

JOHN McCAIN, ARIZONA, CHAIRMAN

JAMES M. INHOFE, OKLAHOMA
JEFF SESSIONS, ALABAMA
ROGER F. WICKER, MISSISSIPPI
KELLY AYOTTE, NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEB FISCHER, NEBRASKA
TOM COTTON, ARKANSAS
MIKE ROUNDS, SOUTH DAKOTA
JONI ERNST, IOWA
THOM TILLIS, NORTH CAROLINA
DAN SULLIVAN, ALASKA
MIKE LEE, UTAH
LINDSEY GRAHAM, SOUTH CAROLINA
TED CRUZ, TEXAS

JACK REED, RHODE ISLAND
BILL NELSON, FLORIDA
CLAIRE McCASKILL, MISSOURI
JOE MANCHIN III, WEST VIRGINIA
JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, NEW YORK
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, CONNECTICUT
JOE DONNELLY, INDIANA
MAZIE HIRONO, HAWAII
TIM KAINE, VIRGINIA
ANGUS S. KING, JR., MAINE
MARTIN HEINRICH, NEW MEXICO

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

CHRISTIAN D. BROSE, STAFF DIRECTOR
ELIZABETH L. KING, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

June 2, 2015

The Honorable Ashton Carter
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Carter and Secretary Kerry:

We are writing to express our deep concern about the deteriorating situation in the Maldives and the implications of recent events for the democratic process, human rights and U.S. national security policy in South Asia. As you are aware, the political space in the Maldives is quickly closing as democratically-oriented opposition political parties, civil society groups and journalists have come under increased pressure. Opposition political activists, including former President Nasheed, have been subject to criminal proceedings with no due process. We are also concerned about the prison conditions in which these opposition figures are being kept.

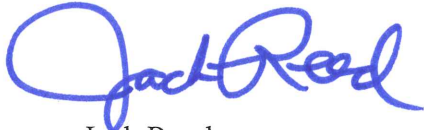
Secretary Kerry, we appreciate that you raised these issues in Sri Lanka in May when said there were “troubling signs that democracy is under threat in Maldives, where former President Nasheed has been imprisoned without due process.” You added this “is an injustice that must be addressed soon.” We agree with this assessment and urge the State Department to increase high level engagement with the government of the Maldives and send a strong message that the country should abide by its international commitments, especially to the rule of law.

On May 1st, some 20,000 protesters in Male marching for the freedom of all political prisoners were met by security forces dressed in riot gear with tear gas and stun guns. More than 100 protesters were arrested. Both of these developments are very concerning and we would respectfully request that you reemphasize the importance of the rule of law in the Maldives the damage this is causing to the U.S.-Maldives bilateral relationship. It will greatly impact our ability to work with the Government of Maldives and to engage on a host of issues, including military to military activities.

In short, while the Maldives may be a small island nation, there are big principles at stake. The United States should work with India and other democratic countries to impress upon the Maldives that its decisions are having serious adverse consequences on its relationships

abroad. And the United States must also urge the Maldives to release all political prisoners, including President Nasheed.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed
Ranking Member



John McCain
Chairman