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Attend the Immigration Court Hearing to Stop the Deportation of Iraqi Refugee Oliver Awshana

1 message

Kate Stenvig <kstenvig@umich.edu> Thu, Oct 31, 2019 at 10:10 PM
To: BAMN Info List <bamn-list@umich.edu>

Stop the Deportation of Oliver Awshana and all Iraqi Refugees
NO MORE DEATH BY DEPORTATION!

Monday, November 4, 12pm Rally/Press Conference
1pm - Trial in Judge Jebson's Courtroom
McNamara Federal Building, 477, Michigan Ave

On April 23, Oliver Awshana, an Iraqi refugee who fled genocide in Iraq over a decade ago, heroically fought and stopped his own deportation when ICE agents attempted to force him onto a plane. He protested, fought and screamed that he was being deported to his death, as a group of I.C.E. officers and police brutalized and threatened him with tasers. When the pilot saw this, he refused to fly with him on the plane and despite their many threats ICE were forced to return him to detention in Michigan and within a week his case was reopened. It will be heard Monday, November 4th at 1:00pm at the Detroit Immigration Court. This hearing will be decisive not only for Oliver's own fight against deportation, but also for thousands who are in the same situation.

Since Oliver's heroic act of taking direct action to prevent his death deportation to Iraq, it has opened up a new chapter in the immigrant rights movement. It has shown many that when the legal system has failed to do justice, when ICE respects no law, justice, or human life, it is still possible to stop one's imminent deportation so long as there is a will to fight. Oliver's individual direct action did save his life on that day, but if we want to stop the deportations of thousands, we must learn from Oliver's experience and amplify it by taking collective mass direct action.

The Immigration Court is by no means a neutral nor a democratic entity. Instead, it is a department side by side with ICE under the Department of Justice controlled by the U.S. Attorney General. In other words, the Immigration Court also answers to the Trump administration and his racist deportation policies.

The tragic death of Detroit's own Jimmy Al-Daoud in Iraq this summer sent shockwaves across the nation. Jimmy's death was not just the result of a lack of medication and medical care; it is the direct result of Trump and ICE's mass deportation campaign. For decades, the Iraqi government had not issued any travel documents for potential deportees because Iraq is a war-torn country. The birth records of refugees left decades ago simply do not exist because much of Iraq's civilization, including their government buildings in cities and villages alike, has been bombed and destroyed. The so-called travel documents that the Iraqi government now issues, in cooperation with Trump and ICE, are called these Laissez-passe documents, temporary, one-way travel passes that expire upon arrival in Iraq. Beyond that, the deportee has no identification documents, no way to apply for new IDs, and becomes a literally stateless person, recognized by no country. Any reasonable person knows that no one can survive without identification in a society that requires the showing of IDs anywhere you go, where military checkpoints are set up everywhere. Jimmy had never been to Iraq, he was born in Greece, grew up as an American, and did not speak Arabic. He was left completely isolated, without help, and vulnerable to dangers because of war and genocide against Chaldeans; he did not stand a chance. The video of Jimmy, which spread through American social media, was his last hope and appeal for help. Everyone feared that Jimmy's death was only a matter of time. Jimmy's blood is on Trump and ICE's hands, and the Immigration Court was their accomplice that conspired in his death.

In the hearing on Monday, Oliver's attorney Shanta Driver will introduce Daniel W. Smith as an expert witness testifying to Iraq's current deteriorating country conditions and to Oliver's extreme unlikelihood to survive upon landing in Iraq because of his Chaldean and American identity, as well as the lack of any identification documents. Mr. Smith is an American Journalist who has made numerous publications on Iraq over the past decade and has held many important positions in human rights groups in Iraq. Mr. Smith has become an authoritative spokesperson on the subject of the humanitarian crisis in Iraq. The truth is on our side, but whether or not justice will prevail on the basis of this truth depends on the strength of our political will and action. We must mobilize to defend our neighbors against ICE terror. Stop the deportation of Oliver Awshana and All Iraqi Refugees now.