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STATEMENT ON ASYLUM RESTRICTIONS BARRING ANYONE WHO ENTERS THE U.S. FROM SEEKING ASYLUM EXCEPT AT A PORT OF ENTRY

Yesterday, the administration announced that it will bar from asylum anyone who enters the U.S. anywhere except at a port of entry. This flies in the face of U.S. law established by Congress decades ago to provide a legal pathway to asylum for anyone fleeing persecution. It is also a violation of our international obligations under the Refugee Convention. Practically, this will mean that asylum as a form of protection will be unavailable to those from Central America and Mexico who are fleeing persecution, especially as ports of entry are closed to migrants for days at a time. The administration is justifying this rule by claiming that the entry of migrants is a matter of national security. At this point there is no apparent evidence to support a claim that the migrants who may be trying to seek entry to the U.S. pose a threat to the country.

“In its latest attempt to upend the asylum system, the administration is slamming our door on individuals and families who are running from severe violence,” said Archi Pyati, Chief of Policy at the Tahirih Justice Center. “This cruel move will shut out many people who have left everything to find safety. There is also no reasonable justification for this new policy, despite the lengthy document provided by the White House. All of its arguments fall flat: this will not deter migration or reduce the backlogs in the courts, nor will it do anything to address the systemic issues that are leading to the violence in the countries producing refugees. The fact that many people were previously being approved through the credible fear process is also not a sign that we should close our border, but a sign that people who are approaching the border legitimately need help avoiding persecution and even death.”

The Tahirih Justice Center strongly condemns the President’s decision and is deeply disturbed by the implications of the rule, which will particularly endanger survivors of gender-based violence. If they are turned away at the border, survivors face severe danger if they are forced to return to their homes. Migrants traveling from Central America are coming from one of the most dangerous region in the world for women and children, who are often specifically targeted for rape, sex trafficking, domestic abuse, and other crimes. These women who approach the southern border seeking asylum qualify as refugees under the 1951 International Refugee Convention.

“Our nation will be complicit in the abuse and violence the refugees will face if they are turned away and sent back. Our legal system is meant to protect the vulnerable, not punish them,” said Pyati.

“We have for decades built up asylum protections in this country, and we will not allow the administration to dismantle the progress that has been made. In the era of the Holocaust, the United States, along with other nations, took on the responsibility to provide refuge to those who suffer persecution and are unable to avail themselves of protection in their home. We must continue to respect the values of shared humanity and international obligation that underlie these promises. We cannot allow these longstanding protections to be undermined.”

Tahirih is working with partners to address this latest in a string of policies set by this administration over the last two years intended to undermine long-established U.S. laws and long-held U.S. values of welcoming refugees and immigrants who need our help and enrich our society.

About the Tahirih Justice Center

The Tahirih Justice Center is the largest national direct service and policy advocacy organization focused on assisting immigrant women and girls fleeing violence. Tahirih will continue to monitor policy shifts that impact women and girls fleeing violence and advocate for the United States to honor its legal obligations to protect those fleeing human rights abuses.

Tahirih Justice Center is a national non-profit that protects courageous immigrant women and girls who refuse to be victims of violence through free legal and social services, public policy advocacy, and training and education. Visit www.tahirih.org for more information.