



November 11, 2016

President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz  
Islamic Republic of Mauritania  
Ministère du Secrétariat Général à la Présidence  
B.P.184 Nouakchott, Mauritanie  
Fax: +222 525 85 52

Dear President Abdel Aziz,

The organizations signing below write to express their concern for the life of blogger Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mohamed, also known as [Mohamed Ould M'Kaitir](#). We also ask that your government do everything it can to secure his release.

Mauritania's Supreme Court is expected to review Mohamed's case on November 15. The blogger faces the death penalty following his conviction in 2014 on blasphemy charges stemming from an article he published on the news website *Aqlame* on December 31, 2013, titled, "Religion, religiosity, and craftsmen," which criticized Mauritania's caste system.

Mohamed has repeatedly repented. On January 11, 2014, he issued a [statement](#) from prison denying that he intended to insult the Prophet Mohamed. In an unsuccessful, April 21, 2016, appeal, he said that he had made [a mistake](#), and asked for forgiveness.

Article 306 of the Penal Code gives the Supreme Court power to [cancel or reduce](#) his sentence to a maximum of two years in jail and up to 60,000 ouguiya (US\$173) if it [determines that](#) he has repented. We hope the court will order Mohamed's release, given his demonstrated contrition.

Regardless of the court's ruling, we ask you to instruct your government to ensure his physical safety inside and outside prison. Since his imprisonment two years ago, preachers have called for his death, according to [press reports](#). Those who have spoken out on his behalf have themselves been labeled as infidels and received violent threats, according to [news accounts](#).

In April 2014 you [told](#) reporters that you did not believe Mohamed was aware of the seriousness of what he had written. In this spirit, we ask you to acknowledge his repentance and ensure his safe release from prison.

**CHAIRMAN**

Sandra Mims Rowe

**HONORARY CHAIRMAN**

Terry Anderson

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Joel Simon

**DIRECTORS**

Andrew Alexander

Franz Allina

Christiane Amanpour ABC NEWS

Dean Baquet THE NEW YORK TIMES

John S. Carroll

Kathleen Carroll THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rajiv Chandrasekaran THE WASHINGTON POST

Sheila Coronel COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Josh Friedman

Anne Garrels

James C. Goodale DEBEVOISE & PLIMPTON

Cheryl Gould NBC NEWS

Arianna Huffington AOL HUFFINGTON POST MEDIA GROUP

Charlayne Hunter-Gault

Gwen Ifill PBS

Jonathan Klein GETTY IMAGES

Jane Kramer THE NEW YORKER

Mhamed Krichen AL-JAZEERA

David Laventhol

Lara Logan CBS NEWS

Rebecca MacKinnon

Kati Marton

Michael Massing

Geraldine Fabrikant Metz THE NEW YORK TIMES

Victor Navasky THE NATION

Andres Oppenheimer THE MIAMI HERALD

Burl Osborne FREEDOM COMMUNICATIONS

Clarence Page CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Norman Pearlstine BLOOMBERG L.P.

Ahmed Rashid

Gene Roberts PHILIP MERRILL COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

María Teresa Ronderos SEMANA.COM

Diane Sawyer ABC NEWS

David Schlesinger THOMSON REUTERS

Paul C.Tash TAMPA BAY TIMES

Jacob Weisberg THE SLATE GROUP

Mark Whitaker CNN WORLDWIDE

Brian Williams NBC NEWS

Matthew Winkler BLOOMBERG NEWS

330 7th Avenue, 11th Floor  
New York, NY 10001 USA  
PHONE: +1 (212) 465-1004  
FAX: +1 (212) 465-9568  
info@cpj.org

www.cpj.org



Committee to Protect Journalists

Sincerely,

Joel Simon  
Executive Director  
Committee to Protect Journalists

Christophe Deloire  
Secretary general  
Reporters Without Borders

Karin D. Karlekar  
Director of Free Expression At Risk  
Programs  
Pen America

Maran Turner  
Executive Director  
Freedom Now

**CC:**

Commissioner for Human rights,  
Humanitarian action and relations with civil society  
Ms Aichetou Mint M'Haiham  
Commissariat aux Droits de l'Homme,  
à l'Action humanitaire et aux Relations avec la société civile  
B.P. 1258 Nouakchott Mauritanie  
Fax: + 222 45 29 21 55  
[presidente@cndhmauritaniae.mr](mailto:presidente@cndhmauritaniae.mr)

His Excellency Mohamed Lemine El Haycen,  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the United Nations  
116 East 38th Street New York, N.Y. 10016  
Fax: (212) 252-0175  
Email: [mauritaniamission@gmail.com](mailto:mauritaniamission@gmail.com)

S.E. Ambassadeur Mme Salka Mint Bilal Yamar  
Mission permanente de la Mauritanie auprès de l'Office des Nations unies à  
Genève, Suisse.  
Fax: +41 22 906 18 41  
Email: [mission.mauritania@ties.itu.int](mailto:mission.mauritania@ties.itu.int)