

Press Statement: Call for a Fair and Independent Investigation into the Arrest and Death of Adam Athuhar

2 September 2024: We express our concerns regarding the circumstances leading to the death of Adam Athuhar, who was placed in Police custody and passed away while receiving treatment at Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH). We extend our deepest condolences to Adam Athuhar's family during this difficult time.

We call on all the relevant authorities including the Human Rights Commission of Maldives (HRCM) and National Integrity Commission (NIC), to conduct a fair, independent, thorough, and transparent investigation into the circumstances surrounding his arrest and the events leading up to his death. The apparent use of force by the Maldives Police Services during his arrest, as well as the decision to place Athuhar in remand given his health and medical condition must also be investigated. Additionally we call on the investigative bodies to ensure that the investigation is conducted in a manner that is respectful and considerate to the family of the deceased.

The State must uphold its responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals in custody. At this critical juncture, we reiterate and highlight our calls to:

- Expedite and conduct the investigation in an open and transparent manner and publicize the findings of the investigation.
- Improve oversight mechanisms in custodial and detention systems to ensure regular monitoring and performance of detention facilities' conditions and treatment of detainees to identify and actively work towards bringing meaningful and effective reforms
- Commit to meaningful reform of the custodial and detention system, including strengthening governance mechanisms and the management structure as well as the rehabilitation and reintegration services across all relevant agencies to ensure accessibility of essential services to detainees.
- Invest in public health care systems to ensure universal mental health support is available and accessible to all, especially to reduce inequality in care and avoid incarceration of people living with mental health conditions and substance-use disorders through effective coordination between the criminal justice system, health and social services.
- To conduct a thorough review of existing procedures and protocols for handling critical situations, such as hostage scenarios, with a focus on incorporating effective crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques and ensure that police officers are provided with continuous comprehensive training to equip them with the necessary skills to manage these high-pressure situations safely and effectively.
- To review and reform the current policies, legislative and regulatory framework to focus more on Restorative Justice in penal code, criminal proceedings, and emphasis on improving and strengthening the application of non-custodial measures such as clemency, parole and probation.
- Expedite implementation of all pending recommendations from independent institutions and government mechanisms concerning the conditions of police custodial facilities, prisons and other facilities where individuals, including children, are held under State custody.

