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Mauritania: Government treatment of members of the Mauritanian Human Rights Association (Association mauritanienne des droits de l'homme, AMDH) (2003 - Feb. 2007)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

A representative of the Mauritanian Human Rights Association (Association mauritanienne des droits de l'homme, AMDH) provided the following information in correspondence dated 23 January 2007. She stated that the AMDH was founded in 1991 and that it was not recognized by the Mauritanian government until May 2005. She indicated that, because it was not recognized, the organization's members, and in particular its leaders, were subject to [translation] "persecution, smear campaigns, financial obstruction, arrest and imprisonment." According to the Representative, although the AMDH has not yet been [translation] "fully accepted" by the government, the association has been participating in the country's political transition since August 2005 and remains a [translation] "major player in the negotiations concerning Mauritanian civil society."

The information provided by the AMDH Representative was corroborated by a representative of SOS-Slaves Mauritania (SOS Esclaves Mauritanie), a Mauritanian anti-slavery organization, in correspondence dated 23 January 2007. The SOS Representative indicated that the AMDH had [translation] "a relationship of conflict" with Colonel Ould Taya's government, which was in power from December 1984 to 3 August 2005 (see also *Le Monde diplomatique* Nov. 2005). He added that, despite the association's recognition by Colonel Ould Taya's government in May 2005, [translation] "the hostility of the political police [toward AMDH members] did not ease up." He also stated that, from 1991 until the coup on 3 August 2005 in which Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall took power, [translation] "active [AMDH] members were habitually intimidated, threatened and arrested for short periods." Finally, the SOS Representative stated that, since 3 August 2005, relations between the government in power and the AMDH have remained [translation] "strained." However, he also added that since 3 August 2005, [translation] "no members of the association or of other organizations of the same type have been stopped."

According to an article published by Amnesty International (AI) in 2004, the Mauritanian Minister of Communication [AI English version] "accused AMDH and *SOS Esclaves* of being 'enemies and plotters against the country in the pay of the outside world'" (AI 18 Nov. 2004; see also OMCT/FIDH 15 Apr. 2005, 82). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004* states that in 2004, the Mauritanian government had still not responded to the AMDH's requests for recognition on the grounds that it was an "ethnically based" organization and that its work was "in violation of the law" (US 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 4; see also OMCT/FIDH 15 Apr. 2005, 23). However, the same report also notes that in 2004, the AMDH was able to carry out its activities unimpeded (US 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 4).

According to a letter published on the Human Rights Watch (HRW) website, the general secretary of the Ministry of Justice refused to meet with a delegation of lawyers in August 2003 because the acting president of the AMDH was part of the delegation (2 Sep. 2003). In addition, a report published by the World Organization Against Torture (Organisation mondiale contre la torture, OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH) states that a lawyer who is a legal

adviser for SOS-Slaves Mauritania and an active member of the AMDH was arrested in April 2005 and released on 13 May 2005 without charge (OMCT/FIDH Nov. 2005, 4). No additional information on specific cases of repression of AMDH members by Mauritanian authorities from 2003 to the present was found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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.

References

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: *Africa Confidential*, Agence France-Presse (AFP), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Freedom in the World, International Crisis Group (ICG), *Jeune Afrique*, United Nations.

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