

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of torture / Legal concern

27 January 1995

MAURITANIA

Ahmed Ould Daddah - Secretary General of the *Union des Forces Démocratiques* (UFD), Union of Democratic Forces  
Hamdi Ould Mouknass, President of *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès* (UDP), Union for Democracy and Progress

at least four other prominent members of the UFD and UDP including:

Mohamed El Moustapha Ould Bedreddine, second Deputy Secretary General of the UFD  
Ahmed Ould Lafdal, member of the UFD's executive bureau  
Diagana Chouaibou, member of the UFD's executive bureau  
Sy Ibrahima, Vice-President of the UDP

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Two opposition leaders, Ahmed Ould Daddah and Hamdi Ould Mouknass, were arrested on 23 January 1995, together with at least four other opposition activists, following riots in the capital, Nouakchott, and other towns during the weekend of 21/22 January. Ahmed Ould Daddah and Hamdi Ould Mouknass are reported to have been moved from the place where they were initially held in Nouakchott to an unknown destination. None of those arrested are known to have been charged with any offence and they remain held incommunicado. There are fears that they may be at risk of torture while in incommunicado detention.

The arrests occurred after the authorities accused Mauritania's two main opposition parties, the UFD and the UDP, of fomenting unrest following demonstrations in Nouakchott and elsewhere on 21 and 22 January against a 25 per cent increase in the price of bread. Opposition leaders have claimed that the demonstrations started spontaneously and have condemned the acts of violence which occurred.

On 24 January, at least 10 further arrests took place in Nouakchott after another demonstration demanding the release of those arrested on 23 January and again protesting at the price increase. Although official sources said that the 10 people had been released, it is believed that at least some of these and others arrested in similar circumstances in the following days remain held without charge or trial in incommunicado detention.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters in French or your own language:**

- expressing concern at the continuing detention outside any legal framework of opposition party leaders Ahmed Ould Daddah and Hamdi Ould Mouknass and others arrested on or around 23 January 1995;
- explaining that you believe that they may be prisoners of conscience who have been arrested solely on account of their membership of an opposition party and have not been involved in acts of violence;
- expressing concern for the well-being of prisoners held in incommunicado detention, and seeking assurances that they are being treated humanely in accordance with international standards;
- urging that all those arrested in connection with the demonstrations be given immediate access to their families, and that they should be allowed to see doctors and lawyers as appropriate;

- urging that if any are to be charged with criminal offences, they be formally charged and promptly brought to trial, and that all others be immediately and unconditionally released.

**APPEALS TO:**

1. Son Excellence

Monsieur Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya

Président de la République

La Présidence - BP 184, Nouakchott - Mauritania

**Telegrams: President Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, Nouakchott, Mauritania**

**Telexes: 5580 PRIM MTN**

**Faxes: + 222 2 52636**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Président/Dear Mr President**

2. Monsieur Sid Ahmed Ould Boubacar

Premier ministre et Chef du gouvernement

La Primature, Nouakchott - Mauritania

**Telegrams: Prime Minister Ould Boubacar, Nouakchott, Mauritania**

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

3. Monsieur Sow Abou Demba

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice, Nouakchott - Mauritania

**Telegrams: Justice Minister, Nouakchott, Mauritania**

**Faxes: + 222 2 52860**

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

**COPIES TO:**

1. Monsieur Mohamed Lemine Salem Ould Dah

Ministre de l'Intérieur, des Postes et des Télécommunications

Ministère de l'Intérieur, des Postes et des Télécommunications

BP 195, Nouakchott - Mauritania

2. Al Bayane (Newspaper)

BP 1673, Nouakchott - Mauritania

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 12 March 1995.