

## **Press statement on the opening of polls for the 2023 Presidential Election**

**9 September 2023** - Transparency Maldives observer network has a wide national coverage spanning Malé and the atolls, resorts, industrial islands and prisons, as well as abroad in Colombo, Sri Lanka and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. We thank the over 400 observers and volunteers deployed across the country for their dedication in observing and assisting in the election observation processes.

In observing the 2023 Presidential Election, Transparency Maldives is assessing both the election-day proceedings and have monitored the larger electoral and political environment during the pre-election since May 2023. The observations are carried out at ballot boxes which have been selected through a random sample. The results we report from our observation are generalisable to the entire country. The following results are based on the observation at the time of opening of polls.

The opening procedure went well, with all polling stations open by 9:00 am, and 85.8% of polling stations open within the first 10 minutes of the required opening time.

Nearly all polling station officials were in place at all polling stations.

The materials required for voting were present, the ballot papers were counted and reconciled at all polling stations, and all ballot boxes were verified as empty at the start of the voting process.

Candidates were well represented at polling stations. Three or more candidate/party observers were present at 89.5% of all observed polling stations. All polling stations observed had at least 1 candidate/party observer present and 7.2% of polling stations had 5 or more party/candidate observers at the polling station.

Observers from PPM/PNC coalition were present at 72% of the polling stations while 71% and 34% of polling stations had observers from MDP/AP/MDA coalition and The Democrats respectively. Transparency Maldives also notes that police were operating outside at 96% of the observed polling stations at the opening time.

Observers concluded that the polling stations were set up to ensure a secret vote in the vast majority of cases (97%). This was less clear in about 3% of all cases observed. These polling stations will be closely watched by our observers.

We encourage all parties to maintain peace during the voting process and after the preliminary results are announced.

Transparency Maldives encourages all those eligible to exercise their right to vote. Our observers will be present at polling stations during voting, vote counting, and the announcement of preliminary results.

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