URGENT ACTION

ANTI-SLAVERY ACTIVISTS CONTINUE TO BE DETAINED

The seven members of the anti-slavery organisation IRA Mauritania, who remained in detention after four of their colleagues were released, had their court hearing on 27 June. The judge stated that the court case could not go ahead and sent the case back to the prosecutor. In usual practice, detainees are released following such an order until new charges can be brought. However, the seven remain in detention on the same charges.

As the judge did not give a ruling on the case, the charges should have been dropped. Instead the seven activists remain in detention at the Central Prison in Nouakchott, Mauritania's capital. A new order for the detention pending trial, on the same charges, was issued. The charges include: offence to national security, contempt to good morals, management of a non-authorised organisation and, for **Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid** only, the crime of Apostasy.

On Sunday 15 July, the lawyers' formal request to the Indictments Chamber to declare that the action against the activists was inadmissible and to drop all charges was refused.

This is the latest example of the legal harassment that anti-slavery activists who are only detained for peacefully expressing their views after protesting against the writings of Islamic scholars face in Mauritania.

When Amnesty International staff visited him in detention, Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid told them "Thank you very much for the Urgent Action, because you took action, other organisations in Mauritania who had hesitated to support us, were convinced to take action" (Merci beaucoup car l'action urgente d'Amnesty a convaincue d'autres organisations en Mauritanie, qui hésitaient à agir).

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

- Urging the authorities to release the activists immediately and unconditionally
- Calling on the authorities to drop all charges against the activists

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 SEPTEMBER 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

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 second update of UA 127/12. Further information: http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR38/004/2012/en

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

URGENT ACTION

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid is the president of the anti-slavery organisation IRA-Mauritanie (Initiative pour la Résurgence du movement Abolitionniste en Mauritanie, Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement in Mauritania). Eleven members of IRA-Mauritanie were arrested on 28 April after the burning of several books written by Islamic scholars, in Nouakchott, the capital city of Mauritania.

Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid has said that they had burned the books because of their concerns at references they made which according to them, offered a justification for slavery.

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.

The Mauritanian authorities have often placed restrictions on freedom of expression in Mauritania. 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 United Nations Human Rights Committee has stated that this right "embraces even expression that may be regarded as deeply offensive." 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.

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.

Name: Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, Issa Ould Alioune, Yacoub Diarra, Abidine Ould Maatala, 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 38/005/2012 Issue Date: 1 August 2012

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