

# Corporal punishment of children in the Maldives



Global Initiative to  
End All Corporal Punishment  
of Children

Report prepared by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children ([www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org)), last updated August 2015

## Child population

120,060 (UNICEF, 2013)

*\*The Maldives is committed to reforming its laws to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings.\**

## The Maldives' commitment to prohibiting corporal punishment

The Maldives expressed its commitment to prohibiting all corporal punishment of children, including in the home, at the July 2006 meeting of the South Asia Forum, following the 2005 regional consultation of the UN Study on Violence against Children.

## Summary of necessary legal reform to achieve full prohibition

Prohibition is still to be achieved in the home, alternative care settings, day care, schools, penal institutions and as a sentence for crime.

We have yet to see the text of the Penal Code 2014, but in its draft form section 44(a) authorised the use of force by parents and others for the purpose of punishing children. This provision should be repealed, and prohibition of all corporal punishment, however light, should be enacted in relation to parents and all adults with authority over children.

*Alternative care settings* – Corporal punishment should be prohibited in all alternative care settings (foster care, institutions, places of safety, emergency care, etc).

*Day care* – Corporal punishment should be prohibited in all early childhood care (nurseries, crèches, preschools, family centres, etc) and all day care for older children (day centres, after-school childcare, childminding, etc).

*Schools* – The law should prohibit corporal punishment in all education settings (public and private).

*Penal institutions* – Corporal punishment should be prohibited as a disciplinary measure in all institutions accommodating children in conflict with the law.

*Sentence for crime* – All judicial corporal punishment of children and young people under 18 should be prohibited, including under Shari'a law.

## **Detailed country report**

### **Current legality of corporal punishment**

#### **Home**

Corporal punishment is lawful in the home. In April 2014, a new Penal Code was adopted, to come into force in April 2015. We have yet to see the final full text, but in its draft form it introduced a legal defence for the use of corporal punishment in the home and other settings. Section 44(a) of the draft states that “a parent, legal guardian, teacher or other person similarly responsible for the care or supervision of a minor, or a person acting at the request of a person with such responsibility” may justifiably use force on a child for the “prevention or punishment of his misconduct”, provided that the force used “does not create a substantial risk of causing death, serious bodily injury, extreme or unnecessary pain or mental distress, or humiliation”. Provisions against violence and abuse – including in the Domestic Violence Act 2012 – do not include prohibition of corporal punishment of children.

In information provided to the Human Rights Committee in 2012, the Government asserted that the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child 1991 “prohibits corporal punishment in homes, schools and the penal system of any person under the age of 18”.<sup>1</sup> In fact, article 18 of the Law prohibits only punishment of a degree which is considered to harm the child: “No child shall, even as a measure of discipline, be subjected to punishment which may cause physical injury or which may be detrimental to the health of the child.” Furthermore, at the same time as stating that all corporal punishment is prohibited the Government confirmed that it had “identified the actions and measures to prohibit all corporal punishment in all settings including law reform and an anti-corporal punishment campaign is planned for 2013”.<sup>2</sup>

The Government made a commitment to prohibition in all settings at a meeting of the South Asia Forum in July 2006, following on from the regional consultation in 2005 of the UN Secretary General’s Study on Violence against Children. In 2010, Government representatives in SAIEVAC (South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children) developed a national action plan to achieve prohibition, and in 2011 endorsed a report on progress towards prohibiting corporal punishment in South Asia states which included an analysis of the reforms required in the Maldives.<sup>3</sup> In 2010 a Children’s Bill was being drafted which would reportedly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings.<sup>4</sup> As at August 2014, amendments to the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child 1991 were being discussed in Parliament. The Government reported to the Universal Periodic Review in 2015 that a new Child Rights Bill had been drafted “designed to bring the child protection system in line with the Maldives’ obligations under the CRC” and that the Ministry of Law and Gender is reviewing all child rights and protection related legislation and regulations.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Alternative care settings**

Corporal punishment is lawful in alternative care settings. In its draft form, the new Penal Code would provide a legal defence for the use of force to punish children in institutions and other care settings (see under “Home”). In 2010 regulations for children’s homes were being drafted which would reportedly prohibit corporal punishment.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 5 July 2012, CCPR/C/MDV/Q/1/Add.1, Written replies to the Human Rights Committee, para. 73

<sup>2</sup> 5 July 2012, CCPR/C/MDV/Q/1/Add.1, Written replies to the Human Rights Committee, para. 74

<sup>3</sup> SAIEVAC (2011), *Prohibition of corporal punishment of children in South Asia: a progress review*

<sup>4</sup> National action plan to prohibit all corporal punishment, SAIEVAC workshop on Legal Reform and Corporal Punishment, November 2010, Kathmandu

<sup>5</sup> 17 April 2015, A/HRC/WG.22/MDV/1, National report to the UPR, paras. 79 and 80

<sup>6</sup> National action plan to prohibit all corporal punishment, SAIEVAC workshop on Legal Reform and Corporal Punishment, November 2010, Kathmandu

## Day care

There is no explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in early childhood care or in day care for older children. In its draft form, the new Penal Code would provide a legal defence for the use of force to punish children in day care settings (see under “Home”).

## Schools

There is no explicit prohibition of all corporal punishment in schools. Article 10 of the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child 1991 states that punishment in school “must be appropriate to the age of the child and should not be physically or psychologically harmful to the child”. The Ministry of Education has stated that corporal punishment should not be used, but in its draft form the new Penal Code would introduce a legal defence for the use of corporal punishment by teachers (see under “Home”). An Education Bill has been under discussion since 2009: it was reviewed by the Committee on National Development in October 2012 and recommendations for further amendments were made but we have no detailed information on the proposed provisions. The Bill was submitted to Parliament in August 2014.<sup>7</sup>

## Penal institutions

There is no explicit prohibition of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions. The draft Penal Code would legalise corporal punishment in institutions (see under “Home”). The Prisons and Parole Act 2013 was adopted in December 2013: we have yet to see the final text. In its draft form, the Bill included explicit prohibition of corporal punishment (art. 163) but it appeared to apply to adults only. A Juvenile Justice Bill is under discussion and is expected to be submitted to Parliament in 2015: we are seeking information on the proposed provisions.<sup>8</sup>

## Sentence for crime

Corporal punishment is lawful as a sentence for crime. The Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child 1991 prohibits cruel and degrading punishment on children, and the current Penal Code does not authorise judicial corporal punishment. However, the Penal Code does not apply to offences under Shari’a law or to certain other offences. The Regulation on Conducting Trials, Investigations and Sentencing Fairly for Offences Committed by Minors 2006 states that children from the age of puberty may be held criminally responsible for committing apostasy, revolution against the state, fornication, falsely accusing a person of fornication, consumption of alcohol, unlawful intentional killing and other offences relating to homicide (arts. 4 and 5). These are offences for which *hadd* is prescribed in Islam, including flogging. From the age of 15, children can be convicted of a wider range of offences under Shari’a law. The Disobedience Law provides for corporal punishment as a sentence but we have no further information.

In 2012, the Government stated to the Human Rights Committee that flogging is available as a sentence under Shari’a law only for persons over 18 but also that it had identified the necessary law reform to prohibit corporal punishment in a report published by the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC).<sup>9</sup> The report confirms that corporal punishment is lawful as a sentence for crime for children as described above.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 17 April 2015, A/HRC/WG.22/MDV/1, National report to the UPR, para. 26

<sup>8</sup> 17 April 2015, A/HRC/WG.22/MDV/1, National report to the UPR, para. 80

<sup>9</sup> 5 July 2012, CCPR/C/MDV/Q/1/Add.1, Written replies to the Human Rights Committee, para. 74

<sup>10</sup> SAIEVAC with the Global Initiative and Save the Children Sweden (2011), *Prohibition of Corporal Punishment of Children in South Asia: a progress review*, p. 21

A review commissioned by the Attorney General recommended the abolition of flogging,<sup>11</sup> but in its draft form the new Penal Code authorised lashes for certain offences (arts. 411, 413, 612 and 616), and in April 2013 was further amended to provide for Shari'a punishments including amputations: we are seeking confirmation that these provisions are also in the Code as adopted in April 2014. Another review recommended the drafting of a new Juvenile Justice Act and foresaw the abolition of flogging for juveniles and adults.<sup>12</sup> A Juvenile Justice Bill has long been under discussion: we have no details of its provisions. The failure to pass this and other legislation was noted by the Government in a media statement it issued on 28 February 2013 in response to a 15 year old girl being sentenced by the Juvenile Court to flogging. The Government expressed "deep concern", referred to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and announced the establishment of a Committee to review existing child protection mechanisms, particularly legislation.

The Government reported to the Universal Periodic Review in 2015 that the Juvenile Justice Bill is expected to be submitted to Parliament in 2015, but made no comment on its provisions.<sup>13</sup> However, the Government stated that since Islam is the basis of all laws in the Maldives, "it is unconstitutional to remove *Hadd* punishments such as the death penalty and flogging from the Penal Code".<sup>14</sup> Recommendations to prohibit corporal punishment were rejected (see below).<sup>15</sup>

## **Universal Periodic Review of the Maldives' human rights record**

The Maldives was examined in the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in 2010 (session 9). During the review, the Government stated that it had no plans to abolish flogging under Shari'a law but was concerned that it was being imposed in a discriminatory way against women and a moratorium was being considered.<sup>16</sup> The following recommendations were made:<sup>17</sup>

"Ensure that its new Penal Code is fully consistent with international human rights standards and that it abolishes corporal punishment and the death penalty (United Kingdom);

"Take all measures to end the application of cruel, inhuman or degrading penalties such as flogging (France);/abolish criminal penalties that infringe on the physical integrity of convicts, for example, flogging (Austria);/prohibit the use of public flogging (New Zealand); abolish corporal punishment, in particular public flogging (Brazil)"

The Government "partially accepted" the first of these recommendations, stating: "The new draft Penal Code currently before the People's Majlis is the first of its kind, designed to combine Shariah law with international human rights law and best practice. Notwithstanding, the new draft Penal Code does include provisions on corporal punishment."<sup>18</sup> In response to the second recommendation, the Government stated: "The Maldives accepts to begin wider consultations on this matter. The Maldives accepts to consult with relevant national and international authorities to assess whether the application of corporal punishment, as currently practiced in the Maldives, is compatible with the Maldives' international obligations under the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (CAT), and also whether the newly-independent judiciary in the country has the capacity, at present, to pass down such punishments in a manner fully consistent with the Maldives Constitution

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<sup>11</sup> Robinson, Paul H. & Diver, C. S. (2004), *Report on the Criminal Justice System of the Republic of Maldives: Proposals for Reform*, para. 6.4

<sup>12</sup> Alder, C. & Polk, K. (2004), *Strategic Plan for the Reform of the Juvenile Justice System*, p.7

<sup>13</sup> 17 April 2015, A/HRC/WG.22/MDV/1, National report to the UPR, para. 80

<sup>14</sup> 17 April 2015, A/HRC/WG.22/MDV/1, National report to the UPR, para. 58

<sup>15</sup> 8 May 2015, A/HRC/WG.6/22/L.6 Unedited Version, Draft report of the working group, paras. 8(9), 8(34), 8(35), 8(36), 8(37), 8(38) and 8(39)

<sup>16</sup> 4 January 2011, A/HRC/16/7, Report of the working group, paras. 33 and 68

<sup>17</sup> 4 January 2011, A/HRC/16/7, Report of the working group, paras. 100(55) and 100(58)

<sup>18</sup> 14 March 2011, A/HRC/16/7/Add.1, Report of the Working Group: Addendum, para. 100(55)

and international human rights law, in particular those provisions dealing with non-discrimination on the basis of gender.”<sup>19</sup>

Examination in the second cycle took place in 2015 (session 22). In its national report, the Government stated that since the Constitution states that Islam constitutes the basis of laws in the Maldives “it is unconstitutional to remove Hadd punishments such as the death penalty and flogging from the Penal Code” and “there is extremely high evidentiary burden prescribed to Hadd offences”.<sup>20</sup> During the review the following recommendations were made, all of which were rejected by the Government:<sup>21</sup>

“Banish from its Penal Code the provisions related to corporal punishment, including flogging for sexual intercourse outside of marriage, and death penalty (Albania)

“Amend the Penal Code to prohibit corporal punishment (Chile);

“Abolish flogging and other forms of corporal punishment, and ensure that survivors of sexual violence are not prosecuted for fornication (Slovenia);

“Institute an immediate moratorium on the punishment by flogging, with a view to abolishing this practice at the legislative level (Uruguay);

“Impose an immediate moratorium on flogging, with the view of abolishing it in law and prohibit all forms of corporal punishment in all settings (Latvia);

“Bring an end to the application of cruel, inhuman or degrading punishments, in particular corporal punishment (France);

“Introduce the necessary legal and policy measures to abolish all forms of corporal punishment (Italy)”

## **Recommendations by human rights treaty bodies**

### ***Committee on the Rights of the Child***

(13 July 2007, CRC/CDV/CO/3, Concluding observations on second/third report, paras. 55, 56, 62, 63, 98 and 99)

“The Committee is concerned at the information that section 44 of the new draft Penal Code would legalize corporal punishment of children at home, schools and institutions. The Committee is also seriously concerned that, contrary to article 37 (a) of the Convention, under applicable law of the State party, persons who have reached puberty may be subject to flogging.

“In the light of the consideration of the new draft Penal Code, the Committee urges the State party to take all the necessary measures to ensure that persons who committed crimes while under the age of 18 are not subjected to any form of corporal punishment, including as a sentence for offences, and that corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure is prohibited by law in the home, alternative care settings and justice institutions, schools and workplace settings. It recommends that the State party take other appropriate measures, such as positive education and training programmes as well as public awareness raising campaigns, to eliminate this practice which directly conflicts with the equal and inalienable rights of the child to respect for her/his human dignity and physical integrity. Finally, it draws the attention of the State party to the Committee’s General Comment No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment (CRC/C/GC/8).

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<sup>19</sup> 4 January 2011, A/HRC/16/7, Report of the working group, para. 100(58)

<sup>20</sup> 17 April 2015, A/HRC/WG.22/MDV/1, National report to the UPR, para. 58

<sup>21</sup> 8 May 2015, A/HRC/WG.6/22/L.6 Unedited Version, Draft report of the working group, paras. 8(9), 8(34), 8(35), 8(36), 8(37), 8(38) and 8(39)

“The Committee welcomes the information that the State party is in the process of establishing child helpline services. The Committee regrets that insufficient measures are being taken to address the serious problem of violence against children, child abuse, including sexual abuse, and ill-treatment of children in the State party. The Committee notes with concern that the legal framework fails to provide full protection against sexual abuse and that it also shifts responsibility on producing evidence to a victim. It also notes with concern that domestic violence is widely tolerated in Maldivian society and that Maldivian legislation does not expressly prohibit corporal punishment in the family....

“In the light of article 19, other relevant provisions of the Convention and taking into account the recommendations of the Committee adopted on its days of general discussion on children and violence (CRC/C/100, para. 866 and CRC/C/111, paras. 701-745), the Committee urges the State party to:

a) undertake a national study on domestic violence, ill-treatment of children and child abuse in the home assessing the scope and nature of this problem as well as the impact of legal measures to address violence against children with a view to prohibiting all forms of physical, sexual and mental violence against children, including sexual abuse in the family....

“Despite these positive steps taken, the Committee notes with concern that: ...

c) children from the age of 7 years can be held liable for *haddu* offences and consequently they can be exposed to a death penalty;

d) corporal punishment is lawful as a sentence for crime and for disciplinary purposes....

“The Committee recommends that the State party continue and strengthen its efforts to ensure the full implementation of juvenile justice standards, in particular articles 37, 40 and 39 of the Convention and other relevant international standards in this area, such as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty (the Havana Rules), taking into account the Committee’s newly adopted General Comment No. 10 on children’s rights in juvenile justice (CRC/C/GC/10). It recommends that the State party:

a) expedite its efforts to draft and enact a Juvenile Justice Act and ensure that the provisions of this Act fully comply with the provisions and principles of the Convention as well as other international standards on the administration of juvenile justice, including the hearing of the child during criminal justice proceedings; ...

e) abolish the use of corporal punishment as a sentence for crime and for disciplinary purposes....”

### ***Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women***

(6 March 2015, CEDAW/C/MDV/CO/4-5 Advance Unedited Version, Concluding observations on fourth/fifth report, paras. 44 and 45)

“... The Committee notes with grave concern that consensual sexual relations outside marriage are still punished with flogging sentences, which disproportionately affect women and girls and deter them from reporting sexual offences....

“The Committee recommends that the State party:

a) as a matter of urgency, de-criminalize and abolish the imposition of flogging as a sentence for consensual sexual relations outside marriage, as recommended by the Committee in its previous Concluding Observations (CEDAW/C/MDV/CO/3, para. 34)....”

### ***Human Rights Committee***

(31 August 2012, CCPR/C/MDV/CO/1, Concluding observations on initial report, para. 16)

“The Committee is concerned at reported cases of corporal punishment of children in schools. The Committee is also concerned that flogging can be administered to persons for certain offences prescribed by the Sharia law (art. 7).

The State should abolish flogging. It should also explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all institutional settings.”

### ***Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture***

(26 February 2009, CAT/OP/MDV/1, Report on first periodic visit, para. 26, 27, 28, 29, 192, 194, 195, 196, 207 and 248)

“In the initial talks with the Minister for Justice, Attorney General and the Minister for Home Affairs the delegation was informed that flogging remains an applicable sentence for certain offences. The authorities noted, however, that this punishment was intended to inflict humiliation rather than physical pain. The delegation understood that even children may be subject to flogging; for the offences for which flogging is prescribed, they must assume criminal responsibility once they reach puberty.

“Deliberate infliction of pain as a form of control or punishment is both inhuman and degrading. The SPT shares the views expressed by the Human Rights Committee (HRC) in its general comment No. 20 on prohibition of torture and cruel treatment or punishment, according to which the prohibition of torture enshrined in article 7 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) should be extended to corporal punishment. The Special Rapporteur on Torture also has taken the view that corporal punishment is inconsistent with the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment enshrined in the international human rights instruments. As regards the practice of flogging, the SPT emphasizes that the HRC has considered flogging as cruel and inhuman punishment prohibited by article 7 of ICCPR, and the Committee against Torture has taken the view that flogging is not in conformity with the Convention against Torture.

“Furthermore, the SPT is concerned about the fact that section 44 of the draft Penal Code would legalize corporal punishment of children at schools and institutions. The SPT shares the opinion of the Committee on the Rights of the Child which, in its latest concluding observations on the Maldives, considered that the practice of flogging was contrary to article 37 (a) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The SPT considers that the practice of flogging, whether inflicted upon a child or an adult and irrespective of whether it is intended to inflict humiliation or physical pain, is unacceptable because of its inherent humiliating and degrading nature. It should therefore not be an applicable sentence for any offences.

“The SPT recommends that the Government of Maldives prohibit all types of corporal punishment, including flogging irrespective of whether inflicted with the purpose to cause pain or humiliation, as a sentence for crime and for disciplinary purposes.

“... The SPT understands that the Government is currently considering a draft Prison, Detention and Young Offender Centre Rules, which will, include provisions on disciplinary proceedings and sanctions.

“In interviews with the detainees [in prisons], the delegation heard several coherent allegations of the use of beating and handcuffing as disciplinary measures, as well as humiliation by being stripped naked in front of other prisoners and prison officers and blindfolded....

“The SPT was left with the impression that disciplinary measures were used in an arbitrary way, almost at the will of the prison administration, and that the system was not oriented to punish specific individuals but that also collective punishment was also regularly used.

“The SPT considers that discipline in prison is an important factor in the safety of both prisoners and staff. However, it is important that safeguards are introduced to avoid abuses of the disciplinary process and to prevent ill-treatment. The SPT encourages the Maldivian Government to adopt the draft

Prison Rules and trusts that the Government will ensure that they conform to the international standards on treatment of prisoners binding upon Maldives. The SPT further recommends that the authorities ensure that no collective punishments are used. Prison managers should increase oversight of incidents and the disciplinary process to ensure that no punishments other than those provided for in law are imposed or other than by the formal disciplinary process. All occurrences giving rise to disciplinary proceedings and all disciplinary punishments should be carefully recorded in special registers, and subject to independent monitoring.

“The delegation also heard several accounts of use of handcuffs in particularly humiliating and painful way, for purposes of punishment and control [in prisons].... The SPT emphasizes that discipline and order should be maintained with no more restriction than it is necessary for safe custody and well-ordered prison life. Instruments of restraints, such as handcuffs, should never be applied as punishment. The SPT recommends that the practice of using handcuffing as a means of punishment be eliminated immediately.

“The SPT was informed by the Director [of Maafushi Educational Training Centre for Children] that, as regards disciplinary punishment, the rules and regulations did not include corporal punishment. If disciplinary measures were needed, children might be punished by the cancellation of their favourite TV programme. Decisions on disciplinary measures were taken by the teachers. The SPT recommends that all incidents and punishments and other disciplinary measures be systematically recorded in an incident book in a manner allowing proper oversight of use of those measures.”

### **Prevalence/attitudinal research in the last ten years**

A study which involved focus groups with 15 10-18 year olds and interviews with children and staff in alternative care settings documented the use of isolation for over a week as a punishment in a “correctional training centre”.

(Naseem, A. (2011), *Child participation in the Maldives: An Assessment of Knowledge*, UNICEF & Human Rights Commission of the Maldives)

An unpublished large scale 2009 UNICEF study found that 47% of children had experienced physical or emotional punishment at home, at school or in the community. The study involved almost 17,035 people in 2,500 households and 2,000 children in schools. Thirty per cent of children at secondary school had been hit by at least one of their caregivers, 21% with an object; 8% of school students had been physically punished by their teachers.

(Reported by *Minivan News*, 21 February 2011, [www.minivannews.com](http://www.minivannews.com))

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August 2015