

DECLARATION OF BIRAM DAH ABEID

I, Biram Dah Abeid, am the Founder and President of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement, recipient of the United Nations Human Rights Prize in 2013, Trafficking in Persons Report Heroes Award from U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in June 2016, Front Line Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk in December 2013, and James Lawson Prize for Non-Violent Conflict from Tufts University in June 2016. Furthermore, I have been named on TIME's "2017 List of 100 Most Influential People." I welcome my partners in the international community to collaborate with me in ending the deportation of Black Mauritanian migrants to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

- I. I call upon the United States Department of Homeland Security to immediately cease the deportation of Black Mauritians to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. All human rights are universal and all human beings are entitled to due process of law, equal treatment, freedom from torture, freedom from slavery, freedom from discrimination, freedom from arbitrary and disproportionately harsh practices, and the protection of their human rights and fundamental freedoms under the Charter of the United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The deportation and expulsion of Black Mauritians by the Department of Homeland Security deprives this class of people of their fundamental human rights, subjecting them to grave mistreatment, punishment, torture and even death.
- II. Under the jurisdiction of the United States Department of Homeland Security, Immigration & Customs Enforcement has commenced a nationwide effort to identify, arrest, detain and deport a population of Black Mauritians, who are subject to final removal orders. This effort is a result of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania's recent decision to cooperate and issue travel documents to facilitate deportations in exchange for being removed from the list of countries, which are considered recalcitrant or uncooperative with deportations. Immigration & Customs Enforcement officers are actively contacting representatives and officials from the Mauritanian government, in particular, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, in Washington D.C., to identify Black Mauritians, who are subject to final removal orders, and requesting travel documents for them. The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is now providing Laissez-Passers to facilitate the deportation of Black Mauritians.
- III. The vast majority of the Black Mauritians, who are subject to final removal orders, have been residing in the U.S. for approximately two decades. Black Mauritians include members of the Haratine, Fulani, Wolof, Sonike and Bambara ethnic groups; in Mauritania, these groups are targets for systematic violence and persecution and they are subject to slavery, racism, and discriminatory practices. The United States government publishes country condition reports for Mauritania, which show that Mauritania still violates fundamental human rights, including arbitrary arrests, torture, and land grabbing.
- IV. In addition to considering my testimony regarding the country conditions in Mauritania, I implore the Department of Homeland Security to refer to reports from the United States government itself, including the most recent CIA World Factbook – Mauritania (updated on June 8, 2018), which states as follows on the problem of human trafficking in Mauritania:

Mauritania is a source and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking; adults and children from

traditional slave castes are subjected to slavery-related practices rooted in ancestral master-slave relationships; Mauritanian boy students called talibes are trafficked within the country by religious teachers for forced begging; Mauritanian girls, as well as girls from Mali, Senegal, The Gambia, and other West African countries, are forced into domestic servitude; Mauritanian women and girls are forced into prostitution domestically or transported to countries in the Middle East for the same purpose, sometimes through forced marriages.

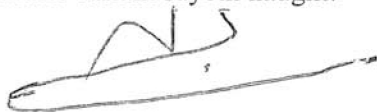
Tier 3 - Mauritania does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so; anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts were negligible; one slavery case identified by an NGO was investigated, but no prosecutions or convictions were made, including among the 4,000 child labor cases NGOs referred to the police; the 2007 anti-slavery law remains ineffective because it requires slaves, most of whom are illiterate, to file their own legal complaint, and the government agency that can submit claims on them did not file any in 2014; authorities arrested, prosecuted, and convicted several anti-slavery activists; NGOs continued to provide the majority of protective services to trafficking victims without support from the government; some steps were taken to raise public awareness about human trafficking (2015).

- V. On June 22, 2018, I received confirmation that over ten Black Mauritians are presently detained in the State of Ohio at Morrow County Correction Facility as they await their forced deportation to Mauritania. One of the Mauritanian detainees is a mother of four United States citizen children, who has never worked unlawfully in the United States, and has no known relatives in Mauritania. My sources have informed me that there are over 200 Black Mauritians in Ohio with final removal orders and Immigration & Customs Enforcement agents may arrest, detain and deport them at any given moment. We are still working to confirm this figure and obtain a national estimate.
- VI. The deportation of detained Black Mauritians and all Black Mauritians, who reside in the United States and are subject to final removal orders, amounts to a death sentence for an entire population. The actions of Immigration & Customs Enforcement agents in identifying them to the Mauritanian government and procuring travel documents on their behalf is deplorable. In fact, Mauritania conducted a national census in 2011, aiming to ban many Black Mauritians from the citizenship. This vast campaign of identity confiscation made many Black Mauritians undocumented. If those who sought asylum in United States return to Mauritania, they will become undocumented and face arrest for not having proper civil documents to live in Mauritania.
- VII. Many Black Mauritians who were deported to Mauritania have been arrested and put into detention. Some have been lucky to bribe the police officers sizable amounts of money to be released. It came to my attention that Messrs Alpha Diallo, Zeiroub Ly, and Seyedou Sarr, who have been deported to Mauritania, were arrested upon their arrival.
- VIII. On behalf of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement, I urge the United States Department of Homeland Security to:

- i. Recognize the importance of protecting the fundamental human rights of Black Mauritians in the United States;
- ii. Acknowledge the highly adverse country conditions for Black Mauritians in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, which are documented in reports from the Central Intelligence Agency, Department of State and numerous other federal government agencies;
- iii. Immediately cease the arrest, detention and deportation of Black Mauritians to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania;
- iv. Immediately cease any and all contact with officials and representatives from the Mauritanian government in order to obtain travel documents for Black Mauritians;
- v. Immediately release Black Mauritians who are presently detained in the custody of United States Immigration & Customs Enforcement;
- vi. Immediately release the following Black Mauritians from Immigration & Customs Enforcement custody:


1. Issa Sao
2. Aissata Traore
3. [REDACTED]
4. Oumar Sy
5. Ousmane Sy
6. Abdoulaye Thiaw
7. Seyni Malick Diagne
8. Abou Diallo
9. Moussam Diop

Further affiant sayeth naught.



Biram Dah Abeid
President of IRA Mauritania

Sworn to and subscribed to me in my presence at Columbus, Ohio on this 24 day of June 2018.



Notary Public

AHMED TIDIANE
Notary Public
In and for the State of Ohio
My Commission Expires
August 21, 2018