

July 24, 2020

H.E. President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
The President's Office
Boduthakurufaanu Magu,
Male' 20113
Republic of Maldives
By Email: info@po.gov.mv, pressrelations@po.gov.mv

Dear President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih,

I write to you on behalf of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the world's largest organization of journalists, to express our deep concern about the inaction by the Maldivian administration regarding the reported sexual harassment of the editor of *The Edition*, Rae Munavvar, by a member of the President's official staff.

Ms Munavvar reported that she was harassed by the communications secretary of the president's office, Hassan Ismail, at the presidential office in February 2019. In that encounter, Ms Munavvar said the communications secretary propositioned her, offering special treatment including exclusive government and presidential access if she agreed to spend time with him at a resort or his apartment. The IFJ is informed that the journalist's father contacted your office shortly after the incident and was given assurances the matter was being investigated. However, after nearly a year of inaction on the matter, the journalist was forced to formally lodge a complaint with the presidential office on January 21, 2020, and subsequently with Maldives police on February 4, 2020.

Understandably, Ms Munavvar is deeply distressed not only by these inappropriate advances, but also by the lack of adequate response from the authorities. Almost 17 months on from the incident, it was only after the journalist posted on Twitter about her case on July 12, 2020, that police summoned Hassan Ismail.

The IFJ is strongly committed to gender equality and has a "zero tolerance" approach to sexual harassment in the media. As such, we are greatly concerned with the lack of appropriate action regarding the sexual harassment of a female journalist by a member of the president's office, as well as with the lack of communication with the said journalist, and in the pursuit of appropriate discipline by the alleged offender.

In line with your country's own laws on sexual abuse and harassment, we respectfully urge you to urgently act on Rae Munavvar's case to ensure that the Maldives' women journalists have assurances from the highest levels that they can work safely and without fear of abuse or harassment. We appreciate your urgent cooperation in this matter and in the interest of a strong, independent media in the Maldives.

Yours sincerely,



Jane Worthington
Director – Asia-Pacific
International Federation of Journalists