

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal concern

13 June 1991

MAURITANIA: Moustapha Ould Bedredine, leader of the Mouvement national démocratique (MND), National Democratic Movement
Ladji Traoré, leader of the Patriotes pour l'unité et la démocratie, Patriots for Unity and Democracy, and former prisoner of conscience
Massaoud Ould Boulkheir, leader of the El Hor movement
Béchir El Hassen, leader of the Mouvement des démocrates indépendants, Independent Democrats' Movement
Diop Amadou Mamadou, leader of the Initiative pour le rassemblement démocratique, Movement for Democratic Rally, former government minister
Abderamane Ould Yessa, leader of the independent democrats
Adrami Ould Khatri, leader of the centrist democrats and former Minister of Education

The seven people named above, all leaders of opposition groups, were arrested on 5 June 1991, after the public announcement of the formation of an opposition coalition, the Front démocratique uni des forces du changement, United Democratic Front of the Forces for Change. They were first held in detention in the capital, Nouakchott. On 8 June 1991, Ladji Traoré and one other were transferred to Tichit, located 700 kms east of Nouakchott, while others were moved to unknown places of detention outside of the capital. The Minister of the Interior announced that they were being placed under house arrest. He stated that no legal proceedings would take place, but that the detainees could be released "*as soon as order has been re-established*". Two are believed to be in poor health: Diop Amadou Mamadou, who is a diabetic and Adrami Ould Khatri, who is reported to suffer from kidney problems.

No formal charges have been announced against any of the detainees. Amnesty International is concerned that they are being held as prisoners of conscience on account of their non-violent political views.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 15 April 1991, Colonel Maaouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, President of Mauritania, announced that a new constitution would be voted on before the end of the year, and this would lead to free elections. He also stated that the authorization of an unlimited number of political parties would form the basis of the process of reform. The draft constitution was issued on 11 June and the referendum is due to take place on 15 July 1991.

Since that announcement, various political parties have made public statements and on 5 June they announced a common programme calling for the dissolution of the government and the appointment of a transitional government until a national conference could be held to determine the future structure of the government.

Also on 15 April, President Maaouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya announced the release of all remaining political prisoners. However he failed to account for the whereabouts of more than 300 prisoners arrested since November 1990 who are believed to have died in detention as a result of torture or extrajudicial execution.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- inquiring about the reasons and legal basis for the detentions under house arrest of the above-named seven political party leaders;
- requesting an assurance that they are not being subjected to ill-treatment;

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- urging the authorities to allow them immediate access to legal counsel, to relatives and medical facilities, especially for Diop Amadou Mamadou and Adrami Ould Khatri who are believed to require special medical care;
- expressing concern that they are prisoners of conscience being held purely on account of their non-violent political activities and urging that they should be released immediately and unconditionally.

APPEALS TO:

Son Excellence Monsieur le Colonel Maaouya Ould Sid'
Ahmed TAYA

Président du Comité militaire de salut national, (CMSN),
Chef de l'Etat
(Ministre de la Défense)

La Présidence

B.P. 184

Nouakchott, Mauritanie

Telegrams: President Ould Taya, Nouakchott, Mauritanie

Telexes: 5580 PRIM MTN

Faxes: + 222 2 52636

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

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Nouakchott, Mauritanie

Telexes: 5844 MTN MTN

M. Adama Samba Sow
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
Nouakchott, Mauritanie

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Nouakchott, Mauritanie

Telexes: 5585 MINAF MTN (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

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

M. Mohamed Ould Haimer
Ministre de la Santé et des Affaires Sociales
Ministère de la Santé et des Affaires Sociales
B.P. 177

Nouakchott, Mauritanie

Telegrams: Ministre Sante, Nouakchott, Mauritanie

COPIES TO:

- Son Excellence M. Hasni Ould Didi, Ministre des Affaires étrangères et de la Coopération, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, B.P. 230, Nouakchott, Mauritanie **Faxes: + 222 2 52860**
- 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 SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 July 1991.