



## Constitutional Crisis in Maldives

### What is the issue?

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- The Maldivian Supreme Court has cancelled the imprisonment of the deposed former president and 8 other opposition leaders.
- While this opens up the avenue for them to contest the upcoming elections, the government has been resorting to repressive tactics.

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### What are the contours of the current Maldivian Polity?

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- In the 2013 election, the incumbent President Abdulla Yameen defeated Mohammad Nasheed who was deposed from presidency in 2012 by a coup.
- While the results of the election are still contested, Yameen has ruled the island since then with an authoritarian streak.
- Meanwhile, Nasheed was sentenced in 2015 to 13 years in prison for charges of terrorism, and has remained in exile all these years to avoid arrest.
- Recently, the Supreme Court cancelled his imprisonment and that of eight other political leaders, which the current ruling dispensation hasn't liked.
- The order also reinstated 12 parliamentarians who were disqualified last year also asked the government to convene the parliament (Majlis).
- As Yameen hasn't complied with the order thus far, this pits his government directly against the judiciary, polity and sections of the bureaucracy.

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## **What were the violations on the part of the government?**

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  - The government has openly refusal to cancel the imprisonment of the nine leaders, most of whom formed the core of the previous Nasheed Government.
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  - The President has also refused to allow the Majlis to meet, which has led to the resignation of its Secretary General.
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  - Contrarily, the government sent in the army to stop lawmakers from entering the premises, besides arresting two parliamentarians at the airport.
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  - Several officials, including two police chiefs and the prison chief have resigned or been sacked, as they've tended to comply with the court directives.
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  - The Attorney General has now termed the court directives as "illegal orders" which can't be adhered to by the executive.
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  - Maldives is clearly in the midst of a constitutional crisis due to stifling of the opposition, with less than a year away for the next general election.
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## **What have been the international reactions?**

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  - India has joined the U.S., the European Union and several other countries in calling for Mr. Yameen to carry out the Supreme Court's order.
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  - But notably, India's clout over the ruling Maldivian dispensation has been on the wane ever since the Nasheed was deposed.
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  - Compounding this is the reality that SAARC has become dysfunctional and Maldives has quit the "British Commonwealth".
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  - It will require concerted action from the international community to persuade Mr. Yameen to steer the Maldives out of this crisis amicably without coercion.
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- Ensuring the fairness of the upcoming elections, with an equal playing field for the opposition and other dissenting parties is the only way out.
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**Source: The Hindu**

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