



## **SANCTIONED: Trump Administration Dismissed International Law, Forced Deportation of Eritreans and Cambodians Who Face Torture, Death In Home Countries**

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On January 31, 2020, the Trump Administration expanded the Muslim Ban to include six additional countries: Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar (Burma), Nigeria, Sudan, and Tanzania. Notably, four of these countries are in Africa. The Muslim Ban is now also an *Africa Ban*. Eritrea, one of the Africa Ban countries, has been targeted by the Administration since September 2017. In September 2017, the Administration imposed visa sanctions on: Cambodia, Eritrea, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, targeting vulnerable refugees and immigrants who sought sanctuary from war, persecution, poverty, and violence.

The Trump Administration's stated reason for choosing to enforce the sanctions was that these countries had "delay[ed] or refuse[d] to issue travel documents" for people that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) intended to deport. The Administration further stated that sanctions would be lifted only if the country more aggressively cooperated with ICE's deportation plans. **In other words: The government imposed visa sanctions with the explicit intent of facilitating and expediting the deportation of Black and Asian community members from our country.**

In January 2019, Advancement Project National Office filed suit under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) on behalf of the UndocuBlack Network, after the Trump Administration violated our FOIA requesting information about the September 2017 visa sanctions. Following the suit, the government started producing documents. Below are some highlights that shed light on the government's devastating impact that forced deportations would have on migrants from Eritrea and Cambodia and the influence of anti-immigrant hate groups on public policy.

- **Administration knew that migrants deported to Eritrea face high likelihood of imprisonment, torture, and death:**

In March 2017, ICE received a letter from the America Team for Displaced Eritreans that detailed an "urgent request" to suspend deportations of Eritreans, who "would likely be imprisoned, tortured and even put to death by the Eritrean regime if they were removed to Eritrea before the country became safe." The letter attached findings of American and international human rights bodies, including the U.S. Department of State, that confirm the likelihood of imprisonment, torture, and death for deported Eritreans.

In December 2017, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) received a joint urgent appeal by the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, and the U.N. Working Group on



Arbitrary Detention. The appeal was about the deportation of Eritreans, and it noted that those forcibly returned to Eritrea “are at high risk of being arrested and detained, and subjected to ill-treatment and torture,” including enslavement. The appeal asked, among other requests, that the U.S. government “provide information about any measures taken to guarantee the psychological and physical integrity of the Eritrean nationals if returned to their home country.”

- **Administration knew of the devastating impact of forced deportations on Cambodian refugees:**

In July 2017, delegations from the United States and Cambodia met to discuss the issue of repatriation. Notes from this joint commission meeting indicate that the Cambodian delegation relayed various concerns regarding the deportation of people to Cambodia, including that the “[d]eportation of refugees is against U.S. and international law, and does not reflect American values.” The Cambodian delegation observed that those who would be forcibly deported “have already paid their debt to society by serving time in prison,” and would be “removed from their families” without “visiting rights to America,” and would endure “difficult” integration into Cambodian society. The Cambodian delegation then noted that four people forcibly deported to Cambodia have already died by suicide.

- **ICE Legal Staff receive updates from anti-immigrant hate group Center for Immigration Studies (CIS):**

ICE’s Office of the Principal Legal Advisor produced an email suggesting that someone in its office subscribes to weekly email updates by the anti-immigrant hate group, CIS. In late August 2017, one of the CIS weekly e-newsletters included a CIS opinion piece titled “Won’t Take Back Your Citizens? No Visas For You: Trump Pulls the Trigger on 243(d).”

### **What can you do?**

- Tell Congress to pass the Eritrean Nationals’ Safety from Unjust Removal or Exclusion (“ENSURE”) Act.
- Tell Congress, Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. State Department to cancel visa sanctions currently in effect.

For more information, please contact Losmin Jimenez, Project Director, Immigrant Justice, [LJimenez@advancementproject.org](mailto:LJimenez@advancementproject.org) or Patrice Lawrence, Executive Director, the UndocuBlack Network, [Patrice@undocublack.org](mailto:Patrice@undocublack.org).