

## **Press Statement: Concerns Over Restrictions on Freedom of Media, Expression and Assembly Amid Ongoing Political Protests**

**29 April 2026**

Transparency Maldives expresses serious concern over recent developments restricting civic and democratic space in the Maldives, particularly with respect to the constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of media, expression and assembly.

On 27 April, the Maldives Police Service conducted a raid on the offices of *Adhadhu News*. The officers entered the premises under a court order. Following a four-hour search, the Police seized laptops and hard drives of journalists, marketing staff and administrators.

### **Key Concerns:**

- **Concerns regarding procedural compliance:** Despite being expressly informed during the search that the warrant did not authorize seizure of any materials from the premises by Adhadhu's legal team, the Police proceeded with the search and confiscation.
- Under the Criminal Procedure Code, searches involving journalistic data are subject to specific legal safeguards, including a requirement that a recognized media industry body be present during any search or inspection. Adhadhu's legal team confirmed to the media that no such representative organization was present, raising serious concerns about procedural compliance.
- Using criminal provisions to address matters that should fall under established civil media regulations risks undermining the independence of journalism and sets a troubling precedent for media freedom in the Maldives. It is concerning that authorities appear to be sidestepping established civil procedures for media regulation, which are intended to safeguard press independence and ensure accountability through appropriate channels.
- **Violation of constitutionally protected rights:** Article 28 of the Constitution states that "No person shall be compelled to disclose the source of any information that is espoused, disseminated or published by that person." The indiscriminate confiscation of devices exposes journalists and their sources to serious risk, potentially compromising ongoing work unrelated to the investigation, and undermining the constitutional right of journalists to protect their sources.

Furthermore, separate court orders have imposed travel bans on Adhadhu CEO Hussain Fiyaz Moosa and Managing Editor Hassan Mohamed, with both individuals summoned and multiple charges reportedly brought against them, signalling a further escalation in efforts to criminalise press freedom.

These developments are arising in the context of ongoing political protests, where reports on restrictions on live coverage have been applied for some media outlets, alongside heightened law enforcement presence and instances of excessive use of force. Taken together, the use of criminal processes against journalists, apparent breaches of due process, restrictions on media reporting, and the policing of assemblies reflect a troubling pattern of shrinking civic space that risks undermining democratic governance, accountability, and public trust.

Transparency Maldives calls for:

- The immediate cessation of the use of criminal law to target journalists, and the withdrawal of charges against media professionals.
- Ensuring that any action taken is consistent with constitutional protections, and that concerns regarding media content are addressed through appropriate civil and regulatory mechanisms.
- The return of all seized journalistic equipment and materials, and a review of the legality of the actions taken during the raid.
- Full compliance with due process, including strict adherence to court warrants and legal safeguards for journalistic data, and an immediate review of any actions taken beyond authorised powers.
- The lifting of travel restrictions imposed on media professionals, and the protection of freedom of movement without undue interference.
- The protection of journalists, media workers, and human rights defenders, including their right to protect sources and to work without intimidation, harassment, or threat of reprisal.
- Independent oversight and accountability, including investigations into potential procedural violations and misuse of authority.
- The upholding of constitutional and international obligations, ensuring that any restrictions on fundamental freedoms meet the tests of legality, necessity, and proportionality.