November 22, 2019

Acting Secretary Chad Wolf
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

The Honorable Secretary Mike Pompeo
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Acting Secretary Chad Wolf and Secretary Mike Pompeo:

We, the 105 undersigned international, national, state, and local organizations, write to urge you to extend for 18 months and redesignate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Yemen and Somalia. Given the ongoing armed conflicts and humanitarian crises devastating both countries, we are extremely concerned that a forcible return of over 1,7501 of our Yemeni and Somali neighbors and community members back to danger would tear livelihoods apart and be akin to a death sentence because of the extraordinary and dangerous conditions in these countries.

Yemen is in the midst of the world’s largest humanitarian crisis,2 fueled by warring parties who continually act with total disregard to international law and human life.3 By the end of 2019, the total number of deaths from the conflict and dire humanitarian conditions could rise to at least 233,000,4 with 60 percent of the deceased being children under the age of five. In Yemen, a child dies every 11 minutes and 54 seconds.5 The conflict uprooted more than three million people from their homes and 80 percent6 of the total population—an estimated 24 million people—are in need of humanitarian assistance to survive. The destruction of civilian infrastructure from indiscriminate bombings, including schools, hospitals, markets, and central water systems, continue to exacerbate the largest cholera outbreak in modern history and a hunger crisis in which at least 20 million7 people are food insecure. The State Department’s travel advisory in April 2019 states that “no part of Yemen is immune to violence,”8 citing immense threats of artillery shelling, air strikes, landmines, kidnappings, and lack of access to food, water, and medicine throughout the country.

1 Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) tools and resources, CLINIC, https://clinclegae.org/tps
5 Ibid.
8 Yemen Travel Advisory, U.S. State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, April 9, 2019, https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/yemen-travel-advisory.html
Meanwhile, Somalia remains home to one of the most complex and protracted humanitarian emergencies in the world. Recent environmental disasters and conflict, including famine and floods, triggered widespread hunger, displacement, and contagious diseases. Prolonged conflict and drought conditions devastate Somalia, with over 5.7 million people—nearly half of the population—food insecure and almost a quarter of the population displaced.\(^9\) At least two million people\(^{10}\) live in areas where delivering aid is difficult, if not impossible, due to active conflict and other factors such as lack of infrastructure. Forced evictions—related to property owners taking advantage of already vulnerable people among other factors—are on the rise and exacerbate the humanitarian crisis. There were nearly 40,000 more forced evictions\(^{11}\) in 2018 than 2017, amounting to approximately five percent of total displacements in the country. In addition, ongoing armed conflict and targeted attacks on civilians continue to cause massive loss of civilian life and destabilize livelihoods and communities. Returning nationals are at particular risk of violence, torture, and religious persecution by armed actors. In 2019, Al-Shabaab has carried out attacks\(^{12}\) nearly every day, killing at least 1,600 people.

For decades, TPS affirmed our shared humanity and principled engagement with the international community by serving as a critical humanitarian lifeline for people seeking safety. To help continue, instead of harm, this tradition, the United States must not only extend, but redesignate, TPS for Yemen and Somalia. Redesignation is the only way to fully ensure that Yemenis and Somalis have a safe and legal place of refuge, and that families who arrived to the United States after an arbitrary cut-off date are protected.

As we eagerly await a legally required decision from you on TPS for Yemen by January 3, 2020, and for Somalia by January 17, 2020, we reaffirm the important statutory bedrock values that underpin TPS: protecting human dignity and the international principle of non-refoulement\(^{13}\) by not returning human beings to countries where their lives or freedoms would be threatened. The United States must do more to ease humanitarian suffering and address the drivers of violence in Yemen and Somalia. In the immediate term, extending and redesignating these countries for TPS can save countless lives. It is a bare minimum, and an absolute necessity, that the United States upholds its international responsibilities to protect people from return to unsafe conditions.

As survivors of conflict and humanitarian crises, Yemeni and Somali TPS holders already faced insurmountable traumas, heartache, and obstacles in the pursuit of safety. We respectfully request that you do not send our friends, neighbors, and loved ones back into harm’s way.

Sincerely,

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\(^9\) World Food Programme Somalia Country Brief, [https://www.wfp.org/countries/somalia](https://www.wfp.org/countries/somalia)


\(^{11}\) Ibid.


International and National Organizations
African Communities Together
Alianza Americas
America's Voice
American Family Voices
American Friends Service Committee
American Relief Coalition for Syria
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Amnesty International USA
Arab American Institute
Asian American Advancing Justice
AsylumConnect
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
Center for American Progress
Center for International Policy
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Victims of Torture
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
Church World Service
CODEPINK
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Daily Kos
Demand Progress Education Fund
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
HIAS
Human Rights First
Immigration Hub
Institute for Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
International Rescue Committee
Islamophobia Studies Center
J Street
Jobs With Justice
Mercy Corps
Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity
MPower Change
Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (MuslimARC)
Muslim Public Affairs Council
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Jewish Women
National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC)
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
National TPS Alliance
Only Through US
Oxfam America
Peace Direct
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Project South
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator
Public Citizen
RAICES
Refugees International
Rice University’s Baker Institute
RootsAction.org
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Sisters of Charity, BVM
Southern Poverty Law Center
Take On Hate (A Project of ACCESS)
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
UndocuBlack Network
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
United for Peace and Justice
Win Without War
Yemeni American Merchants Association

State, Regional, and Local Organizations
Adhikaar
Arab American Civic Council
Arab Women’s Voice
Brooklyn For Peace
CARECEN San Francisco
Episcopal Church of St. Matthew
Family Action Network Movement
Franciscans for Justice
Haitian Bridge Alliance
Holy Name of Jesus - St. Gregory the Great Church
International Institute of New England
Irish International Immigrant Center
Jesuit Social Research Institute
Justice for Muslims Collective
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Mississippi Center for Justice
Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance
New Hope Immigration Legal Services
New Mexico Immigrant Law Center
New York Immigration Coalition
OneAmerica
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA)
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Services, Immigrant Rights & Education Network (SIREN)
Sisters of St. Francis Charitable Trust
Sisters of St. Francis, Dubuque
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood
Somali Action Alliance
South Texas Human Rights Center
Virginia Coalition for Immigrant Rights
Western NC Sanctuary Movement
WNY Peace Center
Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Yemeni Alliance Committee