

under the ICCPR, raised concern about the compatibility of the prohibition with the right to life.

- 
1. Lives adrift: Refugees and migrants in peril in the central Mediterranean (EUR 05/006/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR05/006/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR05/006/2014/en)
  2. Lives adrift: Refugees and migrants in peril in the central Mediterranean: Executive summary (EUR 05/007/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR05/007/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR05/007/2014/en)

---

## MAURITANIA

---

### Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Head of state: **General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz**

Head of government: **Yahya Ould Hademine (replaced Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf in August)**

---

**Torture and other ill-treatment were routinely used to extract confessions from detainees and as punishment in prisons. Slavery persisted, with generations of families, particularly women and girls, being held in slavery. The authorities restricted freedoms of expression and assembly, and human rights defenders faced harassment and intimidation.**

### BACKGROUND

President Aziz was re-elected for a second five-year term in June, obtaining more than 80% of the vote. The Independent National Electoral Commission received complaints contesting this result from four other candidates. President Aziz was also elected to serve as President of the AU for one year in January.

### TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Prisoners of all ages, status and gender were at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Women, children, homosexual prisoners,

political prisoners and prisoners convicted of common law offences told Amnesty International that they were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment by security forces. Although mainly used to extract “confessions” from detainees, torture and other ill-treatment were also used as punishment in prison. The use of torture was facilitated by laws which allowed detainees to be held in police custody for up to 45 days on suspicion of national security offences. This limit was regularly exceeded. No action was taken when complaints of torture were made to judges or the police.

Reported torture methods included regular beatings, including beatings with batons; beatings on the back with the hands and feet handcuffed behind the back; enforced squatting for long periods; and having an iron bar placed between the knees and being suspended from two water barrels. Detainees reported being made to sign statements under threat without being allowed to read them.

### SLAVERY

Despite the adoption of laws criminalizing slavery and the creation in December 2013 of a special tribunal to hear slavery cases, implementation in practice remained poor.

Court cases were subject to long delays. Between 2010 and the end of 2014, at least six cases of slavery were submitted to the Public Prosecutor, but no ruling had been made by the end of 2014.

A strategy to eradicate slavery was adopted by the government in March. Its 29 recommendations included amending the 2007 law against slavery to include further forms of slavery such as hereditary slavery, debt bondage and early marriage. It also recommended that the 2007 law should include provisions for reintegration programmes for people freed from slavery, and called for initiatives to raise awareness that slavery is a criminal offence.

In May, a complaint was filed against a slaveholder in the Echemin region for the

enslavement of a 15-year-old girl, MBeirika Mint M'Bareck. The slaveholder was charged with exploitation of a minor, but human rights organizations called for the charges to be changed to slavery. When MBeirika Mint M'Bareck was freed in June, the Public Prosecutor charged her with *Zina* (unlawful sexual intercourse) as she was pregnant. The charge was later dropped. At the end of the year, her mother and two sisters were still being held in slavery in the town of Azamat, near the border with Mali.

Also in May, a woman and her five children were reported to be held in slavery in Ould Ramy, near Wembou in southeastern Mauritania, by the anti-slavery organization Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement in Mauritania (IRA). The case was transferred to the police, who questioned the representatives of IRA, claiming they were an unrecognized organization. Gendarmes were sent to investigate but no progress was reported by the end of the year.

## **FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY**

The rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression were repeatedly curtailed.

In March there were demonstrations in several cities including Nouakchott, Kiffa and Aioun against an act of desecration of the Qur'an by unidentified men. Security forces in Nouakchott used tear gas, resulting in numerous injuries and the death by suffocation of one student demonstrator.

The government closed several Islamic health and education charities and sealed their offices in March. No official explanation was offered but the government accused these organizations of working outside the bounds of their missions.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

Human rights defenders and other activists faced harassment and intimidation, including death threats. Police and judicial authorities

failed to bring the perpetrators of these acts to justice.

IRA member Cheikh Ould Vall was arrested in February without a warrant. He was held for three days, released and rearrested a week later, reportedly for assisting his mother in a court case over a land dispute. He was sentenced to one year in prison in April, with six months suspended. He was due to be released in August, but remained in detention at the end of the year.

In June, Aminetou Mint El Moctar, President of the Women's Association of Heads of Household, faced a *fatwa* (religious decree) including death threats. No action was known to have been taken by the authorities to investigate these threats.<sup>1</sup> The threats came after Aminetou Mint El Moctar called for a fair trial for Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir, who had been arrested in January for publishing an allegedly blasphemous article and was detained in Nouadhibou Prison in northern Mauritania. He was charged with apostasy and faced the death penalty if convicted.

In September and November, at least 10 anti-slavery activists, including Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, President of the IRA, were arrested in Nouakchott and Rosso. At the end of the year, the activists were detained in different detention centres around the country, facing charges including public disorder.<sup>2</sup>

## **ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES**

Of the 14 men convicted of terrorism-related offences who were victims of enforced disappearance in 2011, one died in detention in May, while the other 13 were transferred to Nouakchott central prison in May and July.

Maarouf Ould Haiba, sentenced to death in 2010 for the murder of French tourists and then held incommunicado, died in detention in the unofficial detention centre Salah Eddin in May. He was transferred to a military hospital several times before his death. The circumstances of his death remained unclear and no investigation was opened. Salah

Eddin, situated in the north of the country, was closed in July. The remaining prisoners were transferred to the central prison in Nouakchott.

- 
1. Mauritania: Human rights defender threatened, life at risk: Aminetou Mint El Moctar (AFR 38/002/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR38/002/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR38/002/2014/en)
  2. Mauritania must end clampdown on anti-slavery activists (Press release)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/mauritania-must-end-clamp-down-anti-slavery-activists-2014-11-12](http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/mauritania-must-end-clamp-down-anti-slavery-activists-2014-11-12)

---

## MEXICO

---

### United Mexican States

Head of state and government: **Enrique Peña Nieto**

---

**There were new reports of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions and torture in the context of violent crime and lack of accountability in the police and military. Impunity for human rights violations and ordinary crimes remained the norm. More than 22,000 people remained abducted, forcibly disappeared or missing, according to official records, including 43 students from Guerrero state. Search efforts for missing people were generally ineffective. Reports of torture and other ill-treatment continued to be widespread, as was the failure on the part of federal and state prosecutors to adequately investigate complaints. The Supreme Court strengthened legal obligations to exclude evidence obtained under torture. Many human rights violations continued to be attributed to soldiers and navy marines, who continued to be deployed widely to carry out law enforcement operations including combating organized crime. Military jurisdiction over human rights violations committed by military personnel against**

**civilians was abolished after decades of campaigning by victims and civil society organizations. Human rights defenders and journalists were harassed, threatened or killed. Some faced politically motivated criminal charges. Irregular migrants in transit faced the threat of murder, abduction, extortion, sexual violence and human trafficking; perpetrators were rarely brought to justice. Despite laws to combat violence against women, gender-based violence was routine in many states. Development and resource exploitation projects in different parts of the country affecting Indigenous communities led to protests and demands for adequate consultation and consent.**

### BACKGROUND

The government continued its programme of legislative reforms affecting the energy sector, education, telecommunications and political organization. Despite publishing a National Human Rights Program, there was little evidence of substantive measures to address the human rights situation.

Several states including Puebla, Quintana Roo, Chiapas and the Federal District adopted or sought to adopt laws on the use of force by law enforcement officials during demonstrations. These changes were inconsistent with international human rights standards and posed a threat to freedoms of expression and association. In Puebla state, which had recently approved such a law, police officers were under investigation at the end of the year for the death of a 13-year-old boy who died in the context of a demonstration, possibly as a result of excessive use of force. The changes to the law were put under review after the incident.

In November the Senate appointed the new president of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) for the period 2014 to 2019. Human rights organizations requested full consultation and transparency, in compliance with international standards. However, Senators only allowed for one