

Climate change & the struggle with democracy in 'Paradise'

By: Mr. Nasheed climate activist & first democratic President of Maldives 2008-2012.

The Maldives Exodus Caravan Show in Venice is an important statement about the situation in Maldives right now – both in relation to the climate change issue and particularly in regards to the political situation. When Soren Dahlgaard in 2010 presented to me the idea of bringing these issues to Venice in the context of an art exhibition I welcomed the initiative.

The fight against climate change is a fight for human rights. It's a fight for the right to exist in a healthy environment and to have the freedom that goes along with that. The climate debate is about that, and so is the fight for democracy.

I feel that now climate issues and human rights are equally important. You have to save the planet as much as save the people, and democracy can be built on that foundation. I would hope that Egyptians, or all the other democracy movements in the Middle East, would find climate change as a track that they have to address. They cannot come into government without understanding climate issues, and what is happening to the environment around them.

There is no Plan B; because there is no Planet B

At the moment, every country arrives at climate negotiations seeking to keep their own emissions as high as possible. This is the logic of the madhouse, a recipe for collective suicide. We don't want a global suicide pact. We want a global survival pact.

We have to deal with the current political situation before we can deal with the climate challenge. The two are closely related.

The problems we are facing in the Maldives are a warning for other Muslim nations undergoing democratic reform. At times, dealing with the corrupt system of patronage the former regime left behind can feel like wrestling with a Hydra: when you remove one head, two more grow back. With patience and determination, the beast can be slain. But let the Maldives be a lesson for aspiring democrats everywhere: *the dictator can be removed in a day, but it can take years to stamp out the lingering remnants of his dictatorship.*

We do everything that we do for our children. Why are you working? Why am I working? We would not have any policies for ourselves, but we should have policies for our children.

The Maldives Exodus Caravan Show in Venice will host a much-needed continued platform for discussions and debate on these issues and I hope I will be able to come to Venice and participate in the program.