

CONTACT: Danny Hajjar
dhajjar@mrss.com, 202-478-6182

TAHIRIH FILES LAWSUIT CHALLENGING “SAFE THIRD COUNTRY” RULE

Today, the Tahirih Justice Center [filed a lawsuit](#) challenging the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security’s “safe third country” rule. Issued on November 18, 2019, without prior notice and comment from the public, the rule allows the government to remove almost everyone seeking asylum in the U.S. to Guatemala, even if they have no ties to the country. The lawsuit was filed in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. Tahirih is represented in the action by the American Civil Liberties Union.

“The rule makes a mockery of our national obligation not to return asylum seekers to violence and persecution,” said Tahirih Litigation Counsel, Richard Caldarone. “The rule allows the government to deport asylum seekers who have left everything behind in search of safety—including women fleeing rape and severe domestic violence and families fleeing persecution—to Guatemala, even if they have no ties to that country and are in serious danger there. The government is outsourcing our responsibility to offer protection to victims of persecution and torture.”

Asylum seekers are already being sent to Guatemala, where persecutors can freely pursue survivors of gender-based violence from the other Northern Triangle countries. Additionally, the U.S. government has yet to make any finding that Guatemala has full and fair asylum procedures or that its asylum system is robust enough to handle even a small number of asylum claims.

Because Guatemala’s asylum system is ill-equipped to manage hundreds of asylum claims, the rule effectively forces survivors of severe violence to return to the very countries in which they were persecuted, without having a chance to seek protection anywhere else. If fully implemented, the rule would end asylum and related protections in the U.S. for everyone except unaccompanied children.

Richard Caldarone is available for comment on this topic. Please contact dhajjar@mrss.com to arrange an interview.

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. Visit tahirih.org for more information.