

PUBLIC

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Fear of ill-treatment or torture/ Incommunicado detention/
Medical concern

14 November 2003

MAURITANIA Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla (m)
Sidi Mohamed Ould Haidalla (m) - his son
Habba Ould Mohamed Vall (m)
Mohamed Yehdhi Ould Breideleil (m)
Ismaël Oud Amar (m)
And eight others (names unknown)

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of those named above. They are being held in incommunicado detention apparently without charge. At least one detainee has reportedly been ill treated, whilst four others are reported to require urgent medical attention. The authorities are denying the detainees' access to legal representatives, family members and medical treatment, despite repeated requests.

All the men were arrested around the presidential elections, held on 7 November 2003, apparently on suspicion of planning a coup d'Etat. The authorities have informed the media that they were arrested for committing a state security offence ("*atteinte à la sûreté de l'Etat*").

Under the Mauritanian code of criminal procedure, as the case involves a state security offence, the detainees could be held incommunicado, putting them at increased risk of ill-treatment or torture, for up to 30 days before being charged or released.

Presidential candidate, Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla and five people directly involved in the preparation of his campaign were arrested by security forces on 6 November. Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla and his campaign director, Ismaël Oud Amar, were released after few hours to allow the vote to take place. They were re-arrested on 9 November and are now being held at Beyla prison in the capital Nouakchott. They were arrested along with a group of young supporters, who are currently being held in incommunicado at the Ksar II Police Station, Nouakchott.

Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla's son, Sidi Mohamed Ould Haidalla, was arrested prior to the elections on 5 November. He is currently being held in incommunicado detention by the police at Nouakchott central police station. According to reports, he was badly beaten during questioning. He has not been charged with any offence.

Habba Ould Mohamed Vall, Mohamed Yehdhi Ould Breideleil and Ismaël Oud Amar reportedly all suffer from diabetes and are being denied medical treatment. They are detained in Beyla prison in Nouakchott, along with Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla who was suffering from gastric problems and severe fatigue when he was arrested. He is reportedly being held in solitary confinement and is reportedly being deprived of sleep as a result of continuous interrogation. He too has been denied medical treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

President Maaouya Ould Sidi Mohammed Taya was re-elected on 7 November 2003. A coalition of members of Mauritanian civil society and the main political opposition parties alleged massive fraud throughout the country, which was not monitored by independent observers. Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla came to power in January 1980 after a coup d'état and ruled until 1984 when he was overthrown by Maaouya Ould Sidi Mohammed Taya in another coup d'état.

In June 2003, following an attempt coup, hundreds of military officers were arrested and detained incommunicado for three months. At least 128 detainees were charged with several offences including treason, a crime punished by the death penalty. Some were reportedly subjected to torture.

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

- expressing concern at the incommunicado detention of Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla, his son Sidi Mohamed Ould Haidalla, Habba Ould Mohamed Vall, Mohamed Yehdhi Ould Breideleil, Ismaël Oud Amar, and eight others who were arrested around the 7 November Presidential Elections;
- expressing concern at the alleged torture of Sidi Mohamed Ould Haidalla and requesting that all the detainees are protected from torture and ill-treatment and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment whilst in detention;
- calling for all the detainees to be given regular access to family and lawyers;
- requesting that Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla, Habba Ould Mohamed Vall, Ismaël Oud Amar and Mohamed Yehdhi Ould Breideleil are given the medical attention they require and that the other detainees are given medical assistance should they require it;
- urging the authorities to release the detainees immediately, unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- if they are not released, asking for details of the charges against them and any subsequent trial proceedings to be made public.

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

President of the Republic

Président de la République
Maaouya Ould Sidi Mohammed Taya
Présidence de la République
B.P. 184

Nouakchott, Mauritania

Telegram: President de la Republique, 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. Kaba Ould Aléwa
B.P. 195

Nouakchott, Mauritania

Telegram: Ministre de l'Interieur, des Postes et Telecommunications, Nouakchott, Mauritania

Fax : + 222 525 36 61

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

Ministre de la Justice
M. Diabira Bakary
B.P. 350

Nouakchott, Mauritania

Telegram: Ministre de la Justice, Nouakchott, Mauritania

**Fax: + 222 525 70 02 (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

COPIES 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 26 December 2003.