



MEDIA RELEASE

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All-Party Talks Chair Calls for Re-engagement

At a press conference held this afternoon at the President's Office, lead representative for the administration at the All-Party Talks initiated by President Yameen, Fisheries Minister Dr. Mohamed Shainee has called upon all political parties in the Maldives to re-engage in the talks.

Following is a statement by chairman of all-party talks Dr. Shainee:

“Call to Re-engage in All-Party Talks

As Chairman, and chief negotiator representing President Yameen's Administration in the All-Party Talks, I would like to once again call upon all political parties in the Maldives to re-engage in the Talks — I stand with this Administration's continued commitment and support towards strengthening democracy, upholding democratic principles and fundamental freedoms in the Maldives.

History of Opposition's Failure to Engage in All-Party Talks

The opposition has, since July 2015, ignored repeated initiations to re-engage in All-Party Talks. During this period, the opposition have not provided any reasonable justification for refusal to engage nor raised any issues of governance, policy or dialogue that needs to be addressed. Yet they continue to demand the release of persons incarcerated, under court mandated sentences, as pre-conditions to any engagement.

Further opposition action has demonstrated, on multiple occasions, a deliberate disregard for Administrations efforts to engage in national development as well as a desire to disrupt national harmony while endangering efforts to bring in foreign, and other investments.

Legitimacy of the Opposition Pact

Our Administration welcomes constructive criticism and engagement of the wider international community. However I strongly believe that recent statements by foreign leaders calling for the support of a pact signed between the opposition and the former President of the Progressive Party of the Maldives (PPM), Maumoon Abdul Gayoom stems from the wilful distribution of misinformation and disingenuous representations of actual events.

Legitimacy of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom

Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's autocratic actions in, among others, deliberately preventing meetings of PPM's Council, and that of other party organs, while establishing an "advisory committee" for his reform agenda without party consultations found him guilty, by the Civil Court on October 16th 2016, of violating both the party charter and the political party law — this ruling was upheld by both the High Court and Supreme Court. The party leadership was then transferred to the party's Senior Councilor. Despite the ruling, the former President continued to illegitimately represent the party — he had no standing to sign as a representative of PPM.

Legitimacy of Mohamed Nasheed

Mohamed Nasheed, during his term, heavily and openly violated the rule of law; including ordering Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) officers to withhold the key to the Supreme Court while also ordering the warrantless arrest of the Chief Judge of the Criminal Court as well as a number of opposition leaders. Through explicit threats Mohamed Nasheed's abuses created a culture of fear and apprehension amongst the judiciary. Nasheed was later tried, and found guilty, of offenses relating to these actions. He continues to diminish the laws of the land and the rule of law by remaining out of the country under initial false pretences to avoid his sentence and to evade his legal obligations.

Recent Impeachment Proceedings

Some foreign leaders have also questioned the legitimacy of the roll-call vote taken in Parliament on 27 March, for a no-confidence motion submitted by the opposition against the Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Abdulla Maseeh Mohammed.

Roll-call votes are the most transparent form of voting that exists and the decision for such a vote was taken in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

Clause 165 of the Parliament Rules of Procedure allows, without reference to any other condition, the possibility of a roll-call vote. Any member of the Parliament may propose such a vote — upon which a majority approval is required.

It should be noted that the debate, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, was conducted by the Deputy Speaker, who is an independent MP with no affiliation to any party.

Despite the majority vote in favour of a roll-call, the opposition objected with some members physically preventing the Deputy Speaker from conducting the session, clearly in breach of the Rules of Procedure. After continued obstruction to parliamentary business by opposition members, the acting speaker, in line with his obligations and responsibilities, was forced to call out a list of 13 disruptive members to leave the chamber upon which the rest of the opposition then staged a walk-out, refusing to take part in the vote. With order restored the roll-call vote was held. 48 MPs voted to defeat the motion — a majority of 43 was needed to pass or defeat the motion.

It should also be noted that incidents of CCTV footage showing some members using the electronic voting cards of absent/other parliamentarians is currently under investigation.

Call on Wider Community to Understand Laws and Procedures Unique to the Maldives

As Chair of the All-Party Talks, which is aimed at bridging political differences, I urge the wider international community to observe clearly the intricacies of the laws of the land in the Maldives as it relates to a free, fair and transparent vote, such as was taken on that day, before rushing to judgement.

As an open and cooperative partner and representative of this Administration, I ask those abroad to ascertain the facts, from all relevant agencies including the government.

The Maldives has a constitution, and set of laws, unique to the territory duly passed, and amended, by its legal and constitutional legislative body — which may be different from other democracies but are not, by any sense, less democratic.

Re-engagement in All-Party Talks and Strengthening Democracy

I would therefore like to underscore President Yameen, and this Administration's, commitment to continue working with regional and international partners to strengthen democracy in the Maldives and I remain committed towards re-engaging with the opposition on the Administration initiated All-Party Talks.

Chairman, All-Party Talks.”

30 March 2017

