



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Immigrant Survivor Nonprofit Raises Alarm as Houston Police Contact ICE After 911 Domestic Violence Call—Warning of ‘Chilling Effect’ on Survivor Reporting”

HOUSTON – The Tahirih Justice Center has been serving immigrant survivors in Houston since 2009, and nationwide since 1997. Today, the level of fear among those we serve is at an all-time high. We are deeply alarmed by reports in the Houston Chronicle that the Houston Police Department contacted Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) after an immigrant survivor of domestic violence called 911 for help in an emergency. Our **Houston Managing Attorney, Libby Hasse**, recently spoke out about a similar situation involving one of her clients.

What survivors need in these moments is safety, care, and compassion. Instead, the worst nightmare of every immigrant survivor became a reality. The fact is, when local law enforcement cooperates with and engages in immigration enforcement, it means that immigrant survivors do not feel safe calling 911 in an emergency, reporting crime to the police, or going to court as a victim or witness of a crime.

The Alliance for Immigrant Survivors recently published the results of a survey that demonstrates the consequences of entanglement between federal immigration enforcement and local law enforcement – Fear and Silence: 2025 Insights from Advocates for Immigrant Survivors. This report, based on responses from over 170 advocates and legal professionals across the country, revealed 76% of advocates have observed that immigrant survivors have concerns about contacting the police to report domestic violence and sexual assault and 70% reported that immigrant survivors have concerns about going to court for a matter related to their abuser.

Unfortunately, the situation in Texas will only become more challenging for immigrant survivors, as the Texas legislature recently passed a law that will newly require Texas sheriffs’ departments to enter into cooperative agreements with ICE for immigration enforcement. These kinds of agreements will further entangle local law enforcement in Texas with federal immigration enforcement, and that will result in even more fear and hesitation for immigrant survivors needing help in an emergency. When the agency responsible for protecting victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other violent crimes is also taking on immigrant enforcement



responsibilities that rest with DHS, immigrant survivors are forced to make impossible choices.

Immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility; local law enforcement must focus on protecting survivors and ensuring community safety. When those roles blur, survivors stay silent and communities suffer. And when local law enforcement prioritizes enforcement of non-violent civil immigration violations over violent crime, that makes all of our communities less safe.

Tahirih will continue to work with our partners in Houston, including law enforcement, local government, and policymakers, to advocate for policies that prioritize safety and justice for all survivors. We look forward to a day when Houston and every city in the United States is a place where all survivors of domestic and sexual violence feel safe reaching out for help regardless of their immigration status. The safety of our communities depends on it.

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The Tahirih Justice Center is a national, nonprofit organization that serves women, girls, and all immigrant survivors of gender-based violence. By amplifying the experiences of survivors, our mission is to create a world in which all people share equal rights and live in safety and with dignity.