

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 23, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
301 7th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

**RE: Request for 18-month extension and redesignation of TPS for Yemen**

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken:

By July 5, 2021, the Secretary of Homeland Security must decide the fate of nearly 1,400 Yemeni nationals in the United States with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which is set to expire September 3, 2021. We strongly urge you to both extend and redesignate Yemen for TPS, safeguarding the lives of both current TPS holders and Yemenis who have arrived in the United States since 2017. We call for a decision, publication of a Federal Register Notice, a minimum 180-day registration period, and a public education campaign to inform the impacted community by July 5, 2021.

The United Nations has deemed the conditions in Yemen “the largest humanitarian crisis in the world,” with approximately 24.1 million people, or 80 percent of its population, in need of humanitarian aid and protection.<sup>[1]</sup> Yemen was first designated for TPS in 2015 in response to escalating violence that sparked a brutal civil war.<sup>[2]</sup> Today Yemen is in its sixth year of violence, and conditions for Yemeni civilians continues to deteriorate. Such deterioration has prompted the extension of TPS for Yemen in both 2018 and 2020.<sup>[3]</sup>

Despite peace efforts, Yemen has now fractured into multiple pieces, each controlled by an expanding number of armed groups with no protection for those caught in the crossfire.<sup>[4]</sup> As of February 2021, four million people have been forced from their homes and are internally displaced in Yemen, and over 18,400 civilians have lost their lives to the conflict to date.<sup>[5]</sup> Yemen has been bombarded with an estimated 20,624 to 58,487 airstrikes over five years, almost a third of which were recorded to have hit residential homes, hospitals, schools, weddings, farms, food stores, school buses, markets, mosques, bridges, civilian factories, detention centers, and water wells.<sup>[6]</sup>

The Yemeni economy is also far from recovering. According to the United Nations, Yemen has lost 90 billion USD in economic output and more than 600,000 people have lost their jobs.<sup>[7]</sup> Fifty-eight percent of the population lives in extreme poverty.<sup>[8]</sup> UNICEF projects that nearly 2.3 million children under the age of five in Yemen will suffer from acute malnutrition in 2021, 400,000 of which may perish if they do not receive urgent treatment.<sup>[9]</sup> The combination of collapsing health and water systems has culminated into the largest cholera outbreak in modern history, with over 2.5 million suspected cases in

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Yemen from 2016 to 2020.<sup>[10]</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has only served to exacerbate these conditions. As of May 15, 2021, Yemen had the highest case fatality rate in the region (19.7 percent), over nine times higher than the global rate of 2.1 percent.<sup>[11]</sup>

The need for protection from the conditions in Yemen is the same whether a person is a current TPS holder or more recently arrived. While TPS for Yemen has been extended twice, previous administrations have neglected to redesignate Yemen for TPS. Thus Yemeni nationals who have arrived in the United States after March 4, 2017 are still unable to access this vital humanitarian protection. This administration must not make the same mistake. On May 11th, President Biden continued Yemen's national emergency declaration, citing political obstruction and corruption that undermine "a peaceful transition of power that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people."<sup>[12]</sup>

Extending TPS by the 18-month maximum and redesignating TPS for eligible Yemenis is legally and morally warranted. The armed conflict renders safe return to Yemen impossible, and the humanitarian crisis represents a "substantial, but temporary, disruption of living conditions" for Yemeni citizens.<sup>[13]</sup> The civil war and loss of territory and infrastructure continues to render the Yemeni government "unable, temporarily, to handle adequately the return" of its citizens.<sup>[14]</sup>

Extending and redesignating TPS for Yemen is also clearly within the U.S. national interest. As a country without the capacity or conditions for a safe, voluntary, and dignified return of its citizens, TPS is a vital part of the ongoing humanitarian response for Yemen. Since the beginning of the civil war in 2015, the United States has acted in support of stability in Yemen in the interest of the safety and prosperity of Yemeni citizens as well as further stability in the region. Extending and redesignating Yemen for TPS would also demonstrate our nation's commitment to human rights, including the principle of *non-refoulement* that no one should be returned to a country where their life is in danger.

As many TPS holders have done, Yemeni TPS holders have served as essential workers during the pandemic, contributing to the economy and enriching communities. Failing to extend and redesignate TPS for eligible individuals will put lives and families at risk. We urge you to not only grant the maximum protection for Yemen but to implement that decision in a way that honors the dignity and humanity of the Yemeni community in the United States.

Sincerely,



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TED W. LIEU  
Member of Congress



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DEBBIE DINGELL  
Member of Congress



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BRENDA L. LAWRENCE  
Member of Congress



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ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON  
Member of Congress

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STEVE COHEN  
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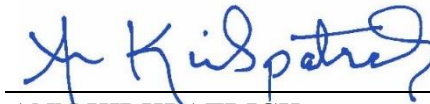
ANTHONY G. BROWN  
Member of Congress



C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER  
Member of Congress



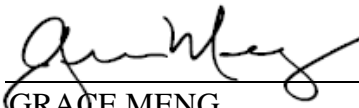
ANTHONY G. BROWN  
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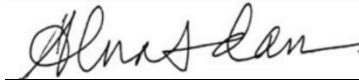
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DEREK KILMER  
Member of Congress

<sup>[1]</sup> *The United Nations in Yemen*, United Nations (last accessed May 18, 2021), <https://yemen.un.org/en/about/about-the-un>.

<sup>[2]</sup> 80 Fed. Reg. 53319 (Sept. 3, 2015).

<sup>[3]</sup> 83 Fed. Reg. 40307 (Aug. 14, 2018); 85 Fed. Reg. 12313 (March 2, 2020).

<sup>[4]</sup> Gregory D. Johnsen, *The End of Yemen*, BROOKINGS INSTITUTE (March 25, 2021), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/03/25/the-end-of-yemen/>

<sup>[5]</sup> *Id.*; *Yemen: Events of 2020*, World Report 2021, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2021), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen>.

<sup>[6]</sup> *Id.*

<sup>[7]</sup> *The United Nations in Yemen*, UNITED NATIONS (2021).

<sup>[8]</sup> *Id.*

<sup>[9]</sup> *Acute malnutrition threatens half of children under five in Yemen in 2021: UN*, UNICEF (February 11, 2021), <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/acute-malnutrition-threatens-half-children-under-five-yemen-2021-un>.

<sup>[10]</sup> *Cholera situation in Yemen, December 2020*, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (March 5, 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/cholera-situation-yemen-december-2020>.

<sup>[11]</sup> *COVID-19 situation updates for week 19 (9 - 15 May 2021)*, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (May 19, 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/report/iran-islamic-republic/covid-19-situation-updates-week-19-9-15-may-2021>.

<sup>[12]</sup> 86 Fed. Reg. 26341 (May 11, 2021).

<sup>[13]</sup> 8 U.S.C. § 1254a.

<sup>[14]</sup> *Id.*