



**29<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council**  
**Item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention**

**Oral Statement Delivered by R. Iniyan Ilango**  
**On behalf of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

**Wednesday, 24 June 2015**

Mr President, FORUM-ASIA expresses concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in several Asian countries. The human rights situation in Maldives continues to regress. The right to peaceful assembly has been severely restrained while trumped up charges suppress political dissent. Former President Nasheed was sentenced to 13-years in prison after a deeply flawed and unfair trial found him guilty of terrorism in March. On 1 May approximately 200 protesters were arrested during a peaceful demonstration<sup>1</sup> demanding the former President's release. Three opposition leaders face terrorism charges, while another 129 protesters face various other criminal charges.<sup>2</sup> We call on the government of Maldives to repeal the Anti-Terrorism Act and reiterate our calls for a review of the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly Act and other laws that unduly restrict freedoms of assembly and expression in the country.

The ongoing political impasse in Bangladesh continues to induce serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.<sup>3</sup> The right to freedom of expression has been severely curtailed and several news editors have been persecuted for reports critical of the government. We are alarmed by the growing intolerance towards freedom of expression in the context of religion in Bangladesh, and strongly condemn the recent killings of three bloggers who had posted pieces online that were critical of religious extremism.<sup>4</sup> We urge the government to fulfill its obligation to protect its citizens from human rights violations by both state and non-state actors. We further express concern at recent attempts to stifle democratic space through the draft Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act and the newly proposed cyber security law, which will widen the scope of offenses and impose harsher penalties than the existing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act. We urge the government to withdraw these proposed draft laws, and reiterate our call for the repeal of existing repressive laws, including the ICT Act.<sup>5</sup>

Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>1</sup> MDN, [Briefer following observations of the May Day Protests](#), 3 May 2015.

<sup>2</sup> MDN, [Briefer on the Current Situation Concerning Detention of Protesters and Threats to Employment Rights](#), 24 May 2015.

<sup>3</sup> AFAD & FORUM-ASIA, [Bangladesh: Extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances amidst political impasse must end](#), 10 February 2015.

<sup>4</sup> OHCHR, [Bangladesh: UN human rights experts condemn killing of bloggers critical of extremism](#), 13 May 2015

<sup>5</sup> FORUM-ASIA, [Bangladesh: FORUM-ASIA Reiterates Call for the Release of Adilur Rahman Khan and Condemns Continued Attacks on Freedom of Expression](#), 25 September 2013.