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RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		16 August 2006
About the Board	MRT101577.FE	
Biographies		
Organization Chart	Mauritania: The country's situation, including the human rights situation and the political situation (August 2005 - August 2006)	
Employment	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
Legal and Policy		
References	Background	
Publications	In August 2005, a military coup d'état led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall (UN 9 Dec. 2005; AI 23 May 2006; <i>Aujourd'hui Le Maroc</i> 3 Aug. 2005) [translation] "put an end to the totalitarian practices" of President Maaouiya Ould Taya (FIDH 3 Aug. 2005; <i>Mauritanie-web</i> 3 Aug. 2005), who had been in power since 1984 (ibid.). The Military Council for Justice and Democracy (Conseil militaire pour la justice et la démocratie, CMJD), headed by Colonel Vall, now runs the country (<i>Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent</i> 2 - 8 Oct. 2005, 38; see also FIDH Apr. 2006, 9).	
Tribunal		
Refugee Protection Division	The CMJD has made some progress in rebuilding democratic institutions (ICG 24 Apr. 2006, 17; <i>Jeune Afrique</i> 26 Mar. - 1 Apr. 2006a, 53; see also AU 21 June 2006, 1) and in eliminating corruption (ICG 24 Apr. 2006, 13- 14; UN 24 Feb. 2006). However, although freedom of association is respected and although various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in human rights have been recognized (<i>Jeune Afrique</i> 26 Mar. - 1 Apr. 2006b, 56), some human rights organizations are questioning the progress made by the CMJD in that area (FIDH 9 May 2006; see also AI 23 May 2006; <i>L'Humanité</i> 27 June 2006; SOS Slavery 3 July 2006).	
Immigration Division		
Immigration Appeal Division		
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Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets	Corruption	
Responses to Information Requests	An article from the United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) and a report published by the International Crisis Group (ICG) indicate that the CMJD is facing two challenges: managing oil revenues and fighting the corruption linked to the oil industry (ICG 24 Apr. 2006, 13; UN 24 Feb. 2006). The ICG report indicates that in September 2005, Mauritania adopted the Initiative for Transparency in Extractive Industries (<i>Initiative pour la transparence des industries extractives, EITI</i>) (24 Apr. 2006, 14). In January 2006, the country also adopted [translation] "a draft order for ratifying the United Nations Convention Against Corruption" and agreed to a [translation] "draft ratification order, the African Union (AU) Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption" (ICG 24 Apr. 2006, 14). Also in January 2006, Zeidane Ould Hmeida, former oil minister, was arrested and charged with [translation] "economic crimes" (<i>Syfia</i> 17 Feb. 2006; ICG 24 Apr. 2006, 13; see also <i>Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent</i> 29 Jan. - 4 Feb. 2006, 56). In February 2006, the CMJD set up a committee to ensure transparency	
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in the use of revenues from the oil extraction industry and to [UN English version] "ensure that they are allocated for the good of the population" (UN 24 Feb. 2006; *Horizons* 23 Feb. 2006).

Electoral process

The CMJD has honoured its promise to establish an election calendar (ICG 24 Apr. 2006, 17; see also *Jeune Afrique* 26 Mar. - 1 Apr. 2006b, 55). Municipal and legislative elections are scheduled for 19 November 2006, while senatorial and presidential elections are scheduled for 21 January 2007 and 11 March 2007, respectively (ibid., 55; UN 9 Dec. 2005; AU 21 June 2006, 3). Various measures have already been taken to prepare for the elections; in August 2005, CMJD members agreed not to run in the elections (UN 27 June 2006). On 29 November 2005, the CMJD created the Independent National Electoral Commission (Commission électorale nationale indépendante, CENI), which is responsible for ensuring that the electoral calendar is respected (ibid. 9 Dec. 2005; see also AU 21 June 2006, 3). On 25 June 2006, with a participation rate of approximately 76 percent, Mauritians voted 97 percent in favour of the new constitution proposed by the CMJD, which ensures alternating presidential powers (UN 27 June 2006; AFP 26 June 2006; *L'Humanité* 27 June 2006). The new constitution limits a presidential term to five years instead of six (ibid.; UN 27 June 2006; AFP 26 June 2006; *Jeune Afrique* 26 Mar. - 1 Apr. 2006b, 56). Moreover, [translation] "the text also introduces a presidential-type of regime that gives the head of state important prerogatives, including the power to appoint a Prime Minister, but it gives Parliament the right to censure the government or to issue a non-confidence vote" (AFP 26 June 2006; see also *L'Humanité* 27 June 2006 et *Le Messager* 27 June 2006).

Several Mauritanian human rights organizations have expressed their satisfaction with how the constitutional referendum unfolded (UN 27 June 2006). Nevertheless, [translation] "three opposition parties -- the Alliance for Justice and Democracy (Alliance pour la justice et la démocratie), the 3rd Generation Party (Parti de la 3e generation) and the African Liberation Forces of Mauritania (Forces africaines de libération de la Mauritanie) -- called for a boycott" because, in their view, the constitution does not address [translation] "'the co-existence of Arab and Black African ethnic groups' or slavery, which was officially abolished in 1981" (*L'Humanité* 27 June 2006; see also *Le Messager* 27 June 2006).

Slavery

Several sources indicated that slavery still exists in Mauritania (AI 23 May 2006; FIDH Apr. 2006, 30; SOS Slavery 5 Feb. 2006) and that "those denouncing slavery remained at risk of harassment" (AI 23 May 2006). In a report published in April 2006, the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH) stated that the CMJD is not taking the appropriate measures to put an end to [translation] "slavery and all forms of human debasement and exploitation" (9 May 2006). SOS Slavery Mauritania (SOS Esclaves Mauritanie), a Maritanian anti-slavery organization, states that no law punishes [translation] "slavery practices" and that [translation] "no case of that kind has ever been tried by a judge" (11 June 2006; see also FIDH Apr. 2006, 31). An article published by Agence France-Press (AFP) indicates that Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall has recognized the existence of slavery in Mauritania by calling for the abolition of the practice (28 May 2006; AP 28 May 2006; see also *Jeune Afrique* 11 - 17 June 2006, 41). No information on measures adopted by the CMJD to fight slavery could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Attitude of members of the government toward political prisoners and relatives of the former president

In September 2005, Colonel Vall allowed [UN English version] "a general, full

and complete amnesty to all Mauritians condemned for political crimes or offences, in order to permit them to participate in the work of building the country in complete freedom" (UN 6 Sept. 2005; see also AI 23 May 2006; FIDH Apr. 2006, 8 - 9; UN 4 July 2006). However, approximately 20 [translation] "Islamists" have been imprisoned since April 2005; accused of being part of terrorist cells, they have not been given a trial as of July 2006 (FIDH Apr. 2006, 28; SOS Slavery 3 July 2006; *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 30 Oct. - 5 Nov. 2005, 36). Moreover, in October 2005, the CMJD refused to recognize the Party of Democratic Convergence (Parti de la convergence démocratique), an Islamist party (ibid.; see also SOS Slavery 11 June 2006).

In June 2006, relatives of former President Ould Taya were arrested for [translation] "conspiring to destabilize the constitutional referendum" on 25 June 2006 (Reuters 20 June 2006; AFP 30 June 2006). According to correspondence from representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and SOS Slavery, the suspects were put in prison (UN 4 July 2006; SOS Slavery 3 July 2006). No additional information on the attitude of the CMJD toward the relatives of the former president could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Freedom of the press

The CMJD has started to implement measures in the area of freedom of the press, but structural problems persist in the Mauritanian news sector (FIDH Apr. 2006, 17; AU 21 June 2006, 4; Panapress 8 June 2006; *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 15 - 21 Jan. 2006, 71). When Colonel Vall came into power, he allowed all political parties to use public media (*Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 15 - 21 Jan. 2006, 71). During a visit to Nouakchott in October, Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans frontières, RSF) [RSF English version] "persuaded the new head of state to end censorship and resume broadcasts in the capital by Radio France Internationale (RFI) ... [and] also helped draw up a new press law" (2006). On 7 June 2006, the CMJD passed a law on the press reform; the law, which abolishes [translation] "censorship and legal deposit" represents an improvement in journalistic practices (AU 21 June 2006, 4; see also Panapress 8 June 2006).

Unresolved humanitarian concerns

Various human rights organizations are questioning how the CMJD is addressing unresolved humanitarian concerns (UN 9 Dec. 2005; FIDH Apr. 2006, 20). Unresolved humanitarian concerns include the

[translation]

after-effects of the ethnic and racial crises that divided the Mauritanian population in the 1980s and 1990s, these crises include: the deportation of tens of thousands of Black Mauritians to the country's borders; and the attempts to 'un-blacken' the administration, particularly through extrajudiciary killings and torture in the army. (FIDH 9 May 2006)

The CMJD has refused an organized return of exiled Mauritians and the recognition of their rights, and decided on an individualized return (FIDH Apr. 2006, 20; UN 4 July 2006). According to the FIDH, the individualized return raises various issues, including that of [translation] "Mauritanian identity" (Apr. 2006, 21; SOS Slavery 5 Feb. 2006). A representative of SOS Slavery indicated that it is difficult for exiles to prove their [translation] "Mauritanian identity," because most of them [translation] "were stripped of their civil status documents" when they were [translation] "forced into exile" (5 Feb. 2006; FIDH Apr. 2006, 21). The FIDH is of the opinion that exiles should be able to return under the auspices of a neutral organization like the United Nations (ibid.). The CMJD seems to want to hand this matter off to its successor (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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