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CONTACT: Rebekah Stewart, Program Communications Associate, 571-550-9162, RebekahS@tahirih.org

DHS' VINE DATABASE INCLUDES FEDERALLY PROTECTED INFORMATION ON SURVIVORS OF CRIME

The Tahirih Justice Center, ASISTA, API-GBV, and Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network are national non-profits that advocate with and for immigrant survivors of gender-based violence and have found that detained applicants for U visas – and potentially other protected survivors – are listed in the new searchable Department of Homeland Security Victim Information Notification Exchange (DHS-VINE) online database.

Victims of crimes such as human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault may be eligible for relief under the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 and the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, specifically as VAWA self-petitioners, T, or U visa applicants. There are special protections for these applicants' confidentiality under U.S. law, and these provisions are essential, since perpetrators may try to locate and harm victims, undermine and interfere with their cases in order to maintain power and control, or jeopardize victims' eligibility for relief.

Under the law, DHS is prohibited from disclosing any information about a VAWA applicant, U, or T visa holder to a third-party, with certain limited exceptions. The Tahirih Justice Center informed the Department of Homeland Security that applicants for U, T, and VAWA protection, including Tahirih clients, are listed in the DHS-VINE database on May 12, 2017 and [again on May 25, 2017](#).

Although DHS has received several notifications about this breach of confidentiality, **they have not removed these victims' federally protected information**. Their listing in the public database is a violation of federal statute which carries significant penalties under the law, and puts survivors' lives in danger. Advocates requested that DHS either remove the victims' information immediately or shut down the entire VINE database by Friday, May 26.

*The **Tahirih Justice Center** is a national, multi-city organization providing both policy advocacy and leadership and direct, on the ground legal services to immigrant and refugee women and girls fleeing violence. Tahirih will continue to monitor policy shifts that impact women and girls fleeing violence and advocate for the U.S. to honor its legal obligations to protect those fleeing human rights abuses. Contact Archi Pyati, Chief of Policy and Programs, at archip@tahirih.org for comment from Tahirih on this topic.*

***ASISTA** is a national organization that provides leadership, advocacy, training, and technical assistance to those working with crime survivors seeking secure immigration status, especially those who have suffered gender-based violence. Contact Cecelia Friedman Levin, Senior Policy Counsel, at cecelia@asistahelp.org for comment from ASISTA on this topic.*

*The **Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence** (formerly, Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence) is a national resource center on domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence in Asian and Pacific Islander and immigrant communities. The Institute serves a national network of advocates and community-based service programs that work with Asian and Pacific Islander and immigrant survivors, and is a leader on providing analysis and advocacy on critical issues facing victims in the Asian and Pacific Islander and immigrant communities. Contact Grace Huang, Policy Director, at ghuang@api-gbv.org for comment from API-GBV on this topic.*

***Casa de Esperanza** provides emergency shelter for women and children experiencing domestic violence and runs the National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities, which is a national institute focused on research, training & technical assistance, and policy advocacy focused on addressing and preventing domestic violence in Latino communities. Contact Rosie Hidalgo, Senior Director of Public Policy, at rhidalgo@casadeesperanza.org for comment from Casa de Esperanza on this topic.*