

Honorable Elaine Duke
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

RE: Faith groups and leaders in support of life-saving Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program

Dear Secretary Duke,

On behalf of the XXX undersigned national, state, and local faith-based organizations, as well as XXX faith leaders from across traditions, we call on you to continue to utilize Temporary Protected Status (TPS) as Congress intended, to protect human life in the face of armed conflict, natural disaster, or other extraordinary circumstances in their countries of nationality. We cannot sit idly by while our brothers and sisters are returned to the very conditions that forced them from their homes. We urge you to think about the moral imperative to love our neighbor, welcome the sojourner, and care for the most vulnerable among us.

As people of faith, our concern stems from shared values rooted in our sacred texts that remind us to love our neighbor and welcome the sojourner among us. The Torah tells us: "The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Leviticus 19:33-34).

TPS affords the administration an important tool to extend temporary protections, work authorization, and a shield from deportations to extremely vulnerable populations. TPS currently protects over 300,000 people in the United States who would otherwise be subjected to disease, violence, starvation, the aftermath of natural disasters, and other life-threatening conditions. Because of TPS, our immigrant neighbors have had the opportunity to rebuild their lives and raise a family in safety. By welcoming those in need, TPS translates our core American and faith values into action. We do not turn our backs on or devalue the lives of vulnerable people.

In addition to upholding our collective American and faith principles, designating, re-designating, or extending TPS when warranted by country conditions is in the U.S. national interest. TPS holders contribute billions of dollars to our economy and work hard to strengthen and build our society. A study of the majority of TPS holders shows that over 80 percent are in the labor force, making huge contributions across crucial sectors including health care, child care, construction, and more.¹

Ending TPS designations before TPS-holders can safely return home would endanger the lives of our brothers and sisters in need and further destabilize countries and regions. TPS holders provide life-saving remittances to family and friends back home. Many TPS holders have lived in the United States for years and are parents to U.S. citizen children. Undoubtedly, American families would be needlessly ripped apart, especially given the administration's recent termination of parole in the Central American Minors (CAM) program. As we face these challenges, as well as the threat to the safety of nearly 800,000 young people in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, the lives of over a million people

¹ Robert Warren and Donald Kerwin, *A Statistical and Demographic Profile of the US Temporary Protected Status Populations from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti*, Journal on Migration and Human Security, Vol. 5 No. 3 (2017), available at <http://cmsny.org/publications/jmhs-tps-elsalvador-honduras-haiti/>.

are in danger. To prematurely end or terminate TPS would be an affront to our American values of hospitality, generosity, and compassion.

The United States has a moral responsibility to not return children, families, and individuals that have been subject to persecution to extremely violent territories. We pray that you may find compassion and ask you to extend TPS for the currently-designated countries—Haiti, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Syria, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Yemen, Nepal—for as long as those countries remain unsafe for TPS-holders to return and should another country befall such conditions, that you designate TPS for that country to protect those at risk. As Americans and people of faith, we urge you to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with those in need and to defend the lives and dignity of the vulnerable.

Sincerely,