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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Legal Aid Society Celebrates Release of Jamaican Man from Eswatini Prison

***Attorneys Call for Answers and Immediate Action for the Other Men Deported
from the United States to Eswatini***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society today celebrated the release of Orville Etoria, a Jamaican national who had been unlawfully detained for over two months in an Eswatini prison without any charge after being illegally deported by the United States to Eswatini. Mr. Etoria was arbitrarily detained in a maximum-security prison without access to counsel, a grave injustice that underscores the dangers of the U.S. government's continued third-country deportations.

"We are relieved that Mr. Etoria is finally free after enduring over two months of unlawful imprisonment in Eswatini without access to counsel," said **Mia Unger, Staff Attorney in the Immigrant Justice Team at The Legal Aid Society**. "His illegal deportation to Eswatini should never have happened when he was in possession of a valid Jamaican passport. Moreover, his incarceration in a maximum-security prison without charge coupled with intentional efforts to prevent him from accessing legal counsel over the past several weeks are deeply troubling. Mr. Etoria now begins the difficult process of readjusting to life in his country of birth, Jamaica, after nearly five decades living in the United States."

The Legal Aid Society strongly reiterates its opposition to the U.S. government's policy of deporting individuals to third countries—a practice that too often results in unlawful detention, family separation, and grave violations of fundamental human rights. We demand answers from the U.S. government as to why Mr. Etoria was sent to Eswatini. We further urge the Eswatini government to immediately provide meaningful access to counsel for the four other men deported from the United States alongside Mr. Etoria, release them from prison, and work with the relevant authorities towards their repatriation or relocation in accordance with their human rights.

Background:

62-year-old Orville Etoria came to the United States from Jamaica at the age of 12 and lived here as a lawful permanent resident for several decades. He was convicted of a serious crime in 1997 and sentenced to 25 years to life in prison. While incarcerated, he transformed his life — earning a Bachelor's degree and beginning a Master's program with Union Theological Seminary. He was granted parole in 2021 after serving 25 years and has since reintegrated into society, completing parole and complying fully with ICE under a long-standing order of supervision.

Before Mr. Etoria was deported, he worked as a case manager at a men's shelter. He has deep family ties to this country, including U.S. citizen adult children, grandchildren, siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles, and nieces and nephews.

In 2009, while still serving his criminal sentence, he was issued a final order of removal by an immigration judge. Upon his release in 2021, he was not deported. Instead, he was instructed to report regularly to ICE, which he did without fail. Earlier this year, ICE requested that he obtain a passport, which Jamaica issued. Rather than deport him to Jamaica, his country of citizenship, ICE sent him to Eswatini—a country he has never lived in and has no ties to.

Despite credible U.S. State Department reports of torture and abuse in Eswatini, Mr. Etoria was imprisoned for two and half months without charge, legal counsel, or due process. On Sunday, September 21, 2025, Mr. Etoria was at last released from prison and departed Eswatini. On Monday, September 22, 2025, he arrived in Jamaica.

Photo of Mr. Etoria: <https://tinyurl.com/yck3d5hu> (credit: Margaret McKen)

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The Legal Aid Society is a nonprofit organization that exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For nearly 150 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities.

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