

Calls for release of Mauritania blogger Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mohamed

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has written to the Mauritania government to protest the "wrongful imprisonment of blogger Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mohamed, who remains in jail despite the fact that he was scheduled to be released".



A Mauritanian court [sentenced](#) Mohamed to death in December 2014 on apostasy-related charges, after he published an article in which he criticised the Mauritanian caste system. After the blogger repented, an appeals court in November 2017 [reduced](#) Mohamed's death sentence to two years in prison and ordered him to pay a fine of 60,000 Mauritanian ouguiya (\$172).

Having spent more than three years in prison at the time of this verdict, Mohamed was scheduled to be released. Yet he remains in government custody.

In [December 2017](#), CPJ, along with other non-governmental organisations, sent a letter to Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, calling on the government to immediately release Mohamed, who is also known by the name of Mohamed Cheikh Ould M'khaitir, and take steps to guarantee his safety upon release.

CPJ is therefore deeply troubled by President Abdel Aziz's recent response to the blogger's detention. In December 2018, the president [told](#) French daily *Le Monde*, "He [Mohamed] has been tried and he should normally be released. But a large majority of the population opposes it. His release may pose problems of security to our country. For this reason, we are keeping him until we find a solution."

Mohamed's prolonged detention is taking a serious toll on his health. His sister told CPJ that the blogger suffers from physical ailments, such as acute pain in his head and body, in addition to psychological trauma. A doctor saw Mohamed and, despite his professional recommendation for medical care, Mauritanian authorities still have not granted Mohamed access to treatment, according to his sister.

CPJ wrote: "We hope to work with you to secure Mohamed's deserved release and to ensure his safety after his release. Swift action would contribute to creating an environment conducive to freedom of the press in Mauritania. We are available to meet you or a representative of your government at your convenience to elaborate on our concerns and recommendations. We look forward to your response."

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