasting service, including photographers and videographers working there".

The change in the General Election Law will undermine election monitoring efforts by media organisations, especially when important elections like the presidential elections are round the corner. Media plays a key role in ensuring that the elections are conducted in a fair manner, and as such, any move to curtail the media's opportunity to monitor the election raises questions regarding the integrity of the election and will reduce public trust in the electoral process.

If the amendments are passed, foreign media outlets and journalists as well as local freelance journalists interested in covering this year's presidential elections and other upcoming elections will be prevented from monitoring elections.

**CALLS:**

- The election commission, the government, and parliament's efforts to amend election laws should be made in consultation with all civil society, media, and other stakeholders working to ensure the integrity of elections;
- These amendments are intended to ensure that media participation and journalists and reporters are allowed to monitor general elections as much as possible, keeping in mind the way the local press media operates and the challenges in the sector;
- Ensure that any reforms meet international best practices standards.

We also call on the Parliament and all relevant institutions to ensure that all elections can be widely observed, and that foreign media and freelance journalists can continue to cover elections in the same manner.