

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/maldives-gang-leader-buries-machete-in-news-26-09-2014,47032.html>

Asia - Maldives

MALDIVES - Another attack

Gang leader buries machete in news website's front door

26 September 2014

The attack on Minivan came just three days after a report blamed a gang for the disappearance of one of its journalists

The alleged leader of one of one Maldives' many gangs yesterday staged a threatening attack on the headquarters of the independent news website **Minivan** that may have been directly linked to Minivan journalist [Ahmed Rilwan's disappearance](#) 49 days ago

He destroyed the surveillance camera at the entrance and then buried a machete in Minivan's wooden front door. Shortly afterwards, deputy editor **Zaheena Rasheed**, who was present at the time, received a threatening phone call. The attacker was identified as a gang leader from recovered surveillance camera footage.

"The culprit is clearly identifiable and so we look forward to a speedy response from police," Minivan journalist Daniel Bosley told Reporters Without Borders.

Reporters Without Borders condemns this latest attack and calls on the authorities to provide Minivan's journalists with protection, especially as this is not the first time the website and its staff have been targeted. The surveillance camera was installed after Rilwan disappeared on 8 August.

Yesterday's attack may have been directly linked to Rilwan's disappearance, which came four days after he wrote a story after a [threatening SMS](#) that was sent to 15 journalists who cover crime.

Although his disappearance does not seem to a priority for the police, it is the subject of a [major campaign](#), and particularly, a march took place on 19 September.

The Maldivian Democracy Network, a local NGO, carried out its own investigation into this disappearance, issuing [a report](#) on 22 September in which it said a gang was probably involved. The fact that yesterday's attack on Minivan came three days after the report's publication is not seen as a coincidence.

"That we continue to receive intimidation even as we strive to keep the search for our colleague going speaks volumes about media freedom in the Maldives right now," Bosley added.

Maldives has experienced a great deal of political instability since emerging from a dictatorship in 2008. Violent gangs have imposed a climate of terror and their close links with political parties underlie the widespread corruption.

At the same time, most of the parties use the gangs to harass their opponents. Dissidents are often threatened, abducted or murdered, undermining freedom of expression and information. The attacks on Minivan are not isolated. The premises of [Raajje TV](#), an opposition station, were torched last October.

Maldives is ranked 108th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).
