

MALDIVES TOURISM BOYCOTTING INCREASES DAY BY DAY



An online propaganda asking vacationers to shun the Maldives has been welcomed by approximately two million people.

The appeal is made to make changes in the country's legal system and to amend laws when last month a 15-year-old rape victim was punished to 100 lashes for having premarital sex. The victim belonged to the island of Feydhoo and she professed when questioned by the police that she was raped by her stepfather and ill-treated and battered by the locals.

The website Avaaz.com has made an appeal to the Maldivian president Moahamed Waheed Hassan to take some stern steps to protect weak women and children and to make some adequate laws for the betterment of the rape victims.

It stated that they should make efforts and put an end to this “lunatic” attitude by targeting the tourism industry of the Maldivian government as this will have a great impact if this sector is crippled. It also stated that they will make a strong appeal which has more than a million supporters and then jeopardize the reputation of this island via propaganda and advertisements in travel magazines and on web pages or any other means of communication until he abolishes the law.

Recently, Sir Richard Branson also talked about this “inhumane attitude”. He requested the President to look in to the matter and rectify as Maldives tourism industry is largely being affected by it and suffering great losses.

The appeal has already been signed by more than 1.87 million people and is still increasing. This is depicted with an illustrious drawing of a crying child along with the country's most amazing tropical beaches.

However, the decision to attack the tourism industry was highly criticized by the tourism minister of the country. Mohamed Maleeh Jamal stated in Minivan News which is an English newspaper in the capital that people must not take any steps that will hurt the prospects of tourism industry.

He further stated that in Switzerland, you will never see any propaganda, movement, or agitation that will damage Swiss chocolate industry. Similarly, you will never see a German propaganda that will affect their automobile industry. He also stated that the government has already solemnly made an appeal to rectify the laws of lashing and beating given to the victim.

Actually, one-third of the country's GDP comes for the tourism industry. Since February 2012, when former President Mohamed Nasheed was overthrown, several kinds of propaganda have been done to curb the travelers from visiting these islands.

Mr Nasheed, who was crowned as president in 2008 after putting an end to the 30-year long dictatorship of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom stated that his downfall and dethroning was illegal and

politicized. He gave a call last year and asked tourists to boycott especially those resorts whose land owners contributed to his downfall. Another UK-based group - Friends of Maldives - have also made same type of calls.

Amnesty International has used the country's tranquil and peaceful image and published a flyer titled - Another Side of Paradise - which emphasizes the maltreatments of human rights. The various attempts made by the country's tourism ministry to promote this island using the slogan - Sunny Side of Life have been back lashed. Last month, a leaflet titled Cloudy Side of Life was distributed among visitors who came to a travel show in Berlin which exposed the brutality and inhumane attitude of police backed by the present government.

It stated that undoubtedly white sandy beaches, dancing palm trees and sparkling cocktails call the enthusiastic tourists to the Maldives. But, just a few miles far away from your resort, the very same resort owners who wave the honeymooners with one hand lash injustice, cruelty, and inhumane attitude to the citizens with another hand. Moreover, these very resort owners support the ruling government.

It ended by appealing the vacationers to analyze, assess and pay a thought before making a decision to visit Maldives as the income earned via this industry would facilitate the funding of human right abuses.

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