

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–2004

April 28, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

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

Dear President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Secretary Blinken,

We write to you today to request that you issue an immediate 18-month designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ethiopia. While we commend the administration’s swift work to safeguard Ukrainians and Afghans in the United States from war and humanitarian disaster, **we are deeply concerned that TPS has not yet been designated for Ethiopia given the ongoing civil war.**

TPS authority stems from the same deeply held principles that underpin the U.S. refugee and asylum systems—that the United States will not return people to situations where their lives or freedom will be threatened. In addition to humanitarian protection, TPS provides many benefits to the United States. It keeps families and communities stabilized, ensuring they can remain together and support themselves. TPS is a boom to the U.S. economy, adding workers—including essential workers during this pandemic—and new businesses. It also plays an important role on the national stage, setting an example for the world on human rights—as this administration just did with Ukraine and Afghanistan—as well as increasing remittances which can serve as unofficial foreign aid to assist people, families, and economies in countries in crisis.

For over a year, international non-governmental organizations in Ethiopia have documented severe famine conditions, sexual violence as a weapon of war, crumbling infrastructure, and more. According to USAID, about 7 million people in northern Ethiopia face severe acute food insecurity and 8.1 million are in need of humanitarian assistance.¹ We are particularly concerned over media reports of drone warfare against civilians and vital infrastructure, a continued escalation of violence that deepens this human rights and humanitarian crisis.² On March 7, 2022, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights reported even more rapidly deteriorating conditions since late 2021, including widespread “rapes and lethal air strikes.”³

In March 2022, the U.S. State Department re-upped its highest-level do not travel advisory due to “armed conflict, civil unrest, communications disruptions, crime, and the potential for terrorism and kidnapping in border areas.”⁴ The next day, the State Department withdrew all non-emergency U.S. government employees and their family members from Ethiopia due to violence and severe supply shortages.⁵ While Tigrayan forces and the Ethiopian government declared a humanitarian truce on March 24, 2022, only a tiny amount of food aid has been allowed to reach Tigray since then. With up to 900,000 people in Tigray facing famine conditions, and the Horn of Africa’s worst drought in 40 years threatening famine in other parts of the country, the United States must not return anyone to such conditions and must provide protection through TPS designation.⁶

A country is typically designated for TPS when conditions in the country fall into one or more of the three statutory bases for designation: ongoing armed conflict, environmental disasters, or extraordinary and temporary conditions. Due to the atrocities, we have witnessed within Ukraine and Afghanistan, the TPS designation for these countries will save the lives of countless men and women. We have witnessed, extra-judicial killings, massacres, gender-based violence, and forced displacement documented in Ethiopia. The people of Ethiopia living in the United States deserve the same protection from the dangers of returning to a war-torn country.

As we applaud the administration’s swift work in designating TPS for Ukraine and later Afghanistan, we are concerned at the lack of new designations for majority-Black and African

¹ “Ethiopia – Northern Ethiopia Crisis,” USAID, November 30, 2021, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-11-30_USG_Northern_Ethiopia_Crisis_Fact_Sheet_2.pdf.

² Dan Sabbagh, “Ethiopia-Turkey pact fuels speculation about drone use in Tigray war,” *The Guardian*, November 4, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/04/ethiopia-turkey-pact-fuels-speculation-about-drone-use-in-tigray-war>.

³ “U.N. rights chief says air strikes have killed hundreds since November in Ethiopia,” *Reuters*, March 7, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/more-than-300-killed-air-strikes-northern-ethiopia-since-nov-un-rights-chief-2022-03-07/>.

⁴ “Ethiopia Travel Advisory,” U.S. State Department, November 6, 2021, accessed December 7, 2021, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/ethiopia-travel-advisory.html>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Samuel Gebre, “Worst Drought in 40 Years Threatens Millions in the Horn of Africa” *Bloomberg*, April 7, 2022, <https://www.bloombergquint.com/business/worst-drought-in-40-years-threatens-millions-in-horn-of-africa>

countries. **The conditions in Ethiopia are urgent and egregious and we call upon the administration to do its part to protect Ethiopians in the United States from deportation by designating Ethiopia for TPS.**

Sincerely,



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
Member of Congress



Jamal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



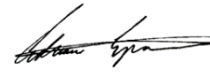
Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



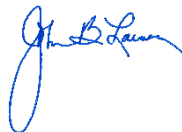
Jim Himes
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



John B. Larson
Member of Congress



Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Jim P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Dean Phillips
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Marc Veasey
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Cori Bush
Member of Congress



June 8, 2022

The Honorable Anthony G. Brown
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Brown:

Thank you for your April 28, 2022 letter in support of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ethiopian nationals. Secretary Mayorkas asked that I respond on his behalf.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is principally responsible for advising the Secretary on TPS issues and implementing the program. As you referenced in your letter, the Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a country for TPS and extend or terminate a country's existing TPS designation based upon specific statutory criteria. In order 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 the Secretary does not find that permitting the country's nationals to remain temporarily in the United States would be contrary to the national interest of the United States. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act § 244(b)(1).

I want to assure you that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is committed to administering its programs, including TPS, in an equitable manner. This is in line with the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to pursue a comprehensive approach to equity and fairness in decision-making.¹ There have been several new TPS designations and redesignations made this year: (1) Cameroon, a new designation announced April 15, 2022; (2) Afghanistan, a new designation announced March 16, 2022; (3) Ukraine, a new designation announced March 3, 2022; (4) South Sudan, an extension and redesignation announced March 2, 2022; and (5) Sudan, a new designation announced March 2, 2022.²

¹ *See* Executive Order 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government* (January 20, 2021), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01753/advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government>

² *See* USCIS, *Temporary Protected Status*, (last updated Apr. 19, 2022), <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status>

I appreciate the additional information you shared about current country conditions in Ethiopia. DHS is actively monitoring conditions in the country. Ultimately, the Secretary, who has discretionary authority to designate a country for TPS based upon specific statutory criteria, will make a determination following consultation with interagency partners and careful consideration of the circumstances of the country.

Thank you again for your letter. The cosigners of your letter will receive a separate, identical response. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (240) 721-3801.

Respectfully,

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

Ur M. Jaddou
Director