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Anti-Slavery International thematic report on slavery in Mauritania for the UN Human Rights Committee, 107th session, 11- 28 March 2013. Adoption of the List of Issues on the initial report of Mauritania.

1. INTRODUCTION

Anti-Slavery International, in consultative status with ECOSOC since 1950, was set up in 1839 and is the oldest international human rights organisation in the world. Today Anti-Slavery International works to eradicate all contemporary forms of slavery, including bonded labour, forced labour, trafficking in human beings, descent based slavery, the worst forms of child labour, and forced marriage.

This thematic report on slavery to the UN Human Rights Committee, prior to the adoption of the List of Issues on Mauritania, provides information on Mauritania's implementation of article 8 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Slavery based on descent remains widespread in Mauritania, predominantly affecting the Hratine ethnic group.¹ Those who are subjected to this practice live under the direct control of their masters, are treated as property, and receive no payment for their work. They face systematic verbal and physical abuse. Girls and women are sexually abused and raped by their masters. The children of slaves are also considered the masters' property and, like other slaves, can be rented out, loaned, given as gifts in marriage or inherited by the masters' children.

Slavery continues despite national legislation criminalising the practice and international obligations to eradicate the practice, including under Article 8 of the ICCPR. Anti-slavery legislation is not being enforced, and the Government has yet to implement a comprehensive national strategy or action plan to eradicate slavery. There are many indications of official resistance to acknowledging and ending the practice of slavery.

2. ARTICLE 8 (PROHIBITION OF SLAVERY): SLAVERY BASED ON DESCENT IN MAURITANIA

2.1 Persistence of slavery in Mauritania

¹ The Hratine, or Black Maures, make up the predominate 'slave caste' and are descended from sedentary black ethnic groups along the Senegal river who were historically raided, enslaved and assimilated by the Berber Arabs, also known as Beidan or White Maures. Hratines make up approximately 40% of the population, and a smaller proportion of this group still live in slavery. The White Maures form the ethnic elite in Mauritania and control the economy, government, military and police. Slavery is practised on a lesser scale by other ethnic groups in the country.

Mauritanian society is highly stratified along racial and ethnic lines, with slaves and the descendants of slaves assigned the lowest status. Slave status is passed on through the generations: some people continue to live as slaves to their masters, while others bear the social status because their ancestors were enslaved, but no longer have ties to their family's traditional masters.

It is not known how many people in Mauritania still live in slavery today, but it is clear that it is widespread, predominantly affecting the Hratine ethnic group². Those who live in slavery are under the direct control of their masters, treated as property³, and receive no payment for their work. Men and children typically herd animals (camels, cows, and goats) or work in the fields. Women are generally given domestic chores, such as fetching water, gathering firewood, pounding millet, preparing food, moving tents made of heavy animal skin and looking after the master's children. They usually live in extreme poverty and face systematic verbal and physical abuse. Girls and women are sexually abused and raped by their masters. The children of slaves are also considered the masters' property and, like other slaves, can be rented out, loaned, given as gifts in marriage or inherited by the masters' children.

In certain cases, slaves work on their master's land and provide a percentage of the crops to him. This system may be considered as serfdom as the slaves do not live under the master's control on a daily basis. However, the master still exerts rights of ownership over them and can demand that work is done for him without payment.

Slaves are not permitted to have any possessions, as they are considered to be possessions themselves. As such they are denied inheritance rights and ownership of land and other resources. When a slave marries, the dowry is taken by the master and if a slave dies their property can be claimed by the master.

“We worked for many different people. Our master, a man named Cheikh Ahmed Ould Siyam, would rent us out to others. I can't even tell you how many different people we worked for. I used to herd camels and sheep, and my sister did domestic work. We worked from a very young age. As soon as we could walk, we were put to work. We were told that we were separated from our mother as soon as we were weaned, as she was rented out to another owner. We didn't really see her after that. We later heard she died. We also have two little brothers owned by the same master, but they weren't with us at the time we left. One master we were rented to was called Mohamed Ould Sidan. He didn't beat us, but he didn't treat us well. He never gave us anything to eat; we were always hungry. I tried escaping back to my first master, but he just sent me back again.

The last master we had was called Inagi Ould Siti. He used to beat both me and my sister, but he was especially cruel to my sister. Sometimes he would

² The Hratine, or Black Maures, make up the predominate 'slave caste' and are descended from sedentary black ethnic groups along the Senegal river who were historically raided, enslaved and assimilated by the Berber Arabs, also known as Beidan or White Maures. Hratines make up approximately 40% of the population, and a smaller proportion of this group still live in slavery. The White Maures form the ethnic elite in Mauritania and control the economy, government, military and police. Slavery is practised on a lesser scale by other ethnic groups in the country.

³ Anti-Slavery International refers to this system as descent-based slavery. Those affected clearly fall within the definition of the 1926 *Slavery Convention* as they have a status where their master exercises “any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership” over them.

tell our first master that we weren't good enough, and then he would come and beat us too. So I decided to take my sister and escape. We slept in the day and walked at night. We would sleep far from any village, for fear of being seen by any Beidan who would guess that we had escaped our masters. We stayed up in trees, well hidden. Finally, a policeman [a relative of an SOS Esclaves representative] found out that we were nearby. He found us and took us to the police station. He wrote down our story and then said – now you are free. You can go where you want now. But we didn't have anywhere to go. So we ended up staying with the SOS representative. Since then we've been thinking about our little brothers who are still with their masters. We are worried about them.”⁴

Numerous international bodies have documented the persistence of slavery in Mauritania. Following a mission to Mauritania in November 2009, the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Gulnara Shahinian, concluded that “de facto slavery in Mauritania continues to be a slow, invisible process which results in the ‘social death’ of many thousands of women and men”.⁵ The Special Rapporteur reported that she had met with victims of slavery who described situations “whereby they were completely controlled by their owner using physical and/or mental threats; could not independently make any decision related to their lives without his or her master’s permission; were treated as commodities – for example, girls being given away as wedding presents; lacked freedom of movement; and were forced to work long hours with very little or no remuneration. These victims had escaped slavery and talked about the relatives that they had left behind who still live in slavery.”⁶

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its 2009 Concluding Observations on Mauritania, expressed its serious concern “over reports indicating the continued existence of caste based slavery” and urged the Government to “take all necessary measures to eradicate slavery and in particular to ensure that perpetrators of such practices are held accountable in accordance with the law.”⁷ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in its 2012 Concluding Observations on Mauritania, expressed its concern “that a large number of persons and families are employed in situations of de facto slavery, in spite of the adoption in 2007 of the Slavery Act” and at “the very low number of prosecutions under the Act despite the fact that it entered into force in 2007.” It urged the State party “to take vigorous measures with a view to eliminate slavery and to implement the provisions of the Slavery Act.”⁸

“I grew up working for a family. I was born into the family – my mother worked for them before me. It was hard work. I had to go out and look after

⁴ 14 and 9 year old girls. One of several case studies documented by Anti-Slavery International in Mauritania, February 2012

⁵ *Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, Gulnara Shahinian, Mission to Mauritania. (A/HRC/15/20/Add.2) Geneva, 24 August 2010*

⁶ *Ibid*, paragraph 34, page 10

⁷ The Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations: Mauritania. (CRC/C/MRT/CO/2), Fifty first session, Geneva, 17 June 2009

⁸ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on the initial report of Mauritania, forty ninth session, 12-30 November 2012, paragraph 13

the goats in the day and then come back and do all the housework. I didn't always get enough to eat. I was hit and beaten regularly.

My children all grew up working for the family too. Two of my girls are the daughters of the master's eldest son. He said he would behead me if I ever told anyone it was him. When I had my fourth child, a baby girl, the family wouldn't let me take her out to the fields with me. They said I couldn't look after my baby and look after the goats as well. I came home one day and found that the baby had been left out in the sun all day. She had died and her body was being eaten by ants. No one had looked after her. I asked the sons of the family if they would help me bury her, but they just said it wasn't their problem. I had to bury her myself, with my hands. There were no burial rites. I buried her how you'd bury a dog.

One day someone from SOS-Esclaves learned I was a slave in the family. I was out collecting watermelons. He greeted me but went off without saying who he was, but he told the police about me. Then someone else warned the master that the police would come round, so I was sent to another home. They told me to say that I was a relative who came to visit them occasionally. They even gave me cooking pots that I could say were mine, and they gave my children school books to make it look like they were at school. My new master was a colonel. The policemen saluted him when they came round. He told them I was from his extended family. He showed them his goats and said they were mine. The police asked me the same questions. They had a camera; they were filming me. I said the same thing, like I'd been told to.

I stayed with this new family for a while, but I was hungry and so were my children. Someone came and offered me work in his field. But the Colonel wouldn't let me go. He said I belonged to him now. Later, the Colonel said that he wasn't happy living in such close quarters with me and my girls, without us being family. I understood that he wanted to marry me, but I was already pregnant at the time. When he learned this, he decided he would marry my eldest daughter instead. This was a few years ago. She was very young. She cried and cried. Well, he called it marriage, but there was no dowry, no ceremony, nothing. It was just a way to abuse her. He used to make me watch him rape her at gunpoint. He raped me too, in front of my two daughters, threatening us all with his gun. He did this on several occasions.

Then my daughter became pregnant. But he didn't want his wife to find out that he had 'married' this young girl, so he went and found another slave to marry her instead. I told this man that he should be careful, as my daughter was already pregnant with the Colonel's child. When the Colonel found out I had warned the slave off marrying her, he was very angry. He made us get in his car and started shouting and insulting us, and then he started driving out up and over the dunes, fast. I knew he was trying to make her miscarry. A few days later, she became very ill. Even though he had told the Hratine neighbours not to help her, some of the neighbours took her to a hospital in Atar. She gave birth there, but the child was stillborn.”⁹

⁹ One of several case studies documented by Anti-Slavery International in Mauritania, March 2011

A range of practices also persist in Mauritania affecting people of slave status who no longer live in slavery. These include the denial of their inheritance rights, land expropriation, and the abduction of children of slave status to serve as herdsmen for their former masters. Mauritania's stratified caste-based society means that those of slave status still live with stigma and discrimination, and as such are mainly politically and socio-economically marginalised.

2.2 The Government response – legal and policy framework

As stated in the initial report by the State Party, there is a national legal framework in place criminalizing slavery.¹⁰

Law no. 025/2003 on Trafficking of Persons criminalised the recruitment, transport and transfer of persons by threat or force for sexual and economic exploitation, including forced labour or services, but without explicit reference to slavery.

In 2007, the Government of Mauritania passed a law criminalising slavery and slavery-like practices (law no. 048-2007). The legislation defines slavery as the exercise of one or all of the attributes of ownership rights over another person and makes it punishable with prison sentences of between five and ten years and a fine of between half a million and one million Mauritanian Ouguiya (MRO) (US\$2,100-4,201¹¹). It also defines as ‘crimes of slavery’: reducing someone to slavery; inciting someone to relinquish their freedom; and inciting a person to allow someone under their control or guardianship to be reduced to slavery. The legislation also codifies ‘offences of slavery’, including appropriating goods, products or earnings resulting from the labour of a slave; harming the physical integrity of a slave, or denying the child of a slave access to education. These are punishable with prison sentences of between six months and two years and a fine of between 50,000 and 200,000 MRO (US\$210-840). The Law provides for assistance and monetary compensation to those released from slavery or slavery-like practices and criminalizes practices such as the sexual exploitation of female slaves by their masters and ‘seeking to justify slavery’. In addition, those who do not investigate a denunciation of any slavery-like practice brought to their attention shall be liable to a prison sentence and a fine. The Government reported to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) that a vast public-awareness programme and campaign was conducted about the Law’s goals and content.¹²

On 29 November 2012, the Council of Ministers adopted a draft law to punish slavery and torture as crimes against humanity. This law, which would mean that those convicted of these offences receive more severe penal sanctions than at present, will now be put to Parliament for adoption.

In 2009, the Commission on Human Rights, Humanitarian Action and Relations with Civil Society established the Programme for the Eradication of Vestiges of Slavery (PESE). According to the State Party report, PESE aims to reduce socioeconomic

¹⁰ Examen des rapports présentés par les États parties en application de l’article 40 du Pacte, Rapports initiaux des États parties, Mauritanie, CCPR/C/MRT/1, 13 April 2012

¹¹ All currency conversions as of July 2012

¹² ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Individual Observation concerning Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29), Mauritania, Published 2010

inequalities by improving livelihood conditions and empowerment of people affected by slavery, and has a budget of 1 billion MRO (US\$3,400,000).¹³

In 2010, an office of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) opened in Nouakchott. It has since focused on developing a ‘road map’ to ending slavery and plans to work with the government to implement the necessary steps. However, at the time of writing in December 2012, the road map has not yet been finalized or published.

2.3 Obstacles to the eradication of slavery

Flaws in the 2007 Law

While the adoption of the 2007 Law was a landmark in efforts to address slavery, there are several flaws. The burden of proof lies with the victim; it is they who have to demonstrate that they are slaves. An investigation cannot be pursued unless a slave files a complaint; it does not allow human rights organisations to file a civil or criminal case on behalf of a victim of slavery. The nature of descent-based slavery in Mauritania is such that victims have been indoctrinated over generations into accepting their status as possessions of their masters and it is therefore extremely difficult for them to pursue their own legal challenges against their masters in court. In addition, some slavery-related practices such as forced marriage, serfdom and debt bondage are not included as offences under the law.

A failure to enforce the 2007 Law

Enforcement of the 2007 Law has been extremely poor. There appears to be resistance to applying this law at various levels of the administration, particularly since the change in government in August 2008, when Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz replaced President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi in a coup d’état. To date, there has been just one conviction under this law, in November 2011, despite the fact that many victims have initiated legal proceedings against their masters. This individual was released on bail pending his appeal of the conviction, without consulting or informing the plaintiffs. The appeal is scheduled to be heard on 23 December 2012.

Anti-Slavery International and SOS Esclaves, a leading Mauritanian anti-slavery organization, have engaged the services of a lawyer for victims in nine slavery cases. In most of these cases, charges were brought using the 2003 trafficking law rather than the 2007 Law against slavery, due to resistance to using the 2007 legislation. These cases, in addition to others documented by human rights organisations, demonstrate the failure of the authorities to ensure that those responsible for slavery are prosecuted. The cases were beset with lengthy delays during investigation and prosecution stages. Many cases are dismissed (declared *non-suit*) – where the Procureur de la République (State Prosecutor) decides that there is insufficient evidence to proceed with the prosecution. When convictions were achieved, the sentences were entirely insufficient given the severity of the crimes. For example:

- Mbaraka mt Mbarek Salem and her family brought charges against their alleged master in July 2007. The case was sent to court for prosecution but the accused was not present; the police said they could not arrest him as he lives 50km east of the Malian border. The Prosecutor requested an international arrest warrant; the

¹³ Examen des rapports présentés par les États parties en application de l’article 40 du Pacte, Rapports initiaux des États parties, Mauritanie, CCPR/C/MRT/1, 13 April 2012, paragraph 107

presiding judge promised to consider the request, but as of July 2012, no further action has been taken, even though SOS Esclaves' lawyer has pursued the case, highlighting that the accused is also frequently in Mauritania.

- Mbarka Mint Kwoida escaped her master in 2008 and went to Bassiknou. She filed many complaints to the Bassiknou police, along with other former slaves, requesting that they locate and release family members who were still in slavery. In 2012, she saw her former master in a camp for Malian refugees and informed the police. The police did not follow procedure and instead took the man to see the *Hakem* (local councillor). He was released after he told the *Hakem* that he did not know Mbarka. Anti-slavery activists took Mbarka to Nouakchott where she had a meeting with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice. The Prime Minister ordered regional officials to locate and arrest the man, and after a lengthy delay he was arrested in September 2012. However, his trial took place without Mbarka and her lawyer being informed or involved, and he was released after being ordered to pay a fine of 50,000 MRO (US\$170) to Mbarka.
- Brake Ould Neini brought charges against his alleged master in August 2007. The case was dismissed, which was appealed by the Prosecutor in May 2010. A settlement of 260,000 MRO (US\$887) was agreed; finally a cow and a calf were given instead of the money.
- Aza mt Fatma brought charges against her alleged master. The case was sent to court in July 2010, but as of December 2012, no further proceedings have taken place.
- In December 2010, a female government employee who was allegedly holding two children in slavery was arrested. She was prosecuted on charges of child exploitation, a lesser crime than slavery, and convicted and sentenced to six months imprisonment in January 2011. However, she was not imprisoned immediately due to a technical error. Finally, she spent just 12 days in prison before being released on bail and then acquitted by the Court of Appeals of Nouakchott in March 2011¹⁴.
- In April 2011, three women were charged for slavery when activists identified three young girls as their slaves. However, they were all acquitted after a trial held just three days after the confirmation of charges hearing. The prosecution lawyers had not even had sufficient time to study the case files. The Court was almost exclusively composed of members of the same clan as the accused.¹⁵
- In 2011, two victims of slavery came forward and provided testimonies detailing how they had been held as slaves. However, when they tried to press charges, the Procureur de la République decided that there was insufficient evidence to proceed with the prosecution. The first case is currently under appeal; in the second case, the young woman who had attempted to press charges succumbed to pressure and returned to her alleged masters¹⁶.
- In November 2011, Ahmed Ould Hassine was the first person to be convicted under the 2007 Law, for holding two boys (aged 11 and 13) in slavery since they were born. He was sentenced to just two years imprisonment and ordered to pay damages of 840,000 MRO (US\$2,816) to the older boy and 240,000 MRO (US\$804) to his younger brother. However, Hassine appealed his conviction, and

¹⁴ United States Department of State, *2011 Trafficking in Persons Report - Mauritania*, June 2011

¹⁵ SOS-Esclaves, *Note d'alerte*, 22 April 2011.

¹⁶ Anti-Slavery International interview with Aminétou Mint Moctar, 7 August 2011.

in March 2012 the Supreme Court released him on bail, pending his appeal hearing. The appeal hearing is scheduled to take place on 23 December.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Slavery noted cases where slavery was reported to the relevant authorities but then reclassified and filed under a different name such as “inheritance or land dispute”, or were not pursued owing to insufficient documentary evidence or because the person was put under pressure to retract the claim by her extended family, master or sometimes the local authorities. Also, that the police and the courts have shown a reluctance to follow up allegations brought to their attention either because of lack of sufficient knowledge of the law or simply pressure from certain communities or groups. Finally, that while the law provides for criminal penalties for authorities who fail to act, prosecutions under this provision will likely rest with the same authorities responsible for acting on slavery complaints.¹⁷

The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, in its 2010 Observation on Mauritania’s compliance with ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour, noted that “...according to the information available, it would not appear that victims are able to assert their rights effectively.” It reminded the Government of its obligation “to ensure that penalties imposed by law for the exaction of forced labour are really adequate and strictly enforced” and requested it “to take the appropriate measures to ensure that victims are effectively in a position to turn to the police and the judicial authorities with a view to asserting their rights and that investigations are conducted in a rapid, effective and impartial manner.”¹⁸

Deficiencies in the PESE programme

The Government has stated that PESE has had a budget of 1 billion MRO (US \$3,400,000). However, no details on how the funds have been allocated or spent appear to have been published. SOS Esclaves is aware of several victims of slavery who have received small sums of money, either in the form of a one-off payment or an ongoing small monthly payment. The financial assistance to victims has been wholly insufficient in meeting the full range of their needs. Victims are not systematically supported long-term, and the programme does not provide other forms of assistance that they typically require, such as psychosocial interventions, vocational training or legal assistance. The programme has not been equipped with the necessary financial or resources to address slavery adequately. It has little capacity for outreach to monitor and identify victims in a systematic and widespread manner. Moreover, the programme refers to the ‘vestiges’ of slavery rather than slavery itself.

While the State Party report claims that the programme has a participatory approach to implementation, and is implemented in close collaboration with other programmes and projects in the same area of intervention¹⁹, Anti-Slavery International and SOS Esclaves are aware of no such consultation or collaboration with civil society and anti-slavery organizations. Furthermore, it is of concern that PESE appears to be

¹⁷ Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, Mission to Mauritania, *op.cit.*, paragraphs 91- 98, pp 19-20

¹⁸ ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Individual Observation concerning Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29), Mauritania, Published 2010

¹⁹ Examen des rapports présentés par les États parties en application de l’article 40 du Pacte, Rapports initiaux des États parties, Mauritanie, CCPR/C/MRT/1, 13 April 2012, paragraph 109

staffed solely by individuals of the traditional ‘slave owning’ ethnic group (the White Maures), and has no representatives from the Hratine community, the group predominantly affected by slavery.

The need for a national strategy and action plan to combat slavery

No known steps have been taken by the Government to assess the nature and extent of either slavery or slavery-related practices, which would enable it to identify the causes and to develop a strategy for the eradication of such practices. The Government needs to establish an inter-agency body (which includes different government departments, members of law enforcement, the judiciary, the labour inspectorate, civil society, the National Human Rights Commission, etc.) to develop a national action plan against slavery and slavery-like practices. One of the first action points should be to carry out research to determine the number of people who are affected by slavery nationally. The national action plan should include measures to compensate former slaves and help them achieve their long term economic independence. Furthermore, such programmes need to be dovetailed with initiatives which address discriminatory attitudes towards individuals or communities that are seen as having slave status.

A failure to fully acknowledge the slavery problem

The Government of Mauritania has officially acknowledged that ‘vestiges’ or ‘consequences’ of slavery exist (*les séquelles de l’esclavage*). However, the slavery problem in Mauritania is far more than an issue of ‘vestiges’ or ‘consequences’, it is the continued existence of descent-based slavery, whereby people are born into slavery and treated as property by their masters. Despite extensive evidence of this practice, the Government has frequently denied the existence of slavery. In a speech given by President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz on 5 August 2011, he claimed that slavery only exists in the minds of those who wish to exploit the poverty of others for their own gain.²⁰ During the Universal Periodic Review of Mauritania in November 2010, the delegation “refuted the notion that slavery-like practices persisted.”²¹ In a December 2011 CNN interview about slavery, Minister of Rural Development, Brahim Ould M’Bareck Ould Med El Moctar, stated “There is a phenomenon to which you are probably alluding, that has existed in Mauritania that has existed in other countries, which is slavery. And it is abolished in all communities, and criminalized today by our government. Therefore, there is absolutely no more problem of that in Mauritania. All people are free in Mauritania and this phenomenon no longer exists.”²² Conversely, human rights and anti-slavery organisations report being subjected to harassment, and even arrest and detention for protests against slavery.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While the 2007 Law criminalising slavery was a historic step forward towards tackling slavery in Mauritania, it has not been enforced. Slavery is still commonplace,

²⁰ Tahalil newspaper, 7 August 2011: ‘Sur la question de l’esclavage il a été très explicite: « L’esclavage n’existe plus. Il existe seulement dans les esprits qui veulent exploiter la misère de certains pour leur servir de tremplin. »’ <http://www.journaltahalil.com/detail.php?id=5357&categ=2>

²¹ Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Mauritania (2010) (A/HRC/16/17), Human Rights Council, Sixteenth session, Geneva, January 2011

²² John D. Sutter, CNN, *Slavery’s last stronghold*, 2012 <http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2012/03/world/mauritania.slaverys.last.stronghold/index.html>

in violation of article 8 of the ICCPR, with those perpetrating this violation able to act with impunity. There has been only one conviction under the 2007 legislation, yet this individual is currently free on bail while he appeals this sentence. There appears to be resistance to applying the legislation at various levels of the administration. Furthermore, the Government frequently denies the persistence of slavery in the country, often only admitting that there are ‘vestiges’ and ‘consequences’ of slavery.

The Government of Mauritania is urged to:

- Amend Law No. 048-2007 to ensure that the burden of proof is on the alleged perpetrator rather than the victim. On account of the psychological state of most victims and the nature of descent-based slavery in Mauritania, non-governmental organisations should be granted a *locus standi* to enable them to bring charges and pursue cases on behalf of victims.
- Effectively enforce national legislation prohibiting slavery, ensuring that those responsible for this practice are effectively prosecuted and receive sentences that are commensurate with the crime and are enforced.
- Conduct nationwide training for police and administrative and judicial authorities on the 2007 law to ensure that they pursue the cases of slavery brought to their attention efficiently and effectively.
- Put in place a national strategy and action plan against slavery and slavery-like practices. The Government should establish an inter-agency body which includes different government departments members of law enforcement, the judiciary, the labour inspectorate, civil society and the National Human Rights Commission, to develop, implement and monitor lead this. This Agency should be endowed with the capacity to undertake research on the nature, extent and causes of slavery and slavery-like practices in Mauritania.
- Facilitate the social and economic integration of former slaves into society, in the short, medium and long term and ensure that Hratine and other marginalised groups affected by slavery and slavery like practices have access to key services and resources, particularly education, employment, land and water.
- Introduce national legislation against all forms of discrimination as part of a national strategy against discrimination in line with Mauritania’s obligations under CERD.

Anti-Slavery International therefore recommends that the Human Rights Committee, when drawing up the List of Issues, raises with the Government of Mauritania:

- The continued widespread practice of slavery based on descent, in violation of article 8 of the ICCPR, whereby individuals affected live under the direct control of their masters, are treated as property, receive no payment for their work, and systematic verbal and physical abuse.
- The failure to adequately enforce the 2007 anti-slavery law, and ensure that those responsible for this practice are effectively prosecuted and receive sentences that are commensurate with the crime and which are enforced.