

August 13, 2020

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

RE: INTERFAITH REQUEST FOR 18-MONTH EXTENSION AND REDESIGNATION OF TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR SOUTH SUDAN

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

We, the 204 undersigned faith-based organizations and faith leaders from across traditions, call on you to extend for 18 months and redesignate Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for South Sudan to protect the 84 current South Sudanese TPS holders¹ and their families, as well as recent arrivals who would benefit from redesignation. Our request is rooted in morality, humanity, and the teachings of our faiths: we must welcome, protect, and offer hospitality to those in need. The Quran teaches: “They love those who emigrated to them and find not any desire in their hearts of what the emigrants were given, but rather give them preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. Whoever is protected from the greediness of his own soul, then those will be successful.”² Similarly, the Torah commands, “You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen alike: for I the LORD am your God.”³

Like the foundations of our faiths, offering help, safety, and security to those seeking refuge is the underpinning of our society. These are the American values that led Congress to create TPS. A failure to provide the maximum protection for South Sudanese people in the United States now would go against the cherished principles that define our country.

I. Current country conditions necessitate 18-month extension and redesignation:

An 18-month extension and redesignation of TPS for South Sudan is warranted as the conditions that existed for the 2018 extension of TPS for South Sudan remain, and, in some cases, have worsened.

Civilian casualties, human rights abuses, war crimes and crimes against humanity continue in South Sudan. 4.8 million people are currently in need of protection.⁴ Since civil war broke out in 2013, at least 400,000 lives have been lost.⁵ In the most recent comprehensive data available from the UN mission in South Sudan, nearly 700 civilian deaths, more than 450 injuries, and 600 abductions were reported in the first quarter of 2020 alone.⁶ The use of child soldiers is also ongoing in the conflict, with UNICEF

¹ 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.

² Surat Al-Hashr 59:9.

³ Leviticus 24:22.

⁴ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan, Humanitarian Program Cycle 2020*, UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS (Nov. 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2020-november-2019>.

⁵ Max Bearak, *Hundreds killed, villages destroyed in massacres undermining South Sudan’s peace deal*, THE WASHINGTON POST (May 28, 2020), www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/south-sudan-violence-peace-deal/2020/05/27/3b28491a-9f8a-11ea-be06-af5514ee0385_story.html.

⁶ *Victims of intercommunal violence in South Sudan deserve ‘justice, truth and reparations’*: Bachelet, UN NEWS (May 22, 2020), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1064792>.

identifying at least 19,000 as of 2019.⁷ Clashes among ethnic groups persist and in late May 2020, hundreds of civilians were killed when a group entered a village with machine guns.⁸ Three aid workers from Doctors Without Borders and the U.N. were killed in the attack.⁹ Civilian deaths at the hands of government forces were recorded in the capital city, Juba, in June 2020.¹⁰ In July 2020, USAID reported ongoing conflict and displacement throughout the entire country.¹¹ The report documented at least 46,000 newly displaced people across several regions.¹² Rape and sexual violence used as weapon of war continues in South Sudan. In 2019, there were 224 documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 133 women, 66 girls, 19 men and 6 boys.¹³ 65 cases were recorded in the first quarter of 2020 alone.¹⁴ Underreporting cases is persistent.¹⁵

In addition to armed conflict in South Sudan, an 18 month extension and redesignation of TPS is needed to protect recent entrants from the deepening humanitarian crisis. At least 7.5 million people are need of humanitarian assistance in South Sudan,¹⁶ up from 7.1 million in 2019.¹⁷ At least 1.6 million are internally displaced from conflict and other factors.¹⁸ South Sudan is hosting approximately 300,000 refugees from neighboring countries as well as 600,000 spontaneous returnees.¹⁹ 2.3 million South Sudanese people have been driven over the border, an increase from the previous year, living as refugees in surrounding countries.²⁰

The Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS) predicts food security will worsen over 2020 due to conflict, complete depletion of cereal stocks from the previous harvest (which were affected by climate extremes among other factors), desert locust damage to crops, and COVID 19.²¹ FEWS predicts more than 6.5 million people will need emergency food assistance by September 2020.²² More than 50 percent of the population is facing crisis level food shortages and if movement becomes more restricted in the country due to COVID 19, widespread famine is possible.²³ The number of children in South Sudan facing acute malnutrition rose from 13 in 2018 to 16 percent in 2019.²⁴ More than 1.3 million children

⁷ *South Sudan: Evidence of violations and illicit concealment of arms must spur UN to renew arms embargo*, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (April 30, 2020), www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/south-sudan-evidence-of-violations-and-illicit-concealment-of-arms-must-spur-un-to-renew-arms-embargo/.

⁸ Max Bearak, *Hundreds killed, villages destroyed in massacres undermining South Sudan's peace deal*, THE WASHINGTON POST (May 28, 2020), www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/south-sudan-violence-peace-deal/2020/05/27/3b28491a-9f8a-11ea-be06-af5514ee0385_story.html.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *South Sudan: Soldiers Kill Civilians in Land Dispute*, Human Rights Watch (June 9, 2020), www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/09/south-sudan-soldiers-kill-civilians-land-dispute.

¹¹ South Sudan Crisis – Fact Sheet # 8, USAID (July 2, 2020), www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/07.02.20_-_USAID-DCHA_South_Sudan_Crisis_Fact_Sheet_8.pdf.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ South Sudan, OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT, (June 3, 2020), www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/countries/south-sudan/.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan, Humanitarian Program Cycle 2020*, UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS (Nov. 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2020-november-2019>.

¹⁷ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan, Humanitarian Program Cycle 2019*, UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS (Dec. 2018), www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/south-sudan/document/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2019.

¹⁸ South Sudan Crisis – Fact Sheet # 8, USAID (July 2, 2020), www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/07.02.20_-_USAID-DCHA_South_Sudan_Crisis_Fact_Sheet_8.pdf.

¹⁹ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan, Humanitarian Program Cycle 2020*, UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS (Nov. 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2020-november-2019>.

²⁰ *Id.*; *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan, Humanitarian Program Cycle 2019*, UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS (Dec. 2018), www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/south-sudan/document/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2019.

²¹ *South Sudan: Poor macroeconomic conditions and COVID-19 to escalate Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes by mid-2020*, FAMINE EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS NETWORK (April 2020), <https://fews.net/east-africa/south-sudan/food-security-outlook-update/may-2020>.

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan, Humanitarian Program Cycle 2020*, UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS (Nov. 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2020-november-2019>.

under the age of five are projected to be acutely malnourished in 2020.²⁵ Eighty percent of South Sudanese are living below the absolute poverty line, greatly contributing to the food and other humanitarian crises.²⁶ Ongoing extreme cycles of drought and flooding are a major issue, destroying food sources and affecting delivery of aid.²⁷

Access to clean water and sanitation remains limited in South Sudan, with more than 5.5 million people in need of assistance.²⁸ Only 60 percent of nondisplaced people and 45 percent of displaced people have access to clean water and sanitation.²⁹ Nearly three quarters of households report family members suffering from waterborne or vector-borne illnesses.³⁰

South Sudan has little health care infrastructure due to ongoing conflict and economic collapse, making both extension and redesignation even more dire given the COVID 19 pandemic.³¹ At least 3.6 million people are currently in need of health care services.³² Due to ongoing conflict and economic collapse, less than half of South Sudan's healthcare facilities are fully functioning.³³ The country only has 24 ICU beds and 4 ventilators for a population of 11.7 million people.³⁴ There is only one laboratory to do coronavirus testing and only one permanent infectious disease unit in the entire country.³⁵ As of late June, there were 2,000 known cases of COVID 19 and 35 deaths.³⁶ While monitoring along South Sudan's shared border with the Democratic Republic of Congo has so far prevented the spread of that country's Ebola outbreak, risks remain.³⁷ A new Ebola outbreak was announced in DRC in June 2020.³⁸ Outbreaks of other infectious diseases continue across the country including hepatitis E, yellow fever, malaria, acute respiratory infection and acute watery diarrhea.³⁹

II. Extension and redesignation of TPS for South Sudan is in line with interfaith values and in the U.S. national interest:

By protecting people's lives and granting work authorization, TPS serves key national and regional security interests, advances moral and strategic U.S. engagement with the international community and provides other benefits to the United States. The United States has made commitments to help restore

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *South Sudan: Floods - Operations Update, Emergency appeal*, INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (April 28, 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-floods-operations-update-emergency-appeal-n-mdrss009-28-april-2020>.

²⁸ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan, Humanitarian Program Cycle 2020*, UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS (Nov. 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2020-november-2019>.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *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.

³² *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan, Humanitarian Program Cycle 2020*, UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS (Nov. 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2020-november-2019>.

³³ *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.

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ Maura Ajak and Cara Anna, *Virus outbreak could spin 'out of control' in South Sudan*, AP (June 22, 2020), <https://apnews.com/265a7d7cbb6bb6ec29f4bcb1c69e739d>.

³⁶ *Devastating South Sudan coronavirus deaths, a tragedy that can be prevented*, Security Council hears, UN NEWS (June 23, 2020), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1066952>.

³⁷ *Ebola Virus Disease Preparedness Report*, IOM (May 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IOM%20South%20Sudan%20%20EVD%20Preparedness%20Monthly%20Update%20May%202020.pdf>.

³⁸ *New Ebola outbreak detected in northwest Democratic Republic of the Congo; WHO surge team supporting the response*, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (June 1, 2020),

www.who.int/news-room/detail/01-06-2020-new-ebola-outbreak-detected-in-northwest-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-who-surge-team-supporting-the-response.

³⁹ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan, Humanitarian Program Cycle 2020*, UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS (Nov. 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2020-november-2019>.

stability in South Sudan and to assist those that have been impacted by the protracted violence.⁴⁰ TPS is a piece of that commitment.

In general, TPS holders make great contributions to the U.S. economy, working in key industries such as construction and home health care and paying into the U.S. GDP, Social Security and Medicare.⁴¹ Many TPS holders are essential workers, serving on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis.⁴² TPS holders also send vital remittances to family and friends in countries of origin, providing unofficial foreign aid that allows people to meet their basic needs and helps stabilize countries and regions.⁴³ In South Sudan, remittances make up 34 percent of the country's GDP.⁴⁴ Remittances to African nations are expected to plummet by 25 percent this year, due to COVID-19.⁴⁵ Extension and redesignation of TPS for South Sudan would help keep life-saving financial support flowing into the country.

Last year, Pope Francis reminded us, "A person's dignity does not depend on them being a citizen, a migrant, or a refugee. Saving the life of someone fleeing war and poverty is an act of humanity."⁴⁶ In line with our belief and understanding of humanity as a common family, called to support and protect one another, we urge you to grant the maximum protection possible through 18-month extension and redesignation of TPS for South Sudan.

Sincerely,

Faith Organizations (82)

ADL (Anti-Defamation League)
Adorers of the Blood of Christ
Adrian Dominican Sisters
Africa Faith & Justice Network
African American Ministers In Action
Agencia ALPHA
American Conference of Cantors
American Friends of the Episcopal Church of the Sudans
Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore
Benedictines For Peace, Chicago Chapter
Carmelites, VEDUNA

⁴⁰ *U.S. Relations With South Sudan*, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE (Aug. 10, 2018), www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/171718.htm.

⁴¹ Robert Warren and Donald Kerwin, *A Statistical and Demographic Profile of the US Temporary Protected Status Populations from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti*, JOURNAL ON MIGRATION AND HUMAN SECURITY, Vol. 5 No. 3 (2017), <https://cmsny.org/publications/imhs-tps-elsalvador-honduras-haiti/>; Amanda Baran, Jose Magana-Salgado and Tom K. Wong, *Economic Contributions by Salvadoran, Honduran, and Haitian TPS Holders*, IMMIGRANT LEGAL RESOURCE CENTER (April 2017), www.ilrc.org/report-tps-economic-cost.

⁴² Nicole Prchal Svajlenka and Tom Jawetz, *A Demographic Profile of TPS Holders Providing Essential Services During the Coronavirus Crisis*, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS (April 14, 2020), www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2020/04/14/483167/demographic-profile-tps-holders-providing-essential-services-coronavirus-crisis/.

⁴³ See e.g., *Somalia's path to recovery*, BROOKINGS INSTITUTE (Oct. 2, 2019), www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2019/10/02/somalias-path-to-stability/; Nurith Aizenmen, *What You May Not Realize About The End Of TPS Status For Salvadorans*, NPR (Jan. 9, 2018), www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/01/09/576583550/what-you-may-not-realize-about-the-end-of-tps-status-forsalvadorans.

⁴⁴ Yinka Adegoke, *Remittances from migrants to African countries will plunge by nearly a quarter this year*, QUARTZ (April 24, 2020), <https://qz.com/africa/1844973/world-bank-remittances-to-africa-to-plunge-by-a-quarter/#:~:text=In%20South%20Sudan%2C%20remittances%20of,the%20highest%20in%20the%20region>.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ See <https://twitter.com/Pontifex/status/1009400469314138112>.

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Boston
Catholic Charities of Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine, Florida
Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri
Catholic Charities of SW Kansas
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington
Catholic Charities of West TN
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
Christ the Servant Catholic Church, Peace and Social Justice Committee
Christ United Methodist Church
Church of the Epiphany DC
Church World Service
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours, USA
Crossing Borders - Dubuque
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul USA
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Dominican Leadership Conference
Dominican Sisters
Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids
Dominican Sisters of Houston
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart
Friends in Solidarity, Inc.
Georgia Interfaith Public Policy Center
Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart
HIAS
IHM Sisters - Leadership Council
Immigration Outreach Service Center
Indiana Catholic Conference
Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace
Interfaith Welcome Coalition
Jesuit Social Research Institute
Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
LUCHA Ministries, Inc.
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Jewish Women
National Justice for Our Neighbors
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Northern KY Justice and Peace Committee
Our Lady Queen of Peace
Peace and Justice Team of the Congregation of St. Joseph
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Project Hope-Proyecto Esperanza
Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator
Saint Paul's Voice Centre of Uganda
SALDEF
School Sisters of Notre Dame - Central Pacific Province
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership
Sisters of Charity, BVM
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York
Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, PA
Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield
Society of Helpers
Srs. of St. Joseph of Carondelet, LA Province
The Episcopal Church
The Interfaith LGBTI Clergy Association
Tri-State Franciscan Solidarity Table
UMCBCS Rapid Response Team
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
Women of Reform Judaism

Faith Leaders (122)

Br. Michael Gosch, CSV
Bro. Brian McLaughlin
Bro. Michael Potvin-Frost
Cantor Barbara Ostfeld
Cantor Brad Hyman
Cantor Jennifer Rueben
Cantor Josée Wolff
Cantor Julie Berlin
Cantor Kenneth Feibush
Cantor Kerith Spencer-Shapiro
Cantor Randall Schloss

Deacon Dr. Jennifer Vasquez
Deacon Steven Beumer
Dr. Beverly Huff
Dr. Grace Roberts Dyrness
Dr. Jeff Reed
Dr. Jessica Price
Dr. Ken Olson
Dr. Sr. Justice and Peace Coordinator Mary Shaw
Elder Maria Studer
Facilitator, Peace & Justice Committee Margaret Feit
Clarke
Father Fr. Jim Hoffman
Lay Leader JL Angell
Lynne Schmidt, SSND, D. Min.
Mary Ellen Loch, CSJ
Pastor (ELCA) Allan Wysocki
Pastor Anne Hall
Provincial Margaret Perron, RJM
Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell
Rabbi Cantor Kim Harris
Rabbi David Mivasair
Rabbi Deborah Bronstein
Rabbi Felicia Sol
Rabbi Fred Greene
Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld
Rabbi Kimberly Herzog Cohen
Rabbi Marc Berkson
Rabbi Marc Soloway
Rabbi Marla Feldman
Rabbi Miriyam Glazer
Rabbi Rick Kellner
Rev. Corrine Haulotte
Rev. Diane Mettam
Rev. Dr. Janet Wolfe
Rev. Dr. Lyle J. Dykstra
Rev. Dr. Mark Zier
Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea
Rev. Frank Bergen
Rev. Jayne L. Ruiz
Rev. Jeff Fox-Kline
Rev. Jennifer Gillyard

Rev. Joan VanBecelaere
Rev. John Gouger,C.S.R.
Rev. Ken Grenz
Rev. Kirsten Linford
Rev. Leonard Smith
Rev. Mark Lancaster
Rev. Pat Shannon Jones
Rev. Paul Hagedorn
Rev. Ron Werner, Jr
Rev. Ruben Ortiz
Rev. Sandra Strauss
Rev. Steve Garnaas-Holmes
Rev./Dr. Roberto Vazquez
Reverend Joseph Keesecker
Reverend Michael Coburn
Ruling Elder Marilyn Rodahan
Sister Andrea Koverman
Sister Bernadine Karge
Sister Carmella Campione
Sister Denise Curry
Sister Dominica Lo Bianco
Sister Eileen Gannon, OP
Sister Elaine Betoncourt
Sister Janet Luecke
Sister Janice Cebula
Sister Joan Agro
Sister JT Dwyer, DC
Sister Judy Zielinski
Sister Karen Lindenberger
Sister Kathy Wiesneski
Sister Maria Orlandini
Sister Maria Pacelli Spino
Sister Marie Lucey
Sister Marilyn Nickol
Sister Marjorie White
Sister Mary Ann Penner
Sister Mary Beth Hamm
Sister Mary Carr
Sister Mary Joyce Moeller
Sister Mary Mahowald
Sister Mary McMahan

Sister Nancy McCarthy
Sister Noella Poinsette, OSF
Sister Pat Cormack
Sister Patricia Colla
Sister Patricia Gardner
Sister Peggy Kenny
Sister Ramona Miller
Sister Rita Specht
Sister Ruth Battaglia CSA
Sister Sally Duffy, SC
Sister Sharon Altendorf
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Sr. Patricia Colla, RSM
The Rev Christine Payden-Travers
The Rev. Canon Maria Tjeltveit
The Rev. Cecil Prescod
The Rev. Francisco Garcia
The Rev. Zachary Harmon
The Reverend Randy Orso
Venerable Catherine Cooke