



# SHEIKH IMRAN SENTENCED ON TERRORISM CHARGES

On the 1st of May 2015, Adhaalath Party leader, Sheikh Imran Abdulla participated in an anti-government rally and delivered a speech lambasting President Yameen Abdul Qayoom's administration. He was arrested on the day on the basis that his speech was directly responsible for the violence that ensued during the demonstration. Though he was not convicted of any offence the Criminal Court kept Sheikh Imran in detention based on the reasoning that he might express opinions that could contribute to further public disorder.

Sheikh Imran was subsequently released on the 27th of May before being rearrested two days later at the request of the Prosecutor General on the basis that Sheikh Imran's speech constituted terrorism under the 1990 Terrorism Act.

On the 1st of June, the Criminal Court ordered him to be brought to court under police custody, with hearings scheduled for the next day.

Following the initial hearings, however, Sheikh Imran was held without trial for a period in excess of 150 days before the trial process resumed on the 12th of October. It should be noted that during this period Sheikh Imran was repeatedly transferred between house arrest and prison, despite not having been convicted of any offence.

It is important to emphasize that under Article 14 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which the Maldives acceded to in September 2006, the accused is to be tried without undue delay.

Furthermore the reasoning provided for the inordinate delay between the initial hearing and the resumption of the trial was that a new courtroom was under construction. Once the trial resumed however, hearings and trials took place inside of an old courtroom building.

During the trial prosecutors argued that Sheikh Imran's speech directly contributed to the violence on May Day protest and that, under the Freedom of Assembly Act, organizers of a protest must be proactive in ensuring that violence does not occur as a result of their demonstrations.

It should be noted that during the speech Sheikh Imran repeatedly denied any intent of violence against the government. Nonetheless, the Criminal Court found the prosecution's arguments persuasive and on the 28th of February 2016 found Sheikh Imran guilty of the charge of terrorism. Sheikh Imran was subsequently sentenced by the Criminal Court to 12 years in prison. Sheikh Imran still has the ability to have this verdict contested at the High Court.