

July 14, 2015

## Biram Dah Abeid Still Imprisoned: Latest Developments



The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) has gathered recent news and first-hand information about the current developments in Mauritania. On 11 November 2014, the Mauritanian Government arrested eight anti-slavery activists during a peaceful protest march, including the high-profile campaigner Biram Dah Abeid. Since then, the Government has stepped up its clampdown of anti-slavery activists, particularly members linked to the IRA-Mauritania (Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement). Moreover, according to [Amnesty International](#), four IRA-Mauritania members arrested in early November are still imprisoned and awaiting trial.

The current developments are particularly worrying due to the wide presence of modern-day slavery in Mauritania. According to the recently-published [2014 Global Slavery Index](#), there are over 155,000 people trapped in modern slavery in the country, accounting for over 4 percent of the entire population. This makes Mauritania the country with the highest prevalence of slavery in the world. Despite outlawing slavery three times and making it a criminal offence in 2007, the Mauritanian Government has failed to genuinely tackle the problem.

[Biram Dah Abeid](#), the President of IRA-Mauritania, was previously arrested in 2010 and 2012. He received the death sentence in 2012 for burning the 'Abrégé de Khilil' (a non-

sacred interpretation of Islam). Yet, his execution is still pending. Despite such harassment, he has been widely recognized by the international community for his brave campaigning. In 2013, he was awarded both the [UN Human Rights Prize](#) and the [Front Line Defenders Award](#).

Following the alarming circumstances and reports of the torture of some imprisoned anti-slavery campaigners, UNPO wishes to draw attention to the ongoing situation in Mauritania. It calls for the immediate and unconditional release of imprisoned anti-slavery activists and for the Mauritanian authorities to stop its current clampdown on the anti-slavery movement (please click [here](#) for our Press Release).

### **Timeline of Events:**

#### **26 June 2015**

On 26 June 2015, Mauritanian media announced [the provisional release of antislavery activist and President of the NGO Kawtal, Djiby Sow](#), for health reasons. According to his family, his medical condition is worrying. Mr Sow suffers from the consequences of the hunger strike he participated in with his fellow activists Mr Biram Dah Abeid and Mr Brahim Jiddou. He suffers from kidney complications and skin problems.

The NGO Kawtal Ngam Yellitaare expressed its gratitude toward Ms Fatimata Mbaye, lawyer and President of the Mauritanian Human Rights Association; international and national organisations; and diplomatic institutions, for the efforts they have put into pressuring the authorities to release Mr Djiby Sow. The United States Embassy in Nouakchott published [a press release](#) welcoming the release.

Meanwhile, [the medical condition of Mr Abeid is still deteriorating](#). According to the International Human Rights Federation, he suffers from stomach and dental pain as well as hypertension. He does not have access to medical attention in prison and the strict diet that his condition requires is not respected by the prison authorities.

The **appeal trial** of Mr Abeid, Mr Ramdhane, Mr Sow and Mr Jiddou is **still pending**.

#### **22 June 2015**

It has now been **more than seven months** since Biram Dah Abeid was incarcerated on 11 November 2014.

IRA members **Dr Saad Ould Louleyd** and **Ms Marieme Cheikh** have recently been released and are now [both leading a delegation](#) to raise IRA's voice abroad.

The delegation led by Dr Louleyd, travelled to the United States and was welcomed by members of the Mauritanian community in Washington, DC on 10 June. Later, they travelled to Philadelphia and met with the mayor of the city. The delegation will continue travelling to several big American cities where they are planning to meet NGOs and members of the civil society.

The second delegation, led by Ms Cheikh, but also by leading member of Kawtaal Mr Malik Lom, is travelling around Europe and arrived in Germany on 16 June. The group will also visit other European countries such as Italy and France.

[Mauritanian President Mr Aziz came across IRA protesters](#) during his visit to the region of Brakna. The activists were holding photos of Biram Dah Abeid, Brahim Jiddou and Djibi Sow, and signs asking for Biram to be freed and Aziz to resign. In response to this protest, the President decided to preventively arrest all IRA activists living around Rosso before his visit to the city. It was reported that these arrests were accompanied by torture, which has become a common practice under the ruling of President Aziz. These arrests have not discouraged the IRA activists, who continue to demonstrate two to three times a week in both Nouakchott and Aleg.

### **11 May 2015**

According to the latest news received by IRA activists, Mr Abeid and Mr Jiddou's appeal trial is scheduled to take place on 22 May 2015 in Aleg. Mr Abeid and Mr Jiddou's lawyers have nevertheless asked for a release on bail until the trial, but have not yet received any official response from the authorities.

IRA members, Mr Ahmed Amou Ould Moustapha, a radiologist, and Mr Mohamed Baba, a university professor, both living and working in France, [visited imprisoned IRA activists in Aleg](#) on 15 April 2015. They found anti-slavery Biram Dah Abeid and Brahim Jiddou determined and in relatively good health.

Mr Abeid reported feeling thankful for the actions led by IRA in the south of France, Paris, Brussels, Rome, Geneva, Berlin, Washington, and many other cities.

IRA-France has been organizing a mock tribunal with other French NGOs, such as Amnesty International France or Agir Ensemble pour les Droits de l'Homme. His wife, Ms Leyla Mint Ahmed, has been organizing the resistance movement in Aleg.

Mr Jiddou's family has been facing a hard financial situation, since his high school teacher salary has been suspended, while his family lacks other means of subsistence.

Mr Moustapha and Mr Baba also visited anti-slavery Mr Djiby Sow on 24 April in Nouakchott, Mauritania, where he was transferred after participating in a hunger strike with Mr Abeid and Mr Jiddou in January 2015. He suffers from kidney complications and skin problems.

### **24 March 2015**

On 19 March 2015, [Nouakchott Criminal Court delivered its verdict on the trial of IRA activists Mr Brahim Jiddou, Mr Yacoub Inalla and Mr Sabar Ould Houssein](#), condemning them to six, five and seven months in prison, respectively. IRA-Mauritania has underlined that this verdict highlights the great influence of Ulamas on the Mauritanian

justice system, and is believed to be a result of the fact that the Government feels threatened by the widespread support the abolitionist movement is enjoying at the international level. Mr Jiddou, Mr Inalla and Mr Sabar Ould Hossein were arrested on 24 October 2014 after having been excommunicated by Imam Ahmedou Ould Lemrabbott Ould Habibou Rahmane.

From 16 to 20 March, a UNPO delegation travelled to Mauritania with the primary objectives to visit Mr Biram Dah Abeid, who is a member of the UNPO Presidency, in prison and to assess efforts at the national level to combat slavery and its aftermaths. In addition to meeting with various governmental agencies, the two delegates also had the opportunity to talk to representatives of IRA-Mauritania, SOS Esclaves, Collectif des Victimes de la Répression (COVIRE), Collectif des Rescapés et Militaires (COREMI), Touche pas à ma nationalité, and several other civil society actors.

### **12 March 2015**

Today, [the criminal court of Nouakchott acquitted Dr Saad Ould Louleid, Mr Yacoub Ould Moussa and Ms Mariem Mint Cheikh Dieng](#). They had been charged a few months ago with organizing, calling for and participating in an unauthorized protest and being members of an unrecognized organization.

IRA members have expressed their joy after this verdict, by gathering in front of the civil and women's prison of Nouakchott, where they will wait for their fellow activists to be released.

### **11 March 2015**

The **trial of IRA members Brahim Jiddou, Yacoub Inalla and Sabar Houssein**, arrested on 24 October 2014 after having been excommunicated by Imam Ahmedou Ould Lemrabbott Ould Habibou Rahmane, [began on 5 March 2015](#).

During the trial, **the prosecution demanded a two-year prison sentence and a fine of 60,000UM for the activists**. The lawyers of IRA members have underlined the very political tone of the accusations and the trial. The verdict is expected to be delivered on 19 March 2015.

On 9 March 2015, [several dozens of IRA supporters met in front of the Courthouse](#) in Aleg to demand the release of Biram Dah Abeid, Brahim Ould Bilal and Djiby Sow. The police and guard units on patrol violently dispersed the peaceful gathering. Several demonstrators were injured, including activist Fatimata Fall Mint Achour, who was taken to the regional hospital by fellow campaigners.

It has been reported that the group of activists, detained since 12 November 2014, [has suffered from extortion and robbery at the Nouakchott Prison](#).

This week, for unknown reasons, prison guards have searched the cell of IRA activist Dr Saad Ould Louleid. Immediately following the inspection, the activist noticed the disappearance of his money, watch and other valuables. The IRA activists have also

been repeatedly subjected to verbal and physical harassment by other prisoners. The assaulted activists filed complaints to the penitentiary authorities, without success.

### **26 February 2015**

The negotiations between Mr Biram Dah Abeid, Mr Brahim Ramdhan Bilal, Mr Sow Djiby and the administration of the prison of Aleg where they are detained, [were successful, also thanks to the assistance of a delegation of the National Bar Association \(ONA\)](#). All three prisoners obtained the right to receive visits from their friends and families three days a week. Additionally, they can now have access to sunny parts of the prison, practice sports, listen to the radio and watch the television. They have also been told that their cases have been transferred to the Nouakchott Court of Appeal. Following these developments, the three anti-slavery activists sent a letter to the Prosecutor to announce the end of their hunger strike.

### **25 February 2015**

The announcement of the [trial verdict of Mariem Mint Cheikh Dieng, Dr Saad Louleyd and Yacoub Ould Moussa](#) is postponed to 12 March 2015.

In the meantime, a [delegation of the Bar Association visit](#) the three prisoners of conscience, Mr Biram Dah Abeid, Mr Brahim Bilal Ramdhan and Mr Djibi Sow, in prison. The association states that the prisoners are in 'the right frame of mind' and calls upon the international community to lead a strong and urgent action leading to the release of the anti-slavery activists. It is further reported that Mr Djibi Sow is no longer participating in the hunger strike on the advice of his doctors.

### **23 February 2015**

After the demands in their letter sent on 19 February are not met, Biram Dah Abeid, Brahim Bilal Ramdhan and Jibril Mamadou Sow being an indefinite hunger strike in protest. For more information, [read our press release and copies of the ultimatum letter.](#)

### **19 February 2015**

The [Belgian branch of IRA-Mauritania hold a sit-in demonstration](#) in front of the European Parliament on this day in order to denounce the arbitrary arrests over the last few months and the daily human rights violations taking place in Mauritania.

UNPO receives a copy of [an ultimatum letter sent by Biram Dah Abeid, Brahim Bilal Ramdhan and Jibril Mamadou Sow to the Mauritanian authorities](#). In the letter they make three demands: 1) that they are transferred to the prison within the correct jurisdiction in Nouakchott; 2) that their families and loved ones, from whom the prisoners have been denied from seeing, are allowed visitation rights; 3) that their fellow prisoners who are also being arbitrarily detained are given their right to a fair trial.

The letter also stipulates that if these demands are not met then the three prisoners will begin passive protestation in the prison, and any harm that comes to them thereof will be the responsibility of the Mauritanian authorities.

### **13 February 2015**

The [trial of Mariem Mint Cheikh Dieng, Dr Saad Louleyd and Yacoub Ould Moussa](#) is postponed to Thursday, 19 February 2015, after the judge cut short the questioning of Ms Cheikh Dieng by a defense lawyer. The lawyers of the accused then walk out of the courtroom in protest. IRA-Mauritania activists and supporters had gathered outside the courthouse to demand the acquittal of the three human rights activists as well as the release of all other detained and imprisoned anti-slavery campaigners, including Biram Dah Abeid.

### **12 February 2015**

Several hundred members and [supporters of IRA-Mauritania demonstrate](#) gather in front of the courthouse in Nouakchott demanding the release of the detained and imprisoned anti-slavery activists. The trial of Dr Saad Louleyd and other IRA-Mauritania members has been postponed several times over the last week but finally starts today.

### **10 February 2015**

Mr Biram Dah Abeid's wife, Mrs Leila Ahmed Khлива, states that [she has been denied access](#) to the prison and can therefore not visit her husband.

### **5 February 2015**

The [trail against Dr Saad Louleyd](#), the spokesperson of IRA-Mauritania who had been arrested on 11 November 2014, Mariem Mint Cheikh Dieng and Yacoub Ould Moussa starts in the regional court in Nouakchott. They have been charged with organizing, calling for and participating in an unauthorized protest and being members of an unrecognized organization. However, the trial is postponed to Thursday, 12 February 2015. The judge gives no reason for this decision. However, activists believe that today's court date was rushed and only organized in order to end the hunger strike, which started on 3 February 2015. It should also be noted that [Dr Saad Louleyd](#) suffers from diabetes and needs daily medical monitoring, which he has been refused for at least part of his detention.

In anticipation of the start of the trial, members and supporters of IRA-Mauritania hold [a sit-in protest](#) outside the courthouse. The protesters demanded the acquittal of the three activists, greater justice and the eradication of slavery in the country. The police, armed with tear gas and batons, monitor the situation closely.

### **3 February 2015**

Seven anti-slavery activists and IRA-Mauritania members currently awaiting trial [start a hunger strike](#) to protest against the continued delay of their trials. The seven activists

are Dr Saad Louleyd (IRA-Mauritania's spokesperson who was arrested on 11 November 2014), Mariem Mint Cheikh Dieng (the private secretary of Biram Dah Abeid arrested on 12 November 2014), Yacoub Ould Moussa, Yacou Inalla, Saber Houssein, Brahim Ould Jiddou and Baba Traoré. The latter four activists have been in detention since the end of October 2014.

The strikers also demand that Mr Sabar Houssein receives adequate medical assistance. Mr Sabar was beaten by prison guards in Dar Naim before being transferred to a prison in Nouakchott and has yet to receive medical assistance despite his condition deteriorating.

### **26 January 2015**

[The motion tabled by Jeremy Corbyn](#) MP in the British Parliament has, so far, been signed by 16 MPs. According to the [UK Parliament's website](#), the majority of such early day motions receive only one or two signatures, while around 70 or 80 a year receive over one hundred.

### **22 January 2015**

During a [press conference in Nouakchott](#), the spokesperson of the Mauritanian Government and Minister of Relations, Mr Izid Bih Ould Mohamed Mahmoud, reportedly announces that the Mauritanian Government is not against holding early Presidential elections. Allegedly, he further points out that following the demand of the opposition for early elections, the Government had proposed talks regarding this matter, to which the opposition has not yet responded. UNPO will continue to monitor developments regarding potential early Presidential elections in Mauritania.

### **20 January 2015**

The delegation of the European Union in Mauritania issues [a statement](#) raising its concern regarding the heavy sentence imposed on the abolitionist campaigners on 15 January 2015. The delegation reiterates the commitment of the EU to respect all human rights, including the rights of association and peaceful protest, and promises to monitor further developments regarding this case with particular attention. It also encourages the Mauritanian authorities to adequately tackle slavery and strengthen national unity through peaceful dialogues.

### **19 January 2015**

Local sources inform UNPO that a sit-in protest, organized by IRA-Mauritania and the anti-slavery organization Kawtal following the announcement of the verdict, was violently suppressed by the police using tear gas. Several activists were beaten, forcibly abducted and dropped off dozens of kilometers away from the location of the protest. Among the people injured was Mr Boubacar Messaoud, President of the anti-slavery organization SOS Esclaves, who has been hospitalized. Some protesters are still missing after being taken away by authorities. Mr Elhaj Ould Elid, the head of IRA-

Mauritania in Riyadh, was able to send a message asking for help, however, he was unable to communicate his location.

On the same day, the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) of the European Parliament, Ms Elena Valenciano, [releases a press statement](#) condemning the imprisonment of the three activists, including Biram Dah Abeid. Ms Valenciano calls for the unconditional and immediate release of the imprisoned anti-slavery campaigners, for the Mauritanian authorities to repeal the court verdict and stop the use of force against abolitionist protesters.

### **16 January 2015**

The U.S. Department of State releases a [press statement](#) expressing its concern over the two year prison sentence of Mr Abeid, Mr Bilal Ramdhane and Mr Sow. The statement further called for a fair, transparent and impartial review of the verdict and committed itself to continuing to support the struggle against slavery in the country.

The prominent Congressman and member of the Democratic Party, Mr Eliot L. Engel, makes a [personal statement](#) regarding the recent court verdict stating that he is ‘deeply disappointed to hear of the sentencing’. In addition, he calls upon the Mauritanian authorities to release the imprisoned activists and to allow IRA-Mauritania to register legally.

### **15 January 2015**

The court announces its verdict in the case against the nine anti-slavery activists arrested on 11 November 2014, including Mr Biram Dah Abeid. While two thirds of the activists are acquitted, Mr Biram Dah Abeid, Brahim Bilal Ramdhane (Vice-President of IRA-Mauritania) and Djibi Sow (President of the anti-slavery organization Kawtal) are sentenced to two years in prison.

Following the announcement, supporters of IRA-Mauritania remain outside the Tribunal of Rosso calling for the release of the three campaigners under strict surveillance from the security forces before the police use tear gas to disperse the protesters. One activist expresses his shock stating that there was no evidence justifying such a conviction. Moreover, the lawyers of the three campaigners vow to appeal the verdict.

In the British Parliament, [Jeremy Corbyn MP tables an early day motion](#) condemning the sentence of the three anti-slavery activists in Mauritania. The motion expresses concern about the detention and treatment of the activists, the trial conditions and the possible ramifications of this sentence on Mauritania’s civil society, as well as the global struggle against modern slavery. It calls upon the UK Government to raise these concerns with the Mauritanian authorities and the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, and to cooperate with its partners in the EU regarding this issue.

### **31 December 2014**

The [criminal court in Rosso rules](#) to put the file of the imprisoned activists under advisement and will announce its verdict on 15 January 2015. The application for bail by the defense lawyers is rejected.

#### **29 December 2014**

As the trial against Mr Abeid and the other activists arrested on 11 November 2014 continues, the [prosecution asks](#) for a prison sentence of 5 years, a fine of 540,000 UM (the equivalent to about 1800 US dollars) and for the confiscation of all property belonging to IRA-Mauritania.

#### **25 December 2014**

Meanwhile, Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir is [sentenced to death](#) in Mauritania for allegedly insulting the Prophet Mohammad. Mr Mkhaitir was arrested on 2 January 2014 after he had published an article about the caste system and slavery in Mauritania on his blog. Although the article [criticizes](#) some of the actions of the prophet, the 28-year-old [denies](#) insulting the prophet and claims that the article has been misinterpreted.

During the hearing on 23 December 2014, Mr Mkhaitir was [left without a lawyer](#) to defend him, as his original lawyer decided to resign after he and his family received death threats. The state-appointed attorneys later also distanced themselves from the case due to receiving similar threats.

#### **24 December 2014**

The [criminal court in Rosso \(South\) starts the proceedings](#) against Biram Dah Abeid, six other members of IRA-Mauritania and Djiby Sow, President of the anti-slavery organization Kawtal. The accused are charged with inciting violence, disturbing public order, offending members of the authorities and being members of an unregistered organization.

The proceedings start after a 5-hour delay, while a crowd has gathered outside the courthouse peacefully protesting for the release of the activists. When being allowed to address the allegations against him, Mr Abeid accuses the Mauritanian regime of targeting the leaders of the Haratin community, including himself. He points out that the caravan was authorized by the Ministry of Interior and that its participants were well organized and peaceful. Moreover, he states that IRA-Mauritania had filed an application to become a registered organization a long time ago but, as of yet, had not received a rejection from the authorities. After around 3 hours, the judge suspends the trial till the next day, 25 December 2014.

On the same day, the Embassy of the United States of America in Mauritania publishes a [press statement](#) calling for a transparent, fair and objective trial of the imprisoned activists. It further states that it is closely monitoring the proceedings and the situation of the IRA-Mauritania campaigners.

#### **23 December 2014**

The [National Assembly of Mauritania unanimously adopts a resolution](#) calling for the European Parliament to stop interfering in the internal affairs of the country. The resolution takes note of the European Parliament urgent resolution from 18 December 2014 regarding the recent developments in Mauritania and highlights the alleged efforts and success of the Mauritanian Government to adequately tackle slavery. It further states that the National Assembly regrets and rejects the stipulations contained in the European Parliament resolution. It calls upon the Mauritanian Government and all national stakeholders, including human rights organizations and economic actors, within Mauritania to defend the country's sovereignty.

#### **18 December 2014**

The European Parliament passes [an urgent resolution on Mauritania](#), in particular on the case of Biram Dah Abeid, following weeks of lobbying work by UNPO. The vote is approved almost unanimously by the 751 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) following a debate in the Strasbourg hemicycle, during which MEPs from all political groups denounced the arrest of Biram Dah Abeid, and calls for his immediate release. The resolution also reiterates the importance of Mr Abeid's IRA-Mauritania movement, and underlines the necessity of dismantling slavery in Mauritania.

#### **17 December 2014**

UNPO learns that the imprisoned activists and their lawyers are notified of a hearing that is supposed to take place on the same day in front of the judge. On the advice of their lawyers, Mr Abeid and the other detainees refuse to appear before the court. The lack of notice for the hearing infringes Mauritanian trial procedures and, according to the lawyers, constitutes an infringement of due process. As stipulated in Mauritanian law, defendants have the right to legal counsel, the right to present a defense and the right to advance notification of judicial proceedings.

The court, as a response to the refusal of the defendants to appear before the judge, reschedules the hearing for Wednesday, 24 December 2014.

On the same day, the [British Foreign and Commonwealth Office replies to the parliamentary question](#) submitted by Angus Robertson MP on 11 December 2014. The office assures that they know about the recent arrests and are following the situation closely. The statement further explains that the British authorities have met with a range of stakeholders involved with the issue, including members of the IRA-Mauritania and have discussed the matter with their partner in the EU on 3 December 2014. The office promises to 'continue to engage with Mauritania on human rights issues'.

#### **15 December 2014**

UNPO learns that a Mauritanian government delegation will be travelling to Strasbourg this week in order to discourage MEPs from passing a strong Urgent Resolution. This resolution aims to pressure the Mauritanian authorities to release Biram Dah Abeid and his fellow activists and thoroughly address persistent slavery in the country.

In addition, Biram Dah Abeid's advisor Hamady Ould Lehbouss [reports](#) that the Mauritanian authorities have confiscated Mr Abeid's phone, although a judge had authorised Mr Abeid to receive visitors and have access to a mobile phone while in prison. Mr Lehbouss suspects that the Mauritanian authorities have denied Mr Abeid access to his phone to prevent him from giving regular updates to the campaigners fighting for his release, as they fear such contact might counter their lobbying work in Europe.

## **12 December 2014**

The [OHCHR issues a report](#) made by its delegation in Mauritania. The delegation was sent to investigate allegations of torture and poor conditions of detention for those who were arrested on 11 November and in the subsequent weeks, and to investigate allegations of disproportionate force used against the activists during the unauthorized demonstration.

The delegation met with authorities involved in the arrest and detention, as well as some of the activists themselves. They reported that "*in general, the conditions of detention in the places that were visited do not comply with the minimum international standards, most particularly the detention units and their ventilation.*"

However, they concluded that there was no evidence suggesting that acts amounting to torture had occurred. They also concluded that there was not enough evidence to determine whether there had been a disproportionate amount of force used in the arrest of the activists and if ill treatment had occurred in the first days of their detention. Therefore, "*the Office remains concerned by the allegations that were made on this issue.*"

The OHCHR urges the Mauritanian government to launch a thorough and independent investigation, free an individual who is detained only for having *peacefully* protested, that all registers of detainees are maintained properly to help keep detention conditions transparent, and to ensure that all detainees have constant access to medical care.

On the same day, two Members of the House of Representatives of the Netherlands, Professor Eric Smaling and Mr Harry van Bommel (both members of the Socialist Party), publish a [parliamentary question](#) asking the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs if he knows how the imprisoned activists in Mauritania are being treated. Moreover, they ask if he agrees with Amnesty International's demands that the Mauritanian Government must end its clampdown on anti-slavery activists and release the detained campaigners unconditionally, and if he is willing to get in touch with Mauritanian authorities to express his concern over the situation.

## **11 December 2014**

Angus Robertson, a Member of the Parliament of the United Kingdom belonging to the Scottish National Party (SNP), addresses a [written parliamentary question](#) at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office asking what representation the UK Government has

made to the Mauritanian Government on the continued detention of Mr Biram Dah Abeid and the other imprisoned anti-slavery activists in Mauritania.

#### **8 December 2014**

[Biram Dah Abeid publishes a letter from prison](#) with the help of his lawyers. In the letter, the anti-slavery activist warns the crackdown on civil society by the Mauritanian Government could lead to nation-wide tensions and conflicts that might be irreversible. He further notes that his colleagues and he demand their 'right to appear before the justice of men'. He promises that: 'We will leave prison when and only when this has been realized, unless we are expelled, in which case we will return and re-assume our position as oppressed people waging a struggle'.

#### **4 December 2014**

Charles Tannock and Mark Demesmaeker, Members of the European Parliament, submit [an urgent parliamentary question](#) asking for a written answer from the European Commission regarding the recent arrests in Mauritania. The questions asked if the Vice-President of the Commission is aware of these recent developments, if she will call upon the Mauritanian authorities to release the imprisoned campaigners and increase the Commission's efforts to encourage the Mauritanian authorities to adequately tackle slavery.

#### **27 November 2014**

Yacoub Moussa, a member of IRA-Mauritania, is arrested 16 days after the original wave of arrests occurred. This signals a resolve on the part of the Mauritanian government to continue its suppression of civil society and political opposition.

#### **20 November 2014**

Biram is taken before an Investigative Judge, who confirms the following charges being held against him: Inciting violence, disturbing public order, offending a member of the authorities (outrage à l'autorité) and being a member of an unregistered organization.

The Investigative Judge denies bail to Biram but provides no explanation or reasons for the denial. Biram, therefore, remains in detention.

#### **19 November 2014**

The President and a large delegation of the National Bar Association of Mauritania visit Biram and the other imprisoned campaigners in prison. The delegation tells the detainees that they consider them to be prisoners of conscience and that the National Bar Association will defend them. The activists also receive a visit by members of the anti-slavery organization SOS Esclaves (SOS Slaves) led by the President of the organization, Mr. Boubacar Messaoud.

Reports indicate the prisoners face horrible conditions due to the small sizes of their cells and the sweltering humid heat. They hardly get to sleep. More worryingly,

however, is the alleged treatment of Dr. Saad Louleyd, the spokesperson of IRA-Mauritania. Currently imprisoned in Nouakchott, he has been apparently tortured. He was denied access to his medication, which he needs due to his diabetes, was deprived of sleep for several days and was not allowed to wash himself for six days. The police and public prosecutor also tried to get him to sign minutes of his interrogation, which did not conform to the actual answers he had given. He refused to do so. It is unknown at this point whether his situation has improved.

The two activists arrested on 12 November 2014 are referred to the prosecution and put on probation. They are ordered to pay a fine of 20,000 Mauritanian Ouguiya each (roughly 55 Euros). According to [Minimum-Wage](#), this is just below the Mauritanian minimum monthly wage for adults.

#### **14 November 2014**

On 13 and 14 November 2014, Biram Dah Abeid is able to give interviews to several news agencies, including [Voice of America](#) and [Deutsche Welle](#). He informs Voice of America that he is accused of 'racism' and that the authorities are threatening to prosecute him for inciting hatred, which can carry a prison sentence of 15 years.

The activists arrested on 11 November, 2014, are [charged with](#) various crimes, including 'working in an unauthorised organisation', 'violating public order', 'inciting violence' and 'offending the authorities'. While, according to [the BBC](#), the Mauritanian authorities accuse the IRA-Mauritania of distributing racist propaganda, sowing racism and hatred and being an organization of extremists.

#### **13 November 2014**

A non-violent protest occurs in Rosso and Nouakchott calling for the release of recently arrested activists. The Mauritanian authorities use this opportunity to arrest Mariem Cheikh, a high level officer of IRA-Mauritania.

#### **12 November 2014**

[Two other IRA-Mauritania members](#), Chedad Mohamed and Mohamed Vadoua, are arrested in Nouakchott. There are reports of some of the other arrested activists allegedly being tortured.

[Further protests](#) take place in Nouakchott calling for the release of the imprisoned campaigners.

#### **11 November 2014**

On the morning of 11 November 2014, Biram Dah Abeid and at least eight other anti-slavery activists are [arrested](#) following a peaceful march against slavery. Among the arrested are also the Vice-President of IRA-Mauritania, Mr. Brahim Bilal Ramdhane, and the President of the anti-slavery NGO Kawtal, Mr. Djiby Sow.

[The activists](#) are campaigning with the Caravan of Liberty in the town of Chgara when the Mauritanian gendarmerie, on the orders of the local Wali, use tear gas and stun grenades to stop them. The activists are assaulted by the police before being arrested and taken to prison in the regional capital Rosso. According to [some reports](#), Biram is originally not involved in the caravan and only arrived after the police tried to halt the march.

The [headquarters of IRA-Mauritania](#) in Nouakchott is closed by the police, who accuse the NGO of spreading hatred. The spokesperson for the organization, Dr. Saad Ould Louleyd, is also arrested.

At night a [demonstration](#) calling for the immediate release of the imprisoned activists in Nouakchott is dispersed using tear gas.

The [known names](#) of the arrested activists are: Biram Dah Abeid, Brahim Bilal Ramdhane, Khattri Rahel, Cheikh Vall, Dah Boushab, Abidine Matalla, Samba Diagana, Hassane Mahmoud, and Djiby Sow.

### **7 November 2014**

IRA-Mauritania re-launches the Caravan of Liberty campaign with the objective of denouncing the exploitation of the Haratin and other marginalized sections of society from landowners. The campaign further aims to force the State to initiate genuine land reforms granting ownership to those who currently are working and have always worked on these lands.

The initiative originally started in January 2013 to raise awareness among the national and international communities about slavery in Mauritania and to pressure the Mauritania Government to properly implement its anti-slavery legislation. The Caravan of Liberty consists of a convoy of activists, who travel from town to town to hold marches and public gatherings.

### **3 November 2014**

[Three other IRA-Mauritania members](#) (Brahim Jiddou, Baba Traoré and Yacoub Inalla) are arrested after they publicly defend the IRA at a mosque in Nouakchott.

The same day, all four recently arrested IRA-activists are charged with disruption of prayer, incitement to hatred and rebellion against authority. Mr. Sabbar Hussein is jailed, while the others are released but placed under judicial control. However, later reports speak of all four activists remaining in prison.

They join two IRA-Mauritania members (Hanana Mboyrick and Boubacar Yatma) already imprisoned earlier in the year, who still have not been released.

### **1 November 2014**

[Mr. Sabbar Hussein](#) is arrested following his public denouncement the day before.

**31 October 2014**

During the prayer at the biggest mosque in Nouakchott, [Mr. Sabbar Hussein](#), an IRA-Mauritania member, publicly denounces land exploitation and slavery and accuses the mufti of supporting it.

**Mid-October 2014:**

[Deutsche Welle](#) reports that the Imam of the largest mosque in Nouakchott has called for Biram Dah Abeid to be murdered for allegedly insulting Islam.

**21 June 2014:**

Biram Dah Abeid finishes second in the [Mauritanian presidential elections](#), receiving a total of 8.67 percent of the votes. However, Abeid strongly denounces the elections results citing wide-spread fraud by the ruling party of Mauritania.