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## Farcical Elections in Maldives with a Tyrant in-charge!-Part I

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A tyrant President who has put in every possible contestant in jail or driven into exile- a person accused of many corruption cases involving millions of dollars- one who has mocked the human rights of the nation, controlling all the administrative apparatus to silence his political opponents, is set to contest the next General Elections for President in Maldives. Can any-one expect a fair election and that too when even the Press is muzzled? Is there any need either to predict the Winner?

### **Using Police as a political Tool**

The Election Commission has closed its eyes on all the misconduct going on in the election campaign. Unreasonable rules and decisions are forced on opposition to disrupt their rallies in Male. Vandalism supported by the State is on top.

Recently, a group of masked men entered MDP party office in Maradhoo island of Addu city, attacked MDP supporters, seriously injuring one with iron rods and vandalising the Party Hall by breaking all windows and the Sound System. The Police which acts with alacrity when the opposition members are involved did not arrest a single culprit yet. Similar incidents of vandalism have been reported from Shaviyani Feydhoo MDP meeting hall, campaign hall of Thaa Thimarafushi, as also one in Hulhumale.

Police is also stopping the opposition from putting banners and posters. If the President is to visit a place in connection with the election, all the posters and leaflets of opposition are destroyed or seized before the visit.

On the other hand, when a hut that was built to welcome the President was burnt, the Police promptly arrested a forty one year old man for

the crime, merely on suspicion.

The list can go on and more incidents are being reported but the President or the Elections Commission do not appear to be perturbed!

### **Mal Practices on the Eve of the Elections:**

Just to get votes by other means, the Government is waiving traffic fines for the fishing vessels and are also releasing inmates to house arrest ahead of the presidential election. The annual fee for vessels smaller than 9 metres long has been waived on the eve of the elections.

Granting presidential pardon to prisoners who have not served even half of their prison terms for drug offences is a very serious issue. For this even the rules under the Clemency Act were changed! The current President has no respect for law and no understanding of the well being of its citizens when the Drug offenders and traffickers are freed ahead of their terms.

### **Election Commission**

The Election Commission has sufficient powers under the 2008 Constitution. The Commission is a Constitutional body and given the task of conducting the elections freely and fairly without intimidation, aggression, undue influence or corruption. All these issues are being violated consistently by the President's party and his followers and yet the Election Commission appears to be helpless! Or does the Election Commission want President Yameen to get re-elected? They have the power to tackle violations of code of conduct but appear to be deliberately avoiding to even send a notice to the President's party.

The reason is very clear for Election Commission to do so. In last march, President Yameen, appointed his loyalist Ahmed Shareef Adam as the President of Election Commission. The appointment was unlawful and the opposition rightly boycotted the parliament seeking to ratify the candidate. How can the Election Commissioner then go against his own master?

Former Election commission President Fuwad Thowfeek told the media that "Shareef was not an appropriate choice for any independent body. But if President Yameen wants to keep someone who will be ready to obey his orders without any respect to the constitution and laws of his country, Shareef may be his choice as he will not hesitate to do any dirty thing asked by his master."

Election commission's recent orders for re registration of voters appears to be a deliberate exercise in electoral manipulation in favour of President Yameen.

### **Media Reports indicate:**

- Lack of national identity card number or photos on the voter list and failure to announce a credible figure of re-registration voters three

days after the deadline are all meant to favour Yameen. “The opposition is concerned the EC has doctored figures, especially amidst reports that some government loyalists have been issued double ID cards which they can use to vote at two different locations.”

- Failure to give a date for publishing the final voter list.
- Re-registration of civil servants and staff of state-owned companies who were forced to submit forms to a political appointee and refusal to re-register known opposition supporters.
- A [video](#) [1] of the first lady saying that forms from the “civil service and companies” were being sent to the ruling party campaign office has been discovered.
- Rumours of the EC accepting forms from President Abdulla Yameen’s campaign office past the deadline “amidst a growing public outrage that many are not re- registered, or are being registered to the wrong place.”
- New measures that would prevent candidate representatives to take in their own list of voters to observe at each polling station. “Observers are only allowed to take in the entire initial voter’s list – without the changes after the re-registration. This way, observers will not be able to determine if people are not registered to vote are there or not, (thus) opening up the way for massive voter fraud.”

### **Controlling Media in Election.**

Targeted attacks are being made through the Maldives Broadcasting Commission on Raajje TV , a pro opposition group, imposing heavy fines on it for broadcasting a politician’s live speech of an opposition demonstration. Charges are being framed that the content is deemed defamatory to President Abdulla Yameen and a threat to national security. No one with a right mind could think how this could affect National Security.

It looks pretty clear now that the sole intent is to create fear of President Abdulla Yameen and his tyrannical Regime. VTV and VFM owned by opposition Jumhooree Party leader Gasim Ibrahim has also been fined. The fines are imposed under anti –defamation laws- that means that the penalty has to be settled first before appealing for a review!

Maldives Immigration department has come up with a set of rules to reduce the presence of foreign journalists. Foreign journalists are strictly required to submit travel history, previous employment details, qualifications, bank account details and a police certificate to get a work or business visa. Punitive measures have been threatened against those foreign journalists if they were found working during the Maldives Presidential election on tourist visas. To get a business visa a journalist has to get a permission from Election Commission too. The EC

website was offline at the time of going to press. We all know now how difficult it is to get a Maldives Visa.

### **Secular angle**

A photo of opposition candidate Ibrahim Mohamed Solih 'ibu' standing near Mosque Minbar, implying that the opposition candidate is violating the sanctity of the Mosque. A Message has been circulated and this picture has been displayed that the opposition candidate is irreligious and a secularist. It was found that the Mosque was an abandoned one in Laamu Hithadhoo Island. The Police have taken no action so far and not likely to either until the elections.

Just to please the extremist Islamists, the Government on the eve of elections is seeking to decriminalise bribery through an amendment in the penal code

Abdulla Yameen is trying everything unlawful and unconstitutional to win the elections. A tyrant will have his way and the international agencies and even Western Democracies who are aggressively condemning such acts elsewhere appear to be silent in the case of Maldives. What is forgotten is that the unscrupulous Yameen is a menace to the stability of the region.

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