



Mauritania's Compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Follow Up Report for the Human Rights Committee

Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights,
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status
and
Mauritanian Network for Human Rights in the US,
a non-governmental organization

Follow-up to the Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee from the 36th Meeting (19 July 2019)

The Advocates for Human Rights (“The Advocates”) is a volunteer-based non-governmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law. Founded in 1983, The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact finding, direct legal representation, education and training, and publication. The Advocates is the primary provider of legal services to low-income asylum seekers in the Upper Midwest region of the United States.

Mauritanian Network for Human Rights in The US is a nonprofit 501(3) organization gathering Mauritanian immigrants living in the US. It is fighting for human rights, civil rights and better opportunities for Mauritanians, both in the US and in Mauritania. Also known as MNHRUS, the Network works diligently to empower Mauritanians immigrants to integrate socially, advance economically, engage civically and fight for a better Mauritania, free of racial discrimination, slavery and injustice. MNHRUS assists Mauritanians by connecting them to important resources in the communities they live in and by assisting them in facing and tackling the issues that matter to them.

I. Summary

1. In its Concluding Observations, the Committee requested that the State party provide information on the steps taken to implement its recommendations contained in paragraphs 11, 21, and 43.1 This report focuses on the steps taken by the State party and developments within the State since 19 July 2019, related to the recommendations in paragraph 11, 21, and 43.

II. Mauritania has not addressed the humanitarian consequences of the events of 1989 to 1991 (CO Paragraph 11)

2. In its 2019 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed concern about the unresolved humanitarian consequences of the events of 1989 to 1991. The Committee recommended that

¹ Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Mauritania*, CCPR/C/MRT/CO/2, 23 August 2019, ¶ 49.

Mauritania repeal Act No. 93-23, properly investigate, prosecute, and punish those responsible, and award reparations to victims and beneficiaries.²

3. The State party has not repealed Act No. 93-23, also known as the Amnesty Law. In a positive development, Mauritanian MP Anissa Ba introduced a draft law in December 2019 that would establish a High Commission for Truth and Reconciliation and repeal Act No. 93-23.³
4. In June 2020, Special Procedure mandate holders sent a joint letter of allegation⁴ to Mauritania, calling on authorities to address the events from 1989 to 1991, noting “the lack of investigation and prosecution of violations committed during the period of the *Passif humanitaire*,”⁵ and welcoming Ba’s draft law. In September 2020, Mauritanian authorities responded to the United Nations’ experts’ letter and, without acknowledging Ba’s draft law by name, recognized a transitional justice draft law in the National Assembly, but stated that the Mauritanian government had no intention to present such a draft law.⁶
5. Black Mauritians continue to experience structural discrimination, evidenced by government restrictions on associations of victims. In November 2020, relatives of individuals who died during *Passif humanitaire* protested in Nouakchott and Bababe, calling on the government to repeal the Amnesty Law.⁷ Authorities arrested over 40 people and released them shortly after.⁸ The following month, 37 people partaking in a memorial ceremony for victims of the 1989 to 1991 events were arrested for walking in the direction of a military parade honoring Mauritania’s independence attended by President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani.⁹

² Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Mauritania*, CCPR/C/MRT/CO/2, 23 August 2019, ¶ 11.

³ MENA Rights Group, “Mauritania: Survivors of the ‘*Passif humanitaire*’ demand truth and justice 29 years after the Inal massacre,” accessed June 23, 2021, <https://menarights.org/en/articles/mauritania-survivors-passif-humanitaire-demand-truth-and-justice-29-years-after-inal>.

⁴ Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Special Rapporteur on minority issues, and Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, *Letter of Allegation*, (June 11, 2020), AL MRT 3/2020, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=25315>.

⁵ MENA Rights Group, “Mauritania: Survivors of the ‘*Passif humanitaire*’ demand truth and justice 29 years after the Inal massacre,” accessed June 23, 2021, <https://menarights.org/en/articles/mauritania-survivors-passif-humanitaire-demand-truth-and-justice-29-years-after-inal>.

⁶ Islamic Republic of Mauritania, *Réponse du Gouvernement de la République Islamique de Mauritanie adressée à certains titulaires de mandats relevant des Procédures Spéciales du Conseil des Droits de l’Homme concernant l’absence de recours effectifs pour les victimes de violation des droits de l’Homme pendant la période dite <<passif humanitaire>> en Mauritanie*, (Sept. 23, 2020), NV/MISRIM/GE/150/20, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=35587>.

⁷ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021 – Mauritania, <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1395046/download>, (accessed June 23, 2021).

⁸ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021 – Mauritania, <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1395046/download>, (accessed June 23, 2021).

⁹ MENA Rights Group, “Years of embers in Mauritania: 30 years of impunity since the Inal massacre,” accessed June 23, 2021, <https://menarights.org/en/articles/annees-de-braises-en-mauritanie-30-ans-dimpunite-depuis-le-massacre-dinal>.

6. In addition, Black Mauritians are still unable to regain ownership rights of the land that local authorities stripped from them in the 1980s and redistributed to Beydanes.¹⁰

III. Mauritania has not passed legislation to prohibit the practice of female genital mutilation (CO Paragraphs 21a, 21b, & 21c)

7. In its 2019 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed concern about the ongoing practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) on women and girls. The Committee recommended Mauritania raise awareness about the harms resulting from FGM and amend legislation to prohibit the practice of FGM.¹¹ The Committee also recommended that Mauritania promptly investigate, prosecute, and punish those responsible, and provide victims with social and medical services.¹²
8. The State party has taken a positive step since its last review by the committee, adopting a draft bill on May 6, 2020 to prevent violence against women and girls.¹³ By the end of the year, however, the National Assembly had yet to vote on the bill.¹⁴ Notably, the National Assembly previously rejected two earlier drafts due to the drafts’ “noncompliance with Islam.”¹⁵
9. Although FGM is criminalized pursuant to the General Code on Children’s Protection, FGM is still performed, primarily by traditional practitioners.¹⁶ According to 2019 World Bank data, “up to 90 percent of Mauritanian women and girls aged 15-49 years have undergone some form of FGM in their lifetime.”¹⁷ It is more likely that women and girls with less education in more rural communities are subjected to FGM.¹⁸

¹⁰ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021 – Mauritania,

<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1395046/download>, (accessed June 23, 2021).

¹¹ Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Mauritania*, CCPR/C/MRT/CO/2, 23 August 2019, ¶ 21a & ¶ 21b.

¹² Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Mauritania*, CCPR/C/MRT/CO/2, 23 August 2019, ¶ 21b.

¹³ United States Department of State, Mauritania 2020 International Religious Freedom Report 1, 4 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/240282-MAURITANIA-2020-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 16, 2021).

¹⁴ United States Department of State, Mauritania 2020 International Religious Freedom 1, 4 Report, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/240282-MAURITANIA-2020-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 16, 2021).

¹⁵ United States Department of State, Mauritania 2020 International Religious Freedom 1, 4 Report, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/240282-MAURITANIA-2020-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 16, 2021).

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Mauritania – 80th Pre-Session” 1, 4 accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/02/202102mena_mauritania_CEDAW_80_0.pdf.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Mauritania – 80th Pre-Session” 1, 4 accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/02/202102mena_mauritania_CEDAW_80_0.pdf.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Mauritania – 80th Pre-Session” 1, 4 accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/02/202102mena_mauritania_CEDAW_80_0.pdf.

10. There were positive domestic developments to strengthen awareness among religious leaders and medical professionals, aiming to eradicate FGM. For example, Islamic scholars declared through a “fatwa” that FGM “lack[s] a religious basis” and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and Family continued tracking over 2,000 traditional health providers to ensure providers maintain their public abandonment of practicing FGM and their ongoing condemnation of the practice’s adverse effects.¹⁹ The UN Fund for Population also “organiz[ed] parliamentary hearings and meetings with religious leaders and medical professionals” to proactively address FGM.²⁰
11. Further awareness-raising efforts and programs are needed, however, to educate the public about harms resulting from FGM, as “only about half of women and girls aged 15-49 years who have heard of FGM think the practice should stop.”²¹
12. In addition to awareness-raising, action must be taken to fill gaps in legal enforcement, specifically through investigations and prosecutions. Despite the law stating that “any act or attempt to damage a girl’s sexual organs is punishable by imprisonment and a monetary fine,”²² Freedom House reported in 2020 that “the law is rarely enforced and the practice remains common.”²³ At the time of writing this report, there were no recent records of prosecutions for FGM.²⁴

IV. Mauritania has not taken steps to eliminate child marriage. (CO Paragraph 21d)

13. In its 2019 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed concern about the continuing practice of child marriage. The Committee recommended Mauritania amend the Personal Status Code to prohibit marriage under the age of 18 years.²⁵

¹⁹ United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania* 1, 16 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021); Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Mauritania – 80th Pre-Session” 1, 4 accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/02/202102mena_mauritania_CEDAW_80_0.pdf.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Mauritania – 80th Pre-Session” 1, 4 accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/02/202102mena_mauritania_CEDAW_80_0.pdf.

²¹ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Mauritania – 80th Pre-Session” 1, 4 accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/02/202102mena_mauritania_CEDAW_80_0.pdf.

²² United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania* 1, 16 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021).

²³ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2021 – Mauritania* 1, 16 <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1395046/download>, (accessed June 23, 2021).

²⁴ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Mauritania – 80th Pre-Session” 1, 4 accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/02/202102mena_mauritania_CEDAW_80_0.pdf.

²⁵ Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Mauritania*, CCPR/C/MRT/CO/2, 23 August 2019, ¶ 21d.

14. The State party has not amended the Personal Status Code. At present, Article 6 of the Personal Status law maintains that guardians deeming a marriage to be in the girls “best interest” can contract a girl into marriage, though contracting a girl to marriage “in the exclusive interest of the guardian” is punishable by fine.²⁶ Although consent to be married by the girl is required, “the silence of a minor is [considered] her consent.”²⁷

V. Mauritania has not amended the Act on criminalization of discrimination, cybercrime, combating terrorism, or the freedom of the press (CO Paragraph 43a)

15. In its 2019 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed concern about specific Acts that are not aligned with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 18 and 19. The Committee recommended Mauritanian amend the Act on the criminalization of discrimination, the Act on cybercrime, the Act on combatting terrorism, and the Act on freedom of the press.²⁸

16. Mauritania continues to apply overbroad and imprecise Acts to suppress political opponents. Since racial and ethnic propaganda are prohibited pursuant to the Constitution, the government used these provisions to accuse individuals and groups of “‘racism” or ‘promoting national disunity’ for speaking out against the extreme underrepresentation in government of disadvantaged populations, namely the Haratines and sub-Saharan Africans.”²⁹

17. The government should be commended for the significant decrease in acts of retaliation against the media in the last year.³⁰ Independent media encountered limited restrictions and government media, though primarily reporting on official news, “increased coverage of opposition activities and views.”³¹ Nevertheless, reports of government officials warning journalists that “one-sided coverage of slavery or sensitive topics [] could harm national unity or the country’s reputation” exemplifies an ongoing threat to freedom of press.³²

²⁶ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Mauritania – 80th Pre-Session” 1, 1-2 accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/02/202102mena_mauritania_CEDAW_80_0.pdf.

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Mauritania – 80th Pre-Session” 1, 1 accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/02/202102mena_mauritania_CEDAW_80_0.pdf.

²⁸ Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Mauritania*, CCPR/C/MRT/CO/2, 23 August 2019, ¶ 42 & ¶ 43a.

²⁹ United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania* 1, 9 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021).

³⁰ United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania* 1, 9 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021).

³¹ United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania* 1, 9 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021).

³² United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania* 1, 9 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021).

18. In addition, the Criminal Code still criminalizes activities that are connected to freedom of expression, with apostasy and blasphemy both punishable by death.³³ While the government has not applied capital punishment in cases of apostasy or blasphemy, the concern remains that these criminal provisions can be selectively applied to “impede the work of journalists and human rights defenders and to restrict their freedom of expression.”³⁴
19. Instead of amending overbroad and imprecise Acts, parliament adopted a new law - the Law on Combatting Manipulation of Information - on June 24, 2020. The law, which aims “to prevent manipulation of information, publication of false news, and the creation of fake digital identities,” is particularly focused on “periods of elections and during health crises” and enforces harsh prison sentences and monetary fines.³⁵ Shortly before parliament adopted the law, authorities arrested and detained multiple individuals for expressing opinions related to the government’s response to the COVID-19 situation.³⁶ In one example, on May 3, 2020, authorities arrested and detained Mommeu Ould Bouzouma, a blogger and Alakhbar.info journalist, for criticizing through Twitter the local authorities’ “erratic” enforcement of the COVID-19 lockdown.³⁷ The governor ultimately dropped the complaint against Bouzouma and authorities released him on May 15, 2020.³⁸

VI. The Mauritanian government continues to harass, arrest, and detain human rights defenders (CO Paragraphs 43b & 43c)

20. In its 2019 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed concern about treatment of human rights defenders. The Committee recommended Mauritania “refrain from intimidating, harassing, arresting, detaining and prosecuting human rights defenders, on the basis of loosely defined offenses” and unconditionally release detained human rights defenders.³⁹
21. In a sign of legislative progress, the draft Law on Associations (the “NGO Law”) continues to advance through the legislative process.⁴⁰ The 1964 Law on Associations requires

³³ United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania* 1, 9 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021); United States Department of State, *Mauritania 2020 International Religious Freedom Report* 1, 2 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/240282-MAURITANIA-2020-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 16, 2021).

³⁴ Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Mauritania*, CCPR/C/MRT/CO/2, 23 August 2019, ¶ 42.

³⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021*, 447–451, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf (accessed June 17, 2021).

³⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021*, 447–451, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf (accessed June 17, 2021).

³⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021* 447, 451 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf (accessed June 17, 2021).

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021*, 447–451, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf (accessed June 17, 2021).

³⁹ Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Mauritania*, CCPR/C/MRT/CO/2, 23 August 2019, ¶ 43b & ¶ 43c.

⁴⁰ United States Department of State, *Mauritania 2020 International Religious Freedom Report*, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/240282-MAURITANIA-2020-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 16, 2021).

organizations to register with the Ministry of Interior and to receive advanced authorization for public and private meetings and gatherings, with the power to “refuse such permission on vague grounds such as ‘anti-national propaganda’ or exercising ‘an unwelcome influence on the minds of the people.’”⁴¹ The draft NGO Law would lessen restrictions on religious-affiliated NGOs,⁴² but it fails to meet international standards on freedom of association.⁴³

22. Despite progress with the draft law, the government still harasses and arrests individuals affiliated with controversial associations.⁴⁴ Arbitrary arrests as a result of overbroad and imprecise Acts continue. For example, in February 2020, authorities arrested 15 individuals and charged eight with “blasphemy and insulting Islam” for attending a meeting by the Alliance for the Refoundation of the Mauritanian State, an organization that advocates for secularism. Authorities charged three of the eight individuals with “disseminating content that ‘undermines the value of Islam’ under cybersecurity and terrorism laws.”⁴⁵ The five individuals held in pretrial detention beginning in February 2020 were released by October 26, 2020.⁴⁶
23. Human rights organizations report “a wide pattern of repression against anti-slavery activists” through arrests, lengthy detentions, cases of torture, and heavy restrictions placed on meetings and gatherings.⁴⁷ For example, on April 13, 2020, authorities arrested activist Mariem Cheikh, a member of the antislavery campaign group Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist movement (IRA), and charged her for “racist comments through social media.”⁴⁸ Authorities released Cheikh on April 21, 2020.⁴⁹ On June 3, 2020, authorities arrested and charged journalist Edy Ould Zeidane with blasphemy and for violating the cybercrime law by “publishing leaflets that undermine the values of Islam” for a Facebook post commenting on when the Muslim holy month of Ramadan should be observed.⁵⁰

⁴¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021* 447, 448

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf (accessed June 17, 2021).

⁴² United States Department of State, Mauritania 2020 International Religious Freedom Report,

<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/240282-MAURITANIA-2020-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 16, 2021).

⁴³ Human Rights Watch, “Mauritania: Revise Draft Associations Law,” accessed June 22, 2021,

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/23/mauritania-revise-draft-associations-law>.

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021*, 447–451,

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf (accessed June 17, 2021).

⁴⁵ United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania* 1, 9

<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021).

⁴⁶ United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania*,

<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021).

⁴⁷ Insert citation

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021* 447, 448

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf (accessed June 17, 2021).

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021* 447-451

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf (accessed June 17, 2021).

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021* 447, 448

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf (accessed June 17, 2021).

VII. Authorities who commit human rights violations against human rights defenders act with impunity (CO Paragraph 43d)

24. In its 2019 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed concern that human rights violations committed against human rights defenders creates a stifling environment for individuals criticizing human rights violations. The Committee recommended that human rights violations against human rights defenders be thoroughly and impartially investigated, that violators be prosecuted, and that victims obtain redress.
25. The government took steps to improve impartiality, but access to fair public trial continues to be a concern.⁵¹ Although individuals have a right to an independent judiciary pursuant to the Constitution, the executive branch has “significant influence over the judiciary” and judges are often perceived as corrupt.⁵² The Administrative Court oversees complaints of human rights abuses, but NGO representatives who collaborated with the Court stated that “it was not impartial.”⁵³
26. Impunity is particularly an issue within the government security forces. Tensions between the Beydane-majority security forces and the Haratine and sub-Saharan communities are at the root of the issue.⁵⁴ Although the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization circulated directives among the security services on September 25, 2020 “that emphasized the importance of taking responsibility for one’s actions and that no one is above or outside of the law,” lack of accountability remains a concern and, at the time of writing this report, there was no information available regarding current or recent investigations into human rights violations against human rights defenders.

VIII. Suggested Questions for the Government of Mauritania

27. The Advocates for Human Rights and the Mauritanian Network for Human Rights in the U.S. respectfully request that the Committee pose the following questions to the Government of Mauritania:
 - What steps is the State party making to ensure victims of the 1989 to 1991 events and their beneficiaries are appropriately compensated, including through the fair redistribution of land to the rightful owners, as part of the fight against impunity for human rights violations?

⁵¹ United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania*, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021).

⁵² United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania*, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021).

⁵³ United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania*, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021).

⁵⁴ United States Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mauritania*, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MAURITANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2021).

- How does the State party ensure the safety of women and girls from violence, including from FGM, while the draft bill to prevent violence against women and girls remains in limbo with the National Assembly?
- What measures are in place by the State to raise awareness and educate individuals in rural communities with fewer educational opportunities about the harms of FGM?
- What resources and funds does the State provide to ensure women and girls subjected to FGM have access to social and medical services?
- Does the State party have a reliable and accessible mechanism in place for victims and families to report cases of FGM and what measures does the State take to ensure reports are promptly and thoroughly investigated, that perpetrators and accomplices are appropriately punished, and that victims receive reparations?
- How many investigations has the State conducted since 19 July 2019 into cases of FGM and what were the outcomes of the investigations?
- What steps and commitments will the State make to prohibit marriage under the age of 18?
- What steps is the State party making to ensure that government security forces that intimidate, harass, and arbitrarily arrest and detain human rights defenders cannot act with impunity?
- How many investigations has the State conducted since 19 July 2019 into cases of human rights violations against human rights defenders and what were the outcomes of the investigations?