

URGENT ACTION

THREE MEN SENTENCED TO DEATH AFTER TORTURE

Three members of a Mauritanian armed group have been sentenced to death for the 2007 murder of four French tourists. Mauritania has not carried out any executions since 1987.

The three Mauritanian men, **Sidi Ould Sidna**, **Maarouf Ould Haiba** and **Mohamed Ould Chabarnou**, were sentenced to death on 25 May by the Criminal Court in the capital, Nouakchott. They had admitted to being members of the Islamist armed group Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

In court, they denied killing the French tourists, and their lawyers protested constantly that the men had given statements under torture after they were arrested, in January 2008, and that these had been used as evidence against them during their trial. For details of Amnesty International's concerns about torture of alleged Islamists, see the report *Mauritania: torture at the heart of the State*, AI Index AFR 38/009/2008.

Amnesty International met the three men several times, during two research missions in Mauritania, while they were in custody. Each of them said they had been tortured for several weeks, one of them saying he had been tortured, beaten and humiliated every day for 18 days. Another said he had been tortured, deprived of sleep and food for a month, and threatened with rape and humiliation. The third one explained how he had been subjected to the "jaguar" technique, in which his wrists and ankle were bound together and he was hung by them from a bar.

The three men were part of a group of 10 Mauritanian men charged in connection with these murders. The prosecuting authorities wanted a further two to be tried *in absentia*, as they are in hiding, but the court refused to try them. Of those convicted, beside the three sentenced to death, five were sentenced to prison terms ranging from six months to 10 years; a driver and a boatman, accused of helping the men escape after the attack on the tourists, were acquitted.

Mauritania has not executed anyone since 1987. However, there are concerns that the defendants in this case could be executed. Amnesty International opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, French or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to commute the death sentences handed down to Sidi Ould Sidna, Maarouf Ould Haiba and Mohamed Ould Chabarnou immediately;
- Calling on them to guarantee that they will continue applying the moratorium on executions which has been in place since 1987.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 08 JULY 2010 TO:

President of the Republic

Son Excellence Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz
Président de la République
La Présidence, BP 184
Nouakchott, Mauritanie

**Salutation: Dear President/
Monsieur le Président**

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Abidine Ould Elkheir
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice, BP 350
Nouakchott, Mauritanie

**Salutation: Dear Minister/
Monsieur le Ministre**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

UA: 124/10 Index: AFR 38/002/2010 Issue Date: 27 May 2010

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The armed group Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, are mainly active in Algeria. They claimed responsibility for several bomb attacks in Algeria in 2007, on both civilian and military targets. They now operate through a network of cells in neighbouring countries, such as Mauritania, Mali and Niger. They have claimed responsibility for several recent abductions of Europeans, notably three Spanish aid workers abducted in November 2009, two Italian tourists taken hostage the following month and a French tourist abducted in Niger in April 2010.

UA: 124/10 Index: AFR 38/002/2010 Issue Date: 27 May 2010

