



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1989/80
8 March 1989

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Forty-fifth session
Agenda item 9

THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS
APPLICATION TO PEOPLES UNDER COLONIAL OR ALIEN
DOMINATION OR FOREIGN OCCUPATION

Letter dated 2 March 1989 from the Permanent Representative
of Maldives to the United Nations addressed to the
Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights

The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations in New York presents his compliments to the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights and has the honour to transmit herewith a statement by the Government of the Republic of Maldives addressed to the Special Rapporteur on the question of the use of mercenaries with regard to his report to the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-fifth session (E/CN.4/1989/14).

The Permanent Representative requests that the enclosed statement be circulated as an official document of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 9.

Annex

STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF MALDIVES TO THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR
ON THE QUESTION OF THE USE OF MERCENARIES

1. The Government of Maldives would like to convey the following facts in respect of paragraphs 13 and 195 of the report contained in document E/CN.4/1989/14 dealing with an attempted coup in the Maldives. The Government of Maldives was unable either to brief the Commission or to make a prior statement as it felt that it would be premature to do so until an exact factual assessment was made and a clear picture of the episode had emerged.
2. A heavily armed foreign mercenary/terrorist force landed at Malé, the capital of Maldives, in two small Sri Lankan fishing trawlers at 4 a.m. on 3 November 1988 and proceeded to attack the National Security Headquarters, situated a few hundred yards from the water front, the President's residence and some key government installations. Two Maldivians, Abdulla Luthfy, a businessman living in Sri Lanka, and Sager Nasir, a former seaman, also took part in the hostile operations.
3. The attackers who, as subsequent investigations have revealed, belonged to a militant Tamil group from Sri Lanka, the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Elam (PLOTE), were armed with assault rifles, machine-guns, mortars, RPG-7 rockets, grenades and explosives. Their main objective was to seize the National Security Service (NSS) Headquarters, and to capture the President and a number of Cabinet Ministers in a bid to overthrow the legitimate Government of President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, undermine the constitutional order of the State and turn it into a Tamil terrorist base from which they could launch subversive operations in Sri Lanka.
4. The attackers failed to achieve their objectives owing to the stiff resistance put up by the NSS and the Presidential guards with the result that they were not able to enter the NSS Headquarters or the residence of the President. However, the fighting lasted 18 hours and left eight National Security Servicemen and four civilians dead and 36 wounded. At least three of the attackers were killed, and many more injured.
5. The armed aggressors also surrounded the main power house and the central telecommunications building in Malé. Although they forced the engineers to cut off the power supply to the entire city, the terrorists were not skilled enough to sever the international telephone links. They also violated the sanctity of the Islamic Centre and Grand Mosque while the early morning prayers were being conducted and took a number of worshippers hostage, including the elderly imam of the Mosque.
6. Considering the fact that the safety of a large number of civilians as well as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation were at stake, President Gayoom appealed to the Indian Government for military assistance to stop the aggression. This crucial step was taken by the President in the light of his concern over the possibility of reinforcements reaching the invading force, which would inevitably have led to more fierce fighting, resulting in heavy loss of life and destruction of key government buildings, private homes and other infrastructure.

7. Their failure to capture the President and the courage with which the NSS fought the terrorists, together with the impending arrival of the Indian troops, caused panic among the mercenaries. In their hurry to escape, they captured a Maldivian cargo ship Progress Light and resorted to hostage-taking. A total of 28 persons, including the Minister of Transport and Shipping, his wife, and a Member of Parliament who is a senior official at the Ministry of Trade and Industries, were taken as hostages on board the Progress Light. One of the fishing craft in which the mercenary group had arrived left Malé before noon, while the other had escaped at about 9 p.m.

8. On 4 November 1988, at the request of the Maldives Government, Indian navy and air-force planes tracked down the Progress Light which was travelling towards Colombo. Two warships of the Indian navy were also directed to intercept the hijacked vessel in an effort to rescue the hostages and apprehend the terrorists. On being ordered to stop and hand over the hostages, the terrorists refused and continued their course towards Colombo.

9. Negotiations between the Maldivian officials on board the Indian frigates and the mercenaries/terrorists at sea, which continued for two days, were of no avail. Finally, and with the explicit approval of the Maldives Government, the Indian frigates on 6 November 1988 used force to stop the commandeered vessel, rescue the hostages and capture the fleeing terrorists. The terrorists had killed two of the hostages in cold blood, including the imam of the Islamic Centre. After the rescue operation was over, five more hostages were found dead.

10. A total of 68 mercenaries, along with the two Maldivian collaborators, Abdulla Luthfy and Sagar Nasir, were apprehended and placed in custody in the Maldives. The investigation of the incident and examination of the evidence is currently being carried out in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Maldives and thereafter the trial of the terrorists will begin.

11. The Government of Maldives is convinced that the 3 November episode was not merely an attempted coup d'état but that it was a foreign mercenary/terrorist aggression aimed at subverting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Republic of Maldives and converting it into a terrorist base which would endanger the security and stability of the South Asian region as a whole. The Government of Maldives has already conveyed the facts of the 3 November aggression to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has also addressed the issue in other international forums.

12. The Republic of Maldives condemns in the strongest terms any mercenary or terrorist activities which threaten the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of any State, or create instability in any region. Terrorism and mercenarism have been growing in recent times in different parts of the world. The Republic of Maldives had repeatedly emphasized the urgent need to tackle this menace in the global context and take strong, effective and concerted action, in various international forums

13. The Government of Maldives has also addressed the question of mercenaries before the Commonwealth forum and more particularly, has discussed the subject in the regional forum of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation

(SAARC). The SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism which came into force in August 1988, provides a framework for the countries of the region to co-operate in combatting the menace of terrorism.

14. The Government of Maldives would appreciate the inclusion of the above statement in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the question of the use of mercenaries to the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-fifth session currently being held in Geneva.
