



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

MAURITIUS

9 APRIL 2009

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1. Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information Key Documents (COI Key Documents) on *the Republic of Mauritius* has been produced by COI Service, UK Border Agency (UKBA), for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 1 April 2009. It was issued on 9 April 2009.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any UKBA opinion or policy.
- iii For UK Border Agency users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Mauritius is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to COI Service as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

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Email: cois@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html

ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

- xi The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information (APCI) was established in 2003 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the UKBA's country of origin information material. The APCI reviewed a number of UKBA's reports and published its findings on its website at www.apci.org.uk. Since October 2008, the work of the APCI has been taken forward by the Chief Inspector of UKBA.

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2. Background information about Mauritius

Full Country Name: The Republic of Mauritius

Area: 1,865 sq. km

Population: 1.2 million (2008 est.)

Capital: Port Louis

People: Hindu Indo-Mauritian 51 per cent; Creole 27 per cent; Muslim Indo-Mauritian 17 per cent; Others 5 per cent

Languages: English, French, Creole

Religion(s): Hinduism (52 per cent), Christianity (28 per cent), Islam (17 per cent),

Currency: Mauritian rupee

Major political parties: Labour Party; Mouvement Socialiste Militant (MSM); Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM); Mauritian Party of Xavier Duval (PMSD)

Government: Alliance of Labour, plus 5 smaller Parties

Head of State: HE Sir Anerood Jugnauth KCMG PC QC

Prime Minister: The Hon Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam

Foreign Minister: The Hon Madan Dooloo

Membership of international groupings/organisations: African Union (AU), Non-aligned Movement (NAM); Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC), Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP); Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Francophone Organisation (OIF); and The Commonwealth. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Mauritius country profile, 7 May 2008) [2a]

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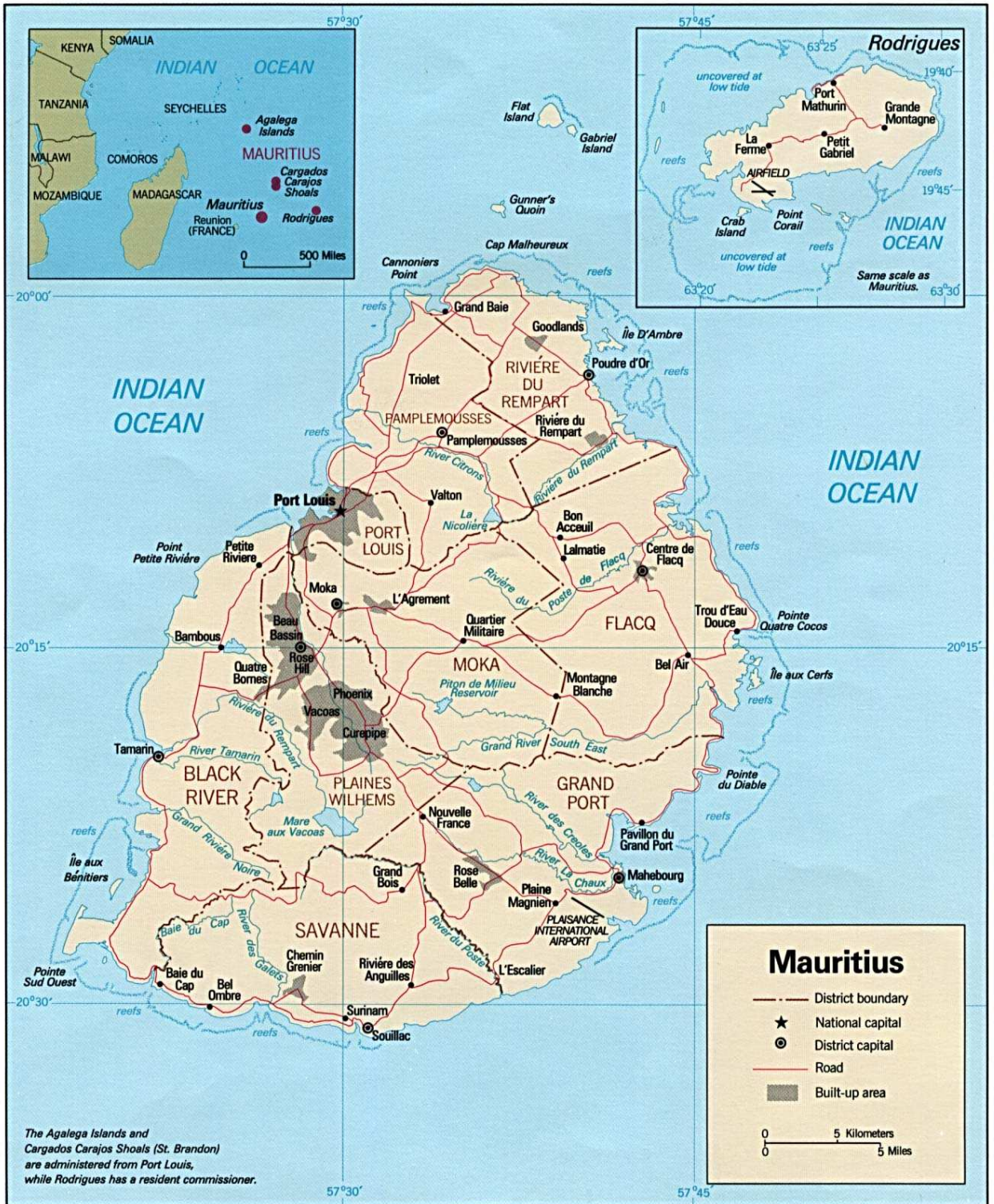
GEOGRAPHY

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) country profile on Mauritius, updated 7 May 2008, stated that: “Mauritius is a mountainous sub-tropical island in the Indian Ocean, with an area of 1,865 sq km. The Republic of Mauritius also includes the island of Rodrigues, 560km east of the principal island, and several much smaller islands. Mauritius lies some 800km to the east of Madagascar. The capital, Port Louis, is in the north west of the island... Cyclones occasionally cause extensive damage.” [2a]

“The island has nine districts and 3 dependencies (identified by an *) which are: Agalega Islands*, Black River, Cargados Carajos Shoals*, Flacq, Grand Port, Moka, Pamplemousses, Plaines Wilhems, Port Louis, Riviere du Rempart, Rodrigues*, Savanne.” (CIA World Factbook, 22 January 2009) [6a]

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MAP



Base 801497 (E00303) 7-90

University of Texas, Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/mauritus.html> [21]

RECENT HISTORY

The US State Department (USSD) Background Note, Mauritius, updated January 2009, reported:

“Elections in 1947 for the newly created Legislative Assembly marked Mauritius’ first steps toward self-rule. An independence campaign gained momentum after 1961, when the British agreed to permit additional self-government and eventual independence. A coalition composed of the Mauritian Labor Party (MLP), the Muslim Committee of Action (CAM), and the Independent Forward Bloc (IFB)- a traditional Hindu party- won a majority in the 1967 Legislative Assembly election, despite opposition from Franco-Mauritian and Creole supporters of Gaeten Duval’s Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD). The contest was interpreted locally as a referendum on independence. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, MLP leader and chief minister in the colonial government, became the first prime minister at independence, on March 12, 1968. This event was preceded by a period of communal strife, brought under control with assistance from British troops.” [1c]

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) country profile on Mauritius, updated 7 May 2008, stated

“Since independence in 1968, Mauritius has been a uni-cameral Parliamentary democracy, with an active free press and an independent judiciary. The National Assembly consists of 70 MPs. 62 are directly elected under a first-past-the-post system. The remaining 8 are distributed according to a complex Best Loser formula designed to ensure equitable ethnic representation in Parliament.

“Mauritius has been dominated by changing political coalitions. A Labour-led coalition lost power in 1982 to an alliance between, initially, the Mauritian Socialist Party (MSM) and the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) and from 1983 the MSM and rival groups. An election in 1995 saw the Labour Party unite with the MMM. In August 2000, following a sudden General Election, the MSM and MMM combined forces and became the government. Under the terms of the MMM/MSM agreement, Sir Anerood Jugnauth was Prime Minister for the first three years of the Government’s 5-year mandate. In September 2003 he became President and was succeeded as Prime Minister by Paul Berenger” [2a]

RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Freedom House Freedom in the World 2008 report for Mauritius, published 2 July 2008, stated:

“Parliamentary elections in 2005 resulted in victory for the opposition Social Alliance, led by Ramgoolam. ... Municipal elections in October 2005 further cemented the Social Alliance’s hold on power. In 2006, however, rising prices for a wide range of products and concerns about increased criminal activity diminished the popularity of the new government, which adopted a number of policies designed to further liberalize the economy, including the sale of government assets and reforms of the labor market, the pension system, social security, taxation, and facilities for foreign investors.

“Mauritius continued to enjoy political and economic stability in 2007... Also during the year, the Mauritius National Assembly moved toward establishing a Truth and Justice Commission to examine the country's history of slavery and indentured labor and to consider possible reparations; it named a director in June... Since gaining independence from Britain in 1968, Mauritius has maintained one of the developing world's most successful democracies.” [18a]

The USSD Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008, published 25 February 2009 noted that “as part of a series of measures to reform the judiciary, reduce caseloads in the Supreme Court, and improve the previously fragmented approach to family law, the government established the Family Court, which became operational on January 7 [2008].” [1a]

An article in Afrol News of 8 December 2008 recorded:

“The Prime Minister of Mauritius, Navin Ramgoolam, announces his government will present a new anti-terrorism bill, adding to the controversial 2002 legislation that led to a political crisis...According to a press release from the PM's office, the government will ‘tomorrow present to the National Assembly the Prevention of Terrorism (international Obligations) Bill, which will allow Mauritius to adhere to international counter-terrorism instruments to which it is not yet a party.’” [4f]

An article in Afrique en ligne of 26 March 2009 stated:

“The Mauritian Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam on Wednesday suggested the restructuring of the national health service...Ramgoolam, who was commissioning a private clinic...in the centre of the island, insisted that when restructured, patients should receive the best medical care at a reasonable price...It was disclosed during the launching that Mauritian patients would no longer need to travel abroad to get specialised care as the same treatment will be available in the new clinic. In the meantime, the five regional hospitals in the island offer free medical services, including heart surgery, to Mauritians.” [64a]

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ECONOMY

Gross Domestic Product: US\$ 8.128 billion (2008 est.)

Gross Domestic Product-per capita: US\$12,100 (2008 est.)

Annual Growth: 5.8 per cent (2008 est.)

Inflation: 10.1 per cent (2008 est.)

Major Industries: food processing (largely sugar milling), textiles, clothing, mining, chemicals, metal products, transport equipment, nonelectrical machinery, tourism

Major trading partners: (Exports) UK 35.1%, France 14.4%, US 7.7%, Madagascar 6.3%, Italy 5.8% (2007); (Imports) India 21.2%, China 11.4%, France 10.7%, South Africa 7.4% (2007) (CIA World Factbook, 22 January 2009) [6a]

Exchange rate: 1 British Pound = 51.16667 Mauritius Rupee; 1 Mauritius Rupee (MUR) = 0.01954 British Pound (GBP) (Oanda.com currency converter, as at 1 April 2009) [65a]

USSD Background Note, Mauritius, updated January 2009, reported:

“Mauritius has one of the most successful and competitive economies in Africa; 2007 GDP at market prices was estimated at \$6.959 billion (official exchange rate) and per capita income at \$11,200 (purchasing power parity), one of the highest in Africa. The

economy is based on tourism, textiles, sugar, and financial services. In recent years, information and communication technology (ICT) and seafood have emerged as important sectors of the economy, growing by an average of 40% last year. Over the past two decades, real output growth averaged just below 6% per year, leading to a more than doubling of per capita income and a marked improvement in social indicators. However, since 2002, the economy started to face some serious challenges as a result of globalization, involving the erosion of trade preferences for both textiles and sugar, two pillars of the economy. Economic growth declined to 3-4% while unemployment, government budget deficit, and public debt increased steadily. The government that took office in July 2005 embarked on a bold economic reform program aimed at moving Mauritius from reliance on trade preferences to global competitiveness. The reform strategy outlined in the FY 2006-2007 government budget, was designed not only to remedy fiscal weaknesses but also to open up the economy, facilitate business, improve the investment climate, and mobilize foreign direct investment and expertise. The reforms and the opening up of the economy have already started to positively impact the economy.” [1c]

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HUMAN RIGHTS

OVERVIEW

The USSD Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008, Mauritius, (USSD Report 2008) released on 25 February 2009, stated in introductory section:

“The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, the following human rights problems were reported: security force torture and abuse of suspects and detainees; prison overcrowding; harassment and intimidation of journalists; official corruption; violence and discrimination against women; abuse and sexual exploitation of children; discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS; restrictions on labor rights, antiunion discrimination, forced labor, including by children, and child labor.” [1a]

POLICE ABUSE/CORRUPTION

The USSD Report 2008 also noted that the constitution and law prohibited the practices of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. There continued, however, to be reports of police abuses:

“Police corruption and abuse of detainees were problems. The NHRC [National Human Rights Commission] investigates allegations of police abuse and may report such cases to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), an independent entity. As of August [2008] the NHRC had received 68 complaints of physical or verbal abuse by police: 29 complaints were withdrawn or dismissed for lack of substantiation; 10 cases were referred to the appropriate authorities for follow up; and 29 cases remained under investigation.

“The Police Complaints Investigation Bureau registered three cases of corruption against police officers during the year; the governmental Independent Commission Against Corruption registered 70 complaints of corruption against police officers.

“The investigation continued into the September 2007 arrest of a police officer in the Passport and Immigration Office for aiding four undocumented persons to transit the country.

“Orientation training for all new police recruits included a segment on human rights; management officers were required to take a refresher course, which was offered several times yearly. More than 200 qualified candidates participated in human rights courses during the year.” [1a] (Sections 1c and 1d)

PRISONS AND PRISON CONDITIONS

The USSD Report 2008 observed:

“There were reports of torture and abuse of prisoners, overcrowding, and drug abuse in prisons. The maximum security prison, which was closed in October 2007 following a visit of the UN Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture, reopened on May 16 after a follow-up visit by the subcommittee. The Central Prison, which has a capacity of 677, held 1,048 prisoners. On May 22, three detainees at the maximum security prison were hospitalized following a fight between two rival groups

“Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports that prisoners died from poor medical care, although 17 died from natural causes.

“During the year the independent National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which accompanied the UN Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture during their 2007 prison visits to the country and Rodrigues Island, registered eight complaints from prisoners.

“The government permitted prison visits by independent observers including the press, NHRC, local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the UN. Local NGO Association Kinouete also ran programs to rehabilitate prisoners.” [1a] (section 1c)

A summary prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the Universal Periodic Review, Mauritius, dated 24 November 2008, stated

“The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) reported that overcrowding in prisons has been lessened. The problem of HIV-AIDS and drugs in prisons still has to be solved...It has also been found that prisoners who are genuinely ill do not benefit from proper medical care.

“According to The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), juvenile detention centres are reportedly not suited for rehabilitation and often mix violent juveniles with those convicted of less serious offences. Prison guards do not have proper training to care for juvenile offenders. A lack of educational facilities and activities in detention centres, reports of violence and abuse by guards, the non-existence of half-way homes for reintegration into society, and a complete absence of post-release supervision or support have also been noted.” [56d] (page 4)

TRAFFICKING

The United States Department of State (USSD) Trafficking in Persons Report for 2008 published 4 June 2008 recorded:

“Mauritius is a source for female children trafficked within the country for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. School girls and young girls from underprivileged areas are induced into prostitution, often by their peers or family members. Taxi drivers are known to provide transportation and introductions to both the girls and the clients. The Government of Mauritius does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The government openly acknowledges that child prostitution occurs within the country and showed greater will to curb the problem over the last year. Along with increased media coverage of the issue, the government showed greater attention to trafficking issues, leading to widespread awareness.” [12b] (opening paragraphs)

VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The USSD Report 2008 stated:

“The law prohibits rape, including spousal rape, and the police and judicial system enforced the law. Rape is punishable by up to eight years' imprisonment. By October there were 52 rape cases reported to the police, of which 31 were prosecuted, convicted, or punished during the year. Many victims chose not to report or prosecute their attackers due to cultural pressures and fear of retaliation.

“The law criminalizes domestic violence; however it was a major problem. Domestic violence activists complained that police did not effectively enforce the law. More than 5,000 domestic violence cases were reported during the year. Anyone found guilty of violating a Protection Order may be fined up to 25,000 rupees (\$754) or imprisoned for up to two years. The local NGO SOS Femmes reported that women remained in abusive situations for fear of losing financial support and that few filed complaints against their abusers. The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, and Family Welfare maintained an abuse hotline and a Web page on legal protections for victims.” [1a] (section 5)

Freedom House, in its Freedom in the World Report 2008, stated regarding the role of women in Mauritius:

“Women make up approximately 20 percent of the paid labor force and generally occupy a subordinate role in society. Domestic violence against women has continued to be a major problem. In 1997, Mauritius became the first country in the region to pass a Protection from Domestic Violence Act. After the 2005 parliamentary elections, 17 percent of the seats in the National Assembly are held by women. However, women occupy only 5 percent of the senior positions in the 100 top companies.”[18a]

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3. Index to key source documents

(KB users – click source number to access document directly)

KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY	[1a]	United States Department of State country report on Human Rights Practices 2008, 25 February 2009 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/119014.htm
	[1c]	Background Note: Mauritius, Bureau of African Affairs, September 2008 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2833.htm
	[2a]	Country Profile: Mauritius, last updated 7 May 2008 http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/sub-saharan-africa/mauritius
	[3a]	Europa World Online: Mauritius http://www.europaworld.com/pub/
	[6a]	The World Factbook, Mauritius, last updated 4 September 2008 https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mp.htm
	[7a]	Country profile: Mauritius, 18 June 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1063172.stm
	[7b]	Timeline: Mauritius, 18 June 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/2988827.stm
	[8a]	UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs, June 2007 http://www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natinfo/countr/mauritiu/index.htm
	[8b]	Environment Statistics Country Snapshot: Mauritius http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/envpdf/Country%20Snapshots_apr2007/Mauritius.pdf
	[29a]	At a glance: Mauritius – Statistics, undated http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/mauritius_statistics.htm/
	[41b]	Support for developing member states and member state with economy transition – Guidance note, 2008 www.iom.int/1035/files/infosheets/guidance_note_2008_en.pdf
	[44a]	Trade reforms have born fruit but need to be pursued, 23 April 2008 http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tp298_e.htm
	[57a]	Minority Rights Group, Mauritius: Overview, undated http://www.minorityrights.org/5824/mauritius/mauritius-overview.html
Map	[21]	University of Texas, Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/mauritius.html

HISTORY	<p>[2a]</p> <p>[3a]</p> <p>[7a]</p> <p>[39a]</p> <p>[57a]</p>	<p>Country Profile: Mauritius, last updated 7 May 2008 http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/sub-saharan-africa/mauritius</p> <p>Europa World Online: Mauritius http://www.europaworld.com/pub/</p> <p>Country profile: Mauritius, 18 June 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1063172.stm</p> <p>Ethnologue, Languages of Mauritius http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=MU</p> <p>Minority Rights Group, Mauritius: Overview, undated http://www.minorityrights.org/5824/mauritius/mauritius-overview.html</p>
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POLITICS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS CONT.	[13a]	An island bridging Africa and Asia, 12 March 2008 http://media.ft.com/cms/77f0b426-efa3-11dc-8a17-0000779fd2ac.pdf
	[13b]	Economy: A lesson in reinvention, 11 March 2008 http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8c3bfd7e-ef2a-11dc-8a17-0000779fd2ac,dwp_uuid=eb11c8dc-ef30-11dc-8a17-0000779fd2ac.html?nclick_check=1
	[13d]	Taxation treaties: Anxious to keep a place in the sun, 11 March 2008 http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/990fa83e-ef2a-11dc-8a17-0000779fd2ac,dwp_uuid=eb11c8dc-ef30-11dc-8a17-0000779fd2ac.html
	[13e]	Sugar: Learning to live without preferential treatment, 11 March 2008 http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/97aa34b4-ef2a-11dc-8a17-0000779fd2ac,dwp_uuid=eb11c8dc-ef30-11dc-8a17-0000779fd2ac.html
	[13f]	Politics: Little bitterness in spite of the rhetoric, 11 March 2008 http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/94ce405a-ef2a-11dc-8a17-0000779fd2ac,dwp_uuid=eb11c8dc-ef30-11dc-8a17-0000779fd2ac.html
	[63b]	Top reforming African countries - Ghana, Kenya and Mauritius - recognized through World Bank-IFC awards, 12 October 2007 http://www.dfid.gov.uk/news/files/pressreleases/africa-business.asp
	[15a]	Political Parties of the World pp408-10
	[26a]	Mauritius: The Human Development Report 2007/2008 http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_MUS.html
	[26b]	Fostering democratic governance (undated) http://un.intnet.mu/undp/html/mauritius/democratic.htm
	[41a]	Surviving the Global Economy, December 2007 http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/microsites/IDM/workshops/return_migration_development_070708/migration_dec07_9-12.pdf
	[41b]	Support for developing member states and member state with economy transition – Guidance note, 2008 www.iom.int/1035/files/infosheets/guidance_note_2008_en.pdf
	[52a]	Index of Economic Development, Mauritius, 2008 http://www.heritage.org/Index/country.cfm?id=mauritius
[59a]	International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mauritius and the IMF, 9 September 2008 http://www.imf.org/external/country/mus/index.htm	

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	[7a]	Country profile: Mauritius, 18 June 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1063172.stm
	[27a]	United Nations Information Service; Human Rights committee takes up report of Mauritius http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2005/hrct660.html
	[56a]	United Nations Human Rights, Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), Mauritius Homepage, 2008 http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AfricaRegion/Pages/MUIndex.aspx
	[56d]	<u>United Nations Human Rights, Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)</u> Summary prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the Universal Periodic Review, Mauritius, 24 November 2008 http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,,MUS,,49465a10d,0.html
<p>HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES (IN ADDITION TO THE GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW)</p>		
ARREST AND DETENTION – LEGAL RIGHTS	[1a]	United States Department of State country report on Human Rights Practices 2008, 25 February 2009 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/119014.htm
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	[10]	US Department of Labor Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2007 – Mauritius, published 26 August 2008 http://www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/ocft/PDF/2007OCFTreport.pdf
	[19d]	Sub-Saharan Africa, AIDS epidemic update, Regional Summary http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2008/jc1526_epibriefs_ssafrica_en.pdf
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	[53a]	Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/mauritius
	[56c]	United Nations Human Rights, Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), Committee on the rights of the child, 17 March 2006 http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CRC.C.MUS.CO.2.En?Opendocument
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