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# TRANSPARENCY MALDIVES CALLS ON AUTHORITIES TO RECOVER ALL ASSETS LOST IN THE MMPRC CORRUPTION SCANDAL AND SPEED UP INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION

As new reporting continues to reveal new details of the 2014 MMPRC grand corruption scandal, too little progress has been made to bring perpetrators to justice

14 December 2021



Last week, additional reporting stemming from the Pandora Papers revealed names of influential businessmen behind the secret deals in the MMPRC grand corruption scandal – one of whom is alleged to have paid a bribe to former president Yameen Abdul Gayoom. Yet the government has made little progress in the MMPRC investigation, with only a few individuals prosecuted and none of the stolen funds recovered. Transparency Maldives reiterates its call for authorities to speed up the investigation and recover lost assets.

## 2014 Scandal and Investigation



The 2014 MMPRC corruption scandal saw allegations of corruption made against public officials including ministers, parliamentarians and judges who all received undue benefits. President Ibrahim Solih took office in November 2018 following his campaign pledging zero tolerance for corruption and to hold those implicated in the scandal to account.

In this effort, the government established the Presidential Commission on Corruption and State Asset Recovery. The Commission has reported the total cost of the scandal to be MVR 4 billion (equivalent to USD 259 million) and released a list of 281 individuals who stole funds – including 119 former and incumbent state officials. But these announcements have led nowhere. The report detailing the loss of funds has never been released to the public, very few individuals involved have been prosecuted, and none of the stolen funds have been recovered.

### **New Information**

On 6 December, OCCRP reporting based on the Pandora Paper documents revealed the owners behind the mysterious Dubai based company that had illegally leased Fuggiri Island as part of the 2014 scandal. Fuggiri was leased to a partnership involving the family business of Avinash Bhosale – one of India’s biggest property developers – and another businessman, Amit Kumar Gandhi, in a \$1.55 million deal that independent auditors flagged as problematic. These leaks now show that Ghandi and his brother Avinash Kumar Ghandi are the owners of A&A Holdings Group, which prosecutors allege paid \$1.1 million in bribes to the former president.

President Gayoom was already convicted in 2018 for money laundering in the scandal, but was acquitted in late November 2021. He is now to be prosecuted for additional corruption charges for different dealings in the case, including his connections with Fuggiri Island.

**Asiath Rilweena, Executive Director of Transparency Maldives, said:**



“These developments with the MMPRC case reaffirm the need to strengthen monitoring, verification and enforcement mechanisms along with the capacity and resources of State Institutes to conduct full, transparent and timely investigation and prosecution. The slow progress in the investigation and prosecution of the case, as well as the inaction by the government raises questions regarding the lack of political will to commit to the State’s zero tolerance to corruption policy, and hold perpetrators, including high ranking members of the government, judiciary and the parliament to account.”

## Call

Transparency Maldives demands the Government honor its obligations under the UN Convention Against Corruption and ensure transparency, competition and objective criteria in decision-making on public matters and resources. We reiterate our demands to the State to:

Publish the report by the Presidential Commission on Corruption and State Asset Recovery on the MMPRC grand corruption scandal submitted to President Ibrahim Solih in July 2020

Recover all the assets lost in the MMPRC corruption scandal and bring all the perpetrators, as well as the institutions that were negligent and complicit, to justice

Proactively disclose updated status of the investigation in a timely manner to increase public trust in the anti-corruption efforts

Strengthen oversight institutions to ensure access to resources. Anti-corruption authorities and oversight institutions must have sufficient funds, resources and independence to perform their duties

Conduct a performance audit of authorities involved to investigate delays in investigation and prosecution



Introduce a comprehensive asset declaration regime and a robust verification mechanism to ensure successful prosecution for the crime of illicit enrichment

Establish a system for filing and verification of conflict of interest, financial disclosure, and information on beneficial ownership for public officials

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