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Contact:

[Press@legal-aid.org](mailto:Press@legal-aid.org)

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

***Legal Aid Condemns U.S. Government for Deporting Jamaican Man to Prison in Eswatini***

***Family and Advocates Demand Immediate Answers on His Safety and Unlawful Imprisonment***

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society condemned the United States government for its [unlawful deportation](#) of Orville Etoria, a former U.S. lawful permanent resident, to Eswatini, a country he had never been to and with which he has no ties, rather than Jamaica, his country of citizenship which was willing and able to accept his return. The U.S. State Department has noted credible reports of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment in Eswatini. For seven weeks, Mr. Etoria has been held in prison without charge, without access to legal counsel, and without basic due process. Legal Aid was retained by his family.

The Legal Aid Society issued the following statement in response:

“We demand immediate answers from the U.S. government about the conditions of Mr. Etoria’s confinement, what steps are being taken to secure his safety and enable communication with his attorneys, release him from custody, and facilitate his return to Jamaica.

“Before this shocking deportation, Mr. Etoria had been living in New York, following the law and reporting regularly to ICE under an order of supervision. When ICE asked him to obtain a Jamaican passport earlier this year, he complied. But instead of removing him to Jamaica, as his documentation clearly allowed and as common sense would dictate, the U.S. government inexplicably and illegally sent him to Eswatini.

“The U.S. government has claimed—falsely—that Jamaica refused to accept him. Jamaica has publicly refuted that claim, confirming that it never blocked his return. These facts raise grave concerns about the legality and integrity of ICE’s removal operations and the U.S. government’s treatment of immigrants with criminal records who have already paid their debt to society and rebuilt their lives.

“Despite seven weeks of incarceration without any apparent charges, The Legal Aid Society has been denied any access to our client. An attorney we are partnering with in Eswatini has on multiple occasions attempted to visit our client and the four other deportees held with him and has similarly been denied access, despite having filed a habeas corpus petition demanding access to the detainees. We call on the U.S. and Eswatini governments to immediately grant access to counsel, provide answers to the families, release our client from prison, facilitate his return to Jamaica, and uphold his basic human rights.

“We will not rest until Mr. Etoria is safe, accounted for, and reunited with his family.”

**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—an act that defies logic, law, and basic humanity.

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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