



July 18, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Re: U.S. Catholic Community Supports Robust Use of TPS

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken:

We write on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration, Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), in gratitude for your recent designations of Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Cameroon for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). We are likewise grateful for the recently announced extension of TPS for Venezuela, although we also urge you to redesignate the country, based on your ongoing consideration of country conditions and for other reasons described below. Finally, we ask that the Administration continue to make robust use of TPS, including by extending and redesignating TPS for Syria and designating additional countries experiencing armed conflict, environmental disasters, or other conditions implicated by section 244(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Since the Administration first designated Venezuela for TPS in March 2021, an estimated 250,000 Venezuelans have arrived in the United States. None of these individuals will qualify for TPS under the extension announced July 11. Unfortunately, conditions warranting the original designation are ongoing, with more than 7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Our Catholic partners on the ground confront these challenges on a daily basis, with CRS recently reporting that the "prevalence of severe acute malnutrition—the most extreme and dangerous form of malnutrition in children under 5—has remained critically high."¹ Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have called for a redesignation of Venezuela for TPS.² Some, including those within the Administration itself, have expressed concerns that a redesignation will incentivize additional migration to the United States. However, statistical assessments do not support this claim, and some studies have even found that TPS designations decrease the demand for both regular and irregular migration.³ Rather, withholding a redesignation on this basis subjects recent arrivals to poverty, exploitation, and insecurity in the United States. For these reasons, we strongly encourage you to redesignate Venezuela for TPS.

¹ CRS, FOOD SECURITY & MALNUTRITION IN VENEZUELA (Mar. 2022), <https://bit.ly/3cbTEMT>.

² See, e.g., Letter from Members of the House of Representatives to President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas (Mar. 22, 2022), <https://bit.ly/3nVhUW3>; Letter from Senators to Secretary Mayorkas (Mar. 31, 2022), <https://bit.ly/3v6k8pN>.

³ Tom K. Wong, Tom Jawetz, & Silva Mathema, *There Is No Evidence That TPS Designations Increase Irregular Migration to the United States* (Feb. 17, 2021), <https://ampr.gs/3yXfl6J>.

We are also mindful of the approaching expiration of TPS for Syria. The country has now entered its eleventh year of civil war, and the longstanding humanitarian crisis has been escalated by recent events. Specifically, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has intensified already dire levels of food insecurity, which now affects 60% of the Syrian population. With wheat and grain trapped in Ukrainian ports, Syrian food prices increased by 24% in March alone, following an 800% increase in the last two years.⁴ This has brought food prices to their highest level since 2013. Given these realities, we urge you to extend Syria's current designation and redesignate the country for TPS prior to the 60-day statutory review deadline of July 31.

Unfortunately, Venezuela and Syria are not the only countries experiencing conditions that warrant TPS designations. It is our belief that such conditions exist in a number of other countries not yet designated for TPS. As Catholics, we believe wholeheartedly in protecting the sanctity of every human life. This includes addressing situations in which people are needlessly put into harm's way. As "the statutory embodiment of safe haven,"⁵ TPS is an important tool provided by Congress to minimize such occurrences. It also ensures that those who are unable to return to their countries of origin can support themselves and their families and make positive contributions to American communities, consistent with their God-given dignity. Consequently, we urge the Administration to make full use of its TPS authority by redesignating Venezuela, extending Syria's current designation and redesignating the country, and providing protection to nationals of other countries warranting TPS designations.

Thank you for considering our requests and for your work on behalf of the common good.

Respectfully,



Most Reverend Mario E. Dorsonville
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration



Sister Donna Markham, OP, PhD
President and CEO
Catholic Charities USA



Sean Callahan
President and CEO
Catholic Relief Services



Anna Gallagher
Executive Director
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

⁴ *11 Years of Conflict: With Hunger at Historic Levels, Millions of Syrians Hang by a Thread* (May 8, 2022), <https://bit.ly/3IBlnm1>.

⁵ Jill H. Wilson, Congressional Research Service, RS20844, *Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure 2* (2002), <https://bit.ly/2OodyYa>.



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

September 9, 2022

Most Reverend Mario E. Dorsonville
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington
Chairman, Committee on Migration
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 4th Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017

Dear Bishop Dorsonville:

Thank you for your July 18, 2022 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in support of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuela and Syria. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is principally responsible for advising the Secretary on TPS issues and implementing the program, and Secretary Mayorkas asked that I respond on his behalf.

I appreciate the concerns you have outlined regarding the situation in Venezuela and your interest in its redesignation for TPS. As you know, on July 11, 2022, after careful consideration, including a thorough review of the country conditions and consultation with interagency partners, Secretary Mayorkas determined that the conditions for the TPS designation of Venezuela continued to be met, and accordingly extended the designation of TPS for Venezuela for 18 months. This extension will be in effect from September 10, 2022, through March 10, 2024. For additional information, please see the press release announcing the TPS extension for Venezuela.¹

The extension allows the approximately 343,000 Venezuelans who were in the United States at the time of the initial designation in March of 2021 to continue to be eligible for TPS and remain in the United States under protected status.² The *Federal Register* notice provides for the automatic extension of employment authorization documents that expire on September 9, 2022, and includes information about fees and how applicants may request a fee waiver, if necessary.

This extension is one of many ways the Biden administration, together with our regional partners, is providing humanitarian support to Venezuelans at home and abroad, including

¹ <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/07/11/dhs-announces-extension-temporary-protected-status-venezuela>.

² See Extension of the Designation of Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status (87 FR 55024), available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/09/08/2022-19527/extension-of-the-designation-of-venezuela-for-temporary-protected-status>.

providing additional humanitarian and development funding, encouraging regional partners to offer protective status, and creating a path to a regular migration status for Venezuelans.

I also note and appreciate your concerns regarding the situation in Syria and your interest in its extension and redesignation for TPS. On July 29, 2022, after careful consideration, including a thorough review of the country conditions and consultation with interagency partners, Secretary Mayorkas determined that the conditions for the TPS designation of Syria continued to be met, and accordingly extended and redesignated TPS for Syria for 18 months. This extension and redesignation will be in effect from October 1, 2022, through March 31, 2024. For additional information, please see the TPS Syria webpage.³

In addition, USCIS also offers support that may be available upon request to assist eligible Venezuelan and Syrian nationals and others affected by special situations, including the following:

- Change or extension of nonimmigrant status if 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 because of the special situation; and
- Replacement of lost or damaged immigration or travel documents issued by USCIS, such as a Permanent Resident Card (Green Card).

More information on these options is available on our website at <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/special-situations>.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Please share this response with the other organizations 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 horizontal line.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director

³ <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status/temporary-protected-status-designated-country-syria>