

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 1,750<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> fueled by warring parties who continually act with total disregard to international law and human life.<sup>3</sup> By the end of 2019, the total number of deaths from the conflict and dire humanitarian conditions could rise to at least 233,000,<sup>4</sup> with 60 percent of the deceased being children under the age of five. In Yemen, a child dies every 11 minutes and 54 seconds.<sup>5</sup> The conflict uprooted more than three million people from their homes and 80 percent<sup>6</sup> 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 million<sup>7</sup> people are food insecure. The State Department's travel advisory in April 2019 states that “no part of Yemen is immune to violence,”<sup>8</sup> citing immense threats of artillery shelling, air strikes, landmines, kidnappings, and lack of access to food, water, and medicine throughout the country.

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<sup>1</sup> Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) tools and resources, CLINIC, <https://cliniclegal.org/tps>

<sup>2</sup> “15 million in Yemen at risk of deadly diseases as fuel crisis sees water supplies cut,” *The Independent*, Oct. 22, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/yemen-war-fuel-crisis-water-supply-cholera-disease-health-oxfam-a9165996.html>

<sup>3</sup> *Yemen: Events of 2018 Report*, Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/yemen>

<sup>4</sup> *Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen: On Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2019, UN Development Programme and the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNDP-YEM%20War%20Impact%20on%20SDGs\\_compressed.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNDP-YEM%20War%20Impact%20on%20SDGs_compressed.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> “Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen Remains the Worst in the World, Warns UN,” *UN News*, Feb. 14, 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1032811>

<sup>7</sup> *WFP Brings Vital Humanitarian Supplies to Civilians Trapped on Yemeni Frontline*, World Food Program report via Relief Web, Oct. 22, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/wfp-brings-vital-humanitarian-supplies-civilians-trapped-yemeni-frontline>

<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> At least two million people<sup>10</sup> 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<sup>11</sup> 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<sup>12</sup> 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<sup>13</sup> 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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<sup>9</sup> World Food Programme Somalia Country Brief, <https://www.wfp.org/countries/somalia>

<sup>10</sup> *2019 Somalia Humanitarian Needs Overview*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs report via Relief Web, Jan. 3, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/2019-somalia-humanitarian-needs-overview>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> "Twin al-Shabab attacks in Somalia target US and European armed forces," *The Washington Post*, Sep. 30, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/twin-al-shabab-attacks-in-somalia-target-us-and-eu-armed-forces/2019/09/30/52505018-e376-11e9-a6e8-8759c5c7f608\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/twin-al-shabab-attacks-in-somalia-target-us-and-eu-armed-forces/2019/09/30/52505018-e376-11e9-a6e8-8759c5c7f608_story.html)

<sup>13</sup> *The principle of non-refoulement in the migration context: 5 key points*, International Committee of the Red Cross, March 30, 2018, <https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2018/03/30/principle-of-non-refoulement-migration-context-5-key-points/>

## **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