

HUMAN RIGHTS MANIFESTO FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CANDIDATES

12 commitments to promote and protect human rights in Mauritania

On 22 June 2019, the people of Mauritania will elect a new president. As candidates for the presidency, you have the opportunity and choice to build a Mauritania where dignity and human rights are respected and promoted for all.

Civil society organizations are calling on each of the candidates – in the event that they win – to commit to implementing reforms and changing practices in order to fulfil Mauritania's national and international human rights obligations. As a candidate in the upcoming elections, we invite you to demonstrate your commitment to protecting the human rights of all inhabitants of Mauritania by signing this manifesto.

By signing this manifesto, I undertake, from the start of my term of office, to protect and promote human rights, in particular to:

1. END IMPUNITY

Law 92 of 1993, which grants amnesty to alleged perpetrators of abuses, torture, illegal detention, extrajudicial killings and mass expulsions of Afro-Mauritanians, will be repealed. An independent investigation will be conducted to bring proceedings against alleged perpetrators and to compensate the victims and their beneficiaries. Measures will be taken to facilitate the return and integration of Mauritanian refugees in Mali and Senegal.

2. END SLAVERY, HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES

The laws on slavery, human trafficking and discriminatory practices will be properly implemented and enforced. Resources will be allocated to the police and the judiciary to enable them to properly address reported cases of exploitation, identify and locate the perpetrators, and prosecute and punish them through fair trials without resorting to the death penalty. Measures will be taken to ensure the representation of all national ethnic groups in positions of power. An inclusive cultural and linguistic policy will be implemented to guarantee that non-Arabic-speaking communities have access to essential services as well as positions of responsibility.

3. END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES

A law to combat violence against women will be adopted within the first year of the term of office. Laws, policies, customs or practices that are discriminatory or based on gender prejudice will be changed to comply with the Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women in Africa. The definition of rape will be brought in line with the definition under international law. Protection mechanisms will be established to prevent violence against women, improve access to justice and provide state-funded shelters for victims. Law enforcement officers, the judicial authorities and health professionals will receive regular training to improve the care offered to victims. Finally, survivors will have free access to medical and psychological care.

4. IMPLEMENT ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Specific measures will be taken to gradually ensure the full implementation of economic, social and cultural rights for all, giving priority to the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups, providing access to the resources available in the country in a non-discriminatory manner. In order to achieve food, economic and social security, we will carry out an in-depth and inclusive consultation of the affected communities to address the problems of confiscation and expulsion as well as the consequences of unresolved humanitarian issues. In addition, we will

review the legal framework for land ownership. The right to health will be guaranteed, particularly maternal and child health.

5. REMOVE ADMINISTRATIVE OBSTACLES TO CIVIL STATUS REGISTRATION

The civil status registration procedures will be made clearer, will be free of charge and will not allow for any form of discrimination based on ethnicity. Actions to inform the population about the civil status registration formalities will be conducted in all the national languages and it will be ensured that no family is prevented from completing the formalities due to a lack of money or other resources. The enjoyment of certain fundamental rights, such as the right to education, will no longer be conditioned by the registration of other family members.

6. ENFORCE RIGHTS TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

In accordance with international human rights standards, no person shall be imprisoned or subjected to other criminal penalties simply for having exercised his or her right to freedom of expression, association or peaceful assembly. Laws penalizing activities relating to the exercise of the right to freedom of expression will be repealed, in particular certain provisions concerning defamation, slander, apostasy and spreading false information. The security forces will not use excessive force during demonstrations. Arbitrary restrictions on the right to the freedom of association will be removed and, if a procedure for registering associations is implemented or maintained, it must consist of no more than a simple declaration. Human rights defenders will be protected and will not be subjected to intimidation, harassment, pressure or arrests on account of their activities.

7. PROTECT THE RIGHT TO LIFE

The number of offences liable to capital punishment will be reduced to the most serious crimes, with a view to completely abolishing this punishment.

8. END TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

All allegations of torture or other ill-treatment will be subject to an independent and impartial investigation. The alleged perpetrators will be brought to justice through fair trials without resorting to the death penalty. We will ensure that any person who makes this kind of allegation is examined by an independent doctor as soon as possible.

9. GUARANTEE THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY

Measures will be taken to guarantee the independence of the judiciary; this will include a revision of the Constitution so that the High Council of the Judiciary is no longer chaired by the President of the Republic or a member of the executive. Courts and judges will be provided with the necessary human, technical and financial resources to perform their functions in complete independence. The recruitment of judges will reflect the diversity of all national ethnic groups.

10. IMPROVE CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

In Mauritanian prisons, we will take measures to reduce the duration of pre-trial detentions, put an end to prison overcrowding and ensure that detainees are treated humanely. All detention centres that are not registered as places of detention or are not known to the public will be closed in order to prevent ill-treatment or acts of torture. All juvenile detainees will be kept separate from adult prisoners and female detainees will no longer be guarded by male guards. Detained persons with mental disorders will receive the necessary assistance and will not be subjected to discriminatory treatment.

11. STRENGTHEN THE INDEPENDENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

Measures will be taken to guarantee the independence of the mechanism to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (NPM) and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), making the appointment of their members transparent, and giving them adequate financial resources and the necessary autonomy to guarantee their independence from the executive.

12. PROTECT MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Illegal practices of expulsion and refoulement of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to neighbouring countries will end. Cases of arbitrary or excessive use of force against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, as well as ethnic profiling and discrimination, will be investigated.

**** This manifesto, initiated by Amnesty International and FONDADH, is signed by 33 organizations and associations working in Mauritania in the field of human rights.*

Signatories

Action by Christians Against Torture (ACAT - France); Amplify Change; Anti-Slavery International; Amnesty International ; Association of Women Heads of Household (Mauritania); Association de la Femme Citoyenne et Engagée; Mauritanian Association for Human Rights; Association d'Appui au Développement à la Base des Communautés; Association pour le Développement Intègre de l'Enfant; Association Mauritanienne pour la Promotion de la Langue et de la Culture SOONINKE; Association pour la Promotion de la Langue Wolof en RIM; Association pour la Renaissance du Pulaar en RIM; Association pour le Renforcement de la Démocratie et l'Éducation Citoyenne; Collectif des Rescapés Anciens Détenus Politiques Civils Torturés (CRADPOCIT) ; Collectif des Veuves ; Comité de Solidarité avec les Victimes des Violations des Droits Humains en Mauritanie ; Coordination des Organisations des Victimes de la Répression (COVIRE) ; Collectif des Anciens Fonctionnaires de la Police Victimes des Événements 1989 ; Collectif des Orphelins des Victimes Civiles et Militaires 1986 à 1991 (COVICIM) ; Fondation Sahel pour la défense des droits de l'homme ; Forum des Organisations Nationales des Droits de l'Homme en Mauritanie (FONDADH) ; Frontline Defenders ; Groupe d'Études et de Recherches sur la Démocratie et le Développement Economique et Social en Afrique (GERDDES) ; Initiative pour la résurgence du mouvement abolitionniste (IRA) ; Les Libertés en Mauritanie ; African Human Rights League - Mauritanian Section ; Mauritanian Human Rights League ; Minority Rights Group (MRG) ; Pour une Mauritanie Verte et Démocratique ; Regroupement des Victimes des Événements 89-91 ; SOS Esclaves – Mauritania ; Touche pas à ma nationalité ; Union Nationale des Rapatriés du Sénégal