



PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

Honorable Ann B. Wheeler
Chair At - Large

April 28, 2023

RECEIVED

By ESEC at 1:57 pm, May 10, 2023

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

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

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken,

My name is Ann Wheeler, and I appeal to your offices as the Chair of the Board of County Supervisors for Prince William County, Virginia. My office has the pleasure of representing half a million residents in the suburban outskirts of Northern Virginia, many of whom have ties to the nations of Honduras and El Salvador.

I urge you to redesignate Honduras and El Salvador for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), as it is unsafe for the nationals of these countries to be returned at this time due to severe environmental damage caused by successive hurricanes and climate change-related catastrophes, combined with human rights violations and cascading political crises exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both El Salvador and Honduras face separate but equally devastating realities that prevent individuals who have fled these countries from safely returning.

Furthermore, the continued litigation in the Ramos v. Nielsen case leaves many in jeopardy and, whatever its result, may still prevent thousands from accessing much-needed protection. A TPS redesignation for El Salvador and Honduras would protect eligible beneficiaries from the dangers they face if they were removed, and would also enable them to support their loved ones back home, reducing the pressure for others in these countries to resort to irregular migration.

El Salvador and Honduras were devastated by three severe environmental catastrophes in the last few years. Hurricanes Iota and Eta destroyed homes, public infrastructure, and health care systems, and crushed the agricultural sector.

In Honduras, the hurricanes displaced 937,000 people, caused widespread damage to agricultural lands and infrastructure, and affected over 4.5 million Hondurans. Honduras continued to experience environmental disasters, including floods, landslides, and tropical



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storms last year that displaced hundreds of thousands and could increase the number of Hondurans living in extreme poverty from 42 percent to 64 percent.

Combined, the effects of the natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic have profoundly exacerbated food insecurity, violence, and led to rising social tensions. These factors have left the country's population struggling to survive. Over a quarter of El Salvador's population lives in deep poverty and facing poor health or malnutrition, and in Honduras, an estimated 2.6 million people, nearly a third of the population, were facing a hunger crisis as of 2022.

Although these conditions alone arguably warrant a TPS redesignation, the subsequent human rights and economic crises have exacerbated the impact on public safety in El Salvador and Honduras, although both countries face unique situational contexts.

TPS is a humanitarian tool used by both Democratic and Republican administrations to provide relief for individuals who are unable to return to their home countries facing extraordinary and temporary conditions. The ongoing humanitarian crises in Honduras and El Salvador coupled with the devastating impact of the environmental disasters, makes the safe return of Honduran and Salvadorans in the United States inconceivable.

A redesignation of TPS would give the U.S. government an opportunity to engage in diplomacy with the Honduran government and work with civil society groups in the region to address the root causes of migration without creating further instability and volatility. The immediate and tangible humanitarian benefits of TPS would help advance life-saving and stability enhancing remittances to the region.

As the Chair of the Board of County Supervisors, I urge you to redesignate TPS for El Salvador and Honduras. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

In Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann B. Wheeler".

Ann B. Wheeler
Chair At-Large
Prince William County Board of Supervisors



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

May 24, 2023

Ann B. Wheeler
Chair At-Large
Prince William County Board of Supervisors
1 County Complex Court
Prince William, VA 22192

Dear Ms. Wheeler:

Thank you for your April 28, 2023 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) urging the redesignation of Honduras and El Salvador for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). I am responding on behalf of the Department.

The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate or redesignate a country for TPS and extend or terminate a country's existing TPS designation based upon specific statutory criteria. To designate a country for TPS or extend a country's TPS designation, the Secretary must find one or more of the following: (1) there is an ongoing armed conflict within the country that would pose a serious threat to the personal safety of the country's nationals if they were returned; (2) there has been an environmental disaster resulting in a substantial, but temporary, disruption of the living conditions in the area affected, the country is temporarily unable to handle adequately the return of its nationals, and the country has officially requested TPS designation; or (3) there exist extraordinary and temporary conditions in the country that prevent nationals from returning in safety, and that permitting the country's nationals to remain temporarily in the United States would not be contrary to the national interest of the United States. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act § 244(b)(1).

Honduras and El Salvador were previously designated for TPS due to natural disasters.¹ Following a review of the country conditions and consulting with appropriate U.S. government agencies, former Secretaries and Acting Secretaries of Homeland Security announced the termination of the TPS designations for Honduras and El Salvador in 2018.² Litigation continues regarding these termination decisions.

As required by court orders adopting parties' stipulations to stay proceedings in *Ramos v. Nielsen*, No. 18-cv-1554 (N.D. Cal.) and *Bhattarai v. Nielsen*, No. 19-cv-731 (N.D. Cal.),³ DHS

¹ El Salvador was designated for TPS on March 9, 2001, following a series of earthquakes occurring in 2001 (66 FR 14214); Honduras (64 FR 524) was designated for TPS on January 5, 1999 following Hurricane Mitch.

² DHS announced the termination of the designations of TPS for Honduras on June 5, 2018 (83 FR 26074) and El Salvador on January 18, 2018 (83 FR 2654).

³ *See Ramos v. Nielsen*, No. 18-cv-1554 (N.D. Cal., Oct. 26, 2018) (proceedings stayed pending appeal in challenge to terminations of TPS for Sudan, Haiti, El Salvador and Nicaragua) and *Bhattarai v. Nielsen*, No. 19-cv-731 (N.D.

extended appropriate TPS-related documentation (Employment Authorization Document (EADs), Form I-797, Notice of Action; and Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record) for eligible beneficiaries of TPS for Honduras and El Salvador.⁴ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has announced the continuation of these TPS designations on its website.⁵ Eligible TPS beneficiaries who would like an EAD with the extended validity date of June 30, 2024, must file Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, with appropriate filing fee or request for fee waiver.

USCIS appreciates the information you have provided regarding the conditions in Honduras and El Salvador. DHS is closely monitoring conditions in these countries, in consultation with other governmental agencies, and is committed to administering its programs in an equitable manner.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you require any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director

Cal. Mar. 12, 2019) (proceedings stayed in challenge to termination of TPS for Honduras and Nepal; approving parties' stipulated agreement that TPS and TPS-related documentation for affected beneficiaries will be continued on same terms as the plaintiffs in *Ramos v. Nielsen*, 336 F. Supp. 3d 1075 (N.D. Cal. 2018), *vacated*, 975 F.3d 872 (9th Cir. 2020), *pet. for reh'g en banc granted*, 59 F.4th 1010 (9th Cir. 2023)).

⁴ See *Continuation of Documentation for Beneficiaries of Temporary Protected Status Designations for El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Sudan, Honduras, and Nepal*, 87 FR 68717 (Nov. 16, 2022).

⁵ See <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status/temporary-protected-status-designated-country-el-salvador> (continuing TPS for El Salvador); <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status/temporary-protected-status-designated-country-honduras> (continuing TPS for Honduras).