

Maldives ex-President Mohammed Nasheed appeals for clemency

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Male: Maldives' former President Mohammed Nasheed has appealed to President Abdulla Yameen to reduce his 13-year jail imprisonment under the country's anti-terrorism laws.

In a letter sent to the president on Monday, lawyer Hassan Latheef noted that the clemency law gives Yameen the "full power and discretion" to reduce the sentence based on the person's age, health, treatment currently undergoing, status and circumstance, or from a humanitarian perspective.

Forty-eight-year-old Nasheed, the country's first democratically elected leader who was arrested on 22 February over the detention of a judge in 2012, was charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act 1990 in a criminal court hearing late on 13 March.

President's office spokesperson Ibrahim Muaz Ali told Minivan News that the office attends to letters in accordance with procedures and declined to comment on whether Yameen would consider the appeal.

Despite the lapse of a 10-day deadline for filing appeals, the prosecutor general and the government have insisted that Nasheed could still appeal at the High Court.

President Yameen has maintained that he does not have constitutional authority to pardon convicts before the appeal process is exhausted.

Nasheed's conviction drew widespread international criticism, including from India, over the apparent lack of due process in the 19-day trial.

Latheef contended that Nasheed was denied the right to a fair trial as guaranteed by both domestic law and the Maldives' obligations under international conventions.

He noted that foreign governments, international human rights organisations, and the UN have condemned the trial.

Last week, US senators John McCain and Jack Reed urged their government to press for the release of all political prisoners in the Maldives.

In another development last week, the Maldivian government started a dialogue with the Jumhooree Party while Nasheed's main opposition Maldivian Democratic Party which had set pre-conditions for talks was not part of the negotiations to resolve the impasse over the ex-president's imprisonment.

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