



## SITUATION IN THE MALDIVES

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir, We have noted with interest statements in the Press and radio concerning the present political situation in the Maldives and in particular reports of the various utterances of the Male Government representatives in Ceylon and London. To present our side of the picture is the aim of this letter.

Some of our reasons for the secession from Male, the old capital of the Maldives are as follows: The indifference of their administration to the elementary needs of the people of these islands: food, clothing, medicine, education, social welfare, &c. For many years we have been reduced to verily and bled by extortionate taxes and levies. At the commencement of this year further taxes were imposed and the people who had nothing left to give revolted.

dear in mind we have not a single doctor for 18,000 undernourished people, nor any medical supplies whatsoever. We have no schools, no means of communication, no public utilities. All this is certainly the fault of Male. Epidemics of Asian flu, malaria, enteric, typhoid, diarrhoea, conjunctivitis, &c., sweep our islands periodically during the year, and in 1958 we had a serious outbreak of dysentery causing deaths. We appealed to Male for help. They refused and very piously told us to go on reading the Quran. The R.A.F. doctors came to our aid, supplied medicine and visited the sick day and night. Can you wonder that we hate Male?

Our main export from these islands was dried Maldive fish which we sent to Male for sale in Ceylon. Payment was made to

Male in Ceylon rupees but we were forced by Male to accept Maldavian rupees in return. One Maldavian rupee is worth only half a Ceylon rupee and we had then to buy what food we could afford from Male at Ceylon prices.

The presence of the British in Addu Atoll had absolutely nothing to do with the will of the people to break from Male. Attempts have been made before and as recently as 18 months ago men were imprisoned for trying to make an improvement. The R.A.F. at Gan Island had no knowledge of our intention to make an uprising on the first day of 1959: it was calculated action by the people to show Male that we are determined never again to submit to the despotic rule of a government of one family.

We wish to make it clear that we have set up a Government unanimously elected by the will of the people. We are a State of 18,000 people willing and able to support ourselves in spite of Male. We are now the United Suvadive Islands. Our immediate policy is betterment of our people, friendliness to all nations and in particular to the British who have sincerely helped and wisely guided the Maldives whenever we desired to do so in the past.

We are in favour of the staging post and radio station at Gan and Hitadu Islands respectively, which must bring economic development and prosperity to our islands. We earnestly appeal to your great and generous country and people for help and understanding. We have been inhabiting these islands from times immemorial, possessing thereby inalienable rights over them; the ownership thereof cannot certainly be claimed by the Male Government. We, therefore, appeal to the British Government to kindly grant us facilities to open negotiations at once with a view to conclude a Treaty of friendship and cooperation between her Majesty's Government and the United Suvadive Islands.

We hope the British Government and people will appreciate the justice of our cause and recognize the United Suvadive Islands at once. Yours truly,

ABDULLAH AFIF DIDI, President,  
United Suvadive Islands.  
The Secretariat, Hitadu, United Suvadive Islands.

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