

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AFR 38/03/91  
Distr: UA/SC

UA 117/91

Torture/Health concern

28 March 1991

**MAURITANIA:** Lt Almami Chouaïbou DIAGANA, aged 31  
Adjutant Moussa Guèye  
Adama N'DIAYE  
Lt Cheikhna TANDIA, aged 31  
Lt Siguino TRAORE, aged 33

and at least 70 others

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The five men named above are among an unknown number of untried political detainees, including civilians and army personnel, who are believed to be held in military barracks in or near Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. Amnesty International is concerned by reports that some have been tortured and that the detainees are being held in extremely poor conditions and are not receiving adequate medical treatment.

Amnesty International has learned that some 50 prisoners were being detained in J'Reida army barracks, near Nouakchott, at the end of February. Some were released on government orders early in March, but others, including Lt Chouaïbou DIAGANA and Adjutant Moussa Guèye, still remain in detention in harsh conditions. Adjutant Moussa Guèye is reported to be in a critical situation, having sustained injuries to his ribs as a result of torture. Most of the other detainees still held in J'Reida are also reported to have been tortured. They are said to have been stripped naked, to have had their hands tied behind their backs, and then to have been hosed with cold water and beaten with wire cables. Investigating officials allegedly subjected detainees to the "jaguar" torture, burnt them with burning coals, put tobacco powder in their eyes and buried them in sand up to the neck. The detainees are said to be kept permanently chained in small cells with no toilet facilities. Army officers are held in individual cells while groups of 11 or 13 non-commissioned officers are detained together. Some are held in underground cells. The J'Reida barracks is located some 600 yards (500 metres) from the sea, and it becomes very cold at night.

In Nouadhibou area, an unknown number of detainees are believed to be held in harsh conditions, including 75 at the *Brigade de terre* barracks in Nouadhibou whose lives are said to be in danger.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Amnesty International has received compelling information that as many as 212 people have died or been killed in detention in the Nouakchott and Nouadhibou areas since November 1990, including 30 who apparently have died under torture in J'Reida between November 1990 and January 1991.

In November and December 1990 as many as 3,000 people, all members of Mauritania's black African ethnic groups, were arrested and questioned about the discovery of an alleged plot to overthrow the government. Some were released within a few days or several weeks but at the end of December 1990 about 1,500 people were believed to be detained incommunicado. The government announced that those involved in the alleged plot would be brought to trial but none are known to have been charged with offences. Under the terms of Mauritania's law, particularly the Code of penal procedure, suspects arrested in connection with offences related to the security of the State may be detained for questioning for up to 30 days. After this period they must be referred to the Procuracy to be remanded in custody formally or released. At the end of February and early March 1991 an unspecified number of detainees were released without charge or trial.

Since April 1989, Mauritania has been experiencing a serious human rights crisis as a result of action taken by the predominantly Arab-Berber government to expel thousands of people, mostly members of the black Hal-pulaar ethnic group, to neighbouring countries. Others have been victims of torture, extrajudicial executions and "disappearances".

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telexes/telegrams/express and airmail letters, in French or Arabic if possible:**

- expressing grave concern about reports that political detainees held in J'Reida and other detention centres have been tortured and that others have been extrajudicially executed or have died as a result of torture;
- calling for an urgent, thorough and impartial investigation into these allegations;
- calling for safeguards against torture and ill-treatment of prisoners to be implemented and rigorously enforced;
- seeking information about the detainees named above, including their state of health and legal status, and what medical treatment is available to them and other detainees;
- urging the immediate, unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience and for all other political detainees to be brought to trial promptly and fairly on recognizably criminal charges or released.

**APPEALS TO:**

Son Excellence Monsieur le Colonel Maaouya Ould Sid' Ahmed TAYA  
Président du Comité militaire de salut national, (CMSN), Chef de l'Etat  
La Présidence  
B.P. 184

Nouakchott, MAURITANIE

**Faxes: + 222 2 52636**

**Telegrams: President Ould Taya, Nouakchott, Mauritanie**

**Telexes: 5580 PRIM MTN**

Monsieur Adama Samba Sow

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

Nouakchott, MAURITANIE

**Faxes: + 222 2 52860 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**

**Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Nouakchott, Mauritanie**

**Telexes: 585 MINAF MTN (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**

Monsieur le Lieutenant-Colonel Mohamed Lemine Ould N'Diayane

Secrétaire permanent du Comité militaire de salut national

La Présidence

BP 184

Nouakchott, MAURITANIE

**Telegrams: Sec. Comite militaire Ould N'Diayane, Nouakchott, Mauritanie**

**Telexes: 566 MINDEF MTN (via Ministry of Defence)**

M. le Commandant Cheikh Sid'Ahmed Ould Baba

Ministre de l'Intérieur, des Postes et des Télécommunications

Ministère de l'Intérieur, des Postes et des Télécommunications

B.P. 195

Nouakchott, MAURITANIE

**Telexes: 5844 MTN MTN**

**COPIES TO:**

- M. Hasni Ould Didi, Ministre des Affaires étrangères et de la Coopération,  
Ministère des Affaires étrangères, B.P. 230, Nouakchott, MAURITANIE
- Mauritanie Demain, BP 4070, Nouakchott, MAURITANIE
- Ligue mauritanienne des droits de l'homme, BP 597, Nouakchott, MAURITANIE

and to diplomatic representatives of MAURITANIA in your country.

**PLEASE DO NOT DISTRIBUTE THIS URGENT ACTION TO THE PRESS WITHIN YOUR COUNTRY AS A PRESS**

**RELEASE ON MAURITANIA IS SCHEDULED FOR EARLY-APRIL 1991.**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 May 1991.