

URGENT ACTION

NINE ANTI-SLAVERY ACTIVISTS HELD INCOMMUNICADO

Nine members of the anti-slavery organization Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement in Mauritania (IRA) have been in incommunicado detention since their arrests. They were charged on 12 July with rebellion, use of violence, attack against the police and agents of justice and membership of an unrecognised organization. They are at risk of ill-treatment while in detention.

Amadou Tijane Diop, the third vice president of IRA-Mauritania and **Abdallahi Maatalla Seck**, Coordinator of Section Sebkhia, were arrested by police on 30 June at their home in Nouakchott. The police searched Amadou Tijane Diop's house and seized his personal documents and laptops. According to his family, he suffers from a heart condition for which he may not be receiving adequate medical treatment while in detention. In the following days, seven other members and supporters of IRA-Mauritania were also arrested, some at their workplace, others at home. **Balla Touré**, external relations officer, and members **Jemal Beylil**, **Salem Vall**, and **Moussa Biram** were arrested on 1 July. **Hamady Lehbouss**, spokesperson, **Khatri Rahel Mbarkek**, President of IRA peace committee, and **Ahmed Hamady**, treasurer, were arrested on 3 July after organising a press conference calling for the release of their colleagues.

None of them has been allowed access to their lawyers or families since their arrest. A member of the national committee of torture prevention mechanism, who was seeking to confirm their whereabouts and their conditions of detention, was also denied access to where they were being held.

The nine anti-slavery activists were arrested after communities who were living in a slum in the area of Gazra in Nouakchott for at least 20 years resisted being forcefully moved to another neighbourhood. None of the activists arrested participated in the organisation of the protest neither were they present at the event.

The nine activists were transferred to the prison of Nouakchott on 12 July after being charged with rebellion, use of violence, attack against the police and agents of justice and membership of an unrecognised organization.

Please write immediately in French or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the nine activists, detained solely for their peaceful work on human rights;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that, during their detention, they are not subject to torture or other ill-treatment and have continuous access to a lawyer of their choice, to medical attention, to family visits and to all basic necessities;
- Urging them to guarantee that anti-slavery activists in Mauritania are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 AUGUST 2016 TO:

President

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. Brahim Ould Daddah
Ministry of Justice
BP 350 Nouakchott
Mauritania
Fax: +222 25 25 70 02

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Carlyle House, 235-237 Vauxhall Bridge Road SW1V 1EJ, 020 7233 615

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Slavery in Mauritania was officially abolished in 1981 and has been recognized as a crime in domestic law since 2007. However, the practice remains and IRA-Mauritania and other organizations, including SOS-Esclaves, have been reporting and denouncing cases of slavery. The Mauritanian authorities often restrict the freedom of expression of human rights defenders and organizations campaigning against slavery.

In January 2015, the Court of Rosso sentenced two members of IRA, Brahim Bilal Ramdane and Biram Dah Abeid, a former presidential candidate and president of the IRA-Mauritania, to two years in prison for belonging to an unrecognized organization, participating in an unauthorized assembly and assaulting security officers. IRA members have been requesting authorization for their organization since 2008 and it is still not recognized by Mauritanian authorities. The activists were campaigning against slavery and raising awareness among the local population of the land rights of people of slave descent. Their sentences were upheld by the Appeal Court of Aleg in August 2015. The Supreme Court released the anti-slavery activists on 17 May 2016 after 20 months in jail.

In the past five years, Biram Dah Abeid (anti-slavery activist) has been imprisoned three times.

UA: 159/16 Index: AFR 38/4403/2016 Issue Date: 15 July 2016