

September 17, 2025

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Legal Aid Condemns Ongoing Unlawful Detention of Jamaican Man in Eswatini

***Court Hearing Scheduled for Tuesday was Again Postponed; Mr. Etoria Has
Now Been Held for Over Two Months Without Access to Counsel***

(NEW YORK, NY) - **The Legal Aid Society** issued the following statement after another postponement of the habeas court hearing for Orville Etoria, a former U.S. lawful permanent resident. Mr. Etoria, who was unlawfully deported to Eswatini instead of Jamaica, his country of citizenship, has now been imprisoned there for more than two months without charge, legal counsel, or due process. A habeas petition was filed on July 31, 2025 in the High Court of Eswatini, demanding he be granted access to counsel. A new court hearing has been scheduled for September 30, 2025.

“The repeated postponement of Mr. Etoria’s habeas hearing in Eswatini is unacceptable. Each delay compounds the injustice — depriving him of fundamental legal rights, access to counsel, and any sense of safety.

“The Eswatini government’s late and misleading court filings, coupled with a judiciary that continues to grant them more time, are deeply troubling. These continued obstructions to due process cannot stand. This grave injustice underscores the broader dangers of third-country deportations, where people are exiled to nations with which they have no ties and where their basic rights and safety cannot be guaranteed.

“We condemn this stalling in the strongest terms and demand that Mr. Etoria’s case move forward immediately, with no further delay. We also call on the U.S. government, whose actions led to Mr. Etoria’s unlawful deportation, to play a constructive role in securing his release.”

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. But upon his release in 2021, he was not deported and instead 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 his country of origin, ICE sent him to Eswatini—a country he has never lived in and has no ties to—instead of Jamaica, his country of citizenship.

Despite credible U.S. State Department reports of torture and abuse in Eswatini, Mr. Etoria has been imprisoned for nine weeks without charge, legal counsel, or due process.

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

Other attorneys representing men deported to Eswatini in the same deportation operation have also raised legal and human rights concerns. Read their statements [here](#) and [here](#).

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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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