

Mauritania Immigration Detention Data Profile



Quick Facts

Immigration detainees (2019)	Not Available
International migrants (2019)	172,987
New asylum applications (2019)	1,868

NOTES ON USING THIS PROFILE

- Sources for the data provided in this report are available online at: <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/africa/mauritania>
- "Observation Dates" indicate the timeframe statistical data correspond to or other data were last validated. More than one statistical entry for a year indicates contrasting reports.

STATISTICS

Detention, expulsion, and incarceration statistics

		Observation Date			Observation Date
Total number of immigration detainees by year	Not Available	2019	Number of apprehensions of non-citizens	6,463	2014
				713	2013
Criminal prison population	1,768	2014	Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	44	2014
	1,664	2013		43	2013
	1,602	2012		42	2012
	1,700	2010		47	2010
	815	2005		26	2005
	1,185	2003		40	2003
	1,413	2001		50	2001
	1,352	1999		51	1999
	1,400	1997		56	1997

Demographics and immigration-related statistics

		Observation Date			Observation Date
Population	4,600,000	2020	International migrants	172,987	2019
	4,068,000	2015		138,200	2015
	3,600,000	2012		90,200	2013
International migrants as a percentage of the population	3.4	2015	Refugees	84,901	2019
	2.3	2013		83,191	2018
				77,427	2017
				74,117	2016
				77,394	2015
				92,767	2014
Ratio of refugees per 1000 inhabitants	17.8	2016	Total number of new asylum applications	1,868	2019
	19.05	2014		624	2016
	22.3	2012		605	2014
				602	2012
Refugee recognition rate	55.8	2014			

DOMESTIC LAW

LEGAL TRADITION				
Legal tradition	Name		Observation Date	
	Muslim law		2017	
LAWS AND REGULATIONS				
Constitutional guarantees?	Yes/No	Constitution and Articles	Year Adopted	Last Year Amended
	Yes	National Salvation Military Committee, Mauritania's Constitution of 1991 with Amendments through 2012. Article 13 "No one can be prosecuted, arrested, detained or punished except in the cases determined by the law and according to the forms that it prescribes"	1991	1991
GROUNDS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE IMMIGRATION-RELATED DETENTION				
Immigration-status-related grounds	Name		Observation Date	
	Detention for unauthorised entry or stay		2015	
	Detention to effect removal		2015	
PROCEDURAL STANDARDS				
Provision of basic procedural standards	Name	In Law	In Practice	Observation Date
	Right to legal counsel		No	2017

COVID-19 UPDATES

	Update Status	Observation Date
Latest Update	<p>The IOM Mauritania office has informed the GDP that Mauritanian authorities have “informally” placed a moratorium on new detention orders during the crisis; police forces in both Nouakchott and Nouadhibou have reported that they were not detaining migrants. With borders closed and inter-regional movement restrictions in place, deportations from the country have also ceased. Reportedly, however, UNHCR has been seeking to ensure that asylum seekers may still enter the country. While deportations from Mauritania have ceased, as the GDP previously reported on this platform (see 16 May update), the country appears to have continued to receive returns from Spain--based on an agreement between Spain and Mauritania, and with the support of Frontex. Between mid-2019 and mid-March 2020, nine deportation flights took place, raising concerns that persons wishing to seek asylum in Spain were returned to Mauritania. Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Mauritania have long faced arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as expulsion. Since the 2000s, the country has come under significant pressure from the EU - and in particular Spain - to combat irregular migration flows by reinforcing external border control policies. Yet, as the GDP noted in a recent submission to the Universal Periodic Review (jointly submitted with Italy's Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration), little information is publicly available regarding where immigration detainees are confined. However - based on the Covid-19 survey information provided by the IOM - it appears that police stations in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou confined non-nationals prior to the pandemic. The UN Committee on Migrant Workers has also reported that migrants and refugees apprehended due to their administrative status are detained in penal establishments alongside ordinary prisoners. Information regarding length of detention has also remained unavailable, although the IOM reported that “typically in Mauritania due to a lack of resources rather than legal frameworks, it is rare for people to remain in detention for a long time.”</p> <p>As of May 2020, Mauritania hosted some 63,213 refugees—the majority of whom are from neighbouring Mali, displaced by the political, institutional, and security crisis and many of whom now live in Mbera refugee camp in the south-east of the country. During the crisis, UNHCR has been running a communication campaign sharing key government and WHO health messages with refugees in the camp - as well as those in urban areas. Amongst other actions, the refugee agency has trained community facilitators to conduct door-to-door visits, as well as to conduct WhatsApp messaging campaigns.</p>	2020
	<p>With the support of Frontex, an agreement between Spain and Mauritania allows for the return of Mauritanian nationals or migrants arriving in the Canary Islands. In 2018, four flights were carried out. However, from mid 2019 to mid March 2020, nine flights took place. According to the Mixed Migration Centre, at the beginning of the pandemic, Mauritania did not close its borders to its nationals. Rather, it “imposed a quarantine on those returned from the Canary Islands, making deportation flights more challenging, but it had not stopped them entirely.” This procedure raised concerns, as many undocumented people were reportedly deported despite wishing to seek asylum in Spain. As of early May, Mauritania had only nine confirmed cases of Covid-19. A curfew was imposed as soon as the first case was declared on 13 March, and borders were closed on 25 March. Many Mauritanian nationals are stuck abroad and can not enter the country. The army has been stationed along the Senegal River to prevent undocumented migrants from crossing. On 4 May, the IOM reported that over 1,000 people were waiting for a reopening of the border. At the M'Béra refugee camp, which hosts tens of thousands of Malian refugees, UNHCR is assisting refugees and working to make sure that they are aware of Covid-19 sanitary measures. According to the ICRC delegation in Mauritania, the Covid-19 crisis would have a “dramatic” impact in the country's prisons given the already existing issues related to access to water and sanitary products. It has been providing food and health care services in prisons and is now coordinating with the Mauritanian prison administration to raise awareness of the virus and prevention measures. Maret explained that for now, the country's prisons are in a prevention and preparation phase. The ICRC has spoken with the country's Ministry of Justice highlighting the need to decongest prisons, as has been done in other countries, by releasing the most vulnerable and imposing alternatives to detention. Authorities have released some prisoners although no official statement has been released by the government yet.</p>	2020

INTERNATIONAL LAW

Relevant international treaties and date of ratification			
International treaties	Name		Ratification Year
	ICCPR, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights		2004
	OPCAT, Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment		2012
	CRPD, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities		2012
	ICPED, International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance		2012
	ICRMW, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families		2007
	CTOCTP, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children		2005
	CTOCSP, Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime		2005
	ICESCR, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights		2004
	CAT, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment		2004
	CEDAW, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women		2001
	VCCR, Vienna Convention on Consular Relations		2000
	CRC, Convention on the Rights of the Child		1991
	ICERD, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination		1988
	CRSR, Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees		1987
	PCRSR, Protocol to the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees		1987
Ratio of relevant international treaties ratified	15/19		
Relevant international treaties and date of ratification			
International treaty reservations	Name	Reservation Year	Observation Date
	ICCPR Article 18	2004	2017
Relevant international treaties and date of ratification			
Individual complaints procedure	Name		Acceptance Year
	CRPD, Optional Protocol to o the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities		2012
Relevant international treaties and date of ratification			
Ratio of complaints procedures accepted	Number	Observation Date	
	1/9	2017	

Relevant international treaties and date of ratification			
Relevant recommendations issued by treaty bodies	Name	Recommendation Excerpt	Recommendation Year
	Committee on Migrant Workers	"§35. (a) indicate in its next periodic report the number of migrants, disaggregated by age, sex and nationality and/or origin, who are currently in detention for infringing migration laws, specifying the location, average duration and conditions of their detention and providing information on the decisions rendered in their regard and on the steps taken to ensure that an alternative to detention is provided; (b) to refrain from detaining migrant workers for infringing migration laws other than in exceptional cases and as a last resort and to ensure that, in all cases, they are segregated from ordinary offenders and that women are segregated from men, and minors from adults." "§41. (a) facilitate access to consular or diplomatic assistance for mauritanian migrant workers living abroad, especially in cases of detention or expulsion; (b) ensure that its consular services more effectively fulfil their mission to protect and promote the rights of mauritanian migrant workers and members of their families and, in particular, that they provide the necessary assistance to those who are deprived of their liberty or under an expulsion order; (c) take the necessary steps to ensure that the consular or diplomatic authorities of countries of origin, or of a country representing the interests of those countries, are systematically notified of the detention in the state party of one of their nationals and that the requisite information is duly entered in the police custody register (persons contacted, date, time, etc.);"	2016
	Committee against Torture	§16 [...] (b) Ensure that any person who is detained in connection with the effort to combat irregular immigration has access to an effective judicial remedy which allows that person to challenge the legality of administrative decisions regarding his or her detention, expulsion or refoulement; (c) Ensure that asylum seekers are held in detention only as a last resort and, if this becomes necessary, that they are held for as short a time as possible and that use is made of alternatives to detention whenever feasible. §22 [...] (g) Continue to ensure that the National Human Rights Commission and other human rights organizations have unhindered access to all places of detention, which includes the ability to make unannounced visits and to hold private interviews with detainees.	2013
Regional treaties, regulations, and directives			
Regional legal instruments	Name		Year of Ratification (Treaty) / Transposed (Directive) / Adoption (Regulation)
	ACHPR, African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights		1986
	ACRWC, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child		2005
	APRW, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)		2005
	Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (AU Refugee Convention)		1981
Bilateral/Multilateral agreements linked to readmissions			
Bilateral/multilateral agreements linked to readmission	Name	Year in Force	Observation Date
	Spain	2003	2003
Non treaty-based international human rights mechanisms			
Relevant recommendations of the UN Universal Periodic Review	Recomendation Issued	Year Issued	Observation Date
	No	2011	2017
	No	2015	

INSTITUTIONAL INDICATORS

Institutions responsible for immigration detention															
Custodial authority	Agency				Ministry		Ministry Typology				Observation Date				
	National Security Service						Internal or Public Security				2009				
Institutions responsible for immigration detention															
Detention Facility Management	Entity Name					Entity Type					Observation Date				
	National Security Service					Governmental					2009				
Institutions responsible for immigration detention															
Types of detention facilities used in practice	Immigration detention centre (Administrative)	Immigration field office (Administrative)	Transit centre (Administrative)	Reception centre (Administrative)	Offshore detention centre (Administrative)	Hospital (Administrative)	Border guard (Administrative)	Police station (Criminal)	National penitentiary (Criminal)	Local prison (Criminal)	Juvenile detention centre (Criminal)	Informal camp (Ad hoc)	Immigration detention centre (Ad hoc)	Surge facility (Ad hoc)	Observation Date
															2015
Detention monitoring institutions															
Authorized monitoring institutions	Institution					Institution Type					Observation Date				
	Commission nationale des droits de l'Homme					National Human Rights Institution (or Ombudsperson) (NHRI)					2016				
Detention monitoring institutions															
Is the national human rights institution (NHRI) recognized as independent?	Is the NHRI recognized as independent by the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions?										Observation Date				
	Yes										2016				
Detention monitoring institutions															
Does NHRI carry out visits?	Does NHRI carry out visits in practice?								Observation Date						
	Yes								2014						
Detention monitoring institutions															
Do NGOs carry out visits?	Do NGOs regularly carry our visits?								Observation Date						
	No								2017						

More information about immigration detention in Mauritania is available at the website of the Global Detention Project (www.globaldetentionproject.org)