



منظمة التعاون الإسلامي
Organisation of Islamic Cooperation



Mauritania Invited to Second Summit of Democracies



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Mauritania, which had been excluded from the first summit, was one of only four African countries added

to the guest list for the second edition of the summit, the others being Mozambique, Gambia, and Tanzania. The summit marked a new occasion for the United States to bring Africa closer at a time when China and Russia have strengthened their presence on the continent.

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@ColinWellsUK

I had a lovely afternoon tea and conversation today with management team at The Key – Mauritania's only English language newspaper. I am a fan of their work. Thank you

#The key



What is the Mauritanian Diplomatic Academy?

HIE students lead the way...



A group of committed students from the Higher Institute of English in Nouakchott took part in a cleaning exercise at Sabah Beach on the 18th of March collecting plastic water bottles, containers, bags and other remnants along the coast line.

The students organized the event alongside their teachers Lilian Wardle and Agnieszka Burda. Accompanying the group was Ms Siham Babana, a member of the HIE Management Committee and President of the Sahel Rotary Club of Nouakchott.

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Malouma El Meidah:

The Artist, the Politician, the Icon

On the occasion of Women's Month, we have decided to celebrate with an iconic woman whose life has shaped Mauritanian culture and politics. Malouma mint El Meidah was born in 1960, both of her parents were talented musicians. Her father, Mokhtar Ould Meidah was a distinguished singer, tidi nit (a traditional string instrument that resembles a small guitar) player, and poet. Malouma is mostly known for her unique music style that combines traditional Mauritanian music and blues and jazz.

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US DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Country Reports on Terrorism 2021 : MAURITANIA

Overview: Mauritania remained an excellent security and regional CT partner for the United States. Despite continued terrorist violence in neighboring Mali, the country has not suffered a terrorist attack on its soil since 2011. Countering terrorist activity remains the top priority for the Mauritanian government, and Mauritanian military leadership underscores this message when appealing to donor nations for additional equipment and training assistance.

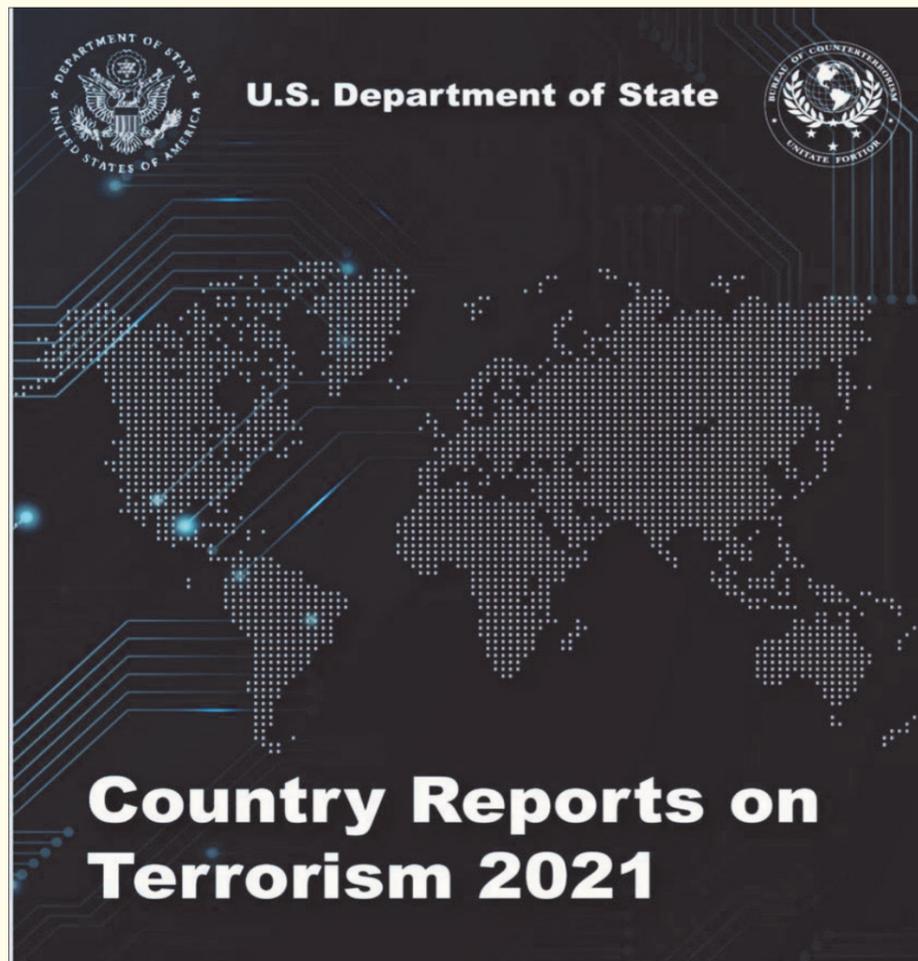
During the year, the government continued to focus its efforts to prevent what it termed extremism, and it took steps to increase its capacity to deter and respond to terrorist attacks, including by working with the Mine Advisory Group and the United States to better manage ammunition stockpiles to prevent them from falling into terrorists' hands.

2021 Terrorist Incidents: There were no terrorist incidents reported in Mauritania in 2021.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: The Mauritanian government did not pass or amend any laws regarding terrorism during 2021. The Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance program, in cooperation with the Regional Security Office and host nation partner forces, provided numerous training opportunities for more than 200 national gendarmerie personnel. Training topics included tactical medicine, facilities protection, active shooter response, managing terrorism investigations, and emergency preparedness.

On February 8, the U.S. ambassador and the Mauritanian Minister of Interior and Decentralization signed an MOU to facilitate continued cooperation on border management assistance at all of Mauritania's land, air, and sea points of entry to identify, disrupt, and deter terrorist travel.

Mauritania's battalion to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is deployed near the border with Mali



to help with CT and counter smuggling operations. The Mauritanian Ministry of Justice also worked with the UNODC, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, and the German Embassy to host an October 25 workshop to train judges and other judicial officials on how to dismantle the links between organized crime and terrorism.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Mauritania is a member of MENAFATF. In addition to the Central Bank's Financial Intelligence Unit (CANIF), Mauritania has two national committees, the National Committee to Combat Terrorist Financing and the National

Committee to Combat Money Laundering, which are tasked with improving internal government coordination on these issues. CANIF also continued to roll out additional security requirements on money transfers to increase transparency on transactions.

Countering Violent Extremism: Mauritania continued its efforts to counter violent extremism, including through several partnerships with the United States. On October 27, the U.S. ambassador launched an \$800,000 two-year program with World Vision and the Mauritanian Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Traditional Education (MIATE) to work with youth, women, religious community leaders,

and civil society actors to promote tolerance and fight against what the government terms "extremism." During June 16-18, UNICEF and the MIATE implemented a U.S.-funded program to train 40 Mahadra teachers in Nouakchott. The training aimed to facilitate the integration of talibes (children, principally boys, studying the Quran) into the country's formal education system.

Throughout the year, the MIATE continued to implement and expand its "Simple Mahadras" program. The program aims to increase the MIATE's oversight of Mahadras in the country, to fight against extremism and ensure children are less vulnerable to becoming victims of trafficking in persons. The Mauritanian government also continued to make efforts to reintegrate former terrorists and returning FTFs.

Both the Mauritanian government and civil society used strategic messaging during the year to promote alternative narratives and weaken the appeal of terrorism. For example, the government nominated Mohamedou Ould Slahi, a former Guantanamo detainee, as a brand ambassador for Mauritania during its expo in Dubai. The nomination amplified Slahi's message about the importance of turning away from extremist ideology.

International and Regional Cooperation: Mauritania is a member of the following international organizations that have CT equities: the United Nations, the African Union, the G-5 Sahel, the Islamic Military Counterterrorism Coalition, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and NATO's Science for Peace and Security Program.

Mauritania continued to work with international partners to combat instability in the Sahel, particularly through its engagement with the G-5 Sahel. In July, the Nouakchott-based G-5 Sahel Defense College graduated 44 international students. Most of the students came from G-5 Sahel member states, and six came from Saudi Arabia.

African Cup of Nations

The third and fourth rounds of the qualifying matches for the African Cup of Nations finals, which will be held in January and February next year, witnessed a lot of excitement, competitiveness, and surprises.

Although several teams have secured their qualification, such as Algeria, Senegal, Morocco, and Tunisia, some teams have struggled to maintain their positions, and others have lost their chances of qualifying.

The two rounds saw several surprises, led by the historic win of South Sudan over Congo-Brazzaville, which is the first of its kind in Africa, with a deserved victory of two goals to one.

Group Nine was on fire, which includes the national team of Mauritania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and Gabon, after

Sudan surprisingly defeated Gabon in Khartoum with a goal to nil, while Gabon won at home with a goal to nil, and the national team «Al Murabitoun» lost to Congo by three goals to one and settled for a positive draw in the return match with one goal each.

With these results, the qualification remains undecided until the last round, and Al Murabitoun has a great chance to qualify if they win against Sudan, which they defeated in the first leg with three clean goals, and win in Nouakchott against Gabon, which they drew with in their home stadium, if they want to avoid complicated calculations.

The national team played four rounds, in which they won one, drew twice, and lost one in Congo when one of their key players, Idrissa Thiam, was sent off by the



referee.

The two rounds witnessed a lot of high competitiveness and rivalry, and 24 teams will qualify for the 2023 African Cup of Nations, which will be held in Cote d'Ivoire. This tournament is considered the third largest in the world after the World Cup and the European Cup. The African Cup of Nations has

produced a number of talents in the continent who have represented it in international tournaments, including world-renowned stars such as its all-time top scorer Samuel Eto'o, the only African player to win the Ballon d'Or, George Weah, Didier Drogba, Rabah Madjer, and currently Mohamed Salah, Riyad Mahrez, Sadio Mane, Badou Zaki,

and others. The first edition of the African Cup of Nations was launched in Sudan in 1957, which was won by Egypt at that time, and they set the record for the most championships won by a team. Cameroon won the Cup after Egypt.

By El Bole Cheikh
 Sid'El Moctar



Mauritania Invited to Second Summit of Democracies



The United States invited Mauritania to participate in the second Summit for Democracy, which will focus on the war in Ukraine and concerns about the rise of China's global, authoritarian influence. Mauritania, which had been excluded from the first summit, was one of only four African countries added to the guest list for the second edition of the summit, the others being Mozambique, Gambia, and Tanzania. The summit marked a new occa-

sion for the United States to bring Africa closer at a time when China and Russia have strengthened their presence on the continent. While the summit took place in Washington, Vice-President Kamala Harris was touring Ghana, Tanzania, and Zambia in an effort to promote Washington's positive image of the continent as part of the "global future." The summit took place primarily online and involved at least 121 world leaders, eight times more than at the first summit in 2021.

The US Department of State refrained from commenting on the criteria adopted in inviting and excluding some States, noting that distribution has a "socio-economic and regional representativeness." A State Department spokesperson added that, «We do not seek to identify which countries are democratic or undemocratic.» Events at the summit brought together officials and civil society to examine challenges to democracy around the world, with a particular focus on the role of technology.

Head of French Army Emphasizes Need to Expand Military Cooperation with G5 Sahel



French Chief of Staff General Thierry Burkhard has stated that it is essential for his country to establish a strategic partnership and military cooperation with member countries of the G5 Sahel group and other African countries at the regional and bilateral level. During his visit to the headquarters of the G5 Sahel Group College in the capital, Nouakchott, General

Burkhard added that this partnership should be «responsive to the current requirements for confronting shared security challenges,» according to his statement. The French General, who visited Mauritania for one day, pointed out that the partnership «must be balanced and based on exchange between France and the relevant countries.» Burkhard emphasized the pivotal

role that the G5 Sahel Group College of Defense can play in this area. The general also held a series of private talks with President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani, Defense Minister Hanana Ould Sidi, and General Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Mokhtar Bolle Chaabane which discussed ways to "strengthen military and security cooperation between the two countries.»

OIC holds its 49th session in Nouakchott



The Mauritanian capital, Nouakchott, hosted a meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The Palestinian issue and developments in Jerusalem topped the agenda of the 49th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, which took place on March 16 and 17.

UK Visa Service

The UK Embassy in Mauritania provides UK visa to Mauritians in the capital, Nouakchott, instead of traveling far to Rabat. The last period in which UK visa was opened at the embassy level was between the 27th and 31st of this month, March 2023.

HIE students lead the way...



A group of committed students from the Higher Institute of English in Nouakchott took part in a cleaning exercise at Sabah Beach on the 18th of March collecting plastic water bottles, containers, bags and other remnants along the coast line. The students organized the event alongside their teachers Lilian Wardle and Agnieszka Burda. Accompanying the group was Ms Siham Babana, a member of the HIE Management Committee and President of the Sahel Rotary Club of Nouakchott. Lilian Wardle spoke of the importance of encouraging students to organize and participate in such an activity. She emphasized on the significance of a broader education which is beyond getting the best degrees or the highest GPAs. Being environmentally conscious she said is just as consequential, if not more, in today's world. She went on to add that as an educator, part of her duty is to inspire

students to take responsibility for protecting the world we live in and being good citizens. Mohamed, one of the students, spoke about the importance of having a clean coast line. A local fisherman expressed his gratitude towards the students and their teachers for the cleaning exercise and urged more people to engage in cleaning the coastline in order to save and protect marine life. The students were clearly enthusiastic, committed and willing to do their bit for the environment, marine life and clean beaches in Nouakchott. Well done to all of them! Hopefully, there will more such activities and other students will follow suit. If you are interested in undertaking such an activity, please contact THE KEY. Thanks and gratitude go to the HIE and Sahel Rotary Club for sponsoring the event.



What is the Mauritanian Diplomatic Academy?



Then-presidential candidate Mohamed Ould Ghazouani proposed the creation of a diplomatic academy in Mauritania as part of his foreign policy platform during the 2019 presidential elections. Following his election in January 2020, the cabinet adopted a proposal from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for such an institution. After a trial period of two years, the academy became an official government institution in July 2022.

During the trial period, and continuing to the present, the Mauritanian Diplomatic Academy has held a number of thematic seminars, colloquiums, and public diplomacy events that will form the core of its functions going forward.

The Mission of the Mauritanian Diplomatic Academy

The mission of the Academy, under the technical supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, and the Diaspora, is based on the following main objectives:

- Ensure the development of departmental officials through capacity building in international law, international relations, analysis, editing, protocol, diplomatic law, negotiation techniques, organization and methodology, languages, archiving, and communication;
- Offer refresher training sessions to improve working methods and build capacity;
- Provide special mandatory training for diplomats posted abroad, including heads of mission, to introduce them to a set of rules, behaviors, and information: knowledge of the main international conventions, protocol, respect for the host country, etc;
- Conduct forward-looking research, studies, and analysis on major national and international issues;
- Promote publications, studies, and research through modern communication tools;
- Serve the Ministry as a think tank for strategic and policy analysis for policymakers. An advisory body, called the Academic Council, is to provide expertise and advice on diplomatic issues and to design training modules specific to the academy. The council's members are chosen from among personalities distinguished by their knowledge and experience in the fields of diplomacy.



An Instrument of Public Diplomacy Instrument and a Unique Tool for International Partnerships

Specifically, the Diplomatic Academy intends to serve as a public diplomacy tool that will function as:

- A place for knowledge transfer between generations of diplomats. It is in this capacity that the Academy has entered into a partnership with the Nouakchott Diplomatic Club, which recently held its congress on the premises of the Diplomatic Academy and whose members have been associated with its activities, notably as speakers in thematic seminars;
- A forum for meetings to discuss present and future diplomatic challenges;
- A framework of direct and collegial debates for serving diplomats and, in particular, for "Ambassadors' Retreats" and other seminars intended for current officers;
- A suitable place for the celebration of diplomatic events and other ceremonies for foreign diplomats posted in Nouakchott or distinguished visitors.

As a specialized training center, the Maurita-

develop memoranda of understandings for the exchange of experience and knowledge between diplomats of friendly countries, as well as those of regional and international organizations.

The Academy's Facilities

During the transitional phase, the Diplomatic Academy of Mauritania was provided a modern building on Nelson Mandela Avenue in the Teveragh Zeina district, attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building.

This public building, in the area of the former Nouakchott conference center, has the capacity to host international gatherings. It includes a large amphitheater equipped with interpretive booths and video conferencing tools, rooms for hosting workshops and other business meetings, a large hall to organize exhibitions and diplomatic events, and a restaurant with capacity for 200 people. The building also contains a research and archival center and a language lab. Through its infrastructure and facilities, the diplomatic academy thus intends to constitute, as part of its mission, a captivating space for public diplomacy that projects a positive image of the country's diplomatic corps. ■ **By The Key**

nian Diplomatic Academy works to develop partnerships with similar institutions and to

Yale seminar course visits Mauritania



A group of Yale Jackson School grad students spent their spring break journey in the Sahel with a visit to Mauritania, including a visit to the tomb of Imam Al Hadrami, an influential scholar.

Celebrating Women's Day

In Panel with Diverse Topics, the Sahel Foundation Commemorated the 8th of March

On Wednesday evening (March 15th), the Sahel Foundation for Human Rights, Education Support, and Social Peace organized a seminar entitled «The Importance of Awareness of Rights and Personal Status» (marital rights and the negatives of divorce as an example). The following individuals contributed to the seminar:

Dr. Bab Ahmed Ali, President of the Mauritanian Sociologists Club, spoke about «The Economic and Social Effects of Family Disintegration and its Impact on Society.» Judge Haroun Eddeqbi discussed «Marriage Documentation and Alimony Rights according to the Personal Status Code.» President Zeinab Mint Eltalib Moussa.

In a welcoming speech on the occasion, the President of the Sahel Foundation, Professor Ibrahim Bilal Ramadan, considered that what women have achieved so far cannot be considered a real gain, and does not go beyond being a small part of their rights as an indivisible unit of society.

Bilal added in his speech that International Women's Day should not be considered just a «global day for women's rights,» but rather when women receive all their rights, then it could really be called «Women's Day.»

Following the welcoming speech, a statement was read on the occasion of International Women's Day by the Education Deputy Director of



the Sahel Foundation, Jeddaha Al-Salek, highlighting the most important gains that women have achieved in their long struggle to assert themselves in this society alongside men.

In a speech, Judge Haroun Eddeqbi stated that, based on his long experience as a judge, he considers the issue of documenting marriage and alimony rights according to the Personal Status Code to be one of the most important topics of a «commitment» (This needs an explanation.) theory. He emphasized the importance of women's awareness of their legal rights, which the Constitution guarantees them in the Personal Status Code. He also explained that marriage is a preliminary

agreement between a man and a woman for procreation and acceptance, which imposes a legal contract between them that obliges the man to provide for and house the woman under the terms of this contract. The judge emphasized the importance of the man's obligation to provide alimony for the woman, calling on judges not to be lenient in cases where women file complaints about their alimony. He also highlighted the Islamic perspective on this issue, citing the theory of «struggle and conflict» which does not impose any financial obligation on the woman towards the man, regardless of her economic level or income.

In turn, the President of the Mauri-

tanian Association for Girls' Education, Salyamata Sey, thanked the panel for the invitation, stressing the importance of women's role alongside men in this society and emphasizing the need to focus on educating girls. She pointed out the danger of early marriage and the negative consequences it has on the lives of underage girls, including school dropouts and exclusion from participating with men in building the community. Sey urged women as household heads to ensure their daughters are enrolled in school as it is the only guarantee of their rights as contributors to building families and the country as a whole. In her speech at the event, the President of the Mauritanian Associa-

tion for Maternal and Child Health, Zeinab Mint al-Talib Moussa, thanked the panel chairman, Professor Ibrahim Bilal Ramadan, for his outstanding efforts in organizing such seminars and providing a platform to address the problems of the oppressed and weak in general, and women in particular. Mint al-Talib Moussa called for the abandonment of retrogressive traditions and customs that perpetuate class and inequality among members of society and emphasized the freedom to choose a life partner without interference from family or tribe. She also believed that secret marriages are the basis of most post-divorce problems that girls, especially those who were school dropouts, suffer from.

In his speech at the event, Dr. Bab Ahmed Ali questioned the issue of extravagance in marriage, pointing out that measuring Mauritanian society against other Western societies is not appropriate because each society has its own cultural specificity.

He also addressed the issue of divorce in Mauritanian society, which is considered a luxury rather than a social problem, as women always celebrate immediately after the divorce.

The President of the Mauritanian Sociologists Club also stated in his speech that the emergence of contemporary government institutions that care about women is a major breakthrough in the field of women's rights in society.

By The Key

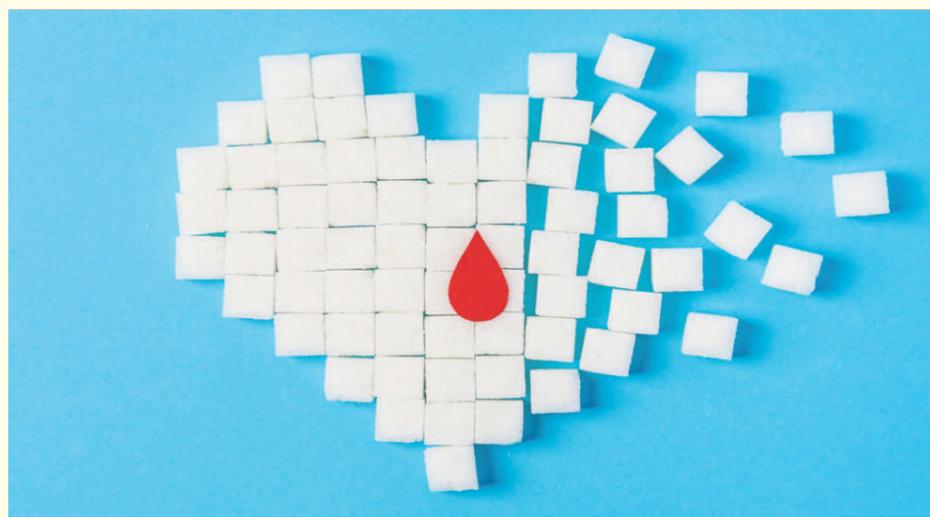
The Detrimental Implications of Excessive Consumption of Added Sugar

Humans' relationship with food experienced several curves since the beginning of the world. Food's availability increased gradually in the nearly stages of human history. In modern era after the industrial revolution, the average income increased significantly and there was new sources of food. People's consumption of food witnessed a considerable increase. This impacted drastically the type of diet that was adopted by most people. The most important food ingredient that entered human diet and affected the overall health of most people in the recent decades is added sugar. People's consumption of added sugar multiplied substantially.

Added sugar is considered to be the epidemic of the modern era.

Studies have shown that chronic consumption of added sugar causes chronic spike of insulin's hormone which by default results in several health conditions, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, non-alcoholic fatty liver and cardiovascular disease.

By chronically spiking insulin, you're putting your body on the track to be obese. This



process causes by time the cells to resist the insulin request to enter glucose into them, which is known medically as insulin resistance condition. Chronic spike of insulin also causes weight gain as mentioned earlier. These two conditions are known as the preliminary stages that occur before the clinical diagnosis of type 2 diabetes. The role of insulin is complex and insulin is not something

bad if it is used moderately. Actually human body needs insulin to work perfectly because it's responsible for regulating blood sugar levels and playing other biological crucial roles. The overconsumption of added sugar is correlated with several health conditions and we're aiming here to shed a light briefly on the side effects of the excessive consumption of this substance. In the other hand reducing

the amount of added sugar consumption was proven to improve metabolic health and put some concerning health conditions into remission. Reducing or quitting added sugar was proven to affect gut health significantly, especially increasing the amount of healthy gut microbiome and helping to assess the digestive system. These are some science backed benefits of the avoidance of added sugar.

Ultimately every person should take responsibility to improve his or her overall health. Three years ago I quit added sugar after years of struggle with obesity and insulin resistance. From my anecdotal experience I noticed psychological and physical benefits of quitting added sugar such as mental clarity, stable mood and increased energy. I lost considerable amount of weight, my metabolic health improved and I reversed insulin resistance.

Every person who aims to improve his overall health should avoid the excessive consumption of added sugar.

By Saadna El Wavi

Malouma El Meidah:

The Artist, the Politician, the Icon

By: Varha Abd Selam

On the occasion of Women's Month, we have decided to celebrate with an iconic woman whose life has shaped Mauritanian culture and politics. Malouma mint El Meidah was born in 1960, both of her parents were talented musicians. Her father, Mokhtar Ould Meidah was a distinguished singer, tidinit (a traditional string instrument that resembles a small guitar) player, and poet. Malouma is mostly known for her unique music style that combines traditional Mauritanian music and blues and jazz. This interview was translated from Arabic and was edited for brevity.

The Key : You come from a family that is deep-rooted in music. No doubt growing up in such a family has influenced your music. However, that hasn't stopped you from creating your style. A style, we can say has "modernized" Mauritanian music. Tell us about your musical debut, and how have you managed to make this new style of music not only accepted by society but also a huge success?

First of all, thank you for this interview. I am glad to meet a young and ambitious young woman such as yourself, who writes in English, the language of beauty and creativity. And I would like to say happy Woman's Day to you and to all the women who read The Key.

My family, of course, was an artistic family. We grew up listening to all sorts of music which has allowed me to develop my musical "imagination", if you will. My father led me artistically. He taught me everything I know about music and art, and he made me who I am today.

The Key : You were the first to make music that was different from the dominant traditional style. How did you manage to impose your style on the Mauritanian audience?

Whenever I heard or imagined a melody, from a certain genre of music or a certain maqam, I would write lyrics about topics that would go well with the said melody. And I have always made sure to stick to the Mauritanian maqam as the essence of the song. I then would adapt it to global scales to create a new global style that the entire world can understand and enjoy. To be honest, this holding onto the Mauritanian maqam and the search for new lyrics about worthy topics, imposed itself on me. And I found myself, singing blues, and jazz when I adapted this new modernized style to reach this modern song.

The Key : Your father, Mokhtar Ould Meidah, must have had a great impact on you and your music, are there any other artists who have influenced you?

My father, may he rest in peace, is the one who taught me music and how to write poe-



try. He was my mentor. however, I am inspired by many beautiful voices.

For example, Nema Chweykh is one of my favorite singers. Her voice used to make me cry sometimes when I was young. Seddoumould Eide is another artist who inspires me. There's also a traditional musician, who is fairly unknown by the public, his name is Is-selmou oud Nivrou. From the Hodh area, Fatimetou mint Awwa was my role model.

Nila mint Bouba and her sisters, Imbarka and Asia, played well and their music inspired me greatly. It reminded me of Gospel music.

From the Arab world, I listen a lot to Fairuz and the Rahbani brothers, Nasri Shamseddine, Wadih El Safi, Umm Kulthum, Abdel Halim Hafez, and Mohammed Abdel Wahab. From the Gulf, I enjoy Mohammed Abdu, Talal Maddah, and Abu Bakr Salem from Yemen.

From France, I usually listen to Jacques Brel and Michel Sardou.

From the States, Aretha Franklin, Bettye Lavette, Louis Armstrong, and Rachelle Ferrell are my favorite.

I also love Mozart, Chopin, and Bach. Generally, I listen to any beautiful music or voice I come across. My entire life has been a search of beautiful music. Music is where I go to find peace.

The Key : You have participated in numerous international music festivals, both regionally and internationally. Nevertheless, the 1988 International Festival of Carthage marked the launch of your career into globalism. Tell us about that experience?



At that festival, I had my siblings, Mounina and Arafat with me. And when we were rehearsing backstage, they [festival organizers] told us that the song would be a hit with the audience because of its upbeat music and unfamiliar style.

When I sang it, I was quite nervous when I stood on the stage. It was my first time standing in front of an audience of that size at a festival this big.

Honestly, I am not very pleased with my performance at the time but thankfully the audience's reaction was positive. Afterward, I have been to more international festivals all over the region, from Iraq, Lebanon, UAE, and many more. Despite many attempts from many Arab producers, I ended up with a French producer with whom I ended up writing the album, Dunia (world). It marked my debut into globalism and awards.

The Key : Tell us about your experience with the World Music Awards?

When I was working with the French producer at the time, we started touring the US, Canada, and Europe. I was getting more attention from the newspapers and magazines. I became the first Mauritanian musician to be in the World Music Awards' top ten. I was also nominated 3 or 4 times for the BBC Radio 3 Awards for World Music. However, my political career back home made it difficult for me to keep up with the producers and the tours as I became a senator.

Despite all that, I still tried to balance my musical and political career. Again my clash with the government resulted in authorities seizing my passport which has put a hold on my career abroad.

The Key : You have sung for love, society, and patriotism. If I were to ask you to play me a song of yours now, which song or songs would you play?

It depends on my mood. If I were feeling emotional, I would listen to romantic songs. If I were excited, I would listen to upbeat songs and so on. However, lately, I do find myself singing the song Nour. I also find myself singing revolutionary songs like my song El Hisar (the ban) which I wrote when my music was banned in the nineties.

The Key : How has your experience as a senator helped you reach your political aspirations?

It was of extreme importance for me to become a lawmaker so that I could help in creating laws that were going to govern the public. We managed to pass crucial bills such as the Family Law and many other important laws. It was a quite the experience for ten years. We tried to pass and create laws that would help the people. It was an extremely important job and gave me a chance to see what goes on behind the scenes of lawmaking.

The Key : Would you repeat the experience?

My entire goal in life is to serve and help people. Of course, politics is one way of doing such a thing, but it is not the only way. Charity, for example, is another way. I have been a part of The Mauritanian Association To support Cancer Patients (AMAPC CHIVA) and Ithar Association for Caring for Cancer Patients. The point is to help people, and you do not need to be a senator or a Member of Parliament to do that.

The Key : Recently, you have presented distinguishable songs, notably, your Tamazight song and your song Live My Country. Have these two songs achieved the impact that you anticipated from them?

Despite being ignored by most local media, I know that the Mauritanians love me, black and white, Arabs and Africans. I feel the strong connection with the people and that what keeps me going despite everything.

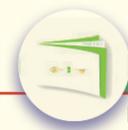
The Key : Lastly, tell us about Malouma's Cultural Association for Arts?

Malouma's Cultural Association for Arts was founded in 2012. and has presented 20 traditional Ashwar that were about to become forgotten as they were no longer sung. These Ashwar are from all regions, from Trarza, El Hodh regions, Tagant, Adrar, and Le Brakna. We have also written a book about Mauritanian music in collab with a German professor, and it is now in the translation phase.

The association also does cultural events, such as cultural events where we invite a pianist from abroad to play music.

And we do events with other local musicians where 3 or 4 artists from different regions of the country would play the same maqam as how their regions play it.

However, due to my passport being seized, the association's work was slowed down. Nevertheless, we are resuming business after Ramadan insha Allah.



Four Al-Qaida Militants Flee Nouakchott Prison



Four captured al-Qaeda prisoners made a sudden escape from a civilian prison in Nouakchott earlier this month. The Ministry of the Interior confirmed that the four terrorists attacked their guards, resulting in an exchange of fire during which two members of the National Guard were killed and two others were injured. The four men were later tracked down en route to northern Mali. Three were killed in the ensuing firefight and the fourth was captured and returned to Nouakchott.

The group included:

Mohamed Rassoul Ould Chbih, convicted of terrorism and assault for the purpose of murder; sentenced to death.

Saleck Ould Cheikh, convicted of high treason and terrorism; sentenced to death.

Mohamed Mahmoud Mohamed Yaslim, convicted conspiracy to commit terrorist attacks; sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in 2020.

Abdelkarim Abou Bakr al-Sadiq, convicted of conspiracy to form a terrorist cell to commit terrorist attacks and having received training abroad; sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in 2020.

The morning following the men's escape, internet service in the country was cut off to prevent the men from communicating with their coconspirators in northern Mali. The four Salafists spent three days driving off-road through the desolate al-Madhah region of Adrar, north of Nouakchott. After an intense manhunt involving police, gendarmes, and the military, a unit of the Gendarmerie, in cooperation with special forces, succeeded in killing three of the fugitive Salafists and arresting the fourth six days after their escape.

The survivor, al-Sadiq, informed gendarmes that the truck the group fled in carried bombs, a pistol, a large quantity of bullets, medicine, ten mobile phones, 100 SIM cards belonging to various companies, and food supplies. The vehicle carried documents issued in Mali, with several Malian license plates. Sources for the local outlet Sahara Media confirmed that Mauritanian security also arrested two Malian nationals who they alleged had brought the vehicle into Mauritanian. Prayers were held at the Ibn Abbas Mosque in Nouakchott for the two guards killed during the escape.

Funeral prayers were also held for the gendarme, Mustafa al-Khadir Obaid, killed during the fugitives' arrest. Imam Ahmadou Ould Murabat's sermon was attended by the Ministers of Justice, National Defence, Interior and Decentralization, Islamic Affairs and Indigenous Education, the mayor of Nouakchott, the Chief of Staff of the National Gendarmerie, a number of military and security commanders, and a prolific gathering of worshippers.

On March 13, President Mohamed Sheikh Ghazouani, honored Salahi Aboul Aboul and Mohamed Said Ahmed Anti, the prison guards, and Obaid, who had "fallen in defense of national security and stability." The Mauritanian President also offered the Order of National Gratitude to their relatives "in recognition of their sacrifice for the country and in recognition of their courage in action." The President promoted each officer to an honorary higher rank. al-Ghazouani also received representatives of the men's families in the presidential palace to offer his condolences, 30 million ouguiya (10 million per family), and land in the capital.

Mauritanian Women, Then and Now

The Mauritanian woman's life has changed dramatically in recent decades.

In the old days, preventing women from exercising their natural rights to study and work was not seen as an underestimation of their status in Mauritanian society. Women were viewed as precious and in need of protection. Men were raised from early childhood to be overprotective to their female relatives, believing that they were fragile creatures. Even women themselves believed this, leading to their marginalization in society. Some ancient practices for women in Mauritania, such as early marriage and force-feeding, led to a number of negative consequences, such as poor health, divorce, family disintegration, lack of education, and poverty.

Despite the fact that some of these problems still persist in Mauritania, as society grows, some traditions and beliefs are changing with time.



By Sehla El Khalifa

Women are trying to take the helm of their own lives. They're moving beyond the stage of being seen as weak, and are able to reach decision-making positions. Nowadays, we have women ministers, doctors, teachers, and leaders in every field. However, they did not reach these ranks on their own. We can find men

who support and accept the idea that protecting women does not mean oppressing them, but rather arming them with knowledge and self-reliance.

In parallel with these change, the idea that to be a "strong independent woman," a female must give up on her rights and responsibilities as a housewife, a mother, and a wife, was promoted and sold at a high price to many women in the world. Nevertheless, Mauritanian women rejected this destructive belief and succeeded in balancing work and family. This is a brave act of self-agency.

What really matters is that Mauritanian women got to know themselves in that process and learned to speak their minds, even if their voices shake. Society must find balanced and sound solutions that help women to rise to their best possible selves but not lead them from one trap to another.

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