



CENTRE FOR LAW
AND DEMOCRACY

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CLD Calls on Maldivian Authorities to Protect Journalists

In the early hours of Monday morning, 7 October 2013, a group of masked men armed with machetes and iron bars stormed the offices of Raajje TV, an opposition-aligned television station in Male, torching the studio, and wounding and hospitalising a security guard. The television station had received written threats of an attack the previous day and had requested police protection, but had received no response.

This incident is the latest in a troubling deterioration in the security situation for the media and journalists in the Maldives. At least four journalists were attacked by police and protesters while covering demonstrations in July 2013. Several journalists were also attacked in February 2013, including Raajje TV's head of news.

"Violence against journalists for their reporting is not an ordinary crime," said CLD Executive Director Toby Mendel. *"It is an attack on freedom of expression and hence on everyone and indeed democracy itself. It is very troubling that these journalists were unable to secure police protection, even after reporting a specific and credible threat."*

According to international human rights law, States are under an obligation to create an environment in which the media can do its job effectively. This includes, where necessary, providing protection for the physical security of journalists and media outlets. The Centre for Law and Democracy calls on the Maldivian authorities, and particularly the police, to enhance the protection that it offers to journalists with a view to preventing future violent incidents. The police should also fully investigate the assaults that have taken place with a view to prosecuting those responsible, among other things to avoid the emergence of a climate of impunity for attacks against the media.

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