

# Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir

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**Mohamed Ould Mkhaitir** or **Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir** (Arabic: محمد الشيخ ولد امخيطير<sup>[1]</sup> ( – 1985) is a [Mauritanian blogger](#) and [political prisoner](#).<sup>[2]</sup> He was sentenced to death after he wrote an article about [discrimination](#) and the [caste](#) system in Mauritania.<sup>[3]</sup>

Mohamed is an engineer from the northern industrial city of Nouadhibou. He belongs to the Moulamines, or [blacksmith](#) group, the lowest social group in Mauritania. He worked for SAMMA, a company partly owned by the Canadian mining corporation Kinross.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Anti-slavery article

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Mohamed wrote an article called "Religion, religiosity and craftsmen," that criticized Mauritania's caste system. The article was published on the news website Aqlame on December 31, 2013.<sup>[5]</sup> Mauritania abolished [slavery](#) in 1981, but activists say it is still very common and that many Mauritians are born into slavery. Mauritania passed a new anti-slavery law in 2015 that makes slavery a "crime against humanity".<sup>[6]</sup>

The editor of Aqlame took down the article, and said it was published by accident.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

## Court cases

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On January 2, 2014, Mohamed was [arrested](#) in his home in the city of Nouadhibou. He was charged with [apostasy](#) under Article 306 of the Mauritanian criminal code, and sentenced to death.<sup>[5]</sup> There were national demonstrations against Mohamed, and there was a [fatwa](#) to kill him. His family denounced him. His lawyers dropped him and he could not get another lawyer, only the lawyers assigned by the court. The trial started a day late because of a fight in the courtroom. The [prosecuting lawyer](#) said he was a member of the caste that the blogger criticized in his article. Mohamed belongs to a lower [social class](#).<sup>[9]</sup>

According to Abdel Nasser Beibe, a Mauritanian [activist](#) and representative of the [Arab Thinking Foundation](#), there are many people who wrote about the same things as Mohamed, but they belong to the white community, who are the majority of the people, and no one asks for their death. Their tribes

and their families defend them against any attack. But Mohamed comes from the "[blacksmith](#)" [minority](#), and are very marginalized. After the article, his family and caste had to deny him, and his parents had to go into exile in France.<sup>[10]</sup>

Mekfoula Brahim, activist and president of [For a Green and Democratic Mauritania](#) says that Mohamed was a victim of a very hard prison sentence because he belongs to a powerless and hated group. Mekfoula says Mohamed's future is being controlled by street fanatics, who receive orders from extremist clerics influenced by radicals who have returned from Afghanistan and Iraq, who press them to execute the boy.<sup>[10]</sup>

The president of Mauritania, Abdel Aziz spoke to the country in January 2014, saying Mauritania is an Islamic state and the death penalty could be used against Mohamed. Abdel Aziz usually wears a business suit and tie in public, and when he speaks with Western allies, like the United States and France. but when he spoke to the nation about Mohamed Ould Mkhaitir, he wore a white Salafi robe and turban.<sup>[4]</sup>

An appeal court heard the case on April 1, 2016, under tight security. The court upheld the verdict, but sent the case back to Mauritania's [supreme court](#).<sup>[8]</sup> On Jan. 31, 2017, Mauritania's supreme court heard the case, and returned it to the appeal court.<sup>[11][10]</sup> There were organized demonstrations in Nouadhibou, Aleg, and Rosso.<sup>[12]</sup>

## References

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1. <sup>↑</sup> "[Mauritania condemns man to death for 'insulting the prophet'](#)". 25 December 2016 - via Reuters.
2. <sup>↑</sup> "[Mauritanian Blogger's Death Sentence Upheld](#)". 25 April 2016. Archived from [the original](#) on 9 March 2017. Retrieved 5 March 2017.
3. <sup>↑</sup> Reuters (25 December 2014). "[Death Sentence in Mauritania for Islam 'Insult'](#)" - via NYTimes.com. {{cite web}}: |last= has generic name (help)
4. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>4.0</sup> <sup>4.1</sup> "[Religion, Race, and Repression in Mauritania: The Ould Mkhaitir Apostasy Affair](#)".
5. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>5.0</sup> <sup>5.1</sup> "[#FreeThePress: Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mohamed - PressUncuffed - Committee to Protect Journalists](#)".
6. <sup>↑</sup> "[Mauritanian blogger's death sentence upheld](#)". 22 April 2016 - via www.bbc.com.
7. <sup>↑</sup> "[توضيح من صحيفة "أفلام حرة" - أفلام حرة](#)". Archived from [the original](#) on 2017-02-21. Retrieved 2017-03-05.
8. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>8.0</sup> <sup>8.1</sup> "[Mauritanian appeals court upholds death sentence for blogger - Committee to Protect Journalists](#)".
9. <sup>↑</sup> "[In Mauritania, blogger sentenced to death for apostasy - Committee to Protect Journalists](#)".

10. ↑ [10.0](#) [10.1](#) [10.2](#) ["Suspenden la pena de muerte de un bloguero mauritano que criticó la "malinterpretación" del Islam"](#).
11. ↑ ["Netizen Report: Egyptian NGOs Face Rampant Phishing Attacks, Researchers Say"](#). 3 February 2017 – via Slate.
12. ↑ ["مطالب في موريتانيا بإعدام كاتب بتهمة "الإساءة للرسول" "](#). *CNN Arabic*. 17 November 2016.

## Other websites

[[change](#) | [change source](#)]

- [Text of "Religion, religiosity and craftsmen" article Archived 2017-04-10 at the Wayback Machine](#)
- [Timeline \(in Arabic\)](#)

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