



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

30 November 2004

MRT43189.FE

Mauritania: the Oulad (or Awlad) Nasser tribe; how a foreign national or the Mauritanian government can determine whether a person is a member of this tribe

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Identifying Oulad Nasser tribe members

No specific information on how a foreign national or the Mauritanian government can determine whether a person is a member of the Oulad Nasser tribe could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints for this Response. However, the following information may be of some use.

Members of the Arab Oulad Nasser tribe (*Maroc Hebdo International* 3-9 Sept. 2004) are light-skinned Bidan Moors, who are a minority in Mauritania; however, the army high command is dominated by officers who are Bidan Moors (IRIN 11 Aug. 2004; EIU 5 Oct. 2004). A Media Monitors Network (MMN) article classified the Oulad Nasser as a warrior tribe, and indicated that, "historically, they pledged loyalty to Smassides d'Atar, the fiefdom of the president" (21 Aug. 2003).

The Oulad Nasser in the news

In its July-August 2003 issue of *La Lettre du mois*, the French non-governmental organization (NGO) Acting Together for Human Rights (Agir ensemble pour les droits de l'homme, AEDH) reported that the Mauritanian authorities had arrested the families of persons suspected of attempting a coup d'état in June 2003. It indicated that:

[translation]

. . . the people arrested are most often spouses, siblings, cousins or other members of the Oulad Nasser, a tribe from the Aioune region in eastern Mauritania, more than 800 km from the capital and home to the majority of putschist officers (AEDH July-Aug. 2003).

The list of the Oulad Nasser tribe members who were arrested includes Rachid Ould Salah, President of the National Assembly; Mohamed Ould Rzizzim, Governor of Nouadhibou; and Mintata Bint Hiddeid, Minister of the Status of Women (*Le Nouvel Afrique-Asie* July-Aug. 2003); as well as the latter's husband and sister; and Malfoud Ould Lemrabott, President of the Supreme Court (AEDH July-Aug. 2003). An Algerian Radio report corroborated the arrest of Ms. Hiddeid and Mr. Lemrabott, and also mentioned the arrest of Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Hamadi, member of the Democratic and Social Republican Party, and three other people-all members of the Oulad Nasser tribe (12 July 2003). According to the United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), the June 2003 coup attempt was led by Major Saleh Ould Hanenna, who escaped arrest; the 40 or so people who were arrested, including relatives of those who organized the coup attempt, "said they were all members of the same Awlad Nasser ethnic group as Ould Hanenna" (11 Aug. 2004). An MMN article indicated that the leaders of the coup, Ould Hanna and Mohamed Ould Cheikh al-Kouti, were

members of the Oulad Nasser tribe (21 Aug. 2003). Most of the military officers who were arrested for their presumed involvement in the coup attempt were also members of the Oulad Nasser clan (IRIN 27 Aug. 2004).

Maroc Hebdo International reported that officers arrested on 9 August 2004 in relation to the June 2003 coup attempt, most of whom were Oulad Nasser tribesmen, had been targeted based on their tribal and regional affiliation rather than their ideological or ethnic affiliation (3-9 Sept. 2004). An article written by SOS-Esclaves and published on the Website of the Guinean People's Rally (Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée) indicated that a man who is the nephew of Rachid Ould Salah (President of the Mauritanian National Assembly) and who is also from the Oulad Nasser tribe, had been arrested on 9 August 2004 (1 Oct. 2004). According to the same source, 20 other members of the Oulad Nasser clan, including two officers of the National Guard, were arrested between the end of September and the beginning of October 2004 (SOS-Esclaves 1 Oct. 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.

References

- Agir ensemble pour les droits de l'homme (AEDH). July-August 2003. *La Lettre du mois*. No. 118. Véronique Rouault. "Arrestations pour 'délit de parenté' en Mauritanie." <<http://www.aedh.org/LM/N%B0118-Juillet-Ao%FBt.pdf>> [Accessed 25 Nov. 2004]
- Algerian Radio [Algiers, in Arabic]. 12 July 2003. "Mauritania: Authorities Arrest Former Prime Minister, Others-Algerian Report." (BBC International Reports/Dialog)
- Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) [London]. 5 October 2004. "The Political Scence: Ethnicity, Tribal Loyalties & Draconian Gov't." (Dialog)
- Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). 27 August 2004. "Mauritania: Government Accuses Burkina Faso and Libya of Backing Coup." <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=42900&SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=MAURITANIA> [Accessed 29 Nov. 2004]
- _____. 11 August 2004. "Mauritania: Defence Minister Confirms Coup Plot, Arrests." <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=42618&SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=MAURITANIA> [Accessed 29 Nov. 2004]
- Maroc Hebdo International* [Casablanca]. 3-9 September 2004. No. 617. Abdallah Ben Ali. "La guerre civile aura-t-elle lieu?" <http://www.maroc-hebdo.press.ma/MHinternet/Archives_617/pdf_-617/page10.pdf> [Accessed 29 Nov. 2004]
- Media Monitors Network (MMN). 21 August 2003. "Images and Realities of Mauritania's Attempted Coup." (Dialog)
- Le Nouvel Afrique-Asie* [Paris]. July-August 2003. Nos. 166-167. Lemine Ould M. Salem. "Enquête sur un putsch." <<http://www.afrique-asie.com/archives/2003/166juilaout/166maurit.htm>> [Accessed 29 Nov. 2004]
- SOS-Esclaves. 1 October 2004. Boubacar Messaoud. "Le point sur les arrestations en Mauritanie." <<http://www.rpgguinee.org/defaultdetails.asp?idactus=244>> [Accessed 29 Nov. 2004]

Additional Sources Consulted

Attempts to reach a professor who is an expert on Mauritania and a representative of the Association mauritanienne des droits de l'homme (AMDH) were unsuccessful.

Publications: *Tribus, ethnies et pouvoir en Mauritanie*.

Internet sites, including: *Afriqu'Echos Magazine*, Amnesty International (AI), Arabic News, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Forces de libération africaines de Mauritanie (FLAM), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Organisation contre les violations des droits humains (OCVIDH), United States Department of State, World News Connection (WNC).


[Top of Page](#)

[Important Notices](#)

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.