



International Refugee  
Assistance Project

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 22, 2020

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## IRAP FILES CHALLENGE TO YEARS-LONG DELAYS IN REUNITING REFUGEE FAMILIES

**(Baltimore, Maryland)** – Today, the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) filed a lawsuit on behalf of two refugees from the Darfur region of Sudan, now resettled in the Baltimore area, who have been waiting for years since petitioning the U.S. government to be reunited with their spouses and children. The lawsuit challenges the many years-long delay in deciding their so-called “follow-to-join” petitions, which has kept the families separated for years and left their spouses and children stranded in precarious conditions in Sudan.

As intended by Congress, the “follow-to-join” process addresses the issue of family separation that commonly occurs during a refugee’s journey to be resettled in the United States by allowing resettled refugees to petition for family reunification. Both named plaintiffs had to flee their native Sudan during the civil war and ethnic cleansing of the Darfur region and were separated from their families in the process.

In violation of U.S. law, however, the Administration has egregiously delayed a decision on their petitions, prolonging their painful separation and causing emotional suffering and financial hardship for the families.

Shortly after resettling to the United States, plaintiffs Ali Adam and Abdel Rahman Abdalla petitioned the U.S. government to have their families join them in the Baltimore, Maryland area. Plaintiff Ali Adam has been waiting almost seven years for a decision on his petition to have his wife and son join him safely in the United States. Plaintiff Abdel Rahman Abdalla has been waiting for more than three years for the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum to process the approved petitions of his wife, son, and daughter, during which time the Embassy has been holding on to the family’s passports, making it impossible for them to flee to another country or even receive money transfers from Mr. Abdalla.

In response to the filing of the lawsuit, **Mr. Abdalla** said: “I long for the day that I can meet my wife and children at the airport and bring them home with me. I have hope that one day I will be reunited with my family and that I can be a father to my children.”



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"I have been separated from my family for over ten years now," said **Mr. Adam**. "It has been so long and I hope for the day when we can be reunited again."

**Melissa Keaney, Senior Litigation Attorney in IRAP's Litigation Department**, said: "Our clients have already had to wait far too long to be reunified with their families, and there are thousands more refugee families who are separated indefinitely because the Trump Administration has been dragging its feet. This has to stop."

**Ruben Chandrasekar, Executive Director for the International Rescue Committee, Baltimore**, which has been assisting the Plaintiffs in pursuing their follow-to-join petitions, said: "The IRC in Baltimore has borne witness for too long to the U.S. Government's shocking and unjustified years-long delay of parents who have jumped through every hoop asked of them, so that they can finally be reunited with their children who live in dangerous conditions abroad. While the IRC in Baltimore has processed 4,000 immigration benefit applications in the past 2 years, no petition has suffered delays like follow-to-join petitions, even as they are specifically vital to reunite separated families in vulnerable situations, like refugees or asylees. In effect, the Trump Administration continues to innovate new cruelty to lengthen the separation of families the program ultimately aims to be reuniting. The IRC is happy to be collaborating with IRAP to seek a remedy to the government's failure to adjudicate simple requests of parents to bring their children from harm to home."

The complaint was filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland. Plaintiffs are represented by IRAP, and their follow-to-join petitions were prepared by the IRC office in Baltimore.

To view the complaint, [click here](#).

To view the press release, [click here](#).

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