

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 38/06/00

17 November 2000

Further information on EXTRA 84/00 (AFR 38/05/00, 14 November 2000) - Fear for safety / Ill-treatment

MAURITANIA Ahmed Ould Lafdal, UDF/EN External Relations Committee Chair
Mohamed Ould Haroun
Ahmed Ould Wediaa, journalist
Ahmed Ould Bah
Sidi Ould Salem, university professor

New name: Mohamed Mounir

Released: Marième Mint Saiga (f), UFD/EN women coordinator in Almina
Benina Mint Chedad (f), UFD/EN women coordinator in Riadh
Six other female UFD/EN members

Eight female opposition members, who had been arrested by the police, have been released. However, five male opposition leaders are still detained incommunicado, and another opposition supporter has been arrested. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

Marième Mint Saiga, Benina Mint Chedad and six other women were released in the afternoon of 13 November after being held for a few hours by the police in Nouakchott, the capital. While in custody, they were interrogated about their political affiliation, and were warned not to take part in any opposition demonstrations. The police threatened at least one of them that she would be re-arrested and beaten if caught at a demonstration. The women had been arrested earlier in the day to prevent them from taking part in a demonstration organised in protest against the government's decision to ban the opposition party, *l'Union des forces démocratiques/Ere nouvelle* (UFD/EN), Union of Democratic Forces - New Era. All the women are active members of the UFD/EN.

Ahmed Ould Lafdal, Mohamed Ould Haroun, Ahmed Ould Wediaa, Ahmed Ould Bah and Sidi Ould Salem remain in custody. It is still not known where they are detained, but on 15 November, the public prosecutor informed their lawyers that they are suspected of an attack on national security (*atteinte à la sûreté de l'état*). Under Mauritanian law, people suspected of such crimes may be held in custody for up to 30 days on the Public Prosecutor's order. Despite having requested a copy, the lawyers have still not received the Public Prosecutor's order. The five men, who are leading opposition politicians and senior members of the UFD/EN, were arrested on 9 and 11 November, apparently with the aim of silencing the party.

Another UDF/EN supporter, Mohamed Mounir, was reportedly arrested by the police in Nouakchott on 16 November and is also held in an unknown place.

The arrests have followed the Mauritanian government's decision on 28 October to ban the UDF/EN in an attempt to suppress widespread opposition to the government's diplomatic links with Israel.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in French or in your own language:

- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of Ahmed Ould Lafdal, Mohamed Ould Haroun, Ahmed Ould Wediaa, Ahmed Ould, Sidi Ould Salem and Mohamed Mounir, and to ensure that they are treated in accordance with international standards;

- asking for them to be given immediate access to their families, lawyers and any medical care they might require;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release, unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence, in which case they should be promptly tried in accordance with international fair trial standards.

APPEALS TO:

Please note that you may experience problems in sending faxes.

President of the Republic

Son Excellence

Monsieur le Président Maaouiya Ould Sid 'Ahmed Taya

Président de la République

La Présidence

BP 184 Nouakchott

Mauritania

Faxes:+ 222 2 52636 (attention of Président de la République)

Salutation:Son Excellence / Your Excellency

Minister of the Interior

Monsieur Dah Ould Abdel Jelil

Ministre de l'Intérieur, des Postes et des Télécommunications

Ministère de l'Intérieur, des Postes et des Télécommunications

BP 195 Nouakchott

Mauritania

Faxes:+ 222 2 53661

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Lemrabott Sidi Mahmoud Ould Cheikh Ahmed

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

BP 350 Nouakchott

Mauritania

Faxes:+ 222 2 57002

Salutation:Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Public Prosecutor

Mohamed Yeslem Ould Jidimou

Procureur de la République

Palais de Justice

Nouakchott, Mauritania

Telegrams:Procureur République, Nouakchott, Mauritania

Salutation: Monsieur le Procureur de la République / Dear Mr Ould Jidimou

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La Tribune

BP 6227 Nouakchott

Mauritania

and to diplomatic representatives of Mauritania accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 December 2000.