



Protecting Immigrant
Women and Girls
Fleeing Violence

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Attorney General
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

April 16, 2018

Attorney General Sessions:

On March 14, 2018, the Tahirih Justice Center launched a [change.org petition](#) calling upon your office to uphold asylum protection for victims of severe domestic violence. As of today, that petition has received an incredible number of signatures, nearly 60,000, demonstrating widespread public concern about your upcoming review of the *Matter of A-B* case.

Your decision in this case will have a profound impact on women fleeing persecution like Tahirih client Aracely. At age 15, a violent man from Aracely's village in Honduras marked her as "his woman". He terrorized her for years, subjecting her to continuous physical abuse and rape, then shot her in the head and killed her two sons. Aracely, who was pregnant at the time, miraculously survived, as did her daughter. With nowhere in Honduras to find safety, her only chance to stay alive was to flee to the United States, where she was granted asylum. A resident of Florida who signed the petition opined: "A woman who fears for her life because her abuser and their family will hunt for her in their country needs to be able to find safety with us."

This country has a legal and moral obligation to protect individuals fleeing persecution. As a Mississippian who signed the petition said, "I believe in an America that welcomes with open arms the people who are seeking freedom and hope. Sending a woman back to a place where she risks having to bury a third innocent child is anti-American."

Other countries and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have indicated that domestic violence may amount to persecution in certain cases, and that persecution by a non-state actor may qualify for asylum. The Department of Homeland Security has previously argued the same before Republican and Democratic attorneys general, and courts under the Department of Justice have long agreed. There is no sound reason to roll back

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protections for some of the most vulnerable and traumatized migrants in the world. As a petition signer from Ohio shared: “Women’s safety matters. There is a solid basis for this policy and no good reason to reverse it!”

We, the growing list of tens of thousands of supporters of this petition, stand with women like Aracely who are fleeing violence, and we ask that you uphold asylum protection for victims of severe domestic violence. As a signer from Kansas said, “These women have barely survived unspeakable violence. We have a duty to protect and welcome them. Otherwise, we are guilty of perpetuating the violence.”

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Archi Pyati', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Archi Pyati
Chief of Policy
Tahirih Justice Center