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01 October 2004

MRT43039.FE

Mauritania: Update to MRT39363.E of 25 September 2002 on the Union of Democratic Forces-New Era (Union des forces démocratiques-Ère nouvelle, UFD-EN) and its successor, the Rally of Democratic Forces (Rassemblement des forces démocratiques, RFD), including the treatment of its members by government authorities (2002-October 2004)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Opposed to "the normalization of relations between Mauritania and Israel" (*Europa 2004 2004*, 2840), the Union of Democratic Forces-New Era (Union des forces démocratiques-Ère nouvelle, UFD-EN) was officially dissolved in October 2000 by Mauritanian government authorities (ibid.; EIU 18 Aug. 2004a; AFP 14 Oct. 2001; PANA 6 July 2004), who accused the party of inciting violence and damaging Mauritanian national interests (AFP 14 Oct. 2001; *Europa 2004 2004*, 2840).

The UFD-EN was later replaced by the Rally of Democratic Forces (Rassemblement des forces démocratiques, RFD) (EIU 18 Aug. 2004a; *Europa 2004 2004*, 2841) and, in January 2002, the former UFD-EN leader, Ahmed Ould Daddah, was elected president of the RFD (EIU 18 Aug. 2004b); he won 6.9 per cent of votes in the November 2003 presidential election (*Europa 2004 2004*, 2842; *Africa Research Bulletin* 26 Feb. 2004, 15609). According to *Europa 2004*, four former vice-presidents of the UFD-EN were also appointed to the party's executive committee (2004, 2841).

Recent information on the treatment of RFD members was limited among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. In its midday news reports on Africa, Radio France Internationale (RFI) said that the Mauritanian government had banned a demonstration planned by the RFD (18 Aug. 2004). However, RFI did not specify the reasons for the demonstration. On 5 November 2003, police used tear gas to disperse participants in a demonstration organized in part by the RFD president (*Europa 2004 2004*, 2842). The demonstration was held in protest of the police raid on the home of Ould Haidala, leader of another opposition party, who was accused of storing illicit weapons (ibid.).

Mohamed Jemil Ould Mansour, an influential RFD member, was arrested by the Mauritanian authorities in May or early June 2003 for "plotting against the constitutional order" (*Europa 2004 2004*, 2841; PANA 21 July 2003; ibid. 4 June 2003). Ould Mansour managed to escape from his prison cell in Nouakchott [the country's capital] (*Africa Research Bulletin* 27 May 2004, 15716; PANA 21 July 2003; ibid. 19 June 2003), only to be re-arrested upon his return from Belgium in January 2004; he was released a few days later (PANA 12 Jan. 2004; *Africa Research Bulletin* 27 May 2004, 15716).

Recent sources describe Mohamed Jemil Ould Mansour as a prominent leader of an Islamist coalition (CNN 11 Aug. 2004; *Africa Research Bulletin* 27 May 2004, 15716) called the Patriotic Alliance (Alliance patriotique), according to a 27 August 2004 report by *Africa Confidential*, or the Party for Democratic Convergence (Parti pour la convergence démocratique), according to the 27 May 2004 issue of the *Africa Research Bulletin*. Mohamed Jemil Ould Mansour was arrested again in August 2004 in connection with an alleged coup plot on 10 August 2004 (*Africa Confidential* 27 Aug. 2004; CNN 11 Aug. 2004).

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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Additional Sources Consulted

Publication: *Africa Confidential*, *Africa Research Bulletin*, *Jeune Afrique/L'intelligent*, *Keesing's Record of World Events*, Resource Centre country file, *West Africa*.

Internet sites, including : Africatime, AllAfrica, Amnesty International, HRW, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), ReliefWeb.


[Top of Page](#)

[Important Notices](#)

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