

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal concern

31 January 1992

MAURITANIA:

Alpha WANE, a lawyer in Nouakchott

Boubacar MESSAOUD, local coordinator of the Union des forces démocratiques, (UFD), Union of Democratic Forces

Coumba SY (female)

Yedalli Ould CHEIKH, former Minister of Justice from 1979 to 1980

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~~Hamdi Ould Mahjoub, former head of Bar Association and~~

former mayor of Nouadhibou

Ladji Tandia, pharmacist

and many others

The six people named above have been arrested in Nouadhibou, Mauritania's second largest town. Altogether, perhaps as many as 100 people have been arrested there since 26 January 1992. That same day, the police had used tear gas and then opened fire to disperse a crowd of opposition supporters waiting to hear the results of the presidential elections held on 24 January. Violent demonstrations followed in protest against the death of three people.

The official results declared that President Ould Taya received 60% of the votes and he will therefore remain in office for a further six years. The other main candidate, Ahmed Ould Daddah, received over 30% of the votes. Later that evening, leading members of the opposition and others were arrested at places throughout the city.

The UFD, the main opposition party, supported the candidature of Ahmed Ould Daddah, brother of the first President of Mauritania. Although all the candidates came from the moorish community, Ahmed Ould Daddah had presented himself as a unifying leader and had attracted large support from the black community. The opposition alleged that the elections had been unfairly conducted and have now threatened to boycott the next rounds of elections unless the government releases all the detainees.

No charges have been announced against any of the six detainees, all of whom are from Mauritania's black community. The other detainees are also believed to be held without charge. 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 Maaouya 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. Political parties were legalised and the first of these elections took place on 24 January 1992 and legislative elections are due to take place in the next few months.

Also on 15 April 1991, President Ould 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 in ARABIC or FRENCH, if possible:**

- inquiring about the reasons and legal basis for the detention of the six people named above and others believed arrested;
- requesting an assurance that they are not being ill-treated;
- urging the authorities to allow them immediate access to legal counsel, relatives and medical facilities;
- expressing concern that they appear to be prisoners of conscience held purely on account of their non-violent political activities and urging that they should be released immediately and unconditionally.

page 2 of UA 35/92

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President:

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**  
**Faxes: + 222 2 52636**  
**Telexes: 5580 PRIM MTN**  
**Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President**

2) Minister of the Interior:

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

3) Mininster of Justice:

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

4) Minister of Health:

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**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs:

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**

Newspaper:

Mauritanie Demain  
BP 4070  
Nouakchott  
Mauritanie

Human Rights Organization:

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 March 1992.