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[Home](#) > Maldives: Elections: A Second round becomes necessary:

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## Maldives: Elections: A Second round becomes necessary:

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Though the results of the Presidential Elections have not been formally announced, it is seen that Nasheed of the MDP obtained 95,224 votes out of 211850 votes polled. This comes to 45.45 percent and thus short of a fifty percent votes to prevent a runoff.

Nasheed was followed by Abdulla Yameen of the PPM ( Gayoom's party) with 25.35 percent of votes (53,099) and Gazim Ibrahim of Jumhooree party with 24.07 percent (50,422). Current president Waheed got 5.13 percent of the votes ( 10,750). There were 2395 invalid votes. So what next?

- \* Though all the candidates claimed that they would get a full majority, election trends indicated that no one would get a majority on his own.
- \* The results were as expected with Nasheed leading all others but yet short of almost 11000 votes to get the magic number. There was no "wave" on behalf of any of the candidates and it was known even to the candidates soon after the elections that no one would get the majority.
- \* The surprise was that Yameen edged out Gasim Ibrahim by 2677 votes as the latter was definitely forging ahead with promise of many "freebies" and with all the disgruntled and discarded entities from other groups joining him. This included Umar Nasir, the rabid Adhaalat Islamic group and former President Gayoom's brother-in-law Ilyas Ibrahim. There is no doubt that in terms of capability and past record, Gasim was definitely far ahead of Yameen. What must have helped Yameen is his relationship with Gayoom ( step brother) and all the old pro Gayoom elements who owe their positions and acquired wealth to Gayoom.
- \* The present incumbent president Waheed who contested as an independent candidate could not have got more and even the ten

thousand plus figure was due to his running mate Thasmeen Ali of DRP. He did not deserve anything more.

\* Even before the elections results were formally announced, Gayoom had started talks with other groups and he was fairly accurate in his estimates of the percentage of votes that would be garnered by each candidate. The results this time were exactly similar to the 2008 results when Gayoom got over 45 percent of the votes and Nasheed got 25 percent of the votes. But in the run off, all other groups joined hands to defeat Gayoom.

\* Gayoom would perhaps try a similar trick to get all the anti Nasheed votes in favour of Abdulla Yameen. Gayoom's capacity to manoeuvre and manipulate other groups and their votes in favour of Abdulla cannot be under estimated. His statement just prior to the elections and I quote- "PPM will not join those who blaspheme and mock the Messenger and the religion of Islam." This is directed towards MDP and Nasheed and Gayoom's tactics will be to tell the voters "vote for safety and security of Islam by voting for Yameen of PPM" and if you do not do so, Islam will be in danger. Nasheed and his MDP will have to find an alternative strategy to prevent Gayoom from using the Islamic card.

\* The key figure will be Gasim Ibrahim and the position he takes in the runoff. Even before the elections, he had said that if elected, he would go for a national consensus, wherein he would invite all the leaders including Nasheed to join him for a coalition of all the groups. The key question again is whether he would accept Abdulla Yameen, his old rival and some say his tormentor to become the President? Or whether he could come to an understanding with Nasheed, which some say is equally difficult? Gasim's aim would be to save his riches and make more money. Off and on he also uses the "Islami card". His response is something everyone would watch.

Much would depend on Nasheed himself, who it is presumed has a plan B for the run off in the elections. He has to be seen to be more flexible, more conciliatory towards the security forces ( they with their families would provide 6000 votes) and come to an understanding with like-minded people in the interest of democracy. He has to. But will he?

**Tags:**

[Maldives](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

[Presidential Elections](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

[Nasheed](#) <sup>[3]</sup>

**Category:**

[Papers](#) <sup>[4]</sup>

**Countries:**

[Maldives](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

**Topics:**

[Political](#) <sup>[6]</sup>

[Islamic Affairs](#) <sup>[7]</sup>

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**Links**

- [1] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/65>
- [2] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/163>
- [3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/157>
- [4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers>
- [5] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/maldives>
- [6] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/political>
- [7] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/islamic-affairs>