

DRAFT LETTER TO THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER AND THE US AMBASSADOR

14 July 2004

Dear Mr. Evans,

I have just received a copy of a rather outlandish letter sent by Mr. Ahmed Shafeeq Ibrahim Moosa to Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America and Mr. Tony Blair, Prime Minister of United Kingdom. I am attaching a photocopy of this letter as I felt that you yourself would be amused to read it.

Mr. Shafeeq is among those few individuals who are carrying out a vicious campaign against President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom in person, and his government in general, presumably with a hidden-agenda of self-interest. But since the Maldives such a small place their intentions are becoming clear and widely known through their plucky remarks or through the rumors spread by their families and friends. The latest of which that some of them had been already rewarded with the British nationality, (and not only been accepted as refugees in UK.) I think that with the intensive reforms currently taking place in the Maldives in the vital areas of democracy and human rights, as well as upholding the values transparency and good governance they have lost the aroma of the self proclaimed championship, and desperately are feeling that they have lost the train where people are freely debating serious matters, while they were seeking charity and asylum.

Coming back to the letter, it obviously contains slanderous accusations and gross lies about the Maldivian Government and the President.

It begins with the notion that the Maldivians hate the two leaders and consider them as “brutal leaders who have a soft heart for the Jews and a hard one for the Muslims”. Then continues with allegations trying to infuriate the recipient, and coming to the conclusion that it is all because of President Gayoom. And his Government’s support and sympathy to Saddam Hussain.

While it is a well known fact that the Maldives was the second country to officially condemn Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and supported all the actions taken by the United Nations and the international community at large against Iraq including the imposition sanctions. Maldives also strongly supported actions taken by the international community aiming at neutralizing Iraq’s nuclear chemical and biological weapons capabilities. Although we had close relations with Iraq years ago, as many other countries had, our eyes did meet on any issue since Saddam Hussain committed his blunder in 1990.

Furthermore, during the recent coalition operations in Iraq Maldives was among of the like-minded countries, which went along with the actions undertaken by the coalition. I may also add that, while some countries hesitated, Maldives even opted to sign with the United States of America the controversial Agreement regarding non-surrender of persons to international tribunals.

I is also no secret the Maldives is already having close ties of friendship with the new interim Government of Iraq.

So it is obvious that, by mentioning Iraq and the name of Saddam Hussain, and making an allegation that the Maldivians consider President Bush and Prime Minister Blair as “two brutal leaders” because of President Gayoom policies, Mr. Shafeeq’s aim is simply to create an

impression through which he could receive more sympathy and more financial benefit, or more viciously, to generate hatred and prejudice in the minds of the leadership in Britain and United States against the people and the Government of Maldives. I do not think that he is naïve enough to think that by sending such a letter, chock-full of distortion and twist, he would be able to convince anyone easily to intervene to change the government of President Gayoom, when he is genuinely engaged in a process of reform seldom was seen in a country like the Maldives.

Mr. Shafeeq's attacks on the President's reform process contain falsifications obvious to any one who has been following the events. Mr. Shafeeq in his letter claims that President Gayoom is convening an "Upper House of Parliament" to amend the constitution. Whereas the fact is that the Special Majlis is the Constituent Assembly, which is mandated by law to be elected if any changes are to be brought to the constitution, and not the "Upper House of Parliament". Apparently whoever drafted the letter for him was ignorant of this very basic fact. Mr. Shafeeq also claims that "no option for open debate" has been given, while the fact is that, after announcing his own proposals for the amendment of the Constitution, he invited the general public to submit their proposals and suggestions directly to the People's Special Majlis, and not to him personally as claimed by Mr. Shafeeq. Furthermore, the President has also called on the people to have open discussions on the issues in an open forum. In fact, some organizations and individuals have already taken up this invitation by the President and held several meetings in Malé, freely debating a wide range of issues dealing with the reforms of the constitution.

While Mr. Shafeeq has made a series of accusations and piled up a bundle of lies, I notice that at the end of his letter Mr. Shafeeq states that, he is an admirer of President George Bush and Prime Minister Blair and read all their works. He also states that, he is a graduate of the Glasgow University. I do not think that these statements would necessarily impress Your Excellency very much and making him a credible source of information or become a trusted ally.

As we look at the history of relationship between our countries, both the British and the United States Governments have very close relations with the Maldives. From the track record of the Maldives, it will be clear that all the allegations made by Mr. Shafeeq are false and have no credibility.

I am also confident that the strong ties between the two countries will not be affected by these negative and totally blunted presentations by individuals seeking to achieve self-centered benefits, discrediting the legally elected government of our country, and defaming the person of the President.

I do not wish to comment on Mr. Shafeeq's references to a "grand palace" "multi-million dollar yacht" "countless numbers of speed boats" "a holiday resort of his own", as these items are state properties same as the White House, Air Force One, Camp David and so on, in the United States, of course with no comparison intended, which are normal things available to and at the disposal of whoever is occupying the seat of Presidency.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Hussain Shihab