



Friends of Maldives

News Release - London, October 2, 2012

A group of leading artists, writers and business people have rallied to support the cause of democracy in the Maldives. In an open letter to be published in the Guardian newspaper (Tuesday), a group of celebrities and campaigners including:

Thom Yorke - Radiohead

Kim Cattrall - actor, campaigner

Sir Richard Branson - Chairman Virgin Group

Lord Bilimoria - House of Lords

Minnie Driver - actor

Darryl Hannah - actor, marine activist

Ed Norton - actor

Rhys Ifans - actor

Anna Friel - actor

Jonathon Porritt - Co-Founder Forum for the Future

Tim Smit - Founder The Eden Project

Professor Peter Singer - Princeton University

have all added their names to a letter calling on the 'illegitimate' regime of President Mohammed Waheed 'to set a date for free and fair elections, release all political detainees and end a culture of police brutality'.

On day when the former President Mohamed Nasheed refused to cooperate at the start of a criminal trial and broke the terms of his 'island arrest', the letter condemns his treatment as a process of 'legal harassment pursued by the illegitimate regime to sideline him from active politics and further stamp out any political opposition'.

The letter warns that the outlook for democracy is 'deteriorating' and cites reports by Amnesty International and the Federation of International Human Rights (FIDH) saying that since Nasheed's toppling from power a 'human rights crisis' has emerged in the country, which has suffered a 'deterioration in democracy and freedom of assembly and expression'.

The signatories also call on the British Government to urge the Waheed regime to end to 'all human rights abuses' and 'hold democratic elections at the earliest opportunity'.

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