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Asia - Maldives

Coup d'état?

New government must guarantee safety and rights of journalists

8 February 2012

Reporters Without Borders calls on the Maldivian security forces to protect the country's media and to ensure that their rights are respected following President Mohamed Nasheed's forced resignation yesterday. The new government has a duty to guarantee media freedom and freedom of information.

After members of the police and army linked to the opposition staged a mutiny and forced the Nasheed to resign, members of the police also stormed the headquarters of the state TV station yesterday and took control there.

"We urge the new president, Mohamed Waheed Hassan, to take immediate steps to ensure the protection and the rights of all media workers, especially the journalists at the state TV station *MNBC*, who were expelled from their offices by the police," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Undertakings must be given at once to defend freedom of information or else journalists are going to find themselves exposed to the same circumstances that prevailed before the country's first democratic elections in 2008."

After police and soldiers yesterday joined the opposition's protests, they took control of *MNBC* – the *Maldivian National Broadcasting Commission* – and from there began broadcasting the opposition TV station *VTV*, which they then renamed *Television Maldives (TVM)*, its name during the government of former dictator Maumoon Abdul Gayoom.

A source told Reporters Without Borders on condition of anonymity that Nasheed's opponents had physically attacked at least one journalist and had threatened to kill another one. According to some media reports, the former president was himself also given a beating.

Since the end of 2011, Reporters Without Borders has been worried about a growing climate of danger for the media, which worsened after a wave of constant demonstrations began on 16 January. **Mohammad Shiham**, a reporter for privately-owned *DhiTV*, was injured on 25 January while providing live coverage of the opposition demonstrations. The next day, masked men used bricks to attack the station's offices and studio in Malé, injuring cameraman **Hussain Nishan**.

The Maldives are ranked 73rd out of 179 countries in the [2011-2012 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

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