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Dear Friends,

What a landmark year. Tahirih served more women and children fleeing human rights abuses than ever before in our organization’s history. We helped lead national efforts to improve laws and policies towards immigrant women. And, we took the next steps in expanding our award-winning model nationally by opening our first field office in Houston. Our successes, despite the challenging economic climate, are because of your critical support and your continued investment in our mission.

We are thrilled to be able to share with you our many other significant accomplishments in this Annual Report, and we would like to highlight a few. In 2009, Tahirih:

- Defended women and children in a record 378 cases, involving 912 unique immigration and family law matters, including a case now positioned at the Board of Immigration Appeals to set precedent regarding a woman’s right to receive asylum because of domestic violence.
- Expanded our Pro Bono Attorney Network to engage nearly 800 attorneys from 130 law firms, who donated $7.7 million in professional services in 2009 alone.
- Briefed the Obama Transition Team on gender-based asylum concerns, and later underscored to senior White House advisors the dangers to immigrant domestic violence victims when state and local police are deputized to aggressively enforce immigration laws.
- Held a Congressional Briefing and published an important report, _Precarious Protection_, on the need for the US asylum system to provide better protection to women and girls fleeing gender-based persecution.
- Co-chaired a national task force to draft legislation to improve access to gender-based asylum.
- Expanded our Board of Directors with national representation to match Tahirih’s growth.
- Improved organizational efficiency with online case management, a new website, an e-forum for pro bono attorneys, and upgraded systems for financial management, IT, and contacts management.

Since 1997, through direct services and referrals, Tahirih has assisted over 11,000 women and children. None of this would be possible without the dedication and generosity of our supporters—your strength and commitment to a better future continues to inspire us.

Together, we can make a change. We can be inspired by the courage of the women who come to Tahirih fleeing violence with a vision of something better. Together, we can work together to make a better world a reality.

With gratitude and hope,

Layli Miller-Muro
Executive Director

Paul Glist
Chair, Board of Directors
Our Mission

Through direct legal services, public policy advocacy, and education, the Tahirih Justice Center protects immigrant women and girls in the United States seeking justice from gender-based violence.

Our Vision

We are a Bahá’í-inspired organization founded on the belief that the achievement of full equality between women and men is necessary for society to progress. Every day, we work to address violence against women and girls as a critical step in making equality possible.

The world of humanity has two wings—one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly.
— Bahá’í writings

Our History

The Tahirih Justice Center was founded by Layli Miller-Muro in 1997 following her involvement in a landmark asylum case as a law student. Fauziya Kassindja was a 17-year-old woman who fled Togo in fear of a forced polygamous marriage and a tribal practice known as female genital mutilation. Her successfully-litigated case established a new national precedent, enabling women to receive asylum on the basis of gender-based persecution. Ms. Miller-Muro’s portion of the proceeds from a book she co-authored with Ms. Kassindja about the ordeal, entitled *Do They Hear You When You Cry* (Delacorte Press 1998), was used to create the Tahirih Justice Center.

Our Name

Tahirih (TAH-heh-ray) was a champion of women’s rights in mid-19th century Persia and one of the first members of the Bahá’í Faith, during a time and place when most women were kept illiterate and hidden from the public sphere. She was executed for her beliefs and activities at the age of 32. Her last recorded words were,

“You can kill me as soon as you like, but you will never stop the emancipation of women.”
Our Holistic Services

Direct Legal Services

Immigrant women and girls fleeing human rights abuses need expert legal representation to access the legal protection and immigration status that they are entitled to under US law. We assist our clients with the following services:

• Immigration Law Services: We provide legal representation to women and girls seeking protection under immigration law from gender-based violence including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, torture, rape, honor crimes, widow rituals, trafficking and domestic violence.

• Family Law Services (Washington DC metro area only): We provide legal representation in family law matters, including temporary and permanent orders of protection, divorce, custody and visitation.

• Holistic Case Management Services: We help our clients find services such as shelter, counseling, food, clothing, language assistance and urgent medical care—holistically addressing their non-legal needs.

Public Policy Advocacy

The voices of the women and girls we serve are critical to public policy debates at the national, state, and local levels on issues that directly impact them. Among other efforts, we work to:

• Ensure access to asylum for women and girls fleeing gender-based persecution.

• Promote protections for immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other violent crimes.

• Prevent abuse and exploitation of women through the international marriage broker industry.

• Advocate for US leadership to end violence against women worldwide.

Public Education

We actively engage in outreach and training activities to ensure that the public and those working on issues of gender-based violence, such as law enforcement and service agencies, are aware of the unique challenges and obstacles faced by our clients.
The distance between the violent reality of the women we serve and our vision of their future is one of our biggest challenges. Every day, we see the profound needs of our clients and are contacted by immigrant women and girls from around the country and globe who need our help. In 2009, we made great strides to expand our reach on a national level.

Houston Office

Houston is a national hotbed of human trafficking as well as the destination point for immigrants from around the world. Leveraging our award-winning pro bono business model and collaborating with the large local network of social services, we successfully opened our Houston office in 2009 with much local support. In this location we are already representing over 30 clients and their 55 children, and we’ve responded to over 120 requests for help.

*Houston office space was kindly donated by Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP with additional meeting space kindly provided by Foster Quan LLP and the Houston Volunteer Lawyer’s Program. The Houston main office is now located within St. Joseph Medical Center with an administrative office at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP.*

Baltimore Office

In the fall of 2009, we laid the groundwork to open an office in Baltimore, Maryland in early 2010. This location operates as a satellite of the Virginia office and improves our ability to serve current and future clients coming to the region.

*DLA Piper has generously donated Baltimore office space.*
In West Africa, I fought hard for women’s rights and freedom. I led a women’s caucus that fought for women’s rights in marriage and ran for office to give women a voice. You see in my country, women are treated as property, slaves with no voice. Many people hated my very public action. I received death threats from extremists who didn’t believe in women’s rights.

The biggest threat to my life came from the man I was forced to marry. Because he felt I shamed him in public with my advocacy, he beat and raped me repeatedly. He poisoned my daughter, burned down the hotel that I operated and tried to set me on fire.

I fled to the United States to protect my daughters, whom I was forced to leave behind against my will. I found the Tahirih Justice Center in Houston. The wonderful team helped me file for asylum and to quickly obtain emergency requests for humanitarian parole for my three children. From what I understand, very few people are granted this emergency protection, and I could not have done this without Tahirih.

Just before printing, we received news that Yuma has been able to reunite with her children in hiding in West Africa and successfully return with them to the United States, where they will finally be able to live a life free from violence.
Tahirih is proud to turn every donated dollar we receive into five dollars worth of valued service. Approximately 
**94 percent of donated gifts go directly to our programs**, and it’s primarily due to our networks of attorneys and medical, public relations, and public policy professionals who partner with us to provide pro bono services. As a result of these partnerships, we are able to represent hundreds more women and girls than we would be capable of representing alone—**with a 99% litigation success rate**.

**Pro Bono Medical Network**

While legal cases are being resolved, our clients lack health insurance or access to public benefits otherwise available to low-income patients, and are thus unable to afford medical care. Additionally, they often require expert medical testimony to corroborate their torture and abuse. To address these needs, we launched the Pro Bono Medical Network, which includes individual providers and MedStar Physician Partners. We also have a dedicated in-house social worker who assesses the needs of our clients and makes referrals as needed. Our staff works with medical providers to schedule appointments at convenient times and to address the need for medical support services.
Tahirih regularly taps government relations professionals, public relations specialists, and other seasoned advisors to enhance our advocacy capacity and expertise. In 2009, we formalized these long-standing pro bono relationships through the creation of a Public Policy Council. Council Members provide financial support and leverage resources to sustain and strengthen our advocacy initiatives.

**Founding Co-Chairs of Public Policy Council:**

Sara Glenn (Director, Federal Government Relations, Shell Oil Company)
Randa Fahmy Hudome (President, Fahmy Hudome International)
Fern O’Brien (Partner, Thompson Hine, LLP, (formerly at Arnold & Porter LLP))
Marti Thomas (Vice President, The Duberstein Group)

**Additional founding Public Policy Council Members:**

Brenda Abdelall (Associate, Sidley Austin LLP)
Martha Cochran (Partner, Arnold & Porter)
Jim Joseph (Partner, Arnold & Porter)
Betsy Karel (Trellis Fund)
Theresa Loar (Vice President, Global Strategies, CH2M HILL)
Steven Schulman (Partner, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP)

**Additional public policy assistance in 2009 was offered by:**

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP
Arnold & Porter LLP
Covington & Burling LLP
Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen and Loewy LLP
GolinHarris
Howrey LLP
Jones Day
McDermott, Will & Emery
Mike Mihalke
Montserrat Miller at Greenberg Traurig LLP
Patton Boggs LLP
Quinn Gillespie & Associates LLC
A few years ago, we were introduced to Ida, a 34 year-old woman from The Gambia. As an infant, Ida was subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM) and given away to work as a servant for her abusive aunt. As a child, she was repeatedly raped. As a young woman, she was forced to marry one of her rapists, who brought her to the United States to serve him and children she was unaware he had.

Her husband constantly abused her, physically and sexually, and controlled every aspect of her life. Ida summoned the courage to leave her husband, but once divorced, her family threatened her life because she refused to bring her three daughters to The Gambia to undergo FGM. Ida feared that if she returned to The Gambia, her family would beat her, if not kill her, for defying tribal traditions and force her daughters to be mutilated.

We took Ida’s case to heart and were honored to represent her. In addition, we were able to gain valuable hands-on experience relevant to our daily practices. It was Ida, however, who found the strength to present her story and convince us, strangers, that she was entitled to asylum. Our client’s expression of disbelief, joy, and hope upon hearing she was granted asylum was undeniably a rewarding moment for everyone involved. She is an amazing individual who has worked hard to overcome extreme oppression and adversity.

Pro Bono Attorney Network

We have a vital network of professional attorneys who donate their time and expertise to our cause. Almost 800 volunteer attorneys from 130 of the nation’s top law firms partner with us in the representation of 75% of our incoming cases. In 2009, our cash budget remained under $2 million while donated services amounted to $7.7 million, significantly increasing the impact of our work. Tahirih works closely with its pro bono attorneys through formal co-counsel agreements, training, mentorship, an online e-forum and monthly newsletters. Additionally, our holistic case management approach ensures that clients’ non-legal needs are met and attorneys can focus on their legal representation.
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Tahirih has made great strides in expanding and advancing our capability to help women and girls in need of our services. Below is a brief list that highlights our major accomplishments in 2009:

**Legal accomplishments**

- Pioneered the use of the U visa and received one of the first U visa grants in the country.
- Litigated a cutting-edge case regarding domestic violence as a grounds for asylum, featured in the Washington Post; the case is positioned to establish precedent.

**Capacity accomplishments**

- Opened first field office in Houston, TX.
- Launched new website.
- Moved into new, more client-friendly office space.
- Increased legal service delivery efficiencies.
- Upgraded our IT infrastructure, financial accounting, case management and time tracking systems.

**Public Policy accomplishments**

- Briefed the Obama Transition Team on gender-based asylum concerns.
- Asked to serve on the Policy Committee of the National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women.
- Co-chaired a national task force to draft legislation to protect access to gender-based asylum.

**Media highlights** – Our work was featured in the following news outlets in 2009:

- NPR Weekend Edition
- The Washington Examiner
- Orlando Sentinel
- The Indypendent
- LA Times
- National Geographic Channel
- The Washington Post
- CQ Weekly
- Houston Business Journal
- FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin (article co-written by Tahirih Staff Attorney Natalie Nanasi)

**Clients Obtain Long-Awaited U Visas**

The U Visa was created to protect certain immigrant victims of serious crimes by granting permanent legal status and work eligibility to those willing to cooperate with law enforcement on their case. In 2009, twelve Tahirih clients were among the first in the country to finally receive approvals for U visas. Congress enacted the visa as part of the “Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000,” and since then, Tahirih has pioneered use of the visa to protect battered immigrant woman. We’ve conducted numerous trainings in the community to educate groups working with immigrant victims of crime and we’ve submitted comments to the Department of Homeland Security on U visa regulations to address areas of concern.
“Rati’s Story” – Our First U Visa Recipient

Several years ago, I left my family in India to live with the man I had been arranged to marry, a doctor living in the United States. Though nervous, I looked forward to my new life in a new country. But this soon changed. Within hours of arriving here, my husband began his abuse. He immediately demanded sex, and when I shyly refused, he attacked me. He bashed my ears repeatedly and laughed as he threw me off the bed.

This torture continued for months, but I believed I had no other options since I only possessed an H4 Visa, a status that left me with no rights and entirely dependent, legally and economically, on my husband. Finally, I summoned the courage and filed a criminal complaint against my husband, who was charged with assault and domestic violence. Tahirih has gone to great lengths to help me obtain a U Visa. With this status, I will be able to stand on my own two feet and support myself.

I2th Annual Fundraising Benefit

We held our 12th Annual Fundraising Benefit on September 30, 2009, at the Carnegie Institution of Washington, DC. The evening was a moving celebration of 12 years of service dedicated to courageous women and girls seeking justice from gender-based violence.

Sam Waterston of the NBC hit Law & Order served as our keynote speaker and recipient of the Pillar of Justice Award. Several of Tahirih’s Congressional Representatives, including Congressman Jim Moran of Virginia and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas, as well as Congresswoman Corrine Brown of Florida and former-Congressman Nick Lampson of Texas, also attended. Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan did not attend, but served as the Honorary Chair of the Benefit Committee.

Isha Kargbo, a former client from Sierra Leone, spoke about her challenges and ultimate triumph over violence. With our help, Isha filed a petition under the Violence Against Women Act, making her eligible to become a legal permanent resident. Currently, Isha is now a Licensed Practical Nurse and is pursuing a degree to become a Registered Nurse.

Additional banquet awards for 2009 included: Law Firm of the Year Award to Howrey LLP, Pushing the Envelope Award to the Estée Lauder Companies, Inc., Volunteer Service Award to Sherry Sutherland.
On September 30, 2009, Tahirih partnered with Human Rights First and the Women’s Refugee Commission, and convened a Congressional briefing to call the attention of policymakers and the public to our cause. Our Executive Director, Layli Miller-Muro, welcomed attendees and our Director of Public Policy, Jeanne Smoot, presented on the panel of experts. Remarks were offered by Tahirih’s former asylum client, Gisele, who has also served on Tahirih’s Board of Directors; award-winning actor and human rights activist Sam Waterston; and longtime Tahirih supporter Congressman Jim Moran of Virginia.

We discussed our report, “Precarious Protection: How Unsettled Policy and Current Laws Harm Women and Girls Fleeing Persecution,” that highlights the problematic state of gender-based asylum law, the consequences of a one-year filing deadline that can bar deserving applicants from receiving asylum and other challenges to women asylum-seekers. The briefing and report, as well as the experiences of another Tahirih client, were featured in The Washington Post.

Leading Advocacy for Women Refugees

We also helped develop landmark legislative reforms in 2009 to increase protections for women asylum seekers. This includes a House of Representatives bill, “The Restoring Protection for Victims of Persecution Act,” which would eliminate an arbitrary one-year filing deadline that can bar asylum-seekers from protection, and provisions in a Senate bill “The Refugee Protection Act of 2010,” which would assist women asylum seekers.

“Lina’s Story” — Why the One Year Asylum Filing Deadline Needs to Change

For as long as I can remember, my mother beat me. When I was in third grade I had to leave school. She threw me out into the streets while I was still a child. Homeless and forced to fend for myself, I had two children by the age of 17. I then met Oswald, who promised to take care of me. This wasn’t so. Almost immediately he began his assault — violent rapes, banging my head into cinder blocks, whipping me with wires and dragging me through the streets by my hair. After 11 years of abuse, I fled to the United States but was unable to bring my children.

For several years I was broken, and did not know what to do. I arranged to have my children brought to me, but Oswald followed and tried to kill me. I tried to file for asylum, but it was too late. Because I did not do this within my first year in the United States, the judge did not grant me asylum, and only granted me a “withholding of removal” status. As a result, I am unable to become a permanent resident or citizen, and I cannot sponsor my children for legal status.

Image and name have been changed to protect client’s privacy.
International Marriage Broker Industry: Continuing the Fight

Many foreign women who have been paired with American men through “marriage broker” agencies find themselves subject to terrible domestic violence. In 2009, Tahirih led efforts to ensure full implementation of the “International Marriage Broker Regulation Act” (IMBRA), to educate foreign brides of their rights, and to advise “International Marriage Brokers” (IMBs) of their responsibilities. Tahirih has worked with the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice and Congressional committees to urge the government to close gaps in IMBRA implementation, including, issuing a required “rights and resources” information pamphlet for foreign brides and prosecuting IMBs that violate IMBRA. This is an ongoing effort and we continue to advocate to ensure IMBRA protects foreign women at risk of domestic violence at the hands of men they meet through IMBs.

Tahirih’s Wings

Tahirih’s Wings is a group of immigrant and refugee women who are survivors of violence and are clients or past clients of the Tahirih Justice Center. Tahirih’s Wings is an initiative of a former Tahirih client and self-organizes to:

1. Support the Tahirih Justice Center.

2. Support each other.

3. Raise the voices of immigrant women suffering violence and educate the public about the issues faced by members of Tahirih’s Wings.

Members of our Tahirih’s Wings were very active in 2009. They helped Tahirih with outreach on Capitol Hill and to the public and were able to raise their issues in legislative forums, as well as through the media. They worked directly with Jeanne Smoot, our Director of Public Policy, to brainstorm ideas related to our public policy advocacy. They held a clothes drive and sale to help support our clients, in addition to hosting a well-received client holiday party. The Wings also welcomed supporters to Tahirih’s Open House, marking our move to new office space with remarks to an audience that included Congressman Jim Moran, who represents the district in which Tahirih is located, and the Deputy Chief of Police for Alexandria, Eddie Reyes.
### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

#### CURRENT ASSETS
- **Cash and Cash Equivalents**: 938,560
- **Receivables**:
  - **Grants Receivables**: 233,104
  - **Other Receivables**: 38,342
  - **Total Receivables**: 271,446
- **Prepaid Expenses**: 12,773
- **Inventory**: 2,993
- **Total Current Assets**: 1,225,772

#### PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT
- **Furniture and Equipment**: 87,532
- **Less: Accumulated Depreciation**: (43,831)
- **Net Property and Equipment**: 43,701

#### OTHER ASSETS
- **Rent Deposit**: 17,844
- **Total Assets**: 1,287,317

#### LIABILITIES
- **Accounts Payable**: 27,135
- **Accrued Expenses**: 64,625
- **Total Current Liabilities**: 91,760
- **Long-term Liabilities**: 103,183
- **Total Liabilities**: 194,943

#### NET ASSETS
- **Unrestricted Net Assets**: 446,928
- **Board Designated Reserve**: 480,000
- **Temporary Net Assets**: 165,446
- **Total Net Assets**: 1,092,374

#### STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

#### CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES
- **Change in Net Assets**: (4,375)
- **Adjustments to Reconcile Change in Net Assets to Net Cash (Used in) Provided by Operating Activities**:
  - **Depreciation**: 11,993
  - **Loss on disposal of Property and Equipment**: 1,815
- **Change in Assets and Liabilities**:
  - **Grants Receivables**: 92,115
  - **Other Receivables**: 8,761
  - **Prepaid Expenses**: 27,352
  - **Inventory**: 624
  - **Other Assets**: 9,930
  - **Accounts Payable**: 92,115
  - **Accrued Payroll**: 11,781
  - **Long-term Liabilities**: 103,183
  - **Net Cash (Used in) Provided by Operating Activities**: 263,179

#### CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES
- **Purchases of Property and Equipment**: (27,045)
- **Net Cash Used in Investing Activities**: (27,045)
- **Net (Decrease) Increase in Cash and Cash Equivalents**: 236,134
- **Cash and Cash Equivalents - Beginning of Year**: 702,426
- **Cash and Cash Equivalents - End of Year**: 938,560

#### SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION
- **Donated Materials and Equipment**: 14,294
- **Donated Services**: 7,712,763

---

**2009 Financial Summary**

**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>REVENUE AND SUPPORT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated (In-Kind) Professional Services</td>
<td>7,712,763</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7,712,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>1,002,428</td>
<td>289,000</td>
<td>1,291,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>420,610</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>420,610</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest Income</td>
<td>8,841</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising Sales, Net of Expense</td>
<td>64,195</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>64,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Income</td>
<td>12,047</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12,047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets Released from Restrictions</td>
<td>286,610</td>
<td>(286,610)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
<td>9,507,493</td>
<td>2,390</td>
<td>9,509,883</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**EXPENSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Services</td>
<td>8,942,662</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting Services:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and Administrative</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>383,108</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>188,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Supporting Services</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>571,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9,514,258</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**CHANGE IN NET ASSETS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets - Beginning of Year</td>
<td>(6,765)</td>
<td>2,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets - End of Year</td>
<td>933,693</td>
<td>165,446</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REVENUE AND SUPPORT**

- **81%** Donated Professional Services
- **14%** Grants
- **4%** Contributions
- **1%** Other

**2009 EXPENSES**

- **94%** Program Services
- **4%** Management and General
- **2%** Fundraising

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