

# 2023 Policy Platform

Tahirih’s policy work is rooted in our core values and in our specific theory of change. We work to advance policies and laws that enable immigrant survivors of gender-based violence to pursue legal immigration status, live in safety, and forge their own paths.

The Tahirih Justice Center is prioritizing the following policy goals to immediately improve protections for immigrant survivors while simultaneously seeking long-term, systemic change.

## REFORM ASYLUM LAW TO NAME GENDER AS A PROTECTED GROUND

Right now, many survivors of violence are denied protection from persecution because the law does not clearly state that they qualify. We can change that by urging Congress and the Administration to name gender-based persecution as a reason for protection.

## DEFEND AGAINST DETERRENCE-BASED IMMIGRATION POLICIES

Deterrence-based policies rarely achieve their stated goal and greatly increase the risk of gender-based violence. The U.S. government should abandon deterrence-based approaches and instead implement trauma-informed policies and practices.



## ACCOUNTABILITY FOR TIMELY PROCESSING OF AFGHAN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS WITHIN 150 DAYS

Congress made a commitment to support Afghan evacuees who fled persecution by expediting their asylum claims, but that promise has not been upheld. Afghan women, girls, and families are living with terrifying uncertainty and will continue to do so until their asylum cases are decided.

## IMPROVE U VISA ACCESSIBILITY

Survivors are experiencing egregious delays in the processing of their U visas, with more than 300,000 individuals in the backlog. These delays subject survivors and their families to additional risks of violence, exploitation, manipulation, and trauma. We must fund USCIS to address the backlog and recapture thousands of unused U visas from the early years of the program.

## PREVENT DETENTION AND DEPORTATION OF SURVIVORS

No survivor should fear detention or deportation in seeking a pathway to safety and security for themselves and their families.



## FUND USCIS TO ENSURE TIMELY EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION FOR SURVIVORS

VAWA self-petitioners, U and T visa applicants, and asylum seekers must have timely access to employment authorization as this is critical to immigrant survivors’ ability to escape violence and provide for themselves and their families.



## STRENGTHEN STATE LAWS ON THE AGE OF CONSENT TO MARRY

The devastating impacts of child marriage on immigrant and other survivors are well documented. Despite the known harms, only seven states set the minimum marriage age at 18. To better protect children, the legal age to marry should be set at 18 (or above, if the age of majority is higher) in all states.

## CENTER THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF UNDOCUMENTED SURVIVORS IN HOUSING POLICY

Access to safe and affordable housing is a vital need for survivors of violence. Undocumented immigrant survivors face compounding challenges securing safe, stable housing and would benefit from creative and flexible solutions and programs to prevent homelessness, food insecurity and other domino effects of housing instability.