



مبادرة إنبعاث الحركة الانعتاقية
INITIATIVE DE RESURGENCE DU MOUVEMENT ABOLITIONNISTE EN MAURITANIE
IRA - Mauritanie

Another International Award for the IRA's Peaceful Struggle

The main leaders of the IRA (Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement) may be locked up. Its activists may be repressed or brutally tortured. Their demonstrations and sit-ins may run up against an administrative ban on exercising freedom of expression. Yet the IRA has just won the prestigious James Lawson Award for Achievement in the Practice of Nonviolent Conflict, presented by the Washington-based International Centre for Non-Violent Conflict. The award, named after the Reverend James Lawson, a companion-in-struggle of Martin Luther King, was given in recognition of the IRA's 'non-violent combat and for its struggle to free slaves and conquer slavery in Mauritania.' Previous James Lawson award-winners include the Palestinian Iyad Burnat (2015) and Jacques Semelin, former executive director of Greenpeace (2014).

This exceptional mark of recognition and respect, to be celebrated in the presence of the Rev. Lawson at a ceremony on 22 June, comes a few months after the Tulip Award from Holland, the Front Line award from Ireland, the 2011 Weimar Human Rights Award, and the UN Human Rights prize awarded to the IRA and its president Biram Dah Abeid in 2013.

Despite repeated attempts to denigrate and demonise it, the IRA is continuing its fight, with determination but without violence, to win freedom for slaves and rehabilitation and the right to a decent life in Mauritania for former slaves. The IRA will continue to denounce racism and exclusion in all their forms and wherever they take root. And today it demands both material and symbolic compensation from what remains the fuel of domination, the resources of the Mauritanian state.

The IRA solemnly dedicates the prize to all those people whom it has freed or helped to free, to the friends and supporters of its struggle, and above all to its activists, who are still mobilised despite the adversity they encounter and the slender resources at their command.

To those who, through the accident of birth, currently dominate, and to their apparatus of intimidation, served by an administration that protects them, the IRA reaffirms its resolve never to weaken until the last hidden slave has been freed, until the last patch of land has been restored to its rightful owners, until the very memory of the sexual abuse of 'concubines' has been forgotten.

Neither prison, nor the cutting-off of finance for our activities, nor the attempts at infiltration and destabilisation undertaken by the police, will put an end to our determination to eradicate slavery in Mauritania and to rebuild, finally, the state based on the rule of law in which duty is dictated by citizenship, and citizenship alone.

The IRA warmly thanks the authorities who bestowed the James Lawson award for the signal encouragement they offer to non-violent ways of struggle, following the example of Martin Luther King and his disciples.

The Communication Committee, 25 April 2016