

URGENT ACTION

FOUR ACTIVISTS RELEASED; SEVEN CHARGED

Four Mauritanian anti-slavery activists, who had been detained in an unknown location since the end of April, have now been released. Seven more activists detained at the same time were charged on 30 May. They have been transferred to the Central Prison in Nouakchott, Mauritania's capital.

All eleven anti-slavery activists are members of the organisation Initiative pour la Résurgence du mouvement Abolitionniste en Mauritanie (Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement in Mauritania, IRA-Mauritanie). **Bilal Ould Sambou, Leid Ould Mbarek and Issa Ould Alioune** were released on 30 May. **Zeidane Ould Maouloud** was released earlier, shortly after the arrests. **Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, Yacoud Diarra, Abidine Ould Maatala, Ahmed Hamdy Ould Hamar Vall, Leid Ould Lemlih, Oubeid Ould Imijine and Boumediane Ould Batta** have all been charged with "offence on national security" (atteinte à la sécurité de l'état).

Representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nouakchott had been given access to the detainees last week, after several weeks in custody at a police station in Nouakchott where they were held incommunicado. Their families were also allowed to visit them.

Amnesty International still considers that the seven detained activists are prisoners of conscience and that they are being held solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Mauritania is a state party, protects freedom of expression, which includes "freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds". The UN Human Rights Committee has stated that this right "embraces even expression that may be regarded as deeply offensive."

Please write immediately in Arabic, French or your own language:

- Urging the President to ensure that the seven activists are released immediately and unconditionally;
- Calling on him to ensure that until they are released, the seven activists have access to their lawyers, their families and any medical attention they may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 JULY 2012 TO:

President

His Excellency
General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz
President of the Islamic Republic of
Mauritania
Presidency BP 184 Nouakchott
Mauritania
Fax: +222 45 25 98 01

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Justice

Me Abidine Ould El Kheir
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
BP 350 Nouakchott
Mauritania
Fax: +222 45 29 49 84

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 127/12. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR38/002/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Slavery in Mauritania was officially abolished in 1981. Since 2007, slavery has been recognized as a crime in Mauritanian law. However, the practice remains and IRA-Mauritanie and other organizations, including SOS-Esclaves, have been reporting and denouncing cases of slavery.

The Mauritanian authorities have often placed restrictions on freedom of expression in Mauritania. Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, freedom of expression may only be subject to restrictions that satisfy the conditions laid out in Article 19 of the Covenant.

Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid and other members of IRA-Mauritanie were sentenced in January 2011 to one year's imprisonment for "assaulting police officers" and "obstructing public order" after holding a rally outside a police station in Nouakchott. They were pardoned in March 2011.

Names: Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, Issa Ould Alioune, Yacoub Diarra, Abidine Ould Maatata, Ahmed Hamdy Ould Hamar Vall, Leid Ould Mbarek, Bilal Ould Samba, Leid Ould Lemlih, Oubeid Ould Imijine, Zeidane Ould Maouloud and Boumediane Ould Batta.

Gender m/f: all male

Further information on UA: 127/12 Index: AFR 38/004/2012 Issue Date: 31 May 2012

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