

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 292/92 Legal concern / Fear of torture

17 September 1992

MAURITANIA: Sarr Alassane N'Dama, aged 34
Niass Yaya, aged 30
M'Bodj Hamidou
Diop Ismaïla Demba, aged 34
Dia Hamath Atoumane

The five people named above, all black Mauritians from the Hal-Pulaar ethnic group, are among a group of people who were arrested on 23 August 1992 by members of the security forces in the village of Sory-Malé (Department of M'Bagne), located in southern Mauritania on the Senegal River Valley.

The village was surrounded by members of the security forces on 23 August 1992 after an Arab trader was shot dead there on 22 August 1992. All the male villagers, between 18 and 70 years of age, were taken to the local school to be interrogated. Eleven people were arrested; some were later released, but at least four, Sarr Alassane N'Dama, Niass Yaya, M'Bodj Hamidou and Diop Ismaïla Demba, were transferred to the nearby town of Aleg, where they were formally charged with murder and remanded in custody. They are reported to have been subjected to torture. One other person, Dia Hamath Atoumane, aged 70 and brother of the chief of the village, is reported to have died in Sory-Malé on 24 August 1992 as result of torture. He was apparently severely beaten up during interrogation.

Amnesty International is concerned about the death under torture of Dia Hamath Atoumane and also that those currently detained in Aleg have been tortured during interrogation and may be subjected to further torture and ill-treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Following intercommunal disturbances in April 1989 in both Mauritania and Senegal, the predominantly Arab government in Mauritania was responsible for a series of operations against black Mauritians from the Hal-Pulaar ethnic group. As well as expelling all Senegalese nationals living in Mauritania, more than 50,000 black Mauritians were expelled to Senegal. During these expulsions, government forces have committed extensive human rights abuses including arbitrary arrests, torture and extrajudicial executions against black Mauritians living in the Senegal River Valley. The village of Sory-Malé experienced a brutal repression in 1990 and a mass grave of victims was apparently discovered in March 1992.

In May 1992, Senegal and Mauritania renewed diplomatic ties, but many of the black Mauritians expelled from Mauritania have not returned home for fear of further persecution. Although the situation is now much calmer in the Senegal

River Valley, there have been reports of isolated human rights abuses such as extrajudicial executions and arbitrary arrests.

During 1992, there have been multi-party elections, largely boycotted by the opposition parties, which returned Colonel Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya to the post of President. His new government has promised to work towards respect for human rights and democracy.

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

- expressing concern at reports of the death of Dia Hamath Atoumane in Sory-Malé as a result of torture, and urging the authorities to open an independent and impartial inquiry into the circumstances of his death and calling for those found responsible for torturing or killing prisoners to be brought to justice;

- expressing concern at reports that others arrested in Sory-Malé were subjected to torture, including Sarr Alassane N'Dama, Niass Yaya, M'Bodj Hamidou, Diop Ismaïla Demba, and urging the authorities to hold an independent and impartial inquiry into these reports;

- seeking assurances that these four are not detained on basis of statements or other evidence obtained under torture and that they will not be subjected to further torture or any cruel, inhuman or any other forms of degrading treatment;

- urging the authorities to allow these four immediate access to representatives of the Procuracy, legal counsel, to relatives and also to receive adequate medical treatment if needed.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

Son Excellence
Monsieur le Colonel
Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya
Président de la République
La Présidence - BP 184
Nouakchott, Mauritanie

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

Telegrams: President Ould Taya, Nouakchott, Mauritanie

Telexes: 5580 PRIM MTN

Faxes: + 222 2 52636

2) Prime Minister:

Monsieur Sidi Ahmed Ould Boubacar
Premier ministre et chef du gouvernement
La Primature
Nouakchott, Mauritanie

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

Telegrams: Prime Minister Ould Boubacar, Nouakchott, Mauritanie

3) Minister of Justice:

Monsieur Sow Abou Demba
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
Nouakchott, Mauritanie

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

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Nouakchott, Mauritanie

Telexes: 5585 MINAF MTN (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Faxes: + 222 2 52860

4) Minister of Health:

Ministre de la Santé et
des Affaires Sociales
Ministère de la Santé et des Affaires Sociales
BP 177, Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Telegrams: Ministre Santé, Nouakchott, Mauritanie

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

PLEAS SEND COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Al Bayane (Newspaper)
BP 1673
Nouakchott
Mauritania

and 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 29 October 1992.