



One Hundred and Fourteenth Congress
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

January 12, 2015

Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz
President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania
c/o Embassy of Mauritania
2129 Leroy Place NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear President Abdel Aziz,

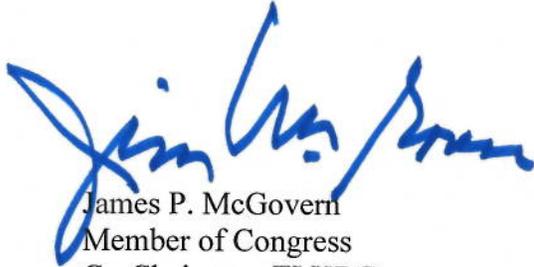
As members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, we write to express our deep concerns about the situation of noted politician and anti-slavery advocate Biram Dah Abeid and his associates, recently imprisoned and currently on trial for leading an unregistered organization, disturbing public order and resisting arrest. Mr. Abeid appeared before the Commission in July of 2014 to speak about his work against slavery in Mauritania. We are particularly concerned that Mr. Abeid's current imprisonment may be tied to his anti-slavery activism. We ask that his and his colleagues' ongoing trial be conducted in an independent, fair, and transparent manner, with full due process guarantees.

As you know, the United States and Mauritania have worked together on a number of important issues since democratic elections were held in 2009, including countering terrorism, promoting food security, and advancing human rights. In spite of some progress, slavery continues to be an ongoing concern within Mauritania, and anti-slavery activists like Mr. Abeid have not only been unable to register their organizations with the government, but they have also consistently been subject to arrest for their work within those organizations.

In this most recent case, we understand that Mr. Abeid and five of his colleagues have been detained since their arrest in November. We appreciate that two of the five charges against Mr. Abeid have been dropped, but we remain concerned that his prosecution may be related to his advocacy on behalf of enslaved and formerly enslaved Mauritians, in an effort to silence his calls for accelerated reforms. Some press sources

have reported on meetings between members of the courts and the executive branch regarding this case, which could compromise the integrity of the trials that are underway. For these reasons we encourage you do all that is in your power to ensure that Mr. Abeid and his colleagues' trials are allowed to proceed in a transparent, fair, and independent manner so that they may be able to return to their vital work without any further impediments.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress
Co-Chairman, TLHRC



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress