

27 July 2017

## **Mauritania: Passport of human rights defender Biram Dah Abeid confiscated**

On 24 July 2017, the Mauritanian police confiscated the passport of human rights defender **Biram Dah Abeid**.

[Biram Dah Abeid](#) is a human rights defender and President of **Initiative pour la Résurgence du Mouvement Abolitionniste - IRA (Initiative for the Resurgence of an Abolitionist Movement)** which works for the eradication of slavery in Mauritania. In 2013, Biram Dah Abeid received the Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk. He has also received the 2013 United Nations Human Rights Prize, the 2015 Human Rights Tulip Award, the 2016 James Lawson Award and the 2016 US State Department TIP Hero Award for his human rights activities.

On 24 July 2017, a friend of Biram Dah Abeid, Sid'Ahmed, was couriering the human rights defender's passport from Dakar, Senegal, to Nouakchott, Mauritania, in order to assist the human rights defender to obtain a visa for a pilgrimage to Mecca. At the border crossing, Mauritanian police confiscated the passport and arrested Sid'Ahmed who was subsequently released, but Biram Dah Abeid's passport was not returned.

Biram Dah Abeid had initially planned to travel to Europe with his wife and children for a holiday. However, Mauritanian authorities refused to issue passports for his children without providing a reason. Unable to go to Europe, Biram Dah Abeid and his wife decided to spend their holidays in Dakar, Senegal. The human rights defender decided to travel to Mecca for a pilgrimage and asked his close friend Sid'Ahmed to travel from Dakar to Nouakchott, Mauritania in order to courier his passport and obtain a visa for the pilgrimage, while he remained in Dakar.

Front Line Defenders expresses concern at the confiscation of Biram Dah Abeid's passport, and the refusal of the authorities to issue passports to his children, which it believes is directly linked to his peaceful and legitimate work to eradicate slavery in Mauritania.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Mauritania to:**

1. Immediately return Biram Dah Abeid's passport, as Front Line Defenders believes it has been confiscated solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Mauritania and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.