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## Mauritania

*Decision adopted by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at its 179th session (Geneva, 2 to 18 February 2026)*



Biram Dah Abeid, Mauritanian politician and advocate for the abolition of slavery, during a press conference in Dakar on 29 September 2016 © Seyllou / AFP

### MRT-03 – Biram Dah Abeid

#### Alleged human rights violations

- ✓ Arbitrary arrest and detentions
- ✓ Lack of due process at the investigation stage and lack of fair trial proceedings
- ✓ Violation of freedom of opinion and expression
- ✓ Failure to respect parliamentary immunity

#### A. Summary of the case

Mr. Biram Dah Abeid, President of the party *Initiative de la résurgence du mouvement abolitionniste* (Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement, IRA) was arrested at his home on 7 August 2018 and charged with “causing harm to others, inciting violence and threatening to use violence” on 13 August 2018, following a complaint filed by a journalist. Mr. Dah Abeid was held in custody without charge for a week, even though, under the Code of Criminal Procedure, the maximum period of custody in such a case cannot exceed 48 hours.

The militant campaigning of Mr. Dah Abeid – and of his party, the IRA – to combat slavery in Mauritania has reportedly been the root cause of the political and judicial harassment towards him, in an attempt to exclude him from the political scene. The complainant alleges that the charges against Mr. Dah Abeid were not supported by evidence and that it was the victim’s alliance with the Essawab political party with a view to the September 2018 legislative elections that had triggered the proceedings brought against him, the aim of which had been to invalidate his candidacy in the legislative elections and prevent him from conducting his

#### Case MRT-03

**Mauritania:** Parliament affiliated to the IPU

**Victim:** Opposition member of parliament

**Qualified complainant(s):** Section I.1(a) and (d) of the Committee Procedure (Annex I)

**Submission of complaint:** October 2018

**Recent IPU decision:** February 2024

**IPU mission(s):** - - -

**Recent Committee hearing:** Hearing with Mr. Dah Abeid at the 161st session of the Committee (January 2020)

#### Recent follow-up:

- Communications from the authorities: Letters from the Minister of Justice (February, May and June 2019)
- Communication from the complainant: January 2026
- Communications to the authorities: Letters to the Speaker of the National Assembly (November 2025)
- Communication to the complainant: January 2026

campaign freely. Mr. Dah Abeid's candidacy was nevertheless validated by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which had also confirmed his election while he was still being held in detention on 1 September 2018.

Despite being elected, Mr. Dah Abeid was kept in pretrial detention in violation of his parliamentary immunity acquired following his election and in the absence of a trial. Responding to this point in particular, the Minister of Justice explained in his letters, received in May and June 2019, that the proceedings against Mr. Dah Abeid had been initiated even before he had stood as a candidate and become a member of the National Assembly. Thus, the parliamentary immunity claimed by Mr. Dah Abeid, and which he did not acquire until after his election was confirmed, could not be retroactive. The Minister of Justice further added that the National Assembly had not requested Mr. Dah Abeid's release and had not called on the authorities to drop the charges against him as provided for in Article 50 of the Mauritanian Constitution.

On 31 December 2018, the Criminal Court sentenced Mr. Dah Abeid to six months' imprisonment, four of which were to be suspended. He was therefore immediately released because the duration of his pretrial detention had covered the length of his sentence. On his release from prison, Mr. Dah Abeid was able to resume his duties as a member of parliament by taking his seat in the National Assembly on 7 January 2019.

Mr. Dah Abeid refutes the charges against him, claiming that his conviction was politically motivated, since the complaint against him was initially rejected by the Public Prosecutor of Nouakchott West, considering it to be unfounded. The journalist who accused Mr. Dah Abeid subsequently filed the same complaint with the Public Prosecutor of Nouakchott South, who decided to prosecute him. His lawyers described the proceedings against Mr. Dah Abeid as arbitrary, especially as in a case of this nature he should have been summoned to appear of his own will. The complainant also pointed out that the case was not based on any serious evidence and that it had been withdrawn by the same journalist who had filed it, on the day the member of parliament was sentenced. Mr. Dah Abeid appealed against the conviction in order to re-establish the truth in the case, but his appeal has not yet been heard.

In May 2023 Mr. Dah Abeid was re-elected as a member of the National Assembly. He was arrested on 23 May, a few days after his election, because of comments he had made during a press conference. Mr. Dah Abeid was released on 25 May 2023 after being detained for two days at the anti-terrorist police headquarters. The prosecuting authorities did not uphold any of the charges against him. The complainant added that the National Assembly had lifted Mr. Dah Abeid's parliamentary immunity on 20 February 2024 following a request by the Minister of Justice in connection with a complaint of defamation made against him by Mohamed Ould Mouloud, the president of the political party Union of the Forces of Progress (UFP). According to the complainant, the case is still being investigated, but Mr. Dah Abeid has not been officially charged with anything. The complainant states that the judiciary's delay in examining this complaint, and the appeal lodged in 2018, is deliberate and is part of a strategy of intimidation against Mr. Dah Abeid.

In the presidential election on 29 June 2024, Mr. Dah Abeid ran as the main opposition candidate and came in second place, results that he strongly contested and described as fraudulent.

In January 2026, the complainant reported that Mr. Dah Abeid was subjected to death threats as a result of his political activism and criticism of the government. Despite requests by Mr. Dah Abeid and his lawyers to open investigations to identify those responsible and put an end to their actions, the prosecuting authorities reportedly took no measures to ensure the deputy's safety.

The National Assembly, for its part, has never responded to the Committee's requests for information.

## **B. Decision**

The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

1. *Deplores*, once again, the silence of the parliamentary authorities since the investigation of this case in 2018;
2. *Expresses its concern* about the death threats received by Mr. Dah Abeid, which endanger his physical safety and hinder the exercise of his parliamentary mandate, and about the acts of

intimidation the deputy has been subjected to;

3. *Calls upon* the Mauritanian authorities to launch a thorough inquiry immediately to identify those responsible for the death threats and put an end to their actions in order to prevent acts of violence that could have very serious consequences; and *also calls upon* the parliamentary authorities to take the necessary measures to guarantee Mr. Dah Abeid's safety and provide him with a security detail as a member of the National Assembly;
4. *Deeply regrets* that the appeal lodged by Mr. Dah Abeid against his conviction in 2018 has been given no response to date, demonstrating a flagrant denial of justice; *reiterates its call* for the judiciary authorities to close this file in view of the above elements, including the initial rejection of the complaint by the Public Prosecutor of Nouakchott West, the withdrawal of the complaint made against Mr. Dah Abeid, and in light of all the procedural irregularities, including the continued pretrial detention of Mr. Dah Abeid without charge and with no access to his lawyers and the investigating judge's decision to refer his case to the criminal court;
5. *Recalls* that, as the guardian of human rights, the National Assembly has the duty to guarantee the safety and the rights of all its members, whatever their political affiliation, and also has the power to question the judiciary about the status of legal proceedings against a member of parliament; therefore *calls on* the parliamentary authorities to exercise their role in an effective manner and to engage in constructive dialogue with the Committee, with a view to finding a definitive resolution of this case;
6. *Invites* the parliamentary authorities to provide information about the lifting of Mr. Dah Abeid's parliamentary immunity in February 2024 in the context of the complaint filed against him for defamation, in order to understand the reasons behind this decision;
7. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the competent authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
8. *Decides* to continue examining the case.