



# INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

" dedicated since 1952 to the primacy, coherence and implementation of international law and principles that advance human rights "

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Maldives: Ban on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be lifted immediately**

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today called on the Government of Republic of Maldives to lift immediately a ban on the possession of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"The Maldivian Government has taken an unprecedented step that puts into question the rights of all citizens", said ICJ Commissioner Professor Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im. "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is fully compatible with Islamic principles. The commitment of many Islamic states to the Declaration clearly demonstrates this. The ban should be lifted and the National Human Rights Commission should be free to distribute the Declaration".

The Maldives Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs announced the banning of the Declaration on 5 July, in what the Council has said could be interpreted as a fatwa. The Council said that Articles 16 and 18 of the Declaration, on the right to marry and found a family and on freedom of religion, are in contradiction with the country's Constitution. In the same announcement the Council prohibited the National Human Rights Commission distributing the Declaration.

"The ban is based on a distorted and arbitrary understanding of the Universal Declaration which can only be corrected through free debate among the citizens of the Maldives and deliberations by their national courts. Banning the Declaration only serves those who seek to violate the rights of citizens without any possibility of remedy or accountability", Professor An-Na'im went on to say.

By joining the United Nations in 1965 the Maldives demonstrated its commitment to respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion (Article 55 of the UN Charter).

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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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