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<http://www.rsf.org/maldives-religious-intolerance-to-blame-for-21-12-2011,41588.html>

Asia - Maldives

Arbitrary detention

Religious intolerance to blame for leading blogger's detention for past week

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Reporters Without Borders condemns the continuing detention of *Ismail Kilath "Hilath" Rasheed*, a leading journalist and blogger who was arrested on 14 December, four weeks after his blog was [closed down on the government's orders](#).

"One of his country's leading free speech advocates, Rasheed has been held for the past week without any information being made available about him," Reporters Without Borders said. "All he did was start a debate about the issues of religious freedom and tolerance in Maldives. The authorities must explain the reasons for his arbitrary detention and release him at once. It is disturbing to see the government yet again yielding to pressure from the most conservative fringes of Maldivian society."

A former editor of the leading Maldivian newspaper *Haveeru*, Rasheed is one of the country's best known journalists. The Communications Authority of Maldives closed his blog on 19 November at the Islamic Affairs Ministry's behest on the grounds that it contained anti-Islamic material. One of the few Maldivians bloggers who do not to censor themselves, he had appealed for religious tolerance in his blog, using his own name.

He was arrested on the evening of 14 December because of his involvement in a "silent protest" for more religious tolerance that was held on 10 December, Human Rights Day. Stones were thrown at the demonstrators and Rasheed was taken to hospital with a head injury. The day after his arrest, a criminal court ordered him held for another 10 days.

It is not clear exactly what charges he is facing. The Maldivian constitution bans the promotion of any religion other than Islam but guarantees freedom of assembly and expression as long as it does not contravene Islam. Rasheed professes to be an adherent of Sufism, which emphasizes the inner, spiritual dimension of Islam. The constitution regards all Maldivians as Sunni Muslims.

Maldives is ranked 52nd out of 178 countries in the 2010 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).
