



## **EAST BAY SANCTUARY COVENANT Condemns Attorney General's Unilateral Ruling Upending Asylum Protections for Survivors of Domestic Violence**

**June 12, 2018**

**Contact:** Sister Maureen Duignan, Executive Director: [sistermaureen@eastbaysanctuary.org](mailto:sistermaureen@eastbaysanctuary.org)  
**Tel:** 510-540-5296, ext. 101 [www.eastbaysanctuary.org](http://www.eastbaysanctuary.org)

On June 11, 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions issued a disheartening decision to erode protections for domestic violence survivors and individuals fleeing pervasive gang violence – people who look to the United States for refuge.

Invoking a rarely utilized power, Sessions reversed asylum for a Salvadoran domestic violence survivor in a case known as *Matter of A-B-*. Ms. A.B. fled to the United States after suffering 15 years of brutal violence at the hands of her ex-husband. He beat and kicked her, including while she was pregnant; bashed her head against a wall; threatened her with death while holding a knife to her throat and while brandishing a gun; and threatened to hang her. Ms. A.B. attempted to secure protection from the government and police to no avail.

Unfortunately, the case of Ms. A.B. is all too common. Gender-based violence is one of the major reasons that women and girls seek asylum. This may be due to gender-discriminatory laws in their home country or from culturally accepted forms of violence against women such as domestic abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), or honor killings.

“Women and unaccompanied minor girls who seek legal assistance at EBSC have survived rape, domestic violence, sexual slavery, and other forms of gender-based violence. We will continue to fight for women’s right to live a life free of violence and to achieve legal protection in the United States if her government cannot ensure her safety.” – Kaveena Singh, Managing Attorney, EBSC

Sessions’ decision is a malicious attempt by the Trump administration to overrule long-standing precedent regarding the manner in which private violence can give rise to a viable asylum claim; his decision contains significant anti-immigrant rhetoric. However, it is important to note that this decision does NOT mean that claims based on persecution by non-state actors, including domestic violence, are no longer viable. Under U.S. and international law, our country is obligated to provide refuge to people like Ms. A.B. who suffer persecution and are unable to avail themselves of protection in their home countries.

**We join the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies and others to call on Sessions to reverse this tragic decision.**

**We urge everyone to take action to support safety for people fleeing violence and persecution.**

- Read more about the case and take action [here](#).
- Learn more about [EBSC's work with survivors of gender-based violence](#).
- And please contact your representatives to express your outrage at Sessions’ recent decision.

**We can’t stand idly by while women’s lives are at stake.**