



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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*Plenary sitting*

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16.12.2014

B8-0384/2014

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on on Mauritania, in particular the case of Biram Dah Arbeid  
(2014/2999(RSP))

**Charles Tannock, Mark Demesmaeker, Ruža Tomašić, Jana Žitňanská,  
Arne Gericke, Ryszard Czarnecki, Valdemar Tomaševski**  
on behalf of the ECR Group

**European Parliament resolution on on Mauritania, in particular the case of Biram Dah Abeid  
(2014/2999(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- A. whereas on 11 November 2014, Biram Dah Abeid, a leading Mauritanian anti-slavery activist and founder of the abolitionist organization IRA (Initiative pour la Resurgence du Mouvement Abolitioniste), was arrested following a peaceful anti-slavery march; Mr Abeid has been charged with calling for a demonstration, participation in a demonstration and belonging to an illegal organisation and some reports suggest that he is at risk of facing the death penalty
- B. Whereas other anti-slavery campaigners have also been arrested and detained bringing the total number of imprisoned IRA-Mauritania activists to 17; it is alleged that during the arrests the Mauritanian gendarmerie used excessive force including beatings with batons, physical dragging along the floor and humiliation techniques including making detainees strip naked; there are also allegations of prison guards attempting to coerce some of the activists into signing confessions
- C. whereas Mr Abeid was voted as runner-up in the 2014 Mauritanian presidential elections this year; his reputation has made him a prime target for the Mauritanian authorities; whereas his arrest, and those of his colleagues, thus represents a crackdown on political opposition as well as civil society;
- D. whereas the Global Slavery Index of November 2014 confirms that Mauritania has the highest proportion of its population enslaved in the world; whereas some figures estimate the prevalence of slavery at up to 20%;
- E. whereas slavery in Mauritania is explicitly racialized, with slaves almost universally drawn from the (black) Haratin community, which comprises between 40-60% of the Mauritanian population; whereas the Haratin, even those not in slavery, are frequently denied access to higher-status work or prominent positions in public life;
- F. whereas slavery is usually hereditary, and babies born to enslaved women are frequently considered the property of a master's family for their whole lives; whereas most slaves are denied a formal education and are taught that their destiny is to belong to their masters, thus perpetuating so-called psychological slavery; whereas women slaves are reportedly routinely subjected to sexual violence and require their masters' permission to marry; whereas many slaves are born as the product of rape; whereas even slaves who have been released have few opportunities to find meaningful employment;
- G. whereas Mauritania has enacted legislation against slavery three times, most recently in 2007, when the ownership of slaves was explicitly criminalized;

- H. whereas Mauritania has ratified such conventions as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement;
1. Strongly condemns the arrest and ongoing detention of anti-slavery activist Biram Dah Abeid and his fellow campaigners, and calls for their immediate release; calls upon the authorities to provide clear evidence for the charges against them, and to follow strict due process; expresses concern about reports of the violence used against some of the activists, and urges the Mauritanian authorities to prosecute those officials who have been involved in the abuse and torture of prisoners;
  2. Calls upon the Mauritanian Government to cease its crackdown on civil society and political opposition, and to permit anti-slavery activists to pursue their non-violent work without fear of harassment and intimidation; urges the Mauritanian authorities to allow freedom of speech and assembly, in accordance with international conventions and its own domestic law;
  3. Expresses grave concern about the reported high prevalence of slavery, slavery related practice and the trafficking of human beings within Mauritania; welcomes the Government's criminalisation of slavery, the existence of a Special Court for slavery and the Government's announcement in March 2014 to introduce a road-map to the abolition of slavery;
  4. Regrets that there has only been one prosecution for slavery to date and urges the Mauritanian Government to demonstrate a concrete commitment to eradicating this practice;
  5. Stresses the need for social change in attitudes about race and slavery, particularly regarding the Haratin population; stresses, specifically, that discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity should be prohibited;
  6. Urges development of universal formal education, so that current and former slaves, as well as their children, can improve their literacy and become equipped with the tools to find meaningful employment; notes that all Mauritanian citizens should be entitled to own land, particularly when they have occupied and cultivated it for generations, which Biram Dah Abeid and IRA-Mauritania propose as the key means to end the cycle of slavery;
  7. Urges the Vice President/High Representative, EEAS and Member States to increase their efforts to address slavery in Mauritania, specifically by ensuring a clear and workable foreign affairs and human rights policy in line with the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, and by promoting a human rights dimension as part of the EU Sahel Strategy, and in dialogues with the Mauritanian Government, including formal bilateral agreements;

