



# City of Chicago



R2015-107

Office of the City Clerk

## Document Tracking Sheet

**Meeting Date:** 3/18/2015

**Sponsor(s):** Brookins (21)  
Cappleman (46)  
Thomas (17)  
Austin (34)  
Burnett (27)  
Ervin (28)  
Reboyras (30)  
Dowell (3)  
Burns (4)  
Graham (29)  
Lane (18)  
Foulkes (15)  
O'Connor (41)  
Holmes (7)  
Cochran (20)  
Fioretti (2)  
Moore (49)  
Chandler (24)  
Solis (25)  
Harris (8)  
Mitts (37)  
Cullerton (38)  
Laurino (39)  
O'Connor (40)

**Type:** Resolution

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

**Committee(s) Assignment:** Committee on Human Relations

A Resolution  
Adopted by The Chicago City Council

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Presented by Alderman Howard Brookins on March 18, 2015

Whereas, the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois have a long and proud history of supporting the abolition of slavery; and

WHEREAS, A diverse coalition of Illinois organizations are honoring the 200 year legacy of abolitionism in our state by fighting modern-day slavery in the African nation of Mauritania, which ranks as the worst nation on Earth in terms of the percentage of its population held as slaves; and

WHEREAS, Biram Dah Abeid, President of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA) convened a press conference on October 23, 2014 in Nouakchott, Mauritania and read the Resolution passed by the City of Chicago on September 10, 2014 in support of the final abolition of slavery in Mauritania; and

WHEREAS, Imam Ahmedou Ould Lemrabott Ould Habibourahmane, Imam of the main mosque in Nouakchott, issued a fatwa or religious decree for all worshippers of Islam to murder Biram Dah Abeid because he publicly read the Resolution passed by us, the City Council of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, other Mauritanian abolitionists who challenged Imam Ahmedou Ould Lemrabott Ould Habibourahmane's fatwa to murder Biram Dah Abeid were arrested and remain in jail to this day; and

WHEREAS, Mauritanian police continue to arrest and harass abolitionist freedom fighters in Mauritania; and

WHEREAS, Biram Dah Abeid was arrested by Mauritanian police on November 6, 2014, and in January 2015, was sentence to a term of imprisonment because he publicly read the Resolution passed by us, the City Council of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, 600,000 Africans, or 20% of the West African nation of Mauritania's 3.4 million residents are estimated to be enslaved, according to in-country organizations and investigative reporting; and

WHEREAS, Enslaved women, girls, and children in Mauritania continue to be regularly subjected to sexual violence, including forced incest in order to produce additional enslaved children for their masters; and

WHEREAS, Slavery was not criminalized in Mauritania until 2007 and no slaveholder in the country has ever been successfully prosecuted; and

WHEREAS, The Mauritanian government has made only superficial attempts to enforce anti-slavery laws despite widespread knowledge of the practice; and

WHEREAS, Slavery in Mauritania exists in conjunction with racial bias against darker skinned Mauritians known as Haratines who routinely suffer significant economic, political, and social discrimination; and

WHEREAS, The 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 U.S. State Department's 2014 Report on Trafficking in Persons 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

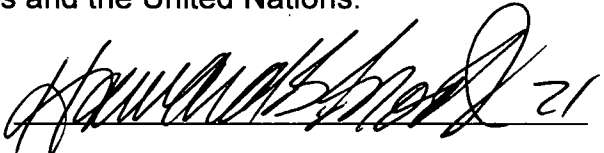
WHEREAS, One of the notable accomplishments of the Chicago City Council in previous decades was its strong and public stances against another injustice in Africa – the cruelty of Apartheid in South Africa – and that this Chicago City Council stance helped the International movement to bring sanctions against – and eventually an end to – apartheid in South Africa; and

WHEREAS, Illinois' United States Senator Richard Durbin has this year secured a \$3 million appropriation to support anti-slavery programs in Mauritania and worked in strong partnership with Illinois groups fighting trafficking and slavery wherever it exists: now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, gathered here this 18<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2015, do hereby wholeheartedly stand in support of Biram Dah Abeid and all other Mauritanian abolitionists in their fight against slavery; and

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, gathered here this 18<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2015, do hereby continue to support the final abolition of slavery in Mauritania and around the world, continue to commend the anti-slavery work of Illinois' U.S. Senator Richard Durbin in securing appropriations to support anti-slavery programs in Mauritania and engaging with global leaders to address this issue, and encourage President Obama to make fighting slavery in Mauritania, and around the world, a priority; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to the United States Congress and the United Nations.

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Carrie M. Austin 34<sup>th</sup>

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Pat Lowell, 31<sup>st</sup>

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Robert ... 24<sup>th</sup>

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Lora Lee 18<sup>th</sup>

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Mary ... 4/1

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Katash ... 7

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Ellie B. Cochran 20

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