

Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy
On
Sense of Congress on the Maldives
November 3, 2015

Mr. LEAHY: Mr. President, since January 2015, President Abdulla Yameen of the Maldives has increasingly cracked down on dissent within his own party and the political opposition, presided over the erosion of judicial impartiality, and put increasing pressure on civil society. The arrest of former president Mohamed Nasheed, who was convicted in a widely condemned trial that UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad described as containing "flagrant irregularities", and who remains imprisoned today, is indicative of the current situation.

That is why today I am introducing, together with a bipartisan coalition of 13 other Senators, a bill expressing the sense of Congress that the Government of the Maldives should immediately release former president Nasheed and all other political prisoners in the country, and guarantee due process for, and respect the human rights of, all of the people of the Maldives.

The United States and the Maldives have common interests in maritime security, commerce, and addressing climate change. But we also expect our partners to respect the fundamental rights of their people, including those who disagree with the government's policies, and to uphold the basic principles of justice. I thank the cosponsors of this legislation for their support.

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