# 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.
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- 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.
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- While the results of the election are still contested, Yameen has ruled the island since then with an authoritarian streak.
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- 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.
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- Recently, the Supreme Court cancelled his imprisonment and that of eight other political leaders, which the current ruling dispensation hasn't liked.
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- The order also reinstated 12 parliamentarians who were disqualified last year also asked the government to convene the parliament (Majlis).
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- 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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