

# American Foreign Policy Council

## MALDIVES

### QUICK FACTS

Population: 393,988

Area: 298 sq km

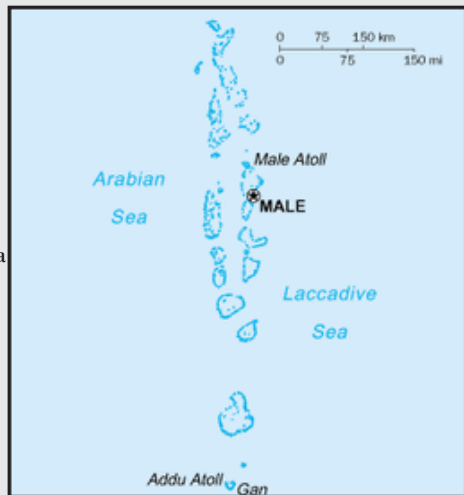
Ethnic Groups: South Indians,  
Sinhalese, Arabs

Religions: Sunni Muslim 80%, Shi'a  
Muslim 19%, other 1%

Government Type: Islamic  
Republic

GDP (official exchange rate):  
\$2.209 billion

Map and Quick Facts courtesy of  
the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated October 2013)



*The Indian Ocean archipelago state of the Maldives, known for its scenic and secluded tourist resorts, has faced a number of internal challenges in recent years, from economic and environmental concerns to political instability, marked by an alleged coup that toppled the democratically elected government in February 2012. While there are no known organized jihadi groups operating inside the Muslim-majority Maldives, the country has proven fertile ground for jihadist recruitment, and there are a number of conservative Islamist political parties and NGOs operating in the country. Both the Pakistani-based terrorist group Lashkar e-Taiba (LeT) and al-Qaeda have successfully recruited youth already radicalized in Islamic schools there.<sup>1</sup>*

*The process of grassroots radicalization in the Maldives is comparatively recent and first became evident in 2003, when posters of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden began to appear on walls in Edhyafushi Island, the capital city of Baa Atoll. Two years later, Islamists vandalized a shop in the national capital, Malé,*

*for displaying images of Santa Claus.<sup>2</sup> Maldivian military chief Major General Ahmed Shiyam warned in May 2013 of a growing risk of terrorist attack in the Maldives stemming from “religious extremism and political turmoil.” He added that messages encouraging such activities are circulating via social media, encouraging youth to partake in the activities of “jihad.”*

*Former president Mohamed Naseed never recovered politically from the “Defend Islam” campaign that began in December 2011, when opposition parties held a mass rally of approximately 20,000 people, accusing his administration of undermining Islam in the country. With the ouster of his democratically elected liberal regime, there are many questions as to what role Islamists played in the coup. Religious conservatives have long argued that Naseed’s government diluted the Islamic ethos in the Maldives by promoting Western ideals and culture and restricting the spread of more austere Islamic practices. For that reason, Islamists have played a significant role in enabling an authoritarian reversal. Even though Islam in the Maldives has been moderate, it has certainly undergone drastic changes throughout the last decade due to a sudden surge of Islamist resistance from within.<sup>3</sup>*

## **ISLAMIST ACTIVITY**

The first Islamist terrorist attack in the Maldives occurred in Malé in September 2007 when a crude bomb wounded 12 foreigners, including British, Japanese and Chinese tourists, in the city’s Sultan Park. The attack was aimed at the country’s thriving tourism industry and the so-called “alien influence” of tourism on local culture. Following the bombing, security agencies rounded up over 50 suspects, including two Bangladeshi nationals. Many more suspects fled to Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Three terrorists, all in their early 20s, were ultimately sentenced to 15 years in jail in connection with the attack, after confessing to their roles in the incident during the trial. All three have reportedly admitted their goal was to “target, attack and injure non-Muslims to fulfill *jihad*.”<sup>4</sup>

The bombing prompted authorities to crack down on extremist elements holed up in the illegal Dar-ul-Khair mosque in October 2007. The Dar-ul-Khair mosque on the island of Himandhoo has served as a major source for the propagation of conservative Islam. After ignoring the Dar-ul-Khair mosque for years, authorities in Malé ordered its demolition in October 2006. The ensuing government action met with considerable local resistance, resulting in the arrest of at least 16 people. Himandhoo residents soon rebuilt the mosque, and it resumed disseminating Islamist ideology. Exactly one year later, in October 2007, the situation erupted into a violent confrontation between members of the Dar-ul-Khair mosque and security forces when the latter attempted to carry out a search and sweep operation. Both

Maldivian police and the Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF) successfully put down the violent uprising, arresting more than 50.<sup>6</sup> The incident at Dar-ul-Khair was subsequently mentioned in an al-Qaeda video.<sup>7</sup>

Sporadic incidents of *jihadi* activity within the Maldives have also occurred. The deadly December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami provided an opening for Islamists, who entered the country in the guise of humanitarian charities. The most significant of these was the *Idara Khidmat-e-Khalq* (IKK), which is affiliated with the Pakistan-based *Jammat ud Dawal/Lashkar-e-Taiba*. The IKK was linked to the *Jamaat Abl-e-Hadith* sect, active in the Maldives, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many *Abl-e-Hadith* groups are known to be involved in the *jihadi* struggle in South Asia, and most are affiliated with Kashmir-centric terrorist groups. Intelligence sources confirm that the IKK has spearheaded LeT's activities in the Maldives, which prioritizes youth recruitment.<sup>8</sup> The IKK claims to have spent 17.2 million Pakistani Rupees (roughly \$282,000 USD) on tsunami relief in the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Indonesia during the 2005 post-tsunami relief effort, although the Maldivian government denies that the organization provided any relief.<sup>9</sup> In February 2010, the government estimated that there were 200-300 unregistered Maldivian students in Pakistan.<sup>10</sup>

The offer of free education in Pakistani *madrassas* is widely acknowledged as a core means of radicalizing Maldivians locally, with well-meaning parents sending their children off on scholarships to "study Islam."<sup>11</sup> In the past, the Maldivian government, including former President Mohamed Nasheed, has admitted that Pakistan-based terrorist groups have successfully recruited hundreds of Maldivian Muslims to fight against government forces in Pakistan.<sup>12</sup>

International concerns over the growth of Islamic extremism in the Maldives were also raised by the May 2002 arrest of Ibrahim Fauzee. Fauzee, a Muslim cleric (now heading the Islamic Foundation of Maldives), was arrested in a suspected al-Qaeda safe house in Karachi, Pakistan and subsequently held in the Guantanamo Bay detention camp until his release and repatriation to the Maldives in March 2005.<sup>13</sup> The incident sparked concerns about the spread of radical Islam and the penetration of international terror groups like al-Qaeda and *Lashkar-e-Taiba* into the social fabric of this Indian Ocean archipelago.

However, the Fauzee case was not an isolated event. Intelligence agencies in the United States and India believe that growing religious extremism in the Maldives is a Pakistani import.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the Maldives' Controller of Immigration and Emigration, Sheikh Ilyas Hussain Ibrahim, believes

that many expatriates from Bangladesh (now under surveillance) have been instrumental in spreading religious extremism in the country.<sup>15</sup>

In April 2005, Indian police arrested Maldivian national Asif Ibrahim, who allegedly frequented the Indian state of Kerala to procure arms and ammunition for the terrorist group *Lashkar-e-Taiba's* (LeT) Maldives operations. Ibrahim confessed to planning to blow up a government-run mosque and assassinate then-President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. An official release from the Maldivian government indicated that Asif Ibrahim had become a member of the UK-based extremist Islamic group *Jama'at-ul-Muslimeen* in 2001.<sup>16</sup>

In the early weeks of February 2010, nine alleged Maldivian terrorists arrested in Pakistan's troubled South Waziristan tribal region in March 2009 were repatriated to the Maldives.<sup>17</sup> According to national police, the nine suspects have ties to the bombing that took place in Malé's Sultan Park in September 2007, and they may have left the country for Pakistan via Sri Lanka for further training and indoctrination.<sup>18</sup> They were repatriated to the Maldives in two phases by the government for de-radicalization. The suspects included Yusuf Izaadhy (who according to a leaked U.S. cable was planning to establish a terror group in the Maldives with the assistance of a Pakistan-based group) and two other individuals identified as Easa Ali, and Hasnain Abdullah Hameedh.<sup>19</sup>

An al-Qaeda video circulated in November 2009 featured Ali Jaleel, a Maldivian national who fought alongside pro-Taliban forces in Pakistan.<sup>20</sup> Soon thereafter, another recruitment video featured a previously unknown al-Qaeda cell operating in the Maldives, which exhorted jihadists to travel to the country, stating "Your brothers in the Maldives are calling you."<sup>21</sup> A Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigation indicated that one Reaz Qadir Khan, a naturalized U.S. citizen residing in Oregon, conspired to provide material assistance to Jaleel in his suicide attack in Lahore. According to the indictment, from December 14, 2005 through June 2, 2009, Khan conspired with Ali Jaleel and others to provide material support and resources and to help conceal the nature of such support, knowing it would be used in a conspiracy to kill, maim, or kidnap persons abroad.<sup>22</sup> According to the indictment, Jaleel died while participating in the suicide attack on the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Headquarters in Lahore on May 27, 2009.

Other recent examples of rising extremism in the Maldives include the "Defend Islam" campaign of December 23, 2011.<sup>23</sup> Demonstrators with placards and banners stating "We stand united for Islam and the nation," "No idols in this holy land," "No to the Zionist Murderers," and "We

stand for peace” descended on the streets of Malé, accusing then-president Mohammed Nasheed’s administration of defiling Islam, promoting Western ideals and culture, and restricting the spread of more austere Islamic practices. The campaign and demonstrations in support of Islam was spearheaded by Islamic non-governmental organizations and some mainstream pro-Islamic political parties, including the *Adhaalath* Party and the party of former President of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the Progressive Party of the Maldives (PPM). On February 17, 2012, a group of Islamist radicals vandalized archaeological artifacts that were mostly ancient Hindu and Buddhist relics, including a sixth century Buddhist statue at a museum in Malé. An estimated 25 exhibits, including Boho mala sculptures and statues of Hanuman and the water god, Makara, were damaged in an apparent attempt to destroy the sole testimony of the Maldives’ pre-Islamic civilization.<sup>24</sup>

Before that incident, intolerance toward other religious and cultural symbols were manifested during the annual summit meeting of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) in November 2011, when monuments gifted to the Maldives by SAARC member countries were damaged by pro-Islamist protestors led by the politico-religious *Adhaalath* Party and the PPM. Protestors targeted a Pakistani monument that was gifted to the Malé government because it depicted objects of worship that, according to the protestors, was “anti-Islam” because it negated “the oneness of God.” A welcome banner at the airport depicting Jesus Christ was also removed, along with monuments gifted by Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Those who destroyed or vandalized those “idolatrous” symbols were called “national heroes” by the pro-Islamic political and religious parties.<sup>25</sup>

Most recently, hundreds of Muslims descended onto the streets in September 2012, protesting against a film made by an independent filmmaker based in the U.S. entitled *Innocence of Muslims*, which was widely perceived as offensive to the Prophet Muhammad and sparked protests worldwide. The rally, which was called “In Protection of the Prophet Muhammad,” resulted in the burning of an American flag and the display of placards with anti-American and anti-Jewish slogans such as “May Allah Curse America” and “Maldives: Future Graveyard of Americans and Jews.”<sup>26</sup>

## ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

Persian travelers and Islamic preachers brought Islam to the Maldives in the 12th century.<sup>27</sup> It was then that Sheikh Yusuf Samsuddin of Tavrezh (now Tabriz, Iran) converted King Darumavanta Rasgefanu and his subjects to Islam. Another account by the Persian traveler Ibn Battuta indicates that Abu Barakat Berberi, a Sufi saint, converted the Maldivian then-Hindu (Bud-

dhist) King and his subjects.<sup>28</sup> After this phase, known in the annals of the Maldives as the Spiritual Revolution, Islam was embraced and widely disseminated by successive Sultans. Under their direct patronage, Islamic laws were enforced, and mosques and *madrassas* were built across the country. Islam became the foundation of the state and the basis for its laws, customs and traditions. This trend was more formally institutionalized in the 20th century with the Constitution of 1932, adopted during the rule of Sultan Muhammed Samusuddin Iskandar III, which made sharia the basis of all administrative and political governance.

Islam in the Maldives has traditionally been very moderate, as evidenced by the freedoms enjoyed by women and their comparatively high status in Maldivian society. The country is almost 100% Muslim, with citizenship strictly confined to practitioners of the Islamic faith. Of these, most belong to the Shafi school of Sunni Islam.

However, the culture of the Maldives has undergone changes in recent years, and many believe it is progressively being Arabized (or Wahhabized) and more and more adherents (particularly among the youth) are following a Salafi-*jihadi* ideology. In January 2011, an investigative report citing Maldivian intelligence officials concluded that Maldivian youths are increasingly attracted to the idea of transnational *jihad*.<sup>29</sup>

Today, the influence of external and more extreme Islamic ideologies can be seen in changing dress codes for women, the increasing frequency with which men wear long beards, and in the name changes adopted by foreign-funded mosques around the country. Although the full veil is illegal in the Maldives (even headscarves are banned for female television anchors), many women on Himandhoo Island have begun to cover themselves completely.<sup>30</sup> Ahmed Naseem, the foreign minister until the bloodless coup of February 2012 that toppled the democratically elected government of Mohamed Nasheed (Maldives Democratic Party), stated that religious orthodoxy has become the norm in the Maldives, as an increasing number of Maldivians receive sponsored *madrassa* education in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.<sup>31</sup>

Taliban-style public flogging as punishment for adultery (known as *Hadd* in the Maldives) is becoming more common. A 2009 investigation found that Muslim courts in the country had sentenced almost 150 women to public flogging for adultery.<sup>32</sup> This finding was widely covered in the media and brought international attention to Maldives, prompting Amnesty International to call for a moratorium on flogging in the Maldives. Reports citing data from the Criminal Court show that there were 67 women who served the flogging sentence for adultery in 2010. Out of the 129 fornication cases

that were filed in 2011, 104 were sentenced, of which 93 were female. That year, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay urged Maldivian authorities to cease the practice of flogging, which, in her words, “constitutes one of the most inhumane and degrading forms of violence against women and should have no place in the legal framework of a democratic country.” Most recently, a young girl, who hailed from the island of Feydhoo in Shaviyani Atoll in the northern part of the Maldives, was convicted of premarital sex at a juvenile court and sentenced to 100 lashes and eight months of house arrest in February 2013,<sup>33</sup> even though she was sexually assaulted by her stepfather and committed no crime.

The attempt to implement strict *sharia* in the Maldives has occasionally triggered confrontation and violence. Many liberal intellectuals, writers and activists who have challenged the idea of the strict implementation of Islamic practices have been targeted in the past. Dr. Afrasheem Ali, a renowned liberal religious scholar and lawmaker, was assassinated in early October 2012,<sup>34</sup> and there were attempted assassinations on two writers and social activists: Aishath Velezinee in January 2011<sup>35</sup> and Khilath Rasheed in June 2012.<sup>36</sup>

Maldivian society boasts a number of Islamist organizations. The most prominent among them is the *Jamiyyatul Salaf* (JS), a non-governmental religious group that propagates an ultra-conservative strain of Islam. JS boasts Wahhabi/Salafi lineage and a strong anti-secular ideology. It supports Islamizing education and promotes intolerance towards other religions, especially Christianity. Many of its members are known to have been educated in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. As part of its campaign to raise Islamic awareness and promote the values of Islam, the group regularly invites Islamic preachers and scholars to the Maldives in conjunction with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs. The JS is also actively engaged in moral policing: in 2008, it declared music to be *haram* (forbidden) and forced a school library in Malé to close because it contained Christian books.<sup>37</sup>

Members of *Jamiyyatul Salaf* vehemently criticized current President Mohamed Waheed Hassan Manik when he asked for a review of the conviction of the minor who was sentenced to flogging.<sup>38</sup> According to JS President Sheikh Abdulla bin Mohamed Ibrahim, flogging of any kind in accordance of Islamic *sharia* is divine law and no one can contest it. He added that, “if it is criticized, the whole Islamic Ummah will stand against that.” In November 2011, JS activists demonstrated against the UN Human Rights chief Navi Pillay’s comments on flogging and the country’s “discriminatory” constitutional provisions. The JS then received some political support in its anti-UN campaign, especially from political parties, including the Dhivehi Rayy-

ithunge Party (DRP) and the PPM. More recently, JS has recommended the use of Saudi-style beheadings and firing squads over lethal injections for a convicted murderer in accordance with the Islamic principle of Qisas (based on the principle of equal retaliation).<sup>39</sup>

The Islamic Foundation of the Maldives is a relatively new non-profit organization, similar to JS, which was registered in April 2009. It was founded by Ibrahim Fauzee, an Islamist previously arrested in Karachi, Pakistan, and detained at Guantanamo Bay for his links to al-Qaeda. According to its website, the IFM aims to “promote and protect Islamic tenets and ethics, create religious awareness, and to uphold social events within the boundary of Islamic principles and [the] Religious Unity Act in the Maldives.”<sup>40</sup> The IFM’s Islamic activism came into the spotlight when Mohamed Nazim, a Maldivian, was assaulted when he raised some doubts over Islam and his own religious beliefs during a meeting addressed by Islamic preacher Zakir Naik. The IFM immediately urged the government and court to strip Nazim of his citizenship and sentence him to death if he did not repent.<sup>41</sup> Nazim relented reportedly under duress and publicly apologized for questioning Islam.

More radical political parties like the *Adhaalath* (Justice) Party control the nation’s Ministry of Islamic Affairs, and they have long clamored for the strict implementation of *sharia* in all parts of the Maldives. The party holds conservative views on gender issues—opposing, for instance, the eligibility of women to contest presidential elections. Under its influence, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs has regularly invited foreign scholars and preachers with extreme religious views to the Maldives to address large and small groups on religious matters. Foreign Islamic scholars and preachers like Zakir Naik (India),<sup>42</sup> Bilal Phillips (Jamaica), and Sheikh Abdur Raheem Green (UK) with extreme religious views and misogynist outlooks are among those to have been invited to the Maldives by the Ministry.<sup>43</sup> Zakir Naik, a “televangelist” who runs the satellite television channel “Peace TV,” is known for his preaching sessions and his inflammatory comment that “every Muslim should be a terrorist.”<sup>44</sup> There is also a breed of indigenous lay preachers (like Sheikh Ibrahim Fareed) mostly educated and trained at Islamic seminaries in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Saudi Arabia, who offer their own version of inflammatory Islamist rhetoric.

The *Adhaalath* party has also banned visits to Sufi tombs and shrines (which hardline Islamists consider to be un-Islamic) because its leadership deemed praying and making wishes there to also be un-Islamic. For instance, the party supports reinstating a ban on public visits to the *Medhu Ziyaaraiy*, the tomb of Abu Barakat Berberi, who is credited with introducing Islam to the



Maldives.<sup>45</sup> The country's Islamic Ministry, however, has ordered the shrine to remain open on the condition that no flags would be hoisted in or around it.

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs claims to have developed de-radicalization methods and has been taking measures to curb the activities of the various transnational Islamic organizations that have arrived in the Maldives in recent years.<sup>46</sup> However, radical interpretations of the religion and calls for *jihad* against non-believers are finding an increasing number of supporters in the Maldives. Islamist hardliners have called for adopting “Arabesque” alternatives in all aspects of life, including determining the age at which women reach puberty and proscribing how convicts should be executed in an “Islamic way.”<sup>47</sup>

## ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

With the adoption of the country's 1997 constitution, Islam became the state religion and the chain of nearly 1,200 coral islands was declared 100-percent Islamic.<sup>48</sup> Non-Muslims are forbidden from proselytizing and conducting public worship in the Maldives. Any Muslim who converts to another faith is breaking *sharia* law and can lose his or her citizenship. Migrant workers of other faiths are denied the ability to practice their faith. The government also prevents the importation of non-Muslim books and other religious items. However, people from other religions are given permanent resident permits to live and work, mostly in the country's thriving hospitality industry, which serves as the economic lifeline of the Maldives. Notably, despite its economic benefits, many radical Islamic groups active in the Maldives have denounced what they view as tourism's negative influence on local Islamic culture.

In December 1998 the country's Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (which later became Ministry of Islamic Affairs) appealed to the National Police Service to impose a ban on nightclubs and discotheques on the eve of New Year celebrations.<sup>49</sup> That same year, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs barred Maldivians from listening to Christian missionary radio.<sup>50</sup> Other incidents of state-backed religious intolerance and discrimination came to light when numerous Christians were imprisoned in June 1998 on religious grounds and held captive at the notorious prison on Dhoonidhoo Island.<sup>51</sup> The arrests followed government-sanctioned search and sweep operations of homes of Christians living in the country (some, but not all, have subsequently been released). The government reportedly expelled nearly 20 foreigners as part of that crackdown.

In July 2000, then-President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, reportedly under pressure from radicals, declared in a public address that there is no room in the Maldives for any religion but Islam. He subsequently reiterated his stance on numerous occasions, and went on to accuse foreigners of destroying religious unity by introducing other faiths.<sup>52</sup> Gayoom claimed that the Maldives achieved and sustained its sovereignty by adhering only to Islamic principles. During the reign of Gayoom, who was himself an alumnus of Cairo's famed Al Azhar University where he studied Islamic jurisprudence, the country experienced a new Islamic revival. In the 1980s and early 1990s, intense indoctrination was undertaken, and mosques were built en masse. During that time period, Koranic schools also emerged as major educational institutions. Gayoom has been accused of having brought Islamic fundamentalism into the country, and of using "Islam as a tool of governance."<sup>53</sup> Under the Gayoom regime, Islamic preachers and *madrassas* received unconditional political and financial support.<sup>54</sup>

After almost three decades of authoritarian rule, the Maldives became a multi-party democracy in 2008 with the election of the liberal Mohamed Nasheed as President. Although Nasheed's party, the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), has progressive views on religion, its main ally, the *Adhaalath* Party, holds conservative views on religious and cultural matters. According to one official, there were at least seven Islamist radicals running in the 2008 elections, though all of them lost their electoral battles.<sup>55</sup> In February 2012, Nasheed was ousted in an alleged "bloodless" coup<sup>56</sup> and replaced by then-Vice President Mohammed Waheed Hassan Manik. Though the alleged coup was never proved,<sup>57</sup> Nasheed indicated that he was forced out of office by gun-toting security personnel at the behest of opposition political parties.<sup>58</sup> The anti-Nasheed wave, which existed prior to the coup over discontent with his economic policy and alleged anti Islamic policies, reached a crescendo when Nasheed's government arrested Judge Abdulla Mohamed on January 16, 2012. A politico-religious coalition (the December 23 Alliance for Defending Islam) then accused Nasheed of violating the Maldivian constitution, and the pro-Islamic alliance led by the President of *Adhaalath* Party Sheikh Imran Abdulla and Vice President of Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) Umar Naseer reportedly orchestrated the ouster of Nasheed.<sup>59</sup>

Nasheed's MDP government had resisted calls from extremists to shut down the country's luxury tourist resorts that serve alcohol, pork and facilitate "pleasure tourism." Since Nasheed's ouster from power, the Islamic Ministry has proposed the adoption of "Islamic tourism" without these basic elements, arguing that it works in Saudi Arabia where alcohol is not available, even at posh hotels frequented by Westerners. Political parties like the Gayoom-led PPM call for an alternative economy based on oil, rather than

depending on the “anti-Islamic” tourism industry that facilitates public dancing, singing and massage parlors. Gayoom and others who propagate this Islamic tourism may find more takers among the conservative populace, but this development will certainly impact the future of the Maldives’ famed tourism industry.

In the post-Nasheed era, there is a renewed call for the implementation of *sharia* in all walks of life in the Maldives. The present government, led by President Mohammed Waheed Hassan, is seen as more favorable to radical Islamist ideas, and is at least passive in the face of their overtures, ignoring extremists and allowing them to freely advocate their beliefs.<sup>60</sup>

Throughout 2013, Minister of Islamic Affairs’ Sheikh Mohamed Shaheem Ali Saeed, who is also a member of the *Adhaalath* Party, has waged a virulent campaign against Christians and what he termed “Freemasons” for conspiring to erase Islam from the Maldives by creating doubts about the religion.<sup>61</sup> This was an expected move, as political debates in the Maldives frequently end with the more liberal politicians being accused of promoting Christianity or conducting business with Jews. Shaheem Ali, who remains among the chief advocates of puritanical Islamic beliefs in the Maldives, reportedly published a book where he proposed the idea that the Maldives should become an emirate of a Middle Eastern country, such as Saudi Arabia. According to sources, Sheikh Shaheem indeed appears to be working towards this goal, as he has made significant effort as a Minister to steer Maldivian foreign policy towards Arabic countries while distancing it from the West.<sup>62</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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[44] Naik was banned from entering the UK for his speeches in June 2010. “Every Muslim Should be a Terrorist,” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bxk5AAA5FbI&feature=Playlist&p=1CD142F58F69D-01C&playnext\\_from=PL&playnext=1&index=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bxk5AAA5FbI&feature=Playlist&p=1CD142F58F69D-01C&playnext_from=PL&playnext=1&index=1).

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[47] Author’s Interview with J J Robinson, Editor, *Minivan News*. (March 2013).

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[51] “Christians Expelled from Maldives,” *Christianity Today*, September 7, 1998, <http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/1998/september7/8ta27d.html>.

[52] Gayoom said while addressing a 4,000 strong crowd that “We want to bring reform to the Maldives, reform that leaves no room for other religions.” See “Asia’s Longest-Serving Leader in Maldives Run-Off,” Associated Press, October 27, 2008, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-10-27-2185416197\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-10-27-2185416197_x.htm).

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[54] “Maumoon Abdul Gayoom - the Father of Maldivian Extremism,” *Dhivehi Observer*, October 10, 2007; Aishath Valenzinee, “Gayoom’s abuse of faith,” *Himal South Asian*, October 2007, [http://www.dhivehiobserver.com/editorial/Islamic\\_Extremism\\_Maldives\\_\\_101007.html](http://www.dhivehiobserver.com/editorial/Islamic_Extremism_Maldives__101007.html); See also <http://himalmag.com/component/content/article/1325-.html>.

[55] Anupam Dasgupta, “A Male-Volent Link,” *The Week*, January 16, 2011, (Archived in) <http://www.maldivestoday.com/2011/01/18/a-male-volent-link/>.

[56] The anti-Nasheed wave existed before due to his economic policy and alleged anti-Islamic policies, it came into open with the arrest of Judge Abdulla Mohamed on January 16, 2012 when a politico-religious coalition (December 23 Alliance for Defending Islam) accused him of violating the Maldivian constitution. The pro-Islamic alliance led by the President of Party Sheikh Imran Abdulla and Vice President of Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) Umar Naseer reportedly orchestrated the ouster of Nasheed.

[57] An independent Commission of National Inquiry (CoNI) ruled out any coup and the findings largely supported by the U.S. and the Commonwealth of Nations. See “Nasheed ouster not a coup: probe panel,” August 30, 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/nasheed-ouster-not-a-coup-probe-panel/article3839500.ece>.

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[59] Azra Naseem, “Operation Haram to Halal – the Islamist role in replacing Nasheed with Waheed”, *Minivan News*, February 18, 2012, <http://minivannews.com/politics/comment-operation-haram-to-ha>



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<sup>[60]</sup> "No other presidency granted more freedom to religious scholars than the current regime- Shaheem," *Miadhru Daily*, February 1, 2013, <http://www.miadhru.com/2013/02/local-news/no-other-presidency-granted-more-freedom-to-religious-scholars-than-the-current-regime-shaheem/>.

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<sup>[62]</sup> Author's Interview with Azra Naseem.