The Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) lodged a complaint on 7 March 2012 with the Maldives Broadcasting Corporation (MBC). MBC was formed by the bill that was ratified on 21 April establishing Maldives Broadcasting Corporation, which was passed by the People’s Majlis on 6 April 2010. The complaint was regarding the gross partiality of content aired over the the 2 channels under the PBS- namely Television Maldives (TVM) and Voice of Maldives (VOM) since the February 7 coup that ousted the elected government of Maldives.

The MDP condemned that the 2 PBS stations TVM and VOM are being blatantly used as propaganda outlets of the coup regime, while the ongoing peaceful political activities of the MDP are being sidelined with little regard to the MBC’s mandate and the nation’s laws under which the MBC is functional.

The MDP informed the Commission that over the past month several attempts to buy airtime from both TVM and VOM by the MDP was met with a meager 30 minutes of airtime provided to the Party. While the ongoing public mass protest at Justice Square since February 17 calling for early elections and off shoot activities of the protest calling for justice held at various corners of the nation are hardly if ever covered in the TVM/VOM news. And that, on March 6 MDP’s request to buy airtime to broadcast a crucial press conference by Maldives’ first democratically elected President Mohamed Nasheed was met with silence.

With great regret the MDP pointed out to the Corporation that the state media airwaves are being clogged incessantly with interviews, views, opinions, and press conferences detailing the regime’s vision by regime loyalist political parties.

The MDP reiterated that MBC is legally bound and mandated to ensure impartiality and independence in its role as a public service provider. According to Article 2 (c) of the Maldives Broadcasting Act the MBC must facilitate nationwide, equitable, and acceptable transmission and broadcasting. According to Article 3 of the Broadcasting Act the MBC is an independent commission of the State. Hence, MDP pointed out that the MBC must provide its services independent of the government.

While it is stated in Article 4 (a) of the Act that the Corporation shall have no administrative influence from any Government institution and no employee shall have any influence over them from the Government; the MDP informed the Corporation that regime loyalist Parties’ members, who are not in the TVM staff, namely Dhivehi Gaumee Party’s (DQP) Adbdulla Ameen, Jumhooree Party’s (JP) Abbas Adil Riza, and Ali Hashim, have been accessing library files of TVM and are often seen inside the editing booths and studios of TVM.

The MDP asked the Commission to clarify the unbidden access these parties have to TVM and called on the Corporation to ensure the state media outlets TVM and VOM are independent of external political influences.

MDP ensured the Corporation that the Party is closely monitoring the frequency of regime sponsored news and programs and regime influenced staff promotions and access for regime loyalist political parties to the premises of PBS outlets and that the Party will not tolerate the continuous and blatant violation of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) Act.

The MDP informed the Corporation that it will access the powers of the People’s Majlis, to which the Corporation is directly answerable; as well as seek the assistance of Majlis Committees for Independent Commissions.

The MDP sincerely requested the Commission to investigate and promptly clarify in full the concerns of the Party.

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