



City of Chicago



SR2015-107

Office of the City Clerk

Document Tracking Sheet

Meeting Date: 3/18/2015

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Type: Resolution

Title: Call for support of Biram Dah Abeid and Mauritanian abolitionists in fight against slavery

Committee(s) Assignment: Committee on Human Relations

SUBSTITUTE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, throughout the sordid history of this world, there have been periods of unconscionable and systematic subjugation and abuse of men, women, and children by means of enslavement; and

WHEREAS, long promoted and practiced by generations of men and women the world over, slavery and servitude has left – and continues to leave – an immeasurable impact on countless physical, psychological, familial, cultural, and economic aspects of everyday life; and

WHEREAS, modern-day slavery is still extant in the West African nation of Mauritania; and

WHEREAS, the institution of slavery in Mauritania exists in conjunction with routine sexual and physical violence against women and children to ensure its perpetuation; and

WHEREAS, home to visionaries and innovators in the continuous fight for human rights, the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois share an extensive and proud history of supporting the abolition of slavery; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. State Department's 2014 Report on Trafficking in Persons states that "held for generations by slave-holding families, persons subjected to slavery are forced to work without pay as cattle herders and domestic servants;" and

WHEREAS, the State Department's 2014 Report further states that "the government failed to hold traffickers criminally accountable, and law enforcement and judicial personnel intervened on behalf of alleged offenders to thwart the progress of criminal prosecutions;" and

WHEREAS, the United States government is closely following the legal proceedings against Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, President of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA), IRA Vice President Brahim Bilal Ramdhane, and Djiby Sow, President of Kawal e Yelitaare; and

WHEREAS, the United States is deeply concerned by the January 15, 2015 court decision to convict and sentence these abolitionists to two years imprisonment, and the impact this ruling will have on freedom of association and assembly in Mauritania; and

WHEREAS, in an encouraging step, the Association of Mauritanian Qulemas (religious scholars) issued a Fatwa on March 31, 2015, which held that slavery has no legal ground with respect to the Shari'ah law in Mauritania; and

WHEREAS, one of the notable accomplishments of the Chicago City Council in previous decades was its strong and public stances against another injustice in Africa—the cruelty of Apartheid in South Africa—and that this Chicago City Council stance was part of the international movement that brought sanctions against—and eventually an end to—Apartheid in South Africa; and

WHEREAS, just as the City of Chicago stood up for abolition and spoke out against slavery then, we urge the appellate court to review both the convictions and the sentencing

without delay, and to handle these important cases in a fair, impartial, and transparent manner; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this sixth day of May, 2015, do hereby join the U.S. Government in expressing the City of Chicago's support of efforts by the Mauritanian government and civil society to eliminate slavery in Mauritania, which must be a sustained and collective effort by government, religious, law enforcement, judicial, tribal, and civil society leaders, together with all Mauritians; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be presented to the members of United States Congress and the United Nations.



**CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF CHICAGO**

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May 6, 2015

To the President and Members of the City Council:

Your committee on Human Relations, for which a meeting was held April 28, 2015, having had under consideration two (2) items;

A Substitute Resolution introduced by Alderman Brookins (21st), calling for support of Biram Dah Abeid and all other Mauritanian abolitionists in their fight against slavery. This recommendation was concurred in a voice vote of all committee members present with no dissenting votes.

A Substitute Ordinance introduced by Mayor Emanuel, Amending the Municipal Code Title 2 by adding new Chapter 40 entitled "Citywide Language Access to Ensure the Effective Delivery of City Services." This recommendation was concurred in a voice vote of all committee members present with no dissenting votes.

Respectfully submitted,

Ariel E. Reboyras, Chairman
Committee on Human Relations