

PUBLIC

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Incommunicado detention / fear for safety

12 April 2001

MAURITANIA

Mohamed Lemine Shbih Ould Cheikh Melainine, president of
the *Front populaire mauritanien* (FPM)

Mohamed Lemine Shbih Ould Cheikh Melainine, the leader of an opposition party, has been detained and held incommunicado for four days. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety.

Mohamed Lemine Shbih Ould Cheikh Melainine is being held incommunicado in police custody in the capital, Nouakchott. He was arrested by the security police at his home on 8 April. The police had no warrant and gave no reason for his arrest. At least two other people, including a young family friend known as "Kiri", who were visiting Mohammed Lemine Shbih Ould Cheikh Melainine at the time of his arrest, were also detained. Both were unconditionally released on 11 April. Amnesty International is investigating reports of a number of other related arrests.

Mohamed Lemine Shbih Ould Cheikh Melainine's arrest is thought to arise from his activities as the leader of an opposition party, the *Front populaire mauritanien* (FPM), Popular Mauritanien Front. He has not yet been officially charged, but on 11 April a government spokesperson accused him of planning to commit acts of sabotage and terrorism with the support of Libya. The basis for the accusation is not known. His house has been searched twice by the police, who took away various documents.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Opposition parties, human rights organizations and the media operate with great difficulty in Mauritania, where political repression is widespread and political opponents are frequently detained because of their political activities.

Political tension increased in late 2000 as the renewed fighting in Israel and the Occupied Territories led to calls for the government to break off the diplomatic relations with Israel which had been established in 1999 despite protest from the opposition. A number of opposition politicians were detained briefly in late 2000 following a series of demonstrations. Two political parties were banned by the government after being accused of subversive activities and actions contrary to the interests of the nation. Local and legislative elections are scheduled for October 2001.

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

- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of Mohamed Lemine Shbih Ould Cheikh Melainine, and to ensure that he is treated in accordance with international standards;
- urging that he be allowed immediate access to his family, lawyers and medical care as appropriate;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release, unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence, for which there is substantiating evidence.

APPEALS TO:

Please note that you may experience problems in sending faxes.

President of the Republic

Son Excellence

Monsieur le Président Maaouiya Ould Sid 'Ahmed Taya

Président de la République

La Présidence

BP 184 Nouakchott

Mauritania

Faxes: + 222 2 52636 (attention of Président de la République)

Salutation: Son Excellence / Your Excellency

Minister of the Interior

Monsieur Dah Ould Abdel Jelil

Ministre de l'Intérieur, des Postes et des Télécommunications

Ministère de l'Intérieur, des Postes et des Télécommunications

BP 195 Nouakchott

Mauritania

Faxes: + 222 2 53661

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Lemrabott Sidi Mahmoud Ould Cheikh Ahmed

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

BP 350 Nouakchott

Mauritania

Faxes: + 222 2 57002

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Public Prosecutor

Mohamed Yeslem Ould Jidimou

Procureur de la République

Palais de Justice

Nouakchott, Mauritania

Telegrams: Procureur République, Nouakchott, Mauritania

Salutation: Monsieur le Procureur de la République / Dear Mr Ould Jidimou

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La Tribune

BP 6227 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 24 May 2001.