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November 7, 2023

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Blinken and Secretary Mayorkas:

We write to you today as representatives of Americans for Justice in Palestine Action (AJP Action) and the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) with deep concern for the well-being and fundamental rights of Palestinians residing in the United States. We request the Biden Administration to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and authorize Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Palestinians in the United States.

Our request is rooted in response to the persistent and deeply reprehensible genocidal actions of the far-right Israeli government, which, over the course of less than a month, have led to the devastating loss of more than 10,000 Palestinian civilians, including over 4,200 innocent children in Gaza. Our concern also extends to the escalating violence targeting Palestinians who live under Israeli apartheid policies in the occupied West Bank. These dire circumstances collectively create an environment where many Palestinians visiting and living in the United States fear for their safety and cannot safely return to their homeland.

Extending TPS and authorizing DED stands as a compassionate alternative to the recent legislative proposal introduced by Rep. Ryan Zinke and other Republicans. That proposal seeks to ban Palestinians from entering the United States and possibly expel those who are already here. We firmly believe that such a legislative measure, rooted in fear and exclusion, fundamentally contradicts the principles of compassion, justice, and equality that should guide our nation's policies.

In response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis, we implore the U.S. government to provide a temporary reprieve from deportation for Palestinians residing in the United States, granting them the opportunity to continue their lives and employment without the constant specter of removal. TPS and DED have been proven to be effective mechanisms that offer sanctuary and security to vulnerable communities confronting crises across the globe.

While we make this request, we continue to emphasize the importance of Palestinians in Gaza having the opportunity to reside in their homeland with justice, peace, and freedom, devoid of the perpetual threat of ethnic cleansing. Our appeal specifically pertains to those Palestinians

who are presently in the United States on limited visas with impending departure dates, and we strongly advocate for granting them the right to stay until the Israeli government ceases its campaign of mass violence in both the West Bank and Gaza.

In addition to the ongoing crisis in Gaza, Palestinians have endured decades of displacement and violence at the hands of the Israeli government and settlers. The recent escalation of the Israeli military in the conflict has only intensified the dire circumstances faced by Palestinians.

Finally, AJP Action and CAIR reiterate our previous calls for the Biden Administration to urgently advocate for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza to prevent any further loss of civilian life and to refrain from further arming the Israeli military, which has demonstrated a complete disregard for civilian lives and international law.

We sincerely request your immediate attention to this matter as we firmly believe that extending TPS and authorizing DED for Palestinians in the United States is a just and humane response to their plight.

The well-being and rights of Palestinians in the United States hinge upon our collective action, and we trust that you will make the right choice.

Sincerely,



Nihad Awad
CAIR National Executive Director



Dr. Osama Abu Irshaid
AJP Action Executive Director



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

March 25, 2024

Nihad Awad
National Executive Director
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
453 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Mr. Awad:

Thank you for your November 7, 2023 letter to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and to the U.S. Department of State (DOS) in support of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Palestinians in the United States. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is principally responsible for advising the Secretary of Homeland Security on TPS and DED issues and implementing the policies. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

I appreciate the concerns you have outlined regarding the situation in Gaza and the West Bank and your interest in a TPS designation and DED. On February 14, 2024, President Biden issued a memorandum to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security determining that it was in the foreign policy interest of the United States to defer for 18 months the removal of certain Palestinians present in the United States. This memorandum also directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to take appropriate measures to authorize employment for such individuals and to consider suspending regulatory requirements with respect to F-1 nonimmigrant students who are Palestinians. More information regarding Palestinians' eligibility for DED can be found in the president's memorandum.¹ DHS will publish further information in the Federal Register as soon as possible to provide additional information about the implementation of the president's memorandum.

Please be assured that DHS is monitoring conditions in the region and engaging with our partners at the DOS and with other interagency partners. In addition to TPS and DED, USCIS may, upon request, apply certain extraordinary measures to eligible noncitizens affected by emergencies or unforeseen circumstances. Such measures may include:

¹ See Presidential Memorandum for the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security on Extending and Expanding Eligibility for Deferred Enforced Departure for Certain Palestinians, February 14, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2024/02/14/memorandum-on-the-deferred-enforced-departure-for-certain-palestinians/>

- Change or extension of nonimmigrant status if eligible individuals are currently in the United States, even if the request is filed after the authorized period of admission has expired;
- Expedited processing of requests for advance parole documents;
- Expedited adjudication of requests for off-campus employment authorization for F-1 students experiencing severe economic hardship;
- Expedited adjudication of employment authorization applications, where appropriate;
- Assistance if applicants received a Request for Evidence or a Notice of Intent to Deny and were unable to appear for an interview, submit evidence, or respond in a timely manner due to the circumstances; and
- Replacement of lost or damaged immigration or travel documents issued by USCIS, such as a Permanent Resident Card (Green Card).

More information is available at <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/immigration-relief-in-emergencies-or-unforeseen-circumstances>.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Please share this response with the other organization that cosigned your letter. Should you require any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director