

PUBLIC

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UA 103/05

Fear of torture or ill treatment / Incommunicado detention/  
Possible prisoners of conscience

29 April 2005

**MAURITANIA** Cheikh Mohamed EL Hacen Ould Dedew (m), *Imam* (religious leader)  
El Moctar Ould Mohamed Moussa (m), leader of the National Party for Democratic  
Convergence  
Mohamed Ahmed Ould El Hadj Sidi (m), human rights lawyer and law professor  
Cheikhani Ould Beïba (m), President of the Association for Wisdom, Authenticity and  
Revival of Patrimony (*Al-Hikma*)  
Mohamed Lemine Ould Moustapha (m), *Imam*  
Habib Ould Houmdeïtt (m), Counsellor to the Minister of Culture  
Abdallah Ould Eminou (m), *Imam*  
Al Hacene Ould Habibullah (m), *Imam*  
Mohamed Sidiya (m), professor  
Sidi Mohamed Ould Sidi (m), businessman  
Ahmed Ould Al Kowri (m), professor  
Mohamed Ould Abarrahmane (m), journalist at *Al Jazeera.net*  
Bounenna Ould Bebbah (m), professor  
Cheikh Ahmed Ould Mohamedine Vall (m)  
Khalid Ould Isselmou (m), *Imam*  
Abderahmane Ould Emine (m), *Imam*  
Mohamed Abdallahi Ould Bilil (m)

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The men named above were arrested by members of the security forces on 25 April in the capital Nouakchott. They are being held in incommunicado, without access to lawyers and their families at an unknown location in the capital, where they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Amnesty International considers the detainees to be possible prisoners of conscience, as they may have been arrested solely for the peaceful expression of their religious or political beliefs. They have not been formally charged with a recognizably offence nor have they appeared before a judge.

A spokesman for the Mauritanian police has accused the detainees of planning acts of terrorism and also being in contact with a fundamentalist group allied to *al Qaeda*. They have also been accused of having links with the militant Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, which is an armed opposition group, based in Algeria.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The arrests appear to be part of a veiled campaign of threats and intimidation against religious figures and the opposition in Mauritania. A similar wave of arrests was carried out in 2003 when several of the men named above, were held in incommunicado for several weeks and charged with "plotting against the constitutional regime and incitement to undermine the State's internal and external public order". They were then released without trial.

Cheikh Mohamed EL Hacen Ould Dedew and El Moctar Ould Mohamed Moussa are former prisoners of conscience. They were arrested twice in 2004. In October, they were held incommunicado for six days in Nouakchott then released without charge. They were then rearrested in November and detained incommunicado for 14 days at an unknown location. They were later charged with "complicity in the fabrication and forgery of documents that might cause a disturbance to public order and prejudice internal

and external security” but released without trial. (See UA 284/04, AFR 38/003/2004, 8 October 2004 and follow ups)

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic, French or your own language:**

- expressing concern at the incommunicado detention of the men named above who were arrested by members of the security forces on 25 April 2005 in the capital Nouakchott;
- seeking assurances that they are not being tortured or ill-treated and calling for them to be given regular access to their families, lawyers and medical attention if necessary;
- urging the authorities to release the detainees immediately, unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;

**APPEALS TO: (fax numbers can be difficult to get through, please send letters instead)**

Attorney General

Procureur Général près de la Cour suprême  
M. Abdelrahman Ould Abdi  
Palais de Justice  
Nouakchott, Mauritania

**Fax: + 222 525 5194**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Procureur Général / Dear Attorney General**

President of the Republic

Président de la République  
Maaouya Ould Sid’Ahmed Taya  
Présidence de la République  
B.P. 184  
Nouakchott, Mauritania

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

Minister for the Interior, Post and Telecommunications

Ministre de l’Intérieur, des Postes et Télécommunications  
M. Mohamed Ghaly Ould Chérif Ahmed  
B.P. 195  
Nouakchott, Mauritania

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

**COPIES 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 10 June 2005.