July 18, 2022

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

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,

\[\text{Most Reverend Mario E. Dorsonville}\]
\[\text{Auxiliary Bishop of Washington}\]
\[\text{Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration}\]

\[\text{Sister Donna Markham, OP, PhD}\]
\[\text{President and CEO}\]
\[\text{Catholic Charities USA}\]

\[\text{Sean Callahan}\]
\[\text{President and CEO}\]
\[\text{Catholic Relief Services}\]

\[\text{Anna Gallagher}\]
\[\text{Executive Director}\]
\[\text{Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.}\]
