

REF BREATHE/ST/2026/01

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BREATHE formed: an independent **civil voice** for tobacco control

A new, dedicated civil-society organisation will monitor tobacco and nicotine policy in the Maldives, publish independent evidence, and hold the line on public health gains.

BREATHE (Building Research, Evidence & Advocacy for Tobacco-free Health Everywhere) was formally registered as a non-governmental organisation in the Maldives on 14 October 2026, under Registration No. 10-NGO/CERT/2026/98. Its founding members first met in Malé on 4 October 2026.

The Maldives has built one of the region's strongest tobacco control frameworks, from the Tobacco Control Act of 2010 to the generational tobacco ban of 2025. Yet hard-won gains can be reversed quickly, as the July 2026 cut in cigarette import duty showed. No organisation in the country has been dedicated full-time to independent oversight of these decisions. BREATHE exists to fill that gap.

"Tobacco control in the Maldives has strong laws but no independent watchdog. Policy can be undone in a single sitting, and the people who pay are our young people and our patients. BREATHE will bring evidence to every decision and make sure the public health case is always heard."

Ahmed Afaal · Founder, BREATHE

MISSION

BREATHE's mission is to protect and advance evidence-based tobacco control in the Maldives through independent research, policy advocacy and public engagement, insulated from the political and fiscal cycles that have reversed past gains. Its work rests on three pillars.

1 Research and monitoring Tracking tobacco industry interference under Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC, independent economic analysis, and data on prevalence and enforcement.	2 Policy advocacy Position papers for the People's Majlis and ministries, and a standing voice whenever tax, trade or licensing rules are debated.	3 Public engagement Support for the national cessation programme, coalition-building, and public communication grounded in evidence.
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BREATHE is independent of government and accepts no funding, sponsorship or in-kind support from the tobacco or nicotine industry or its affiliates. It welcomes collaboration with researchers, health professionals, educators, civil-society organisations, young people and government.

Coming next. BREATHE's first policy brief, *Price is policy*, on the July 2026 cigarette duty reversal, will be published shortly. Its founding statement, *A civil voice for tobacco control*, is available now at breathemv.org.

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**About BREATHE**

BREATHE (Building Research, Evidence & Advocacy for Tobacco-free Health Everywhere) is an independent Maldivian civil-society organisation dedicated to tobacco and nicotine control. It works through research and monitoring, policy advocacy and public engagement.

BREATHE accepts no funding from the tobacco or nicotine industry or its affiliates. Registration No. 10-NGO/CERT/2026/98.

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