



FREEDOM NOW

Honorary Chair  
The Most Reverend Desmond M. Tutu

**November 3, 2015**

**Media Release**

**Freedom Now Asks Special Rapporteur to Inquire About Health of Imprisoned Mauritanian Activist Biram Dah Abeid**

Washington, D.C. – Freedom Now has sent a formal communication to Mr. Dainius Pūras, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, regarding the Government of Mauritania’s denial of urgently needed medical care to imprisoned activist Biram Dah Abeid.

Mr. Abeid is an abolitionist, politician, and president of Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement – Mauritania, an organization dedicated to ending slavery in Mauritania. In this capacity, he has organized numerous public demonstrations, hunger strikes, sit-ins, boycotts, and marches to empower networks of freed slaves and their allies. Since 2008, Mr. Abeid’s activism has resulted in the liberation of thousands of slaves.

Mr. Abeid and nine other activists were arrested on November 11, 2014 for participating in a caravan travelling throughout Mauritania to inform villagers about their rights. Mr. Abeid and his colleagues were charged with “illegal assembly and rebellion,” “encouraging rebellion,” and “refusing to comply with the orders of administrative authorities.” On January 15, 2015, Mr. Abeid and two other activists were convicted and sentenced to two years in prison, despite the lack of witnesses or evidence presented at trial.

During his time in prison, Mr. Abeid’s health has declined at an alarming rate. He has been confined indoors in stifling heat and denied access to nourishing food and clean water. Mr. Abeid’s family had to relocate to a city near the prison so that they could bring him food at their own expense. These dire prison conditions and lack of appropriate medical treatment have led to Mr. Abeid’s very poor health, resulting in malnourishment, vision and dental problems, and a possible herniated discs. Mr. Abeid’s mobility has become significantly restricted as simply standing up is excruciatingly painful. To make matters worse, prison officials have refused to heed recommendations made by outside physicians or move Mr. Abeid to a hospital.

“The treatment afforded Mr. Abeid is deplorable,” said Freedom Now Executive Director Maran Turner. “We ask the Special Rapporteur to inquire about Mr. Abeid’s health and call on the government of Mauritania to provide him with urgent medical care.”

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*Our mission is to free prisoners of conscience through focused legal, political and public relations advocacy efforts.*