



THE LAADHEENEE DIGEST

The Laadheenee Digest is written by Laadheenee people for Laadheenee people. If you don't know what that means fuck off.

Meditations on our history of deviance

Us laadheene people have been through a lot. We tirelessly advocate for our own rights, only to be trivialised and shut down by people who don't understand the first thing about our struggle.

These people are fucked. Honestly, what the fuck is wrong with them. It's safe to say we can't fix them. Most narcissists are like that. So, instead of trying to teach a bunch of assholes how to respect our right to life and Dhivehi identity, it's time for us to talk to ourselves. It's time for us to assert ourselves as Dhivehin. As a legitimate Dhivehi meehun. It is our right to be Dhivehin as much as anybody else. Aharumen' laadheene meehunnakee ves dhivehi dharin.

We deserve to live as our true selves in this society. This society that we love, this society that we want to contribute to, this society that hates our guts and wants kill us. This society that intellectualises our suffering to the point where people talk about us as if we are not even in the same room. This society that is overflowing to the brim with democracy activists and NGOs that have to this day not even acknowledged our existence and right to be Dhivehin.

This morally bankrupt garbage excuse of a country you fuckers are so proud of is our home too. Fuck all of you who has ever made any of us laadheene people question our own Dhivehi vantha kan. Seriously, fuck you. Take your intellectual musings about how we should talk, and how we should be so fucking polite, and how we should wait for the goddamn economy or some shit to fix our problems. Fuuuuuuck youuuuuu. You are not our friends. You are not our allies. If reading this makes you uncomfortable, good! Fuck you.

Well then!

In this first issue I've put together a timeline commemorating our contemporary history and our heroes. This is not an atheist or ex-Muslim magazine. This is not a LGBTQIA+ magazine. This is not a Muslim magazine either. This is a Laadheene magazine. With a capital L and everything. A haven for everyone who has suffered to express themselves because of this hateful label. This label that we now proudly reclaim. Call the Laadheene magazine laadheene, see if we care.

So it's worth pointing out at this point, that if you're anti-diversity, homophobic, transphobic, or just a general hateful little shit, then you can fuck right off. This magazine is not for you. This magazine is for us.

I hope you enjoy this first issue. I think together we could
build something beautiful together.

xoxo,
Burakashi

For Hilath, Rilwan, and Yameen

how should we deal with the problem of religious extremism?

October 15, 2007 by @moyameehaa

It seems after the terror blast the government of Maldives is tightening the grip on all islamic groups.

a bill is to be submitted to the parliament on making the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs an independent institution,rather than being a toothless tiger (as the president of the council , Sheikh Raseedh puts it)...

Under the despotic law of 'protecting the islamic unity of maldives' the president have asked the Islamic council to ban face veiling in public, dressing or behaving in a manner which resembles -in any way- religious denominationalism.In other words they trying to find a way to make things hard for all islamic groups in maldives.

This type of reaction from the government is nothing new. this had happened many times, crack down on wahhabis they call it... they would arrest people and shave off their beards, force them to keep their trousers below ankle (which,according to them is like being in hell),and even take off face veils of women (which will be for them as if removing their clothes).This kind of unacceptable acts of the government is doing nothing except for fueling the wild fire of extremism.This will move elements from more moderate islamic groups in to the stricter and therefore more dangerous people.What i am trying to say is , a bearded guy or a preaching bearded guy is not our business, not a threat to our national security. but bearded or not...a terror minded jihadi muslim is a threat to our country and we should keep an eye on them...when necessary punish them.but a crack down on all bearded or faceveiled people is not just...and very stupid.

Extremism is a serious issue which have to be dealt wisely and professionally.it shouldnt be like the old majeedhee magu paving project or nerugovvun projects our government carried out.because this is no ordinary thing we are dealing with.religous ideologies or thinking cannot be killed by force.it should be killed (if needed) by better ideologies.You all know they have read the story of ashaabul uhdhoodh from Bukhari collection of Hadiths.In that story people are burned alive for what they believe but they prefered death to giving in.

This (the strong faith in what they believe...what ever they may believe) is what drives a young boy,well educated, loved by every one... changes in to a hated monster that wants to kill people.Strengthening the 'islamic unity' itself is a threat to our future. This kind of 'strengthening' will take the rights of islamic groups and will create a violent reaction. A group of religious extremists Gaafu Alifu atoll Maamendhoo are not praying with the common congregation ... now they are praying in the mosque after the common congregation...should we attack them too?!What ever his intention is...Sheikh Shaheem of Adalat party have showed that these people can be softened down by talking to them or discussing religious issues with them instead of releasing a canonic way of doing everything from the president's office and punishing those who disobey.

It is the hypocrisy of Maldives government when it comes to religion ...that have created a breeding ground for jihadi islamic movements and islamic extremism in maldives.For example; we are told that we should follow Quran and Hadith...but we are lied about them.Lies which are so evident that even the kids will know some thing is wrong in those fatwas.Now when this happens children turns to islamic books or websites originating from saudi arabia or saudi funded groups, looking for answers.These will lay a foundation for the wahhabi islam.Now from this stage a person may develop in to anything...just a salafi,a follower of political islam (hizb-ut-tahrir/ikhwanul muslimeen?) or to a houri seeking jihadi muslim.I am not saying that it is their right to preach terrorism. but we cant define what the limits are ,as long as we try to strengthen the 'islamic unity' by force.Let it come by its own (if there is any such thing as an islamic unity) .

I think what we need to cultivate is not islamic unity and hatred for other religions.what we need is an free society, a free environment in which religious tolerance,humanism, and brotherhood would prosper.For this to happen we need social change as well as political change.To bring about this we need education,awareness,change of policies and a secular state or atleast a state with freedom of religion.A state which wouldn't threaten to kill a person for choosing his or her own way of life or belief or for discussing a religious topic freely.Religion have to become more spiritual rather than being a 'dividing-in-the-name-of-uniting' force.Hate and violence would give nothing but hate and violence.

The government should understand that these islamic groups too are maldivian citizens, faceveiled women and bearded men are our people..parents to our children...if you jail them beat them up just for what they believe or how they dress..it would be very unjust.I have known so far that two leaders of the dotcom group (the guys behind the bomb plot) have fled Maldives.This is what we need to concentrate on... bringing the violent and the terror breeding to justice and tackling the extremism problem ideologically.



how should we de...

Non-muslim Maldivians could become stateless with the new Constitution

November 19, 2007

The Special Majlis (Constitutional Assembly) have passed an amendment stating that only Muslims can be Maldivian citizens. The amendment to Article 9 (Citizens of Maldives) of Chapter One (State, Sovereignty and Citizens) of the Constitution was proposed by H.Dh member Abdulla Naseer and seconded by G.A member Ibrahim Khalil Abdulla.

Prior to the amendment (following another amendment proposed by Addu member Husnu-Suood) the article was as follows :

(A) The following persons are citizens of the Maldives:

- 1-Citizens of the Maldives at the commencement of this constitution
- 2-Children born to a citizen of the Maldives; and
- 3-Foreigners who, in accordance to the law becomes citizens of the Maldives.

(B) The citizenship of Maldives cannot be taken away from a citizen of Maldives.

(C) Any person who wishes to renounce the citizenship, can do so in accordance with the law.

Abdulla Naseer then proposed to add a 'D' to this list as follows:

(D) even if (A) of this article states so, none except a Muslim can become a citizen of Maldives.

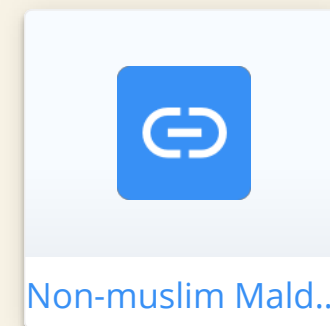
From the 83 members (of the total 112) present at the time of vote; 78 members voted in favor, 2 members voted to remain neutral, but none of the members voted against this amendment.

A prominent lawyer and one of the members who voted to be neutral, Addu member Husnu-Suood said he feared that, with this amendment, a number of Maldivians may lose their right to be citizens of Maldives or even worse; become stateless.

"According to the current Constitution of Maldives, Children of every Maldivian mother and every Maldivian father are citizens of Maldives. Even I know of some Maldivians who are following religions other than Islam. Some of them are living in Australia, some even in Europe. They hold Maldivian passport. According to the current constitution the door to become a citizen of Maldives is open to people of all religions. That door is not closed. Things were like that, but when this was passed today, once the new constitution is passed and comes into effect; some Maldivians will lose their right to remain as citizens of Maldives" said Husnu-Suood. He also said this amendment "will lead to many legal problems".

Another lawyer Raa member and vice president of the Majlis, Shaheen Hameed said this amendment contradicts with the other points of this article. "Now we will have to see who remains as Muslims at the time of adopting the new constitution, before we take them as citizens of Maldives", he said.

Although the current constitution does not specifically mention this, any person found 'guilty' of following or preaching , or simply reading texts of other religions are punished till he or she reverts to Islam. Religious views contradicting the state's version of Islam are also not tolerated and a person can even be punished for praying in a certain way, or carrying a buddha statue, or wearing a crucifix.



FEBRUARY 1, 2008

MALDIVIAN MP AND
MODERATE RELIGIOUS
SCHOLAR DR.
AFRASHEEM ALI IS
ATTACKED BY AN ANGRY
MOB FOLLOWING
FRIDAY PRAYERS AT
THE MASJIDH AL
IBRAHIM MOSQUE

Home Ministry official and controversial religious preacher Dr. Afrashim Ali has been attacked by an angry mob in what appeared to be an organised attack following Friday prayers at the Masjidh Al Ibrahim mosque.

Dr. Afrashim and his child were surrounded by a large crowd as they attempted to leave the mosque, and at least one bystander hit Dr Afrashim before the cleric was escorted away by police.

Police confirmed six people have been arrested in relation to the attack, which the Information Minister has linked to attempted “Talibanisation” of the Maldives.



Attack On Contr...

OCTOBER 30, 2008

MOHAMED NASHEED
WINS THE
PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION, ENDING
MAUMOUN ABDUL
GAYOOM'S 30 YEAR
RULE



congratulations everyone!!!

October 30, 2008 by @moyameehaa

its a lil late maybe. but i just wanted to congratulate all of us on this historical occasion of kicking out a brutal dictator who ruled over us -with extreme power, in which ever manner he wished- for 30 consecutive years. yup, i may have a problem with my short term memory and i maybe insane. but i still mean all that. father of democracy? oh puleeeez, he is the same gayoom. we maybe in 'aneh dhivehi raajje' but that does not change facts (is the world flat now? Duh), or is everything upside down in aneh Dhivehi raaje?).

I really liked and is happy for and am proud of the example of democracy, maldivian people and leaders have shown in this election. how Anni and Gayoom adressed the people and how Anni did not want revenge or how gayoom have been offered security and pension. I do like the fact that Gayoom decided to stay with us. i believe in goodness in humans. I dint know what to say after watching that on TVM. i never saw that coming. Gayoom accepting defeat and Anni not taking things personally, how the people united against gayoom, how the people used the power of the ballot to achieve this, how peacefully they did this...everything is amazing and i am very very happy to see this day turning out like this

.....But still the facts will remain as they are. A theif will never say he is a thief (especially when he is a very good liar). This is not a matter of Anni's personal feelings towards Gayom. This has nothing to do with how humble he is. Do something else to prove that (try forgiving gayoom for your personal sufferings). Only the people can forgive Gayoom. This is just like Gayoom forgiving his brother in law and putting him back in the cabinet (and we forgot that too) or how he forgive dangerous criminals as afuaamu, to show that he is 'ghafoor-ur-raheem'. How could he?, when those money belong to Maldivian people.

I may not be very religious, but i do knowhow these kinda stuff work with God.... God have forbidden forgiving of this sort for himself. Things God can not (by his own will) forgive include; taking away the rights of other people, or harming another person unjustly. So inorder to get in to paradise, these people should be forgiven by their victims. Or another deal is to transfer their good deeds to the victim's account (if the sinner is out of credit, then he should transfer bad deeds from the victim's account and suffer for those).naaeeee.

my point is; that it is a good thing...something we can be proud of..that Gayoom is still with us, that he is safe and is being given all his rights and all the credit he deserve (if nothing else, it could make him feel reallybad inside maybe.heehee.). But stuff he does not deserve (like saying he brought democracy to maldives) should not be given, and justice should be served. we've got a lot of cleaning up (the mess he made) to do and a lot of rebuilding to do, i understand. but we should never forget the facts and the truth.

once again i congratulate the people of maldives, the opposition leaders, Anni, and Gayom for being so civilised and showing that good example of democracy.this is a happy moment.a turning point.a new dawn.a beginning, not an end.

and to keep a record;

The Reformists: 54.21% (97,222 votes)

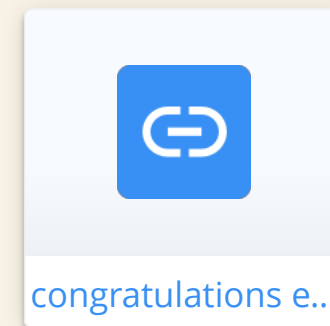
The Dictator: 45.79 (82,121 votes)

Invalid Votes: 1,861 (dumbasses!)

Eligible Voters: 209,294

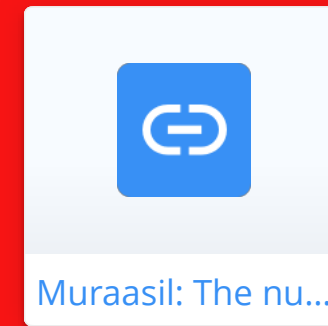
Turn Out: 86.08%

note: i am still alive, i am just away from my blog and the blogosphere for many reasons. and btw, would dhohokko be peeping down from heaven, and saying 'ah, there you go'....anywayz i dedicate this post to him.



SEPTEMBER 12, 2009

A WRITER WITH THE
NAME “ALI MANIK”
WRITES AN ARTICLE ON
MURAASIL.COM SAYING
HILATH RASHEED IS A
BLASPHEMER AND
SOMEONE WHO INSULTS
ALLAH, RESULTING IN
HILATH RASHEED
RECEIVING DEATH
THREATS



Letter on Homosexuality

September 27, 2009

A letter sent to the editor of Minivan News by an anonymous reader, published on the paper's website on 26th September 2009.

Dear Editor,

Whether we accept it or not, like any other country in the world, there are loads of gay people in the Maldives too. Being gay is not something you adopt or acquire, it is who you are and you are born with it. Anyone's son or daughter can be gay or lesbian. They are referred as a taboo and have always been forced to live in the closet. But what we are forgetting here is that we actually deprive a gay person from his rights. His basic right to live, been accepted by the family and society, right to choose his sexual partner and love are all denied.

I think it is time the Maldivian government start thinking about gay rights. Maldivian gays are not going to go anywhere and they are never going to change into straight people. This is who they are and will always remain as gays. And always a new gay person would be born into the Maldives too.

Homosexuality is assuredly no disadvantage, it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness; it is considered to be a variation of the sexual function produced by a certain arrest of sexual development. Many highly respectable individuals of ancient and modern times have been homosexuals, several of the greatest men among them (Plato, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Alexander the great etc.). It is a great injustice to persecute homosexuality as a crime, and cruel too.

Modern medical research has clearly proved that homosexuality is not a disease; it cannot be wiped off from a gay person. He or she will remain so in their sexual orientation and it is more genetic in evolution. So how on earth can we penalise someone for his sexual orientation?

If a man and woman have the right to practice their sexual desires freely between them, why can't a gay couple do so? People blame that homosexual acts are against human nature, but what exactly does it mean by human nature? Gays have been here since human evolution, it's just that they haven't been more open before than now. So how can you say it is against human nature. Gays have always been forced to practice their sexuality in discreet, behind doors with fear.

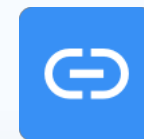
Legally in 2003, Brazil introduced a UN draft resolution titled, "Human Rights and Sexual Orientation," which addresses the topic of equal rights for gays and lesbians. It called upon all states to promote and protect the human rights of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation". Maldives has good record of following all UN resolutions, charters and accords but why is it then the Maldivian government doesn't accept this resolution?

Another barrier hindering the acceptance of homosexuals in Maldives is the religion. Being a 100% Muslim country the Maldives believes that it is going to be against the religion to allow and give the homosexuals their rights. According to the International Lesbian and Gay Association ILGA there are at least seven Muslim countries today which still retain capital punishment for homosexuality. Maldives has also been found to give severe punishments which include long-term imprisonment and sometimes torture. Not to forget also the shame and belittlement a gay person faces from Maldivian society.

Do not forget there are Muslim countries which HAVE legalised homosexuality. They are Iraq, Jordan, Turkmenistan, Albania, Uzbekistan, Palestine, Indonesia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Turkey, Kosovo, Turkish Republic of Cyprus, Chad, Nigeria, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

It is time we need to know the rights of the homosexuals in our country because homosexuality is universal. They are everywhere in this world; rich and poor countries, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus etc, whites and blacks, low and high class societies. They can be doctors, nurses, civil servants, engineers, singers or politicians. Gay Maldivians are also proud to be Muslims and Maldivians and will always remain so. Just Think!

Regards,
Anonymous



[Letter on Homose...](#)

Letter on the infamous letter

November 1, 2009

Dear Editor,
So I guess I missed out on the infamous letter. I never got a chance to read this letter but did see Minivan News's press release regarding the letter. If I am not wrong Minivan did remove the letter from the website, right?
Why, though?
Again I haven't seen this letter, but from what I have read I believe it is a letter regarding homosexuality.
Now, what really baffles me about Maldivian society is the fact that people actually "think" and "believe" that everyone in the Maldives is straight. If anyone had a brain and thought about it, isn't it obvious that this is not true. So not talking about it, not addressing it, is not going to make it go away.
I hope that in the true spirit of freedom of expression, Minivan indeed will publish this letter and also help me locate the letter in reference here.
Regards,
Anonymous



[Letter on the infa...](#)

Who are the Non Muslim Maldivians?

May 13, 2010

They are just like the other Maldivian. There is no physical difference. One difference is what they believe about this universe and creation.

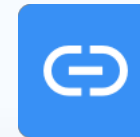
Muslim Maldivian believe that everything was created by a being they call Allah and so on...

There is many kind of beliefs among Non Muslims. Some Non Muslims are Hindhus. Others are Buddhists. There is atheists. There are Christians and satanist and etc.

The other difference is Non Muslim Maldivians do get Human Rights in their own country.

Except for this different belief they are the same as Muslim Maldivians.

There is no physical difference. They are your sons and your daughters. Your mothers and fathers. Your brothers and sisters.



[Who are the Non...](#)

MARCH 11, 2010

HILATH RASHEED
THREATENED WITH
BEHEADING IN AN
ARTICLE PUBLISHED
ON MURAASIL.COM

*“I am of the opinion that
even if you kill him, you are
all innocent. Cut off his
head...”*



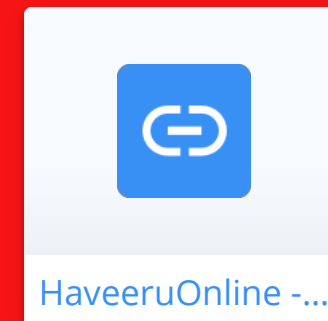
MAY 28, 2010

MOHAMED NAZIM DECLARES HIMSELF AN ATHEIST AT A Q&A SECTION BY ZAKIR NAIK

“Dr Zakir Naik. I am a Maldivian. I am still struggling to believe in religion. That is why I just came to the front of this row. I was born a Maldivian. My parents taught me the religion of Islam. They are good practitioners, actually. I read a lot of books. I have read the translation of Quran. Yet, I still do not believe in a religion. So what do you say, [about] my verdict in Islam? Because Maldives is definitely a Muslim state,” Nazim asked.

When the moderator asked to repeat the question, he said, “My question is I am a Maldivian. I do not believe in religion. What do you think my verdict would be, since Maldives is 100 percent Muslim, as many claim? But I do not believe so.”

Nazim’s question sparked comments of hatred from an angry crowd of around 11,000 with many calling to kill him and attack him, while Naik was answering the question. Several people rushed towards Nazim, who was sitting at a back row after moving away from the microphone, as an official of the Islamic Ministry tried to escort him out. Police, however, came between Nazim and the crowd and escorted him into custody.



MAY 30, 2010

ISLAMIC FOUNDATION OF MALDIVES (IFM) CALLS FOR DEATH SENTENCE TO BE IMPOSED ON MOHAMED NAZIM IF HE FAILS TO REPENT

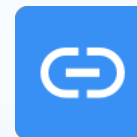
“The Islamic Foundation believes that the person who announces apostasy should be punished according to Islamic laws,” the NGO said, warning that Nazim represented “a disturbance to the religious views and the religious bonds that exist with Maldivians.” “Hereby if this man does not do his penance and come back to the Islamic religion, the Islamic Foundation of the Maldives calls to take the citizenship away from this man as mentioned in the Maldivian constitution.”



Islamic Foundatio...

MOHAMED NAZIM IS FORCED INTO RELIGIOUS COUNSELLING IN PRISON AS ARRANGED BY THE ISLAMIC MINISTRY

Minister of Islamic Affairs Dr Abdul Majeed Abdul Baaree told Haveeru that the ministry has asked police to investigate the case of Mohamed Nazim, 37, and is preparing to give him counseling. “We are preparing for that [counseling]. We have to find out what kind of doubts he has about Islam,” he said.



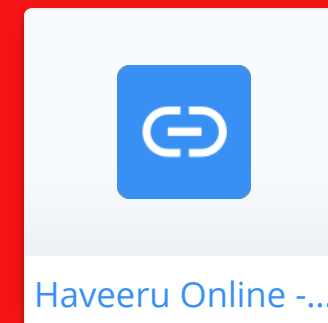
Haveeru Online - I...

JUNE 1, 2010

MOHAMED NAZIM
APOLOGIZES AND
RECITES THE
SHAHAADHAH BEFORE
JOURNALISTS TO
PROVE THAT HE HAS
REPENTED AND
REVERTED BACK TO
ISLAM

“... And as that action was very much related to the feelings of all Maldivians, I believe that it was an agony for the Maldivian people. I deeply apologise for that to all the Maldivians. Along with that, I would like to say that the major misconceptions I had regarding Islam have been clarified. Therefore, I am now a Muslim. I want Maldivians to accept me as a Maldivian and as a child of this community,” he said.

Deputy Minister for Islamic Affairs Sheikh Mohamed Farooq said that Nazim reverted to Islam “on freewill.”



10 reasons why the world cup is haraam

June 21, 2010 by @moyameehaa

The maldivian haabees have dissapointed me. really. :(

smoking is haraam, movies are haraam. music is haraam,secularism and democracy is haraam.tom and jerry and mickey mouse are haraam. travelling without a mahram,showing hair and using perfume are all haraam for women.and the list goes on.

They protest over changes in alchohol regulations, when a muslim converts, about the new curriculum,about diplomatic relations with israel, about something written on the internet..etc. They make facebook groups against their critics, against cocacola, issued death threats against secularists and that one guy who converted from islam for a few hours...etc.

BUT!

But they fail to issue any verdict against the worldcup. they did not protest against it, or even make a goddamned facebook group against it. instead they converted their haabee screens of doom (HSDs) in to worldcup screens, bought TVs for their homes/shops, and started enjoying the matches. you heard it. they are ENJOYING a worldly sport. what the frack is this? something is really wrong here.

im not gonna just sit around when the only passionate and devoted buncha people (you so-called liberals are wussies!) in my country screw up over some lame game. (apologies, football fans. no disrespect. but i dont like football).... so i decided to set aside our differences and help them out. i decided to do it for them and get everything back to normal.for this reason today...today im gonna frigging give a fatwah. oh yeah. brother moyameehaa is gonna give you one really kickass fatwa today. now listen! read!



[taliban militants demonstrating the proper use of a soccer field.]

1. men displaying their awrah (hedhun laigen oriyaamun, as our beloved mullahs would/should put it). behaving in ways which can provoke sexual desires of women and gay men. immodesty.

2. supporting kafir nations like the evil america and portugese!?! this is unacceptable. imitating the kuffaar is common during worldcups. wearing their jerseys, flags and copying their hairstyles. then there are the vuvuzelas. obviously it is not really a 'musical' instrument, but it is part of south african kafir culture and made in kafir communist china!!

3. people watching football even when it is prayer time. just like music is haraam for being an 'idle waste of time'. a friend told me there were only two rows in their neighbourgood mosque when the game was on. i told him even those few people could problyy be the hardcore supporters of some team praying for victory.

4. too much female skin. there are the football fan chicks and cheerleading gals - flashing once in a while. yeah, this is the only time you get to see a naked boob on maldivian national television. and therez the waka waka song. it is straight from hell. what moves. what the shakira! masha allah! i mean, naoozbillah.

5. people waste a lot of money buying TVs,sound systems (to 'listen' to worldcup yeah), setting up screens, decorating rooms,buying airtel dish (which is also haraam for showing christian channels),buying a lot of food,buying calendars, books,stickers...etc. such waste of money are always haraam.

6. media and some local companies have started betting on these games in the name of sms lucky draw quiz. more haraam activities.

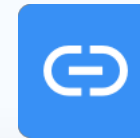
7. people stay late to watch football. its a cause for being late for work, and sometimes causes you to miss dhamunamaadhu and fajr prayer. and staying up late for such an evil activity and missing prayers because of that is totally unacceptable. it is leading you astray. haraam again.

8. mixing of men and women at the football stadium and places (public screens and even rooms) where people watch the matches. we can hear women laughing and screaming too.calling out names of football players. astaghfirullah.

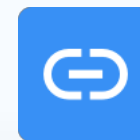
9. the world cup is sponsored by greedy kafir capitalist corporations who probably have connections with the freemasons and all. you are helping them. boycott worldcup and boycott cocacola too.

10. it does not follow the saudi fatwa on rules for halal football.

being a mere mortal this is the best i could do. i sincerely hope that Adhaalath Party would forgive any mistakes i might have made here. Adhaalath Party knows best.



[10 reasons why t...](#)



[Help Find Ahmed...](#)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: ismail mohamed <i.smilemohamed@gmail.com>

Date: 25 June 2010 09:30

Subject: a plea for help

Dear sir,

I'm a 25 year-old Maldivian living in Male'. I have been working as an Air Traffic Controller at Male' International Airport for almost 7 years now.

I started becoming disenchanted with Islam around 5 years ago and am now an atheist. During my transformation, and even now, I am quite the idealist, and when i was confronted about two years back by a couple of my colleagues about my aversion from the daily practices of Islam, i somewhat foolishly admitted my stance on religion.

I had asked them to keep it a secret from the rest of our workforce at ATC, although i now realize i should have known better. It did not take long for everybody at work to find out and since then, i have faced constant harassment in my work environment.

An atheist is not a common feature at all among Maldivians and the word has spread like wildfire since then. It has now come to the point where everyone I know, including my family, have become aware of my lack of belief.

In a society that has always been proud of their religious homogeneity, you can imagine what i am being put through. I have been subjected to numerous consultations with religious scholars and even my closest friends are not allowed to see me.

My company has already begun investigating a complaint regarding me, collecting testimony from fellow workers about my apostasy.

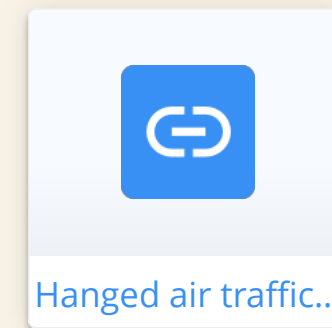
Just 3 days ago, i received two anonymous phone calls threatening violence if i do not start openly practicing Islam.

I am at my wit's end now. I have been trying for sometime to secure employment abroad, but have not yet succeeded.

The only other alternative i can think of is to flee the country to seek asylum elsewhere. I have already written an e-mail to your organization, and am anxiously waiting for a reply. I found your e-mail address on facebook. I am in dire need of assistance and know of no one inside the country who can guide me.

I would have already left the country if i was sure i could meet the required burden of proof in an asylum claim. I would like to know if you would be able to help me in anyway should i travel to the U.K to seek asylum and what my chances are of making a successful claim.

Thank you for your consideration
Ismail Mohamed Didi



The Director
Amnesty International

Dear Sir/Madam:

On 24 June 2010 I was arrested by Raa Atoll Ungoofaaru Police Station where I was charged with “attempted suicide by overdozing on less than a gram of hash oil, atheism and homosexuality.”

However, quite strangely, only a vague reference to “drug abuse” appeared on the Court Order for my arrest.

While the officers of the Maldives Police Service at Male’ Custodial were very kind to me – understandably, due to my parents refusing to allow my transfer to house arrest due to the gravity of the charges – I feel vulnerable against corrupt elements, the remnants of former President Gayoom’s dictatorship, rampant in the Maldives Judiciary and other law enforcement agencies.

I also feel defenceless against extremists of all sorts and the extreme ideas prevailing in Maldives society, especially in relation to previous contributions to Minivan News.

Hence, I would greatly appreciate if you can help me find temporary asylum in a friendly democratic country until I feel it is safe for me to return to Maldives and continue my investigative work as a freelance journalist and independent blogger promoting human rights.

Thanking you in advance for your kind cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Ismail Khilath Rasheed

CC: Human Rights Commission of Maldives
U.N.C.H.R.
Reporters Without Borders



I Was Terrified For My Life

September 22, 2010 by Anonymous

This happened to me about two days back. I was meeting up with a friend after a very long time. He lived alone and not so far from my house. Due to my busy working hours and shift duties, I was unable to meet my closest friends who were just like me, who understood the other side of my life. We had a lot of catching up to do and things to share and talk, so i stayed till late at his home with one of our friends (a girl, who understood what we were going through). We all had a good meal and had a good conversation which led to us losing track of time.

It was just past 1 A.M. when I did eventually realise that it was in fact getting quite late and I had to go to work in the morning. Normally, if I go out on month Ramadan to my friend's place, I'd stay until 2 or 2:30 A.M. but I never knew what was in store for me that very night.

Anyway, so we all said our goodbyes to each other and my one of my girl friend left in a car, being that she was a girl and lives quite far away and as if she knew what might happen if she were to walk. As I was walking home, I rang my girlfriend while she was still in the car. I just wanted to talk to her until I reached home. Which made me feel that I wasn't all alone. While I was on the phone, I suddenly noticed someone lurking from behind. It wasn't only one but two people. I took a peak of who was following me and tried to Quicken up my speed of walking . I was shivering and my heart seems to beat faster than ever. At that very moment I knew something is gonna happen really wrong and that my whole life was under threat.

I told my friend who was still on the phone that I am being followed and that I don't what I should do. She told me to run. But I was too afraid to make any sudden moves as they might catch me and hurt me brutally and or maybe they might even kill me. I didn't have a clue what they wanted or what they had in mind to do to me.

One guy was tall and fair with black hair and wore a black t-shirt with white skinny jeans and looked like a drug dealer. other guy was a little bit shorter than the first guy.

They were yelling out, "Buddy... Stop!!!"

They were literally meters away from me... I was scared to death at that point, but luckily for me i have reached Majeedhi Magu at last. It was a releif for me to make it there but I knew I still had a long way to go. Majeedhi Magu is the main street where the majority of the shops are located and the street is very brightly light with heavy traffic.

I knew my life could be saved but now the question for me was to choose which road should I choose to reach home. One was a very narrow dark road which coincidentally was also a shorcut to my house, while the other was to go straight along Majeedhi Magu and taking a street where there were a lot of people. I almost took the shortcut as I always use that way to get home but I saw what was ahead of me, a dark road and then there is my home... and what was behind me, a man who would dare to kill me on the spot and I knew it wouldn't be a wise choice to choose this one option. I took the long way home. If it saves my life, thats all that matter to me at this point.

They were still following me and they were gaining speed. They yelled out, but I ignored and kept walking faster. Suddenly, they started running and instinctively I started to run as well. I quickly put my phone in my pocket and ran as fast and as far as i could and didnt look back until I was very, very close to home. I checked to see if they saw me go into my house. Luckily they were far too behind to see which house I went in to.

I rang my friend as soon as I got home and told her the rest of the story. I had ran all the way home, because I was terrified for my life.

I have never encountered anything like this in my life before and I really don't feel safe living in Male' anymore.

Maldives maybe a piece of heaven for the tourists who visits here, but it sure is a hell for people like us, who gets chased by people in the middle of the night when no one is around, and either get robbed or murdered.

I didn't report this to the police knowing that they will do nothing about it and that I rather not tell anybody other than my close friends. Until a friend asked me to let other Queer Maldivians be aware of the goings on by telling this story and in hopes that more would come forward and tell their stories.

I maybe safe for now, but the crime rate is increasing day by day in the Maldives. Stealing and abusing and all those bad stuff people do to others are increasing as well.

I hope I never see them again!!!



I Was Terrified For...

Hilath Recieves Yet another death threat

September 15, 2011

Hilath Rasheed is a prominent and noteworthy figure in the LGBT community of Maldives. For the past 10 years, he has been slowly pushing the envelope with controversial subject matter via his blog. But this week, he shut his blog down due to the nuisance of Homophobes and Islamothugs conspiring to silence him.

No stranger to death threats, the latest unwarranted death threat to Hilath appeared on 9 September 2011 on an online newspaper against the governing party called Minivan Adu (Free Voice). The article was entitled, Is there no one to exterminate the traces of Hilath Rasheed. It is written in Dhivehi.

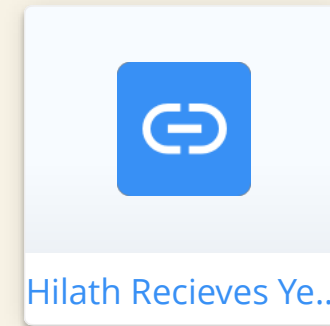
The article which does not attempt to conceal its endorsement of hatred and violence, called for the murder of Hilath Rasheed by way of asking the general public to do the dirty work. The article stated, “the punishment for such peoples are death according to the Shari’ah Law”. The next line read, “[Hilath] is a plague on this society”. Minivan Adu also says that there was no need for Maldivians to go abroad to Afghanistan or Pakistan to perform Jihad when Jihad was attainable right here at home.

This somewhat expected turn of events occurred with no provocation from Hilath, but as a direct result of hypocrisy, bigotry and self righteousness that is rampant in the majority Muslim island nation of Maldives. Hilath reckons a lack of education regarding sensitive issues plays a huge part in homophobic attacks on individuals such as this.

In an exclusive interview via the phone, Hilath confirmed he was safe and that he was not prepared to back down. However, he has given up the futile battles on the internet in favour of taking the fight to a street level with anticipation of real change. “We can’t get our rights unless we take it to the streets”, he said. Hilath doesn’t encourage violence but stressed that he won’t hesitate to do so in self defense.

Hilath went on to say that Queer Maldivians fighting the good fight on the internet everyday should continue to fight the good fight, and that if any one was ready to join him on the streets, they are welcome to and should do so.

Hilath revealed that he is working on a well thought out plan before taking the proverbial it to the streets. He refused to comment any further at this time.



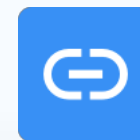
NOVEMBER 19, 2011

HILATH RASHEED'S
BLOG
(WWW.HILATH.COM) IS
BLOCKED BY THE
COMMUNICATIONS
AUTHORITY OF
MALDIVES ON THE
ORDERS OF THE
ISLAMIC AFFAIRS
MINISTRY ON THE
GROUNDS THAT IT
CONTAINED ANTI-
ISLAMIC MATERIAL



DECEMBER 10, 2011

PARTICIPANTS OF A
SILENT PROTEST FOR
RELIGIOUS
TOLERANCE ARE
ATTACKED AND
THREATENED WITH
DEATH IN BROAD
DAYLIGHT. HILATH
RASHEED IS
HOSPITALISED AFTER
HIS SKULL IS
FRACTURED



Maldivian journali...

Sun, sand and intolerance

December 11, 2011 by @yaamyn

Saturday's attack on a group of people silently protesting against religious intolerance is just the latest in a series of orchestrated, well-choreographed acts of violence, hatred and intolerance sweeping across the nation in recent months.

Independent journalist and blogger, Ismail 'Hilath' Rasheed, whose personal blog was censored by the Maldivian government last month, was among those attacked, sustaining serious injuries to the head. Others who attempted to intervene also suffered minor injuries.

Ahmed Hassan, one of the protesters, said, "We planned a silent sit down protest in order to make a statement over the lack of religious freedom for minorities, especially those who aren't Sunni Muslims."

"We are entering the fourth year of democracy but unfortunately, many basic freedoms and rights have yet to be achieved for all Maldivians. It is unacceptable in this day and age that non-Muslim Maldivians are discriminated against in their own country," he said. "This is their country as much as ours."

He further added "I would like to say to those that attacked us today that violence is not a part of Islam. Islam is a religion of love, peace and shura (consultation). The unprovoked attack is clearly an act of intimidation. We realize that as our movement grows, we could face many more such attacks, but we will not be backing out. We will not be intimidated into silence."

Local writer and blogger, Aminath Sulthona, who was also among the protesters said, "These are not people worthy of being termed 'religious', but they are misguided thugs spreading terror and violence in the name of religion."

Sulthona complained that the police at the scene failed to carry out their duties. "I was being openly threatened and verbally abused in the presence of a police officer who paid no heed to the man... I managed to take pictures of the attackers, but as soon as I got home I started receiving calls saying I would be attacked on the streets if the pictures were leaked."

The injured protester, Hilath, has also previously faced death-threats over his vocal criticism of Islamic radicalism on his personal blog.

Million-Man March of bigotry

As the rest of the world celebrates the International Human Rights day to commemorate the adoption of the UDHR, a network of NGOs in the Maldives and seven political parties are preparing to conduct a large protest on December 23 – with organisers vowing to assemble a rather ambitious 100,000 protesters, including mothers and their newborns, in order to 'protect Islam'.

The protests were announced in the aftermath of a speech delivered in parliament by Navi Pillay, the visiting UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, after she sought the removal of discriminatory clauses in the Constitution towards non-Muslims, as well as an open debate on the subject of degrading punishments like public flogging that are still practised in the Maldives.

Pillay argued that flogging as a form of punishment was "cruel and demeaning to women", while pointing out that apart from just one other Islamic country, the practise wasn't condoned even among Muslim nations.

Available statistics appear to support the claim that women are disproportionately affected by punishments such as flogging. Mariyam Omid, then Editor of Minivan News, reported in a 2009 article that according to government statistics, out of 184 people sentenced to flogging for 'fornication', 146 were women.

However, the report was met with outrage from conservative sections of the public who gathered with placards at the same venue where the protesters were attacked yesterday, and demanded that the journalist be deported.

There was simply no room for intelligent discussion on the subject and the offending statistic mysteriously disappeared from government websites not long afterwards.

Similarly, the response to the UN Human Rights Commissioner's recommendations has been a brutish all-out war on the very idea of having a debate on the subject.

One gimmick to rule them all

One might wonder how in a country where Islam is safeguarded by the Constitution, and where there is overwhelming support among both leaders and the general public for mandating Islam's role in state affairs, and where educating the public on other religions is not only taboo, but also illegal by law – could there still exist such insecurity among citizens that they need to rally in order to 'protect Islam'.

The explanation is simple.

For 30 years, former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom carefully consolidated the state's authority over personal beliefs by successfully selling the idea of a '100 percent Sunni Muslim' nation, and making the Dhivehi Identity virtually synonymous with Sunni Islam, which needed to be fiercely protected at all times from ever-present, invisible threats.

One of Gayoom's most damaging legacies is that a paranoid Maldives found itself among the top ten countries in the world noted for religious intolerance, according to a study by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life published in 2009.

Employing religion to keep his citizens in check was a master stroke that ensured him a long reign, but Gayoom's chickens came home to roost in the dying days of his regime when the democratic uprising threw up a medley of ultra-conservative mullahs who would take over the religious mantle from Gayoom.

Following the first democratic Presidential elections, the ultra-conservative Adhaalath Party assumed control of the newly created Ministry of Islamic Affairs, and took upon themselves the onerous responsibility of deciding who were the 'true Muslims' and what constituted 'true Islam'.

It didn't help matters that despite the freedom of speech granted by the constitution, the mainstream Maldivian media continues to exercise strict self-censorship when it comes to issues of religion and human rights.

The subject remains taboo among other public institutions and agencies as well, as evidenced by the statement released by the Maldivian Human Rights Commission yesterday on the occasion of Human Rights day, which glaringly omits any mention of minority rights or non-Muslim Dhivehin.

Speaking at a National Awards ceremony last month, President Nasheed gently rebuked his citizens for reacting 'in a jihadi manner' over the Navi Pillay controversy.

Instead, he exhorted the citizens to "have the courage to be able to listen to and digest what people tell us, what we hear and what we see"

President Nasheed would have done well to foster this spirit in his own government which, in the first few months after coming to power, shut down several websites that were allegedly critical of his then coalition partner, the Adhaalath Party.

Less than two weeks before he implored his citizens to have the courage to digest others' opinions, President Nasheed's government banned the blog of independent journalist Hilath who had been critical of Islamists in the government.

Even more startling was the reaction of his foreign Minister, Ahmed Naseem, to the controversy over Navi Pillay's recommendations for doing away with degrading punishments.

"You cannot argue with God", he said, in what was a clear surrender to the politics of bigotry.

The President would also do well to convey his ideas to his erudite Islamic Minister, Dr Abdul Majeed Abdul Baree whose response to the call for open discussion on the subject was merely, "No Muslim has the right to advocate against flogging for fornication."

The Islamic Minister had also previously condemned the presence of commemorative monuments presented by participating nations in the recently concluded 17th SAARC summit in Addu.

Burning Bridges

The destructive outcome of emotive politics of hatred, strife and fear was clearly demonstrated by the hyper-paranoid religious vandals who burnt, damaged and stole multiple SAARC monuments because they allegedly depicted 'idols of worship'.

One police officer on duty guarding the monument recollected being approached by hostile members of the general public asking why they were guarding "temples".

The opposition parties, seeing political expediency even in the most unfortunate acts of xenophobic vandalism, quickly hailed the vandals as “national heroes”.

In a related incident, some MPs of the Progressive Party, including MP Ahmed Mahloof apparently hijacked a ferry in a valiant effort to save Islam from a banner hung at the International Airport, before they were intercepted by the Police and diverted to another island.

The offending banner at the airport depicted an image of Jesus Christ, a Buddhist chakra, and other religious motifs symbolising the religious diversity of South Asia, which the design consultants who came up with the concept said was in keeping with this year’s SAARC summit’s theme of ‘Building bridges’.

Notably, none of these MPs had anything to say on the young non-Muslim Maldivian man who hung himself from a tower at that very airport in July 2010, following immense pressure from family and state religious authorities after he, in his own words, “foolishly admitted (his) non-religious stance” to friends and colleagues.

If the 17th SAARC Summit proved anything, it is that building bridges is impossible when there are greedy political trolls ready to pounce on anyone willing to cross it.

Uphill struggle

It also appears that the Mullah and the MPs seem to be firm in their understanding that Islam has no room for thinking, no room for debate, no room for tolerance and no room for intelligence.

The seemingly endless series of ugly incidents and violence carried out in the Maldives in the name of Islam only reinforces the reputation of Islam as an intolerant, backward religion fit for narrow minded thugs who are incapable of dealing with 21st century realities or co-existing peacefully with the international community.

According to a March 2011 Universal Periodic Review Report for the Maldives, the Maldivian government had pledged to raise awareness and public debate around the issue of freedom of religion and religious tolerance.

The report states that “The Maldives commits to begin domestic awareness-raising and an open public debate on religious issues. Moreover... the Maldives requests international support to host, in 2012, a major international conference on modern Sharia jurisprudence and human rights.”

However, this may be a difficult task given the sense of over-entitlement prevalent among sections of the Maldivian public that, though it demands – nay depends – on foreign aid, income and expertise to keep their families clothed and fed, nevertheless scoffs at the very thought of having to fulfil any obligations to the international community at large.

When confronted by the UN Committee on the the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in August 2011 on the constitutional clause depriving non-Muslims of citizenship, the Maldivian delegation reportedly had this to say:

“It was not true that under the new Constitution existing citizens could be arbitrarily deprived of their nationality if they were to stop practicing Islam... The Muslim-only clause under the citizenship article of the Constitution only applied to non-Maldivians wishing to become naturalised.”

However, just one month later, the government published new Regulations under the Religious Unity Act of 1994, making it illegal to propagate any other religion than Islam, or to be in possession of any material or literature that contradicts Islam. Any violations of the regulations would carry a 2 to 5 year prison sentence.

In other words, as the silent protesters attacked in broad daylight yesterday learned, the struggle to achieve universal human rights in the Maldives is a seemingly impossible and uphill task that only keeps getting harder, thanks to the cesspool of paranoia, hatred and violence generated by a band of short-sighted politicians who are happy to abuse religion and opportunistic religious clerics who dabble in politics.

As with last year, where a motorcade of fundamentalists rode around the capital yelling loud anti-Semitic slogans about visiting Israelis, this year too the Human Rights Day has been marred by gloomy incidents of intolerance that only remind us of how the idea of mutual respect and civility still eludes us as a nation.



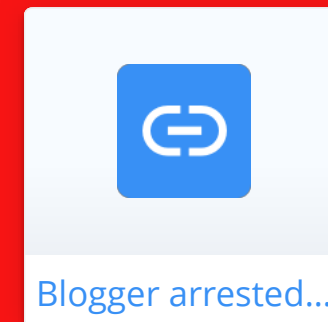
Comment: Sun, s...

DECEMBER 14, 2011

HILATH RASHEED
ARRESTED FOR HIS
INVOLVEMENT IN THE
SILENT PROTEST FOR
RELIGIOUS
TOLERANCE

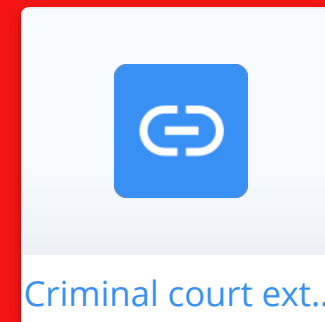
Calls for an investigation of the protest were made by religious conservative Adhaalath party, NGO Jamiyyathu Salaf, and ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) MP 'Reeko' Moosa Manik.

While pursuing its investigation of the protest for religious tolerance, police have also summoned the developer of the website 23December.com, which this week published slogans calling for the murder of anti-Islamic activists in what organisers later described as a "technical mistake".



DECEMBER 17, 2011

CRIMINAL COURT
EXTENDS DETENTION
OF HILATH RASHEED
BY 10 DAYS



The Intolerant Constitution

December 21, 2011 by @yaamyn

In 1959, an expedition of historians unearthed an exquisitely carved ancient statue of Gautama Buddha from the island of Thoddoo.

Buried under slabs of stones, possibly to protect it from being demolished along with the the temples following the Islamization of the Maldives in 1153 AD, the statue was a priceless archaeological find.

Before long, however, the island was gripped with controversy. ‘The religion of worshipping statues has begun!’, some islanders were described as saying, according to the book ‘A New Light on the History of Maldives’.

One early dawn soon after its discovery, the ancient statue was found decapitated by vandals.

The statue was then taken to Male’ and displayed at Mulee’aage, the current Presidential residence. Before the week had ended, another mob barged in and smashed it to pieces leaving behind just the serenely smiling head, which is now displayed in the National Museum in Male’.

The Prime Minister at the time, strong-man Ibrahim Nasir, who didn’t hesitate to personally lead gunboats to forcefully depopulate the island of Thinadhoo following the southern rebellion, knew better than to investigate the vandalism.

It was simply pointless, because half a century later, unidentified vandals would proceed to smash, burn and destroy the SAARC-gifted monuments in Addu, for allegedly being ‘idols of worship’.



The State vs. the Tolerant

Just like Nasir, the modern Maldivian politician knows better than to challenge the deep-rooted fear of ‘other religions’ that is so firmly ingrained in the Maldivian psyche.

On the other hand, it makes for a great political gimmick.

Quite tellingly, the ruling party, seven opposition parties and a network of 127 NGOs are all planning to protest on December 23 in order to renew their vows against allowing ‘other religions’ in the Maldives.

It seems a rather redundant cause, considering the 2008 Maldivian constitution already forbids non-Muslims from becoming citizens, and mandates that the nation remain 100% Sunni Muslim.

This status quo, however, was recently challenged by a group of Maldivians who gathered in Male’ on December 10, on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, in silent protest against the lack of religious freedom in the Maldives.

The sit-down protest was disrupted within minutes by a violent gang, leaving one man with serious injuries to the head.

Joining the chorus of local politicians eagerly latching onto the controversy, “Reeko” Moosa, the former MDP Parliamentary Group leader, demanded the prosecution of those who called for ‘religious tolerance’ – otherwise considered a positive phrase elsewhere in the world.

Independent journalist and blogger, Ismail Hilath Rasheed, who was among the freedom advocates, has been taken into police custody.

Meanwhile, the National Security Committee in parliament has decided to summon participants of the protest, citing their duty to defend Islam and uphold the country’s constitutionally imposed religious unity.

It is abundantly clear that there’ll be no debate on the subject, and that at the heart of it lies the holy writ of country’s unchallengeable Constitution.

The immutable constitution

Thomas Jefferson, one of the great founding fathers of America, once proposed that the American constitution should be rewritten every 20 years, lest the dead end up ruling over the living.

There are, of course, excellent reasons to deliberately make it difficult to modify a country’s constitution, not the least of which is to protect it from whimsical rulers.

In this regard, however, the Maldives goes one step further than the rest.

Speaking about the incarceration of Hilath Rasheed, Police Sub-Inspector Ahmed Shiyam said “Calling for anything against the constitution is illegal”.

There appears to be a general consensus among lawmakers and the public alike that the constitution is beyond all criticism, and any dissenting word spoken against it should be considered a grievous crime.

This would perhaps imply that the entire Chapter 12 of the constitution is now utterly redundant, for what good is a chapter on amending the constitution when apparently it is illegal to find any fault with the existing one?

One presumes that President Nasheed himself must now be put in chains and dragged before the courts for blasphemously uttering in July 2010 that he was in favour of a Parliamentary democracy, whereas the holy constitution explicitly decrees a Presidential system.

Thankfully, other democracies of the world recognize that obeying the constitution doesn’t necessarily mean agreeing with it.

In neighboring democracies like India, writer activists such as Booker Prize winning author Arundhati Roy write fiery articles openly defying the State, and major political parties publicly campaign to remove specific Constitutional clauses they have philosophical differences with.

In a true representative democracy, the public is generally free to advocate and lobby their representatives for causes they believe in.

In the past few weeks, it has emerged that Maldivian public apparently doesn’t have this freedom.

The other sacred text

Perhaps, then, it is not the Constitution, but Islam that imposes certain limits on the debate?

Unfortunately, in the Maldives, there is no way to tell apart the limits imposed by Islam from the ones imposed on it.

It appears that many Maldivians are convinced that the ultra-conservative Adhaalath Party and their Salafi cousins are the foremost authorities on the subject of Islam in the known universe.

But for that to be true, one must argue that every other Islamic nation in history has been wrong.

While one Maldivian blogger has been languishing in a prison cell for the past week for advocating religious tolerance, there is an abundance of Imams, caliphs and even a certain Prophet from history who seem to be in agreement with that blogger's opinion that Islam does indeed have room for religious tolerance.

Didn't the Prophet himself say, "Whosoever does injustice to a protected non-Muslim, then I will be his enemy (on the Day of Judgement)"?

The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, drafted by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference as a Shari'ah compliant alternative to the UDHR, declares the right of people to a dignified life free of discrimination on the grounds of religious belief, among other things.

Maldivian scholar Dr Abdulla Saeed of Melbourne University, argues in his book 'Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam' that there is "a vast amount of clear Qur'anic texts in favour of freedom of religion".

Needless to say, his book was banned in the Maldives.

The burden of defining 'true Islam', instead, fell on a small group of short-sighted conservative political Mullahs working out of a Ministry building in Male'. And in their opinion, Islam forbids the mere mention of 'other religions' – despite what the Qur'an says.

'Because we're special'

12th century copper plate grants found in the Maldives reveal the blood-soaked, painful process of conversion of the Maldives to Islam. The Sultans of the day went through the trouble of bringing in Buddhist monks and beheading them in the capital.

The modern day Maldives takes a much simpler route. The 2008 Constitution unilaterally declares all Maldivians to be Sunni Muslim without the courtesy of so much as an opinion poll.

Maldivians in general are quite proud of the '100% Muslim' statistic that is frequently bandied about.

But it raises a few fundamental questions that are nevertheless extremely taboo in the Maldivian society.

At what point of Maldivian history has there ever been a public census on religion?

Does the Maldivian state even have the right to unilaterally declare a citizen's beliefs? Which other Islamic State or Empire in Islam's 1400 year old history has taken this liberty – and under whose authority?

Those We Do Not Speak Of

A cursory look at online Social networks easily proves the existence of several non-Muslim Maldivians, and Dhivehin who appear to not subscribe to a religion at all.

If we were to do the unthinkable and disregard the holy constitution for just a minute, how morally justified is it really to make their mere existence a crime potentially punishable by death?

Consider the fact that our very economic survival depends on treating other non-Muslims – those who are non-related by blood, culture or language – with generous hospitality.

Does this radical notion of unilaterally enforced Islam only apply to those born of Dhivehi parents? Could the Parliament conceivably declare tourists and other visitors also to be Sunni Muslims while within Maldivian territory?

At what point does the whole affair begin to sound absurd?

Chaos theory

Politicians of both major parties argue that introducing the freedom of conscience to minorities would result in chaos and disorder in society, much like introduction of democracy did with the introduction of political rights. But are any of these politicians sincerely willing to return to the non-chaotic days of the past when they were jailed for simply expressing an opinion? If not, why not?

The Maldives has been "100% Muslim" since at least the Gayoom days. So why do we not see the utopian fantasy of a prosperous, peaceful, gentle society of fellow Muslims treating each other with kindness?

Instead, it appears that Maldivian lawmakers and government no longer have to talk about roads or health or food or development, for they now have the one dead horse of religion to flog for all eternity.

Is it really that hard to see there's something wrong with the picture when eight political parties – both the ruling and the opposition – plan to rally in order to “defend Islam” against each other?

Which Islamic principle was being followed by the MPs who tried to force their way to the International airport in an effort to remove a banner depicting the region's cultural diversity?

Presumably, it takes a tremendous amount of will power for these lawmakers to restrain themselves from forcing their way past security into the National Museum to destroy the still intact head of the ancient coral-stone idol of the Thoddoo Buddha that our ancestors had failed to destroy.

What Islamic value lies behind the sort of blood lust that drives an ordinary Maldivian to go and violently attack a fellow Maldivian simply for being a non-Sunni Muslim?

Based on what Islamic criteria do we religiously uphold certain parts of the Shari'ah penal code such as flogging, while completely disregarding others such as amputating limbs, or stoning half-buried humans to death?

These are all important, crucial questions. But until there's room for an honest debate, how would we ever find out?

End of Reason

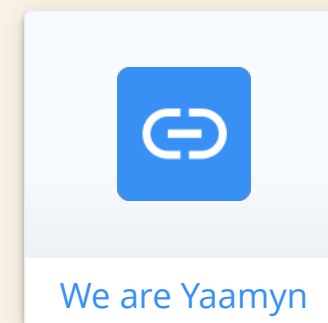
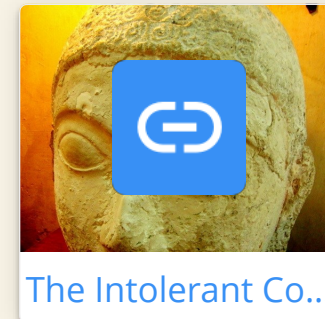
“I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it”, wrote S.G. Tallentyre in 1906, in a quote widely misattributed to French philosopher Voltaire.

Over a century later, we Maldivians have yet to appreciate the sentiment behind this powerful phrase.

While jihadist literature with fiery, cataclysmic titles are openly sold in Salafi bookshops around the capital, the slightest spark of reason is immediately stamped out by an unthinking brigade of conservative clerics and opportunistic politicians.

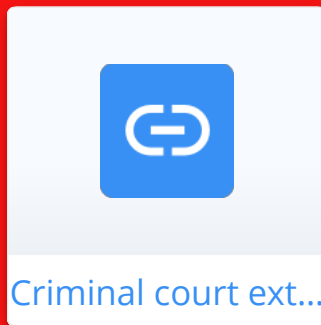
The broken, still smiling Buddha in the National Museum bears witness to our long history of stubbornly refusing to accept reason.

But today, more than ever, it is necessary to ask difficult questions and face hard facts, because the line that marks where the debate stops also marks the point where, as Thomas Jefferson feared, we become enslaved to the past.



DECEMBER 27, 2011

HILATH RASHEED
DETAINED FOR
ANOTHER 15 DAYS AS
ISLAMIC MINISTER DR.
MAJEED ABDUL BARI
REQUESTS PROPER
PUNISHMENT

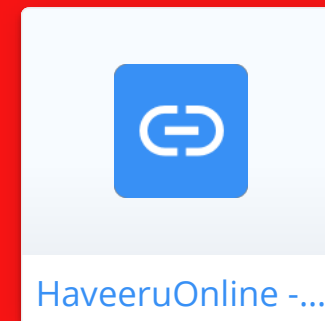


POLICE VOW THOROUGH
PROBE INTO
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
GATHERING, ISLAMIC
MINISTER CITES
LEGAL DIFFICULTIES

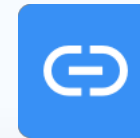
Faseeh stressed that Hilath was arrested under a warrant because the police did not get the chance to arrest him from the crime scene.

"I will give the details [later] and I will point out everything even if it includes negligence on our side," he said. "We have done a lot and several have been summoned. We are determining the identity of those believed to have had participated in the gathering via CCTV footage and video clips received from the public and we are summoning them."

However, Islamic Minister Dr Abdul Majeed Abdul Bari told the committee members that the law does not state a clear punishment for religious freedom activists. The minister requested the parliament pass the much-needed legislations and suggested that punishments for such actions be included in the Penal Code being revised by the parliament.



JANUARY 7, 2012
HILATH RASHEED
RELEASED FROM
CUSTODY



Controversial blo...

FEBRUARY 7TH 2012

PRESIDENT MOHAMED
NASHEED FORCED TO
RESIGN AFTER
SUCCESSFUL COUP BY
OPPOSITION AND
MILITARY / POLICE.
MOST OF THE
FACTIONS INVOLVED
ARE THE SAME AS THE
ONES WHO ORGANISED
THE 23RD DECEMBER
2011 PROTEST TO
“PROTECT ISLAM”.

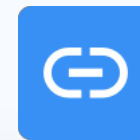


JUNE 4, 2012

ISMAIL HILATH
RASHEED IS LEFT IN
CRITICAL CONDITION
AFTER BEING STABBED
IN THE NECK NEAR HIS
HOUSE IN MALE'

"They slit his throat clean through the trachea, and missed a vital artery by millimetres," the source said, around 11:30pm, giving Rasheed a "five percent chance ... It doesn't look good."

Early on Tuesday morning the source reported that Rasheed's condition had stabilised: "He'll be in intensive care for a couple of days. He's breathing through a tube now."



Prominent blogge...

Rainbow Maldives

June 23, 2012

Rainbow is the arc of colors and manifestation of God's beauty and logic; an illusory hope that keep demise at bay; an assortment of diversity and differences existing in harmony. Locally it is known as vissaradhuni, which can be literally translated as the arrow of rain. And the irony of it all is in that they say straight as an arrow yet rainbow is used throughout the world as a symbol of gay and lesbian pride.

The colours of rainbow have a special meaning for me, especially since I live in Maldives and do not have the luxury or the desire to flee the country like many in my situation has done. The spirit in yellow, the celebration in green, the diversity in purple, the courage in red, the equality in blue, and the community the colour aqua represents and the joy of orange is where my hopes and dreams lie.

Being gay in Maldives is difficult. But I and my fellow gay and lesbian brothers and sisters need to make our existence more known despite the difficulties; maybe in the form of an FB status, a profile picture or maybe a blog post. In order to grow and become a full human we need to embrace our whole selves, including our sexuality. I realized that, in order to reach my maximum potential I needed to embrace my sexuality. Maybe not scream that out from the rooftops, but by taking the first and most important step of it all, by stop lying to myself about my sexuality. I know I have a long way to go... but I at least I feel like I have taken the first step towards the ultimate goal.

In Maldives, where talking about sex in public is considered a taboo while we think about it 24/7, talking openly about themes and topics from a homosexual perspective and homosexuality itself is nothing but blasphemy. Yet I decided to make my voice heard, how meek, feeble and cowardly it may sound. And maybe one day I would not have to hide behind anonymity but stand equal to my fellow heterosexual Maldivian, with equal rights and opportunities, with a voice perhaps louder than his. This might not happen in my life time, but hopefully I would rest in peace knowing I contributed to my best in these very unfavouring conditions.

So for now here I am, slightly wishing that God gave me something a bit easy, yet thankful that He gave me something. I stand proud, as God made me... I stand gay.



Rainbow Maldives

OCTOBER 2, 2012

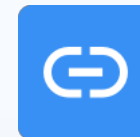
MALDIVIAN MP AND
MODERATE RELIGIOUS
SCHOLAR DR.
AFRASHEEM ALI IS
STABBED TO DEATH AT
HIS HOME IN MALE'
CITY

The member for Ungoofaaru constituency in Raa Atoll was murdered after returning home from appearing on the TVM show “Islamee Dhiriulhun” (Islamic Life) with Deputy Minister of Islamic Affairs Mohamed Qubad Aboobakuru.

The show finished around 11:00pm, and Afrasheem’s body was discovered by his wife at the bottom of the stairs of their apartment building shortly after midnight.

The MP had been stabbed four times in the back of the head and a chunk of his skull was missing, according to reports on VTV. He also suffered stab wounds to the chest and neck.

The MP was rushed to ADK hospital where he was pronounced dead.



PPM MP Dr Afras...

OCTOBER 10, 2012

WAHEED GOVERNMENT
SUBMITS BILL TO
FACILITATE DEATH
PENALTY; MOTIVATED
BY THE MURDER OF MP
DR. AFRASHEEM ALI

A meeting of the cabinet yesterday strongly condemned last week's murder of MP Dr Afrasheem Ali and urged President Dr Mohamed Waheed Hassan to start taking immediate measures to ensure safety and security in the country. President's Office spokesman Masood Imad said that the government had received a large number of calls for implementing the death penalty. "We are having enormous pressure since these high profile murders," he said. "We have indications – the talk around the town – that there will be more murders."



Waheed governm...

November 16, 2013

Abdulla Yameen is
elected President



Letter to the Maldives

July 24, 2014 by Abraham Naim

To the people of the Maldives,

There have been a lot of things said about me in the media back home, and I would like to say a few things in response.

Firstly, I am not a transgendered woman, I am a drag queen. What I do is performance art. I do not wish to live as a woman. I entertain people and talk about issues that have affected me while living in the Maldives and abroad.

I am not crazy and I am not a monster. I believe in human rights for all Maldivians, and for all the people of the world. I am exercising my right to self-expression. I care deeply about people no matter how they happen to present themselves physically. I believe in human rights for all people, be they cisgender, gay, lesbian, transsexual or intersex, black white or anything else they are, or want to be.

Some of you think I am an example of what is wrong with Maldives' society.

I am not what is wrong with Maldives' society. Kleptocracy is what is wrong with Maldives' society. Child prostitution is what is wrong with Maldives' society. State sponsored drug trafficking and addiction is what is wrong with Maldives' society. Poverty and corruption is what is wrong with Maldives' society.

I am a Maldivian and proud. I ask all of you that you to take a good look at your situation in the Maldives, rather than at me. You may try and dismiss what I have to say, but try to see the truth: you live in the country that I fled. My asylum was absolutely legitimate. You live in a place deemed one of the twenty-five worst places to live in the world. I refer you all to the Biological Behavioural Survey (BBS) of the Maldives done in 2008. The survey was done in conjunction with the UN, WHO and UNESCO it discovered the illness in our society. It exposed the truth that drug use begins as young as eight in the Maldives, that injecting drug use starts as young as twelve in the Maldives; that prostitution also begins as young as twelve in the Maldives; that poverty and inequality hang in the air like and odourless gas in your home of the Maldives. This is not the way society should function!

The children of the Maldives, YOUR CHILDREN, are being terrorised and destroyed by this evil - and yet here you all are getting upset by one little drag queen! Some of you have asked me if my friends and I have lost our minds.

We have not lost our minds, we are exercising our freedoms. I can't tell if your comments imply disbelief in my lifestyle or a misplaced religious concern for my immortal soul, but let me explain something to you: I am doing nothing wrong by living my life the way I want to, the way that makes sense to me. The way that makes me feel happy. I am an honest person; what you see on these pages is how I think and feel, and there is nothing even in our culture that prohibits me from doing so. I believe you are making up the rules as you see fit, based on the ideas you have about the world and what you feel comfortable with. As the French political thinker De Tocqueville noted, 'society has a network of small, complicated rules that cover the surface of life and strangle freedom'. These small, silly rules oppress you just as much as they oppress me. How are they serving you exactly?

To all the Maldivian people who are messaging me on social media: Many of you have been messaging me just saying "hello" and do not know what to say when I message you back. I am a busy drag queen and I am not able to try and befriend all of you, particularly as I never know whether your intentions are hostile to me or not. If you have something that you want to say, something thoughtful to say, please say it. Otherwise you are free to read my posts to find out what I think. Some of the messages I get from you have asked me to come back to the Maldives to be some sort of political activist and fight for your rights. If I go back to the Maldives I will almost certainly be killed. The request to come back irritates me to no end. I have only just been granted asylum, I am only just settling in to my new country and the upheaval I went through in becoming a refugee was enormously upsetting. I had to leave knowing I would never see most of the people I truly care about ever EVER again. I would not see the young children in my extended family grow up and become adults, and I would have to leave a part of my life behind forever.

If you want to change Maldives society, then change it! The old fat men in power who squeeze the life out of our country only have as much power as you give them. You can be the change that you are looking for!

It may no longer be my place to try and force new ideas on this country that perhaps cannot, or will not change before it slips back into the Indian Ocean, but I still believe all of you deserve so much better! I will not censor myself because what I have to say might make others feel uncomfortable. That I cannot control.

Although I am abroad I promise to keep fighting for what I believe in – civil and human rights. I am always happy to hear your stories. I am happy to talk about the oppression you are facing, my door is always open, and I will always support you. What I cannot do is spoon feed you all my thoughts and feelings, individually through personal messages. There are not enough hours in the day, not enough time in the world.

I promise to do everything I can to bring your voices to the international stage. I know how hard it can be. I have lived it.

If you are interested in the work I am doing, and want to get involved, there is a group for you – It is called Rainbow Maldives. Fear and silence are the greatest enemies of change. The group is intended to be a safe space, a forum which people can ask questions and discuss issues freely, without fear judgement or discrimination.

Although Rainbow Maldives is a movement that is concentrating on creating a strong community for the LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Intersex and Questioning) Maldivians and their heterosexual supporters, I have always thought about it in the wider terms of civil and human rights, because before I am a drag queen, before I am a gay man, and before I am even a man, I am human. As the philosopher Kierkegaard once said; to label me is to negate me. It may make it easier for you to see me as the enemy, but I am simply a person trying to live my best life in peace and happiness, and I wish the same for all of you.

Live the life you want.

Sincerely,

Medulla Oblongata A.K.A.Abraham Naim

P.S.

I would also like to address my winning performance at Miss Capital Drag this year, which many Maldivians were very upset about. It was reported in the press as me winning a stripping competition. It was not. It was a drag competition. Nobody in the Maldives has ever seen the performance, because only a snippet was uploaded on to the internet.

The Maldivian reaction to what I did thousands of miles away speaks volumes about the brutal outlook of the country. I am not saying that you are wrong because you don't know, care, or understand what drag is; but what I am saying is that the government reacting to the performance by sending thugs around Male to viciously assault anyone who seemed a bit too well dressed or sophisticated was disgusting and pathetic and hurt me deeply.

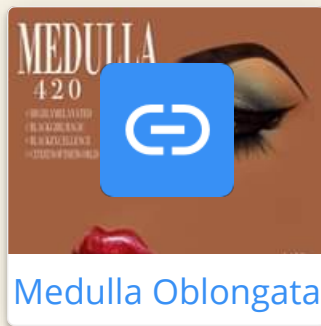
There are cultural aspects of what I did that may be lost in translation, but I will try to give you an idea of what it was all about. In the West, drag is part of the rich cultural tapestry that reflects the diversity of people and outlooks. Here I am free to create whatever I want, and say whatever I want to say. I wanted to create an entertaining and uniquely personal performance to express my perspective about who I am and what drag means to me. Drag is a valid art form. It is a vibrant part of the world's cultural history, and has been an art form in one way or another going back since before ancient Greece. It is sometimes a satire, sometimes a parody, and sometimes a tribute to women; and usually all three at once. It reminds us that the gender binary is somewhat malleable. A man embodying a woman, or vice versa, reminds me that we all have a lot in common, The performance also drew on the history of drag, and used music (Oppulence) inspired by the film Paris is Burning, which was a documentary about the competitive drag scene in New York in the 1980s. I also used a quote from a person in the film because I thought it was humorous.

I wanted to talk about myself through my performance. I wanted to show that I was from the Muslim world using an iconic piece of clothing, the abaya, a garment that is worn by both men and women. I removed it to reveal a tailored haute couture garment that had I had been sewn into. Drag as an art form involves men looking amazing women's clothing. I looked amazing. I took off the layers of black billowy fabric to reveal my mouth, then my head, then my gold cocktail dress; it was designed to surprise the audience. It is called showmanship. I am not the first drag queen from the Muslim world to have worn Muslim attire. I point to British/Pakistani drag queen Asifaa Lahoree as using similar ideas.

Indian drag queens can wear divine hand painted saris, African drag queens can wear the most colourful tribal attire, but somehow because the outfit I wore was symbolically Islamic, it has taken on almost sacred qualities. Have any of you ever stopped to consider that the issue existed before I stepped on to that stage? I did not create it; Muslim women's attire has been a battleground since before I was born. Yes, I was aware of that. I have been aware for some time that exploring many aspects of my culture holds implicit criticism, because they are things already bathed in controversy. The mere concept of what appears to be a woman removing Islamic clothing and revealing western clothing appropriate enough to wear to a cocktail party over here has scandalised a nation all the way over there. You have surrounded women's appearance in so much mystery that it has overtaken a deep part of the cultural psyche. I performed this for the benefit of the audience that was there on the night, not for Maldivians to choke on their breakfast reading the morning paper. The hang-ups of people in a society which ostracised and oppressed me, and ultimately caused me to seek asylum in a foreign country are no longer mine to worry about.

As many of you know, I am not a religious person. I believe in people expressing themselves freely. Your labyrinth of tiny rules that govern what people do in the Maldives do not apply to me anymore. I don't live in a Muslim country. I live in New Zealand.

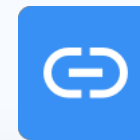
And they liked my performance here so much that I won.



At the time of writing he has been missing for 1655 days.

AUGUST 8, 2014

AHMED RILWAN AKA
@MOYAMEEHAA
CONFIRMED MISSING



Help Find Ahmed Rilwan (@mo...

NOTICE: My retirement from public life

June 08, 2016 by Hilath Rasheed

Last month, on May 13 to be exact, I made a Dhivehi language announcement of my decision to retire from public life.

In that regard, I deactivated all my social media to the maximum extent possible, and by that I mean deactivating my Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and DeviantArt; however, while YouTube allowed me to "unlist" most of my videos ("most" because some videos are already publicly shared by certain media and news websites), Flickr does not allow such, and so, rather than "delete" all those years of my photography documentation from across the Maldives and other countries, I left Flickr as it is -- although I do not plan to update my YouTube and Flickr hereafter.

And the only reason I am keeping just this blog is to make public announcements like this. That is why I do not update this blog regularly in that sense - because I do not want to start blogging ever again, as I never want to engage with society on a public level ever again.

Such a harsh decision stems from the fact that, over the past one and half years since my return to Maldives, my experience on Facebook made me realize that even a trivial "activity" -- such as a "like" or "comment" to anyone's "status" -- can be twisted around, and in such a small society like ours, it is not advisable to allow certain elements to create conflict (fitna) amongst us whether it is political, religious, social, etc.

And at a time when there seems to be so much defamatory behavior and inflammatory action (by some both on social and mainstream media), I felt that, if I see any wrongdoing, I can always, in accordance with Islamic ethics, bring up the issue privately with any individual and organization, and I believe it is their national and religious duty to undertake corrective action. Likewise, if anybody needs to contact me directly, they can always email me (hilath@gmail.com) or send an sms to my Dhiraagu number (+960-*****).

Hence, my retirement from public life comes at a time when the society is such that, the person who holds up the mirror, is demonized by a people who, in this Information Age of the Internet era, still delude themselves that they have a private life.

And when it comes to keeping secrets, Maldivians seem to be one of the worst on Earth; yet, due to fear of social alienation, they still pretend to be "clean" while in the public sphere, although while in the private sphere, everyone knows what everyone else is doing. Yes, here in the Maldives, even if you are a foreigner, you can dig up even the childhood secrets of any (Maldivian) stranger because our social networks (and the grapewine) are one of the best in the world (although I am not proud to point out this).

The insecurity even some of my friends felt when I pointed this out to them was a key reason for my decision to disengage completely from this society. I had around 200 Facebook friends and within the past 4 months, it dropped to just 6. The reason? Consider this hypothetical example:

I meet a friend on the street one day who is wearing a cap suddenly for some reason while I am not. He can see the hair on my head directly while I cannot see his hair. In this Internet age (where all information regarding biology, psychology, etc, is available), I know that, he being human, like me he also has hair on his head although I am not seeing it because he is wearing a cap. But I feel quite disconcerted when, for reasons of his own, he claims that never in his life he ever had hair on his head - although it does not take only just the "underground sex networks" (like Kotari, Mig33 or Facebook dating groups) for even any stranger (and not just me) to confirm beyond doubt that he is human and does have hair on his head and for some reason he now feels so disgusted about his hair and wants the rest of the society to believe that he has no hair on his head. Perhaps, if some day in the future, if it becomes not fashionable and trendy to be a human being at all, he might start wearing a fish costume and claim he is actually a fish, despite all the biological evidence that he is human!

So, how do you enjoy normal friendly relations or reasonable public engagement with a society which consists of a considerable number of people who deep down know that all their "shame" is exposed to everyone else but still chose to delude themselves and live in denial because that is more (falsely) comforting to their fear of social alienation. In fact, all your family, friends, neighbors (and any nosy stranger who is interested in you) by now knows every little dirty secret of yours but do not say it to your face because this is such a small society and holding up mirrors does not seem practical and socially harmonious where, metaphorically speaking, everyone's back has some kind of stain on it.

Hence, just pointing out this simple reality made me lose 200 Facebook friends overnight. But some of them now seem to be recovering from the initial shock of coming to terms with their self-imposed delusion; at least one middle-aged Maldivian man recently admitted to me that he reacted so badly towards me initially because he felt that his whole world fell apart and I was the only around when it happened -- because I was the one who actually held up the mirror to his face; that Sword of Shannara which showed him the secrets he tried to hide even from himself. Quite ironically, it seems that, in a society where there are no saints whatsoever, it serves best for everyone to ignore the others' dirt -- in order to prevent their own lives from being unnecessarily interfered by others. So, it seems he is now less hostile towards me because he has now started feeling that he has to come to terms with the fact that his "shames" are there for anyone to find out -- if they bother so. And maybe, he is also gleeful that he is not the only one around who has committed "shames".

Therefore, in such a society, I myself felt that a policy of non-intervention will serve best for me and for everyone else.

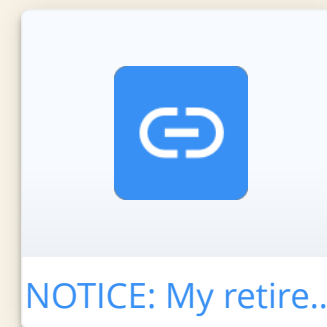
And of course, one can always serve the public in all ways. You don't have to go into politics or any other public life in order to serve the people. And you don't even need any special talent. To quote Paulo Coelho, author of THE ALCHEMIST (the second-most sold novel after Dan Brown's THE DA VINCI CODE): "We have to make it understood that a writer is no more important than someone who sells coconuts."

So I don't agree with some of my friends who tell me they feel it is ethically wrong for me to retire when I have a "talent". Everyone has a "talent". I am nobody special. So get over it.

And Coelho's following words, from THE WAY OF THE BOW, convinces me - beyond a shadow of doubt - that in this Maldivian society, it is best for me to lead a private life hereafter:

"People always judge others by taking as a model their own limitations, and other people's opinions are often full of prejudice and fear. Join with all those who experiment, take risks, fall, get hurt and then take more risks. Stay away from those who affirm truths, who criticise those who do not think like them, people who have never once taken a step unless they were sure they would be respected for doing so, and who prefer certainties to doubts. Join with those who are open and not afraid to be vulnerable: they understand that people can only improve once they start looking at what their fellows are doing, not in order to judge them, but to admire them for their dedication and courage."

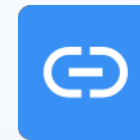
May Allah sustain all of us on the Right Path. Aameen. Ramazan Mubarak. Peace.



April 23, 2017

YAMEEN RASHEED AKA
@YAAMYN IS MURDERED

*At the time of writing his
murderers have been walking free
for 666 days.*



We are Yaamyn

Hilath took a knife to the throat for us.
Rilwan got abducted in the dead of the night.
Yameen was murdered inside his doorstep.
They were rangalhu meehun. They were rangalhu
insaanun.
They are our heroes.
And now we will carry on their legacy for them.
And for us.

To submit content for
The Laadheenee Digest #2
get in touch with your rants, art, stories,
erotica, and whatever the fuck else you feel
like saying at
thelaadheenee@icloud.com



The Laadheenees will rise again!

The Laadheenee Digest #1
February 2019