



Statement from Friends of Maldives - Tuesday 18 December 2012

Friends of Maldives today condemns the positions of the UK Foreign Office (FCO), the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA) and its agency the Scottish Police College (SPC) as reported in the Guardian newspaper.

It is our belief that the FCO and the SPSA positions amount to either wilful blindness or negligence. Either way the result is damage to the good name of Scottish and British policing internationally.

The SPSA's reported ignorance of the existence of the 2007 Robertson report into the failings of the Maldives police service and its complicity in Gayoom era atrocities is deeply worrying. The SPSA's attempt to pass on responsibility for the monitoring of its trainees to the UK high commission in Sri Lanka is transparent buck-passing.

As for the 'positive contribution' the SPC and FCO claim is made through the sharing of a 'wealth of experience', we can only ask ourselves how this has manifested itself?

Is it in the violent overthrowing of a democratically elected government, led by the SPC's star pupil, chief of police Abdulla Riyaz?

Is it in the creation of a human rights crisis where arbitrary arrests and torture are routine?

Is it in the blossoming of a culture of impunity where police feel at liberty to enter hospitals to pepper spray and beat innocent people?

The simple truth is that for too long the SPC, encouraged by the FCO, has provided a badge of respectability to one of the Indian Ocean's most notorious security services. And in return the human rights monsters of the Abdul Gayoom and 2012-coup eras have provided the SPC with a tidy earner.

Whatever actual police training has been provided over the years, one thing is clear: it's not working.

It's time for this relationship to end and a stain on the honorable name of Scottish policing to be removed.

We urge the FCO to cancel its funding of the training programmes and for the SPC to sever its ties with the Maldives Police Service immediately, until the culture of brutality has been curtailed.

We also urge the SPC to provide a full account of the nature of its 'affiliation' with the private training firm Learning and Solutions and the Maldives based Institute for Security and Law Enforcement Studies (ISLES).

And we call upon the FCO to urge the current regime to hold democratic elections at the earliest opportunity.

David Hardingham - Friends of Maldives