

## President Dr Mohamed Waheed – Farewell Address – 15.11.2013

Every day, everywhere in the world, there are wars being fought to defend religion and nation. Citizens are sacrificing themselves everyday in national service. Citizens remain steadfast in prioritizing the nation's good over personal interests and wishes. They do not step back. And they will not step back. Under the sacred shade of the red, green and white of our flag, our citizens are making such sacrifices everyday for this nation. Such citizens will always exist in this country.

My beloved citizens,

I participated in the Maldives' first multi-party presidential elections as MDP presidential candidate Mohamed Nasheed's running mate as I am among the first in the country to work for reform in the country. That is not the first election I contested in the Maldives. Even though I left the Maldives for a time after me and my family were endangered due to my work for democracy, I returned and participated in this work again as someone who wanted development, prosperity, progress and reform in the country. With the determination to serve the country.

My beloved citizens,

There are many accounts of the change of government in the beginning of 2012. Many books written. Some among my brothers and sisters believe that I committed unlawful acts in the transfer of power and changed the government through a coup d'état. I want to say something on this subject as I vacate the post of head of state today.

President Nasheed and I won the presidential election held with the spirit of changing the long 30 years of government and started work with a lot of hope. However, due to the manner in which the Vice President's role was stated in the Constitution, and the manner in which President Nasheed conducted his government, I did not have much responsibility as Vice President. I did not have a role in decision making.

I was not happy with some of the decisions made by the government in times of rivalry and turmoil. No matter how difficult, I believe decisions must be taken within the law. My conscience believes decisions must be resolved through discussion and consent. Hence, I cannot agree with things that have been done outside the law in the spirit of jealousy and revenge. I was not informed of how the government wanted to proceed as President Nasheed and I had not spoken after January 31.

My beloved citizens,

I do not intend to speak on the turmoil and unrest in the country in the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012. All of it happened in front of our eyes. Many unconstitutional acts were committed, and ultimately a Maldivian citizen was brought under military detention against the Supreme Court's ruling, and the head of state

had announced that the constitution was not being acted upon. The result of the constant protests was that many were injured in tear gas and pepper spray. The police and military were trapped in the fight between government and the opposition. That the government ordered the military to confront the police and use tear gas and rubber bullets increased unrest in the country. It is among the most vulnerable and dangerous moments in the recent history of this country. The wounds inflicted on that dangerous day are still raw.

It is not justice when the head of state resigned following the escalation after a matter that could have been solved through talks or giving in went unresolved and then accused the police and military of unlawful acts. It is not fair. That has created challenge then and today for the nation's security forces. Deep wounds have been created in the nation due to the constant lies being spread on TV and social media. Many Maldivian citizens have been defamed and been harmed unjustly and their families are in danger to this day. If all of this is because one individual refused to take responsibility for his actions and refused to let truth be known, then where is the justice in this? When the man who took hold of the wheel to carry out his constitutional duties makes out his ministers and others who came out to serve to be traitors, there is no way falsehood can become truth. And there is no way that truth can be changed.

My beloved citizens,

When the People's majlis speaker informed me that the country was on the brink of civil unrest and that the president had resigned and that the speaker had accepted the resignation and asked me, the vice president, to assume the presidency, I took over the responsibilities of the head of state in front of the chief justice inside the People's Majlis. At the time, the country was angry and divided. In darkness where it was not clear what may happen to the country tomorrow. On the brink of economic ruin. The country's assets had been sold off and money that was to come was lost in the hands of others. Military ranks disrupted and the chain of command was lost.

My beloved citizens,

As the elected vice president of this country, my constitutional duty was to take over the wheel of this country in that turbulent moment. To direct the nation's ship to a safe harbor amid the fear of strong winds, strong currents, and rain. To make use of a torn social structure and to dig out the Maldivian economy from a deep pit. To put out the fires at the state's most sacred institutions and straighten the nation's ranks. To straighten the nation and establish chain of command.

My beloved citizens,

I believed establishing a government of national unity was the highest service I could do given the situation the country was in. That is because if any party was marginalised, it would increase unrest and weaken the state further. So I decided at

the time to not be the leader of one faction, but proceed with everyone. I set aside the biases of the past and my own experiences and I established a government of national unity. And I invited all parties. I formed a government with all those who accepted my invitation and I worked hard with patience and with the intent of increasing the country's speed.

However, the past 21 months have not been easy. Having to work within a legal framework that constrained the powers of the president as it sought to end 30 long years of government, it was only patience and compromise that paved the way for an election where three candidates could contest. Even though you may have felt that the government was weak, the truth is we would not have come where we are if the government had failed to compromise or be patient. The country would have come to a stop and fires would have been set alight long before now. But, today, without closing down any schools, without depreciating the value of the currency, without stopping any aid, we have been able to hold an inclusive election because we prioritized compromise and patience.

My beloved citizens,

In my tenure, my highest priority was to strengthen foreign relations. The previous government had changed the long-standing non-aligned, independent and Islamic character of foreign policy. Hence, in global currents, our ability to raise our own voice was limited and we were in a situation where we were facing pressure to change our constitution and do things our legal framework does not allow. The government and ministers were being ordered to resign within a few hours, and asked to flout the court's orders and stand against those orders. But I note with pleasure that the legal structure of the country and the power of the state's institutions have been maintained despite foreign influence and pressures.

My beloved citizens,

When the current presidential term ended on November 10, it was a day I had to make a very important decision, a decision that is very important in the history of the Maldives. In front of me, I had a Majlis resolution and a court verdict. Even though I had asked the People's Majlis to find a legal solution to save the country from a constitutional void, the Majlis decision was neither a constitutional amendment nor law. It would legally be difficult for me to hand over the state's powers, power to order the security forces and power over state coffers to the speaker based on this decision.

The Supreme Court which is the final arbiter in such situations, constitutional matters and in interpreting the constitution has issued a ruling in this matter. Even now, some lawyers and foreign parties are saying this is a ruling that the Supreme Court cannot issue. However, no party has the power to change the Supreme Court's rulings. Neither the president nor the People's Majlis Speaker has that power. Hence, even though I do not want it, as head of state, I continued in the position because maintaining the rule of law ascertaining that the security forces ranks are in order is

my responsibility. But I repeat, continuing the government on a court order is not my wish.

My beloved citizens,

Due to the current situation, the state's institutions may not function as we want or function similarly to those in advanced democracies. There are reasons for this. However, I believe defaming these institutions and attacking these institutions will destroy them instead of strengthening them. I believe if the decisions of these institutions are not implemented in this country, it will again propel the country into a pit of unrest. The state cannot do that. Hence, the government's highest and most sacred duty is to uphold the state. To uphold the country's standards and strengthen it.

The weaknesses and issues in various state institutions are not weaknesses in those specific institutions, but a weakness in the constitutional framework of the state. Weaknesses we have not been able to rise out of due to the problems in the 2008 constitution, and the lack of laws to address these problems and the expensive state that the constitution established. A weakness caused by the exploitation of the weakness in the state structure and voids to unduly increase political forces. When powers were separated to ensure powers are not concentrated in one person's hands and to protect democracy and the citizen's independence, if the majority can use the separated powers as they see fit, things will worsen. These are not democratic norms, and not norms of rule by the majority either. Rule by the majority or democracy is to protect the rights of the minority and governing within the laws and regulations.

Many describe the past 21 months as turbulent in which the state's powers fought between each other. I still cannot say that the state of division and unrest in the country has completely changed. However, I note with happiness that in those days, the government was able to provide many services to the nation and its citizens. We were able to meet ends with the small amount of money in the country without reducing salaries or stopping any aid or devaluing the rufiyaa. The amount reduced from civil servant's salaries were returned, and Maldivians living abroad were afforded Aasandha services. The Maldives Airports Company Limited which was on the verge of bankruptcy was saved and within 10 months, we received MVR 3.4 billion in revenue. The social protection network for women, children and disabled people was strengthened and steps for the future were taken. 42,000 tons of fish and fish products were exported in this year. MVR 2 billion was paid for the previous government's unpaid bills. 6 new resorts were opened, and 871 beds were added. A total of 2034 students received loans in 2012 and 2013 under the student loan scheme and were given the opportunity to gain higher education.

Despite the pressure of international organizations and countries, because our foreign policy was strengthened, we won the vice chair of the UN Human Rights Council, and have been elected for second term to the council. We were selected for the World Environment Fund, the GEF's executive committee, and won membership

in the executive committee of the renewable energy organization IRENA. We also won a chair in the World Health Organization's executive board. I am proud of these things and thank Allah.

Beloved citizens,

Even though we are in the turmoil of the presidential elections, there is hope in today's scenes. Maldivians have to be given certainty that the upcoming presidential election's results will allow five years of peace. Maldivians must be given the certainty, that no matter who comes to power, a government that will go forward with the citizens must be established in the country.

Current results suggest this presidential election will be very close. However, this must not allow the division of the country in half. Or create a situation where half of the country is isolated from the state's shelter. In contrast to this, the next presidential term must be one in which the constitutional framework is revised and where steps for the future are taken. Instead of Maldivian citizens living in strong political currents or that of a presidential election, they have to be given the opportunity to live within a framework of development and familial and social structures. The division and anger of the past must be set aside and we must work together united to ensure a prosperous future for our children. Our country is too small to marginalize certain groups and proceed. Our population is too small and we are too interconnected.

At the same time, we should keep in mind that our actions today are an example for our children and hence we must lead by example. We must show them that differences and disputes cannot be resolved through force and that compromise is not a weakness. They must be told that our beloved Maldives can see development through democratic principles and the moderate principles of Islam and not through extremist ideologies. Opportunity for development and prosperity must be given. However, we must not break the pillars of this country. We must not destroy religious unity. We must not see the religious unity of Maldives as superstition, but believe it to be the secret behind our unity and the nation coming this far. In no circumstances must any party be given the opportunity to damage the country's economy. Any damage to the Maldivian economy is damage done to every single citizen. Foreigners must not be invited to influence the Maldivian state's powers. This must not be something that has any political weight.

Protection of citizens must be the highest priority of the state in all circumstances. The state's sovereignty must not have a price. And most importantly, we must not stray from the clear path of the religion of Islam.

Beloved citizens,

It has been a pleasure for me to have had the opportunity to serve you. The past 21 months have been the most valuable experience of my life. Even though they were

stressful and hard, I served with pleasure. I thank you beloved citizens for giving me that opportunity. As I step down from the position of head of state, I sincerely thank those who served with me. I pray that Allah grants you blessings for the work you have done for the nation.

I especially thank Vice President Mohamed Waheed Deen and all who served in the cabinet. When the country needed you most, you served without regard to your own life or protection for your families. Even though your salaries were reduced, and you were defamed as traitors in the international community, and you were removed from your jobs, your sacrifice will be written in this country's history. I would like to note Dr Abdul Samad Abdulla who served in my cabinet. He served in stressful and difficult days without regard to his health. He sacrificed himself for the rights of the country and citizens. His passing away leaves a void. May Allah grant him the eternal blessings of paradise.

In this same vein, I thank the members of parliament who worked with me. I would like to note Dr Afrashim Ali. He served the country with sincerity and loyalty. May Allah grant him the eternal blessings of paradise.

I thank the judges and leaders of the state institutions who were present during my tenure. I appeal to you to strengthen the constitutional framework and implement the law. I call on the local council members to serve the citizens no matter who is in power.

I sincerely thank every single police and army officer who maintained loyalty and sincerity in their service. I believe the country meets the sun each passing day in safety because of your service and sacrifice. You will be at front and at the back in ensuring safety for the citizens. The current situation is a difficult one for you. However, I appeal to you to always prioritize the country's independence and the safety of the citizens and stay on the path of the law. I call on you to ensure the Maldivian flag flies in independence from the flag post in the Republic Square.

Beloved citizens,

You citizens are the people closest to my heart, those that I love the most. I was born in this land and this is the land I am the most proud of. I thank Allah for giving me the opportunity to serve in the most important time for the country. I call on you to protect this country's sovereignty. I appeal to you not to commit any act that may harm that sovereignty.

May Allah always protect this beloved nation and bless you all.