MAURITANIA

- **MRT-COLL-01:** Two parliamentarians
- **MRT-03:** Biram Dah Abeid

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Mauritania

Decision adopted by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at its 181st session (Arusha, 4–8 October 2026)



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MRT-04 – Ghame Achour Salem
MRT-05 – Mariem Cheick Samba Dieng

Alleged human rights violations

- ✓ Arbitrary arrest and detention
- ✓ Inhumane conditions of detention
- ✓ 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

Case MRT-COLL-01

Mauritania: Parliament affiliated to the IPU

Victim(s): Two female members of the opposition

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

Submission of complaint(s): April 2026

Recent IPU decision: - - -

IPU mission(s): - - -

Recent Committee hearing(s): - - -

Recent follow-up:
- Communications from the authorities: Letter from the President of the National Assembly (October 2026)
- Communication from the complainants: July 2026
- Communications to the authorities: Letters to the President of the National Assembly (May and July 2026)
- Communication to the complainants: July 2026

A. Summary of the case

This case concerns the situation of two female parliamentarians, Ms. Ghame Salem and Ms. Mariem Dieng, both members of the National Assembly of Mauritania.

According to the complainant, on 9 April 2026 Ms. Dieng posted a live video on her Facebook page in which she denounced the violence and discrimination faced by activists of Haratin descent: a community that has long been subjected to servitude and hereditary slavery by the dominant tribes in Mauritania. That same evening, Ms. Dieng was arrested by the authorities and taken into custody along with her three-month-old baby.

In reaction, Ms. Salem reportedly posted her own live video on her Facebook page in which she expressed support for her colleague and denounced Ms. Dieng's arrest as arbitrary. Ms. Salem was also arrested that same day.

On 10 April 2026, the Ministry of Justice released an official statement regarding the arrest of

Ms. Dieng and Ms. Salem. The document alleges that they had committed acts that could constitute a criminal offence.

The Ministry claimed that the live videos were an offence committed *in flagrante delicto* and that parliamentary immunity therefore did not apply. The complainant alleges that from 9 to 15 April 2026, the authorities refused to provide any information regarding the two parliamentarians' place of detention to their families or lawyers.

On 20 April 2026, the parliamentarians were charged with "deliberately insulting national symbols in digital media and spreading racist discourse with the aim of undermining civil peace and social cohesion via social media" as well as "threats and defamation, inciting gatherings intended to disturb public order, slander and inciting violence". Both were placed in pre-trial detention.

According to the complainant, neither Ms. Dieng nor Ms. Salem was allowed a confidential meeting with a lawyer after their respective arrests. The only time either woman was allowed to see her lawyer was during their hearing before the Public Prosecutor on 20 April 2026, which can hardly be considered effective legal assistance as guaranteed under the protections afforded by international human rights law.

Following a hearing on 20 April 2026, the complainant alleges that Ms. Dieng and her baby were transferred to the Police Academy detention centre, an establishment that is separate from the ordinary detention system, created under President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani primarily for the detention of political opponents. The conditions of detention in the centre are reported to be particularly concerning. Ms. Salem was reportedly transferred to the regular women's prison.

On 4 May 2026, Ms. Salem and Ms. Dieng were each sentenced to four years' imprisonment. Following appeal proceedings, on 8 July 2026 their sentences were reduced to two years' imprisonment, and they were stripped of their civil and political rights for a period of five years. The appeal sentence thus had the effect of suspending half of the prison time imposed by the first-instance court (four years).

The day after the appeal sentence was handed down, on 9 July 2026, both parliamentarians received presidential pardons and were released on 10 July 2026. According to the complainant, the pardons included a remission of both parliamentarians' prison sentences and the cancellation of all fines and court fees but did not mention the restoration of their civil and political rights.

As for the continuity of their parliamentary mandates, the Constitutional Council issued a decision on 15 July 2026 stating "that it was not possible to confirm the loss of the two deputies' status as members of the National Assembly, as the decision of the criminal section of the Court of Appeals is itself subject to appeal." According to the complainant, this meant that Ms. Salem and Ms. Dieng would retain their seats in the National Assembly until the Supreme Court issued a decision. Yet, when Ms. Salem and Ms. Dieng attempted to access their offices at the Assembly on 14 July 2026, they were prevented from doing so by the National Guard unit in charge of security at the Assembly building.

On 16 July 2026, Ms. Salem and Ms. Dieng were allowed to access the Assembly building, but the President of the National Assembly barred them from taking part in the ongoing session. Ms. Salem and Ms. Dieng refused to leave the room and decided to hold a sit-in in their offices, considering that their rights were being violated.

On 17 July 2026, the President of the National Assembly signed a decision of temporary expulsion for both parliamentarians for a period of two months because of their sit-in, considered a breach of parliamentary discipline and an attack on the institution's dignity. The decision was announced, with immediate effect, at a public session of the Assembly on 20 July 2026.

On 29 September 2026, the Supreme Court upheld the appeal sentence and confirmed that legal action could be taken against Ms. Salem and Ms. Dieng without a prior procedure to waive their parliamentary immunity, because their offences had been committed *in flagrante delicto*. The Supreme Court also upheld the revocation of their civil rights for a period of five years. On 1 October 2026, the Constitutional Council confirmed the loss of their parliamentary seats. The complainant stated that both deputies would be replaced.

In a letter dated 7 October 2026, the President of the National Assembly, Mr. Bamba Meguett, wrote that the Assembly attached great importance to its cooperation with the IPU and the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, as evidenced by the official observations on the case provided by the parliamentary authorities. He stressed that the National Assembly would meet and send copies of the relevant judicial decisions as soon as possible to give the Committee a better understanding of the situation.

In his letter, the President also stated that, in line with the principle of the separation of powers, the National Assembly had refrained from interfering in proceedings undertaken through the judiciary. He confirmed that both Ms. Salem and Ms. Dieng had received presidential pardons, but that those pardons did not remove their criminal convictions or any of the additional penalties attached thereto. The President thus did not consider that the Assembly's lack of action in the case could be viewed as a renunciation of its constitutional prerogatives.

As for the incident in which Ms. Dieng and Ms. Salem were prevented from entering the Assembly building before they officially lost their parliamentary mandates on 1 October 2026, the President stated that the measures taken with regard to the National Assembly's internal functioning and discipline should be considered in the context of events within parliament and the relevant provisions of its Rules of Procedure.

In the same letter, the President also confirmed that the replacement procedure was under way to allow Ms. Dieng and Ms. Salem's alternates to sit in the Assembly.

B. Decision

The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

1. *Notes* that the complaint concerning Ms. Dieng and Ms. Salem is admissible, considering that it: (i) was submitted in due form by qualified complainants under Section I.1.(d) of the Procedure for the examination and treatment of complaints (Annex I of the revised Rules and Practices of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians); (ii) concerns two incumbent members of parliament at the time of the alleged facts; and (iii) concerns allegations of arbitrary arrest and detention, inhumane conditions of detention, lack of due process at the investigation stage and lack of fair trial proceedings, violation of freedom of opinion and expression and failure to respect parliamentary immunity, allegations that fall within the Committee's mandate;

2. *Thanks* the President of the National Assembly for the information provided in his letter; and *welcomes* the willingness of the parliamentary authorities to continue cooperating with the Committee towards a satisfactory resolution of the case;

3. *Takes note* of the presidential pardons accorded to Ms. Dieng and Ms. Salem, which allowed them to be released; *regrets*, however, that the pardons did not restore their civil and political rights;

4. *Deplores* that Ms. Dieng and Ms. Salem were prosecuted and convicted for social media posts that appear to be protected by their right to freedom of expression; and *underscores* in that regard that freedom of expression is a fundamental right and central to democracy, that it is essential to members of parliament and includes not only speech, opinions and expressions that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive, but also those that may offend, shock or disturb others;

5. *Expresses concern* that both individuals concerned in this case are women parliamentarians and that the legal action taken against them, the revocation of their civil and political rights and the subsequent loss of their seats in parliament could have a chilling effect on the political participation of Mauritanian women and their ability to fully carry out their parliamentary mandates and express their opinions publicly in a context where women parliamentarians are exposed to specific forms of violence, intimidation and pressure because of their involvement in politics;

6. *Looks forward* to receiving copies of the judicial decisions from the parliamentary authorities in order to understand the arguments justifying Ms. Salem and Ms. Dieng's criminal convictions and the loss of their parliamentary mandates;

7. *Regrets* that Ms. Salem, Ms. Dieng and Ms. Dieng's baby were detained in unsatisfactory conditions and were not allowed to meet with their lawyers or families immediately upon being placed in detention;

8. *Stresses* that the accelerated procedure for *flagrante delicto* offences should not prevent the National Assembly, while respecting the principle of the separation of powers, from carrying out its monitoring role as the guardian of its members' fundamental rights, including the right to defence, the right to a fair trial and the right to conditions of detention that meet the standards of human dignity and applicable international norms;

9. *Is also concerned* by decision of the President of the National Assembly to temporarily expel Ms. Salem and Ms. Dieng from parliament before they officially lost their parliamentary mandates for having protested the authorities' refusal to allow them to access the Assembly building; and *wishes* to receive more information in that regard;

10. *Decides* to continue examining the case.

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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

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

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

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.