

Transparency Maldives condemns the instructions by the Local Government Authority to revoke the statement on the Abuse of State Resources issued by the N. Kendhikulhudhoo Council

3 March 2024

Transparency Maldives condemns the interference of the Local Government Authority (LGA) by instructing to revoke the statement issued by the N. Kendhikulhudhoo Council. The Council had released a statement on 2 March 2024 condemning the abuse of state resources by the incumbent government during an official event organised by the council. This act of LGA goes against the spirit of the Decentralisation Act, and the key principles of decentralised governance. It is imperative that local councils retain the autonomy to address issues of public concern without fear of retribution or censorship from overseeing bodies.

During the recent official visits, during the previously announced official campaign period by the President to Addu, Fuvahmulah, Gaafu Alif, Gaafu Dhaalu, Haa Alif, Haa Dhaalu, Shaviyani, Noonu and Raa atoll, Transparency Maldives observed a clear abuses of state resources including:

- The announcement of new development projects and the signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) for these projects
- Active campaigning for candidates of the ruling coalition by key state officials
- Pledges to increase salaries and allowances of civil service staff through parliamentary means

Instead of intimidating public institutions vigilant of corruption, state institutions must uphold the principles of accountability, transparency, and impartiality, and facilitate creating an environment for a free and fair election. The role of overseeing bodies such as the LGA should be to support and empower local councils in their efforts to uphold the rule of law and promote good governance. We welcome the decision by the Decentralization Committee of the Parliament to investigate LGA's actions, and call on the Parliamentary Committee to hold LGA accountable to ensure Councils can act free of intimidation and interference.

TM calls upon the relevant authorities to investigate these allegations of abuse of state resources and to take appropriate action to ensure accountability and the integrity of the electoral process. We remind public institutions of their duty to ensure that democratic principles and the rule of law prevail. Any attempts to manipulate or undermine the electoral process must be condemned unequivocally and investigated.

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