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COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE – COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

International Commission of Jurists condemns the attack on JSC member Aishath Velezinee

Geneva, 5 January 2011

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) condemns the violent assault against Judicial Services Commission (JSC) member Aishath Velezinee on Monday morning, 3 January. The ICJ calls on the Government of the Maldives to immediately launch an independent, impartial, and transparent investigation into this shocking crime.

Ms. Velezinee was stabbed three times in the back by unknown assailants while walking on Chaandhanee Magu near Iskandaru School in Male'. Fortunately the injuries are not life threatening, and she is currently recovering at Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital.

The ICJ is gravely concerned that the attack may be politically motivated. The stabbing took place in daylight in a public space, with no evidence of robbery or theft.

In her capacity as Presidential appointee to the JSC, Ms. Velezinee has advocated strongly for an independent and accountable judiciary. She has publicly and persistently criticized the JSC for abandoning its Constitutional mandate under Articles 159 and 285 by failing to follow transparent and lawful procedures during the vetting process of the judiciary (excluding the Supreme Court). The JSC majority eventually decided to reappoint 191 of 197 judges despite vocal opposition by Ms. Velezinee and other colleagues, in the context of broader concerns expressed in the legal community about the competency and integrity of a number of such judges.

"Ms. Velezinee's fearless and controversial advocacy on behalf of justice for ordinary citizens of the Maldives has earned her a constant barrage of verbal attacks from prominent political figures," said Roger Normand, the ICJ's Asia Pacific Director. "The Government must take swift action, not only to investigate this cowardly stabbing, but equally important, to reaffirm the centrality of rule of law in the new constitutional order."

Recognizing that the Maldives is at a sensitive juncture in its transition to democratic governance, the ICJ repeats its call for the Government to promptly and effectively investigate and prosecute, in accordance with international fair trial standards, this violent assault against a high-profile public official.

For further information please contact:

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The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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