

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture or ill-treatment/Incommunicado detention

MAURITANIA

Abderrahmane Ould Mini (m)
Moustafa Ould Cheibany (m)
Cheikh Ould Abdallahi (m)
Dahanna Ould Sidi Mahmoud Ould Salah (m)
Amar Ould Amar Jowda (m)
at least 10 others

The five men named above, and at least 10 others, have been arrested since 25 September, and are held incommunicado. All are military men accused of involvement in an alleged coup plot. Abderrahmane Ould Mini has reportedly been tortured, and Amnesty International fears that the other detainees are also at risk of torture or ill-treatment. The authorities have not revealed where they are held, and they have not been allowed to see their families, lawyers, doctors or human rights organizations.

All were arrested after the Mauritanian authorities announced in September that they had foiled a plot to bring down the government. Abderrahmane Ould Mini was arrested on 25 September, in the capital, Nouakchott. He is alleged to be one of the ringleaders of the coup attempt of 8 June 2003. The police had been looking for him, and an international warrant for his arrest had been issued. Moustafa Ould Cheibany was allegedly involved in preparing a further coup attempt in August 2004.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In June 2003 the government of President Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya defeated a military coup, and scores of army officers and men were arrested. Since then the government claims to have foiled two further coup attempts, in August and September 2004.

The 131 officers and men detained after the June 2003 coup attempt were held incommunicado for three months before they were brought before a judge. They were charged with treason, which carries the death penalty. They were held at a naval camp in Nouakchott until July 2004, when they were transferred to Oued Naga, a military barracks recently transformed into a detention center, where conditions are harsh. Their trial is due to start on 21 November 2004.

At least 30 military men were arrested following the alleged coup plot of August 2004 and are reportedly still detained incommunicado. There is very little information about them, and conflicting reports about where they are held.

Torture and ill-treatment are especially common in the first few days after arrest in Mauritania. People suspected of participation in the attempted June 2003 coup are particularly vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment, and were very often beaten during interrogation. Several detainees are known to have been deprived of proper medical care.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of at least 15 army officers and men detained incommunicado since the alleged coup attempt of September 2004, including the five men named;

- expressing concern at reports that Abderrahmane Ould Mini has been tortured, and seeking assurances that the detainees will not be tortured or ill-treated, and that they will be given regular access to their families, lawyers and any medical attention they may need;
- urging the authorities to ensure that all Mauritanian law enforcement agencies respect internationally agreed procedures for arrest and detention, and that they give lawyers and human rights organisations access to all places of detention, and to take immediate action against any member of the security forces suspected of human rights abuses.

APPEALS TO: (It may be very difficult to send faxes to Mauritania.)

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

Attorney General (UK law)

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

Fax: + 222 525 51 94

Salutation: Monsieur le Procureur Général/ Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

Minister of Justice

Ministre de la Justice
M. Diabira Bakary
B.P. 350
Nouakchott, Mauritania

Fax: + 222 525 7002 (if someone answers, say "je voudrais envoyer un fax, s'il vous plaît - I'd like to send a fax, please")

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

and 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 19 November 2004.