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August 27, 2020

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

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration and Committee on International Justice and Peace, and on behalf of Catholic Relief Services, we urge you to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 18 months for South Sudan and to also redesignate TPS for South Sudan.

Guided by Catholic social teaching, our first concern when people are facing life-threatening situations is protecting their right to life. With this request, we are also emphasizing the biblical call in Matthew 25:31-46 to ensure that those on the margins of society do not lack the basics of life. TPS protects members of the designated groups from war and natural disaster. With TPS, they are given permission to stay in the United States and are authorized to work and provide support for themselves and their families. Many TPS holders, through remittances, also send vital financial support to their loved ones in their home countries.

TPS for South Sudan was last extended in April 2019 because of the continued existence of armed conflict and of external and temporary conditions that prevent the safe return of people back to South Sudan.<sup>1</sup> Applying the same criteria now that led to that decision, current conditions noted below<sup>2</sup> are comparable or worse than conditions in 2019 and thus should lead to an extension and redesignation of TPS for South Sudan:

- *the large forcible displacement* of 1.6 million internally displaced persons; 300,000 people seeking refuge in South Sudan from other countries; 2.3 million South Sudanese refugees seeking refuge in neighboring countries;
- *the large need for humanitarian assistance* with 7.5 million of the country's nearly 12 million people needing humanitarian assistance;
- *the continued violation of humanitarian law* including the killing of humanitarian workers that has now reached 119 workers killed since 2013;
- *the ongoing conflict* leading to increased food insecurity and humanitarian needs leading U.S. Ambassador Thomas J. Hushek to redeclare a disaster in South Sudan for fiscal year 2020; and
- *the ongoing violence despite peace agreements* as seen in the 400,000 conflict-related deaths since 2013, the expansive use of gender-based violence as a weapon of war, the exploitation of child soldiers, and extensive and devastating intercommunal violence.

Moreover, COVID-19, a threat not present in April 2019, is another compelling reason to extend and redesignate TPS. Only 56 percent of South Sudan's population has access to even the most basic primary care<sup>3</sup> and there are only 24 intensive care beds and 4 ventilators for a population of

11.7 million people.<sup>4</sup> There are 2,490 reported cases so far of COVID-19 and 47 deaths.<sup>5</sup> Besides the direct threat of COVID-19, it brings with it indirect threats of crippling the already-fragile health care system, and leaving South Sudanese at greater risk of not only COVID-19, but also malaria, diarrheal disease, and malnutrition.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, experts fear that COVID-19 would add as many as 500,000 more people to the 6 million in South Sudan who already suffer from malnutrition.<sup>7</sup>

TPS serves the humanitarian and strategic interests of the United States, while expressing American values and building good will. Providing TPS is part of our commitment to South Sudan as we help them resolve their conflicts and restore those impacted by the ongoing violence.<sup>8</sup> In line with the above policy principles and applying TPS as Congress intended, we urge you to grant the maximum protection possible through an 18-month extension and redesignation of TPS for South Sudan.

Sincerely,



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



Most Reverend David J. Malloy  
Bishop of Rockford  
Chair, Committee on Justice and Peace



Sean Callahan  
President and CEO  
Catholic Relief Services

<sup>1</sup> See 84 Fed. Reg. 13688 (April 5, 2019), [www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/04/05/2019-06746/extension-of-the-designation-of-south-sudan-for-temporary-protected-status](http://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/04/05/2019-06746/extension-of-the-designation-of-south-sudan-for-temporary-protected-status).

<sup>2</sup> See *South Sudan Crisis: Factsheet 8*, USAID (July 2, 2020), [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/07.02.20\\_-\\_USAID-DCHA\\_South\\_Sudan\\_Crisis\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_8.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/07.02.20_-_USAID-DCHA_South_Sudan_Crisis_Fact_Sheet_8.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the General Secretary: Situation in South Sudan*, UN (June 15, 2020), p 5, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/536>

<sup>4</sup> “5 crisis zones threatened by a coronavirus “double emergency,” International Rescue Committee (April 9, 2020), [www.rescue.org/article/5-crisis-zones-threatened-coronavirus-double-emergency](http://www.rescue.org/article/5-crisis-zones-threatened-coronavirus-double-emergency)

<sup>5</sup> *COVID-19 Resource Center*, Johns Hopkins University and Medicine, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/region/south-sudan> (accessed August 18, 2020)

<sup>6</sup> *Report of the General Secretary*, p 5

<sup>7</sup> Id.

<sup>8</sup> *U.S. Relations With South Sudan*, U.S. Department of State (August 10, 2018), [www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/171718.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/171718.htm)