

December 13, 2019

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

**RE: REQUEST FOR 18-MONTH EXTENSION AND REDESIGNATION OF TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR YEMEN**

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

On behalf of the 129 undersigned faith-based organizations and faith leaders from across traditions, we call on you to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Yemen for 18 months and redesignate to protect as many lives as possible from Yemen's brutal conflict and humanitarian crisis. Our call is rooted in our country's interfaith values. 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."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Torah commands, "You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen alike: for I the LORD am your God."<sup>2</sup>

A failure to extend TPS for Yemen for 18 months and redesignate would go against basic principles of human dignity, justice, and mercy. Nearly 1,500 Yemeni nationals currently hold TPS.<sup>3</sup> Yemen was first designated for TPS in 2015 in response to the escalating violence in the country, which erupted in the summer of 2014 when the Houthis began their takeover of Yemen, sparking a civil war.<sup>4</sup> The war has created one of the most appalling humanitarian crises in the world, which prompted the 2018 18-month extension of TPS.<sup>5</sup> Today, Yemen is in its fifth year of brutal war and conditions for Yemeni civilians continue to deteriorate. As of September 2019, Yemen remains "the worst humanitarian crisis in the world."<sup>6</sup> Over three-quarters of the population, some 24.1 million Yemenis, urgently need humanitarian assistance.<sup>7</sup> More than 3.6 million people are displaced in Yemen.<sup>8</sup> Since the beginning of the conflict, at least 6,827 civilians have been killed and more than 10,000 wounded.<sup>9</sup> Every month, bombs and disease kill or injure approximately 37 children.<sup>10</sup>

***"I am trying my best to support my family in Yemen and at the same time I am thinking about the rest of the people in Yemen who have no support. I am trying to get my family out. Look at what is happening there. There is nothing to eat. It is not***

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<sup>1</sup> Surat Al-Hashr 59:9.

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 24:22.

<sup>3</sup> Jill H. Wilson, *Temporary Protected Status: Overview and Current Issues*, CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE (March 29, 2019), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/homesecc/RS20844.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> 80 Fed. Reg. 53319 (Sept. 3, 2015), [www.federalregister.gov/documents/2015/09/03/2015-21881/designation-of-the-republic-of-yemen-for-temporary-protected-status](http://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2015/09/03/2015-21881/designation-of-the-republic-of-yemen-for-temporary-protected-status).

<sup>5</sup> 83 Fed. Reg. 40307 (Aug. 14, 2018), [www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/08/14/2018-17556/extension-of-the-designation-of-yemen-for-temporary-protected-status](http://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/08/14/2018-17556/extension-of-the-designation-of-yemen-for-temporary-protected-status).

<sup>6</sup> Joint NGO Statement on Yemen - 74th UN General Assembly (Sept. 20, 2019), [www.savethechildren.net/news/joint-ngo-statement-yemen-%E2%80%93-74th-un-general-assembly](http://www.savethechildren.net/news/joint-ngo-statement-yemen-%E2%80%93-74th-un-general-assembly).

<sup>7</sup> *Yemen*, UNICEF (2019), [www.unicef.org/appeals/yemen.html](http://www.unicef.org/appeals/yemen.html).

<sup>8</sup> *Rapid Displacement Tracking (RDT) DTM- Yemen- Reporting Period: September 29-October 05, 2019*, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (Oct. 8, 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/rapid-displacement-tracking-rdt-dtm-yemen-reporting-period-september-29-october-05-2019>.

<sup>9</sup> *Yemen Human Rights, Human Rights Concerns*, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (2019), [www.amnestyusa.org/countries/yemen/](http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/yemen/).

<sup>10</sup> Erin Taylor & Claire Garmirian, *Every Month 37 Yemeni Children are Killed or Injured by Foreign Bombs*, SAVE THE CHILDREN (March 24, 2019), [www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/media-and-news/2019-press-releases/every-month-yemeni-children-killed](http://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/media-and-news/2019-press-releases/every-month-yemeni-children-killed).

***safe. People die every day, especially in the city I came from. Without TPS, I would be lost [...] It isn't that I don't want to go back. I can't go back. People are suffering there. Please try to put yourself in my position. We are human. We are all the same. What could happen to me today maybe could happen to you tomorrow."***  
***-- M.M., Yemeni TPS holder***

In addition to the devastating impact of the civil war, there is mass hunger across the country: 24.1 million—80 percent of individuals—are at risk of disease and hunger, with 14.2 million in need of “acute” assistance.<sup>11</sup> Approximately 20 million people are food insecure, with a quarter of a million on the verge of starvation.<sup>12</sup> Experts warn that Yemen is “one step” away from famine.<sup>13</sup> Currently, 17.8 million people lack safe water and sanitation, and 19.7 million lack adequate health care.<sup>14</sup> Upwards of 78 percent of Yemenis are in poverty, with women being more severely affected.<sup>15</sup>

Diseases such as diphtheria and measles have also spread across multiple governorates,<sup>16</sup> and these outbreaks are likely to worsen as the war continues. The Yemeni people continue to face one of the worst cholera epidemics ever recorded, with more than one million documented cases so far.<sup>17</sup> From the beginning of 2019 through July 2019, Yemen reported 845,017 cholera cases with 1,234 deaths.<sup>18</sup> Bombing and conflict affect at least half of Yemen’s hospitals and health care facilities.<sup>19</sup> There is also intentional targeting of public water systems in military action, meaning there is little hope of stopping the outbreak.<sup>20</sup> Overall, the humanitarian crisis has harmed children most severely; according to Save the Children, more than 130 Yemen children die each day from hunger and disease.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to health care, water, and sanitation systems, other vital infrastructure has been ruined.<sup>22</sup> In the 2017 extension and redesignation of TPS for Yemen, the U.S. government cited that half of children in Yemen are unable to attend school because of the destruction or military takeover of buildings.<sup>23</sup> The country is riddled with landmines, which prevent access to vital infrastructure, and water and food sources.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *The World Bank in Yemen*, THE WORLD BANK (Oct. 1, 2019), [www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/overview](http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/overview).

<sup>12</sup> *Keeping Yemen from the brink of famine: Italy and WHO fight malnutrition*, World Health Organization Regional Offices for the Eastern Mediterranean (Oct. 3, 2019), [www.emro.who.int/yem/yemen-news/keeping-yemen-from-the-brink-of-famine-italy-and-who-fight-malnutrition.html](http://www.emro.who.int/yem/yemen-news/keeping-yemen-from-the-brink-of-famine-italy-and-who-fight-malnutrition.html).

<sup>13</sup> *10 million Yemenis ‘one step away from famine’, UN food relief agency calls for ‘unhindered access’ to frontline regions*, UN NEWS (March 26, 2019), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1035501>.

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

<sup>15</sup> *The World Bank in Yemen*, THE WORLD BANK (Oct. 1, 2019), [www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/overview](http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/overview).

<sup>16</sup> *Yemen Humanitarian Update Covering April 2018*, UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS (April 2018), [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/201800409\\_Humanitarian\\_Update\\_Final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/201800409_Humanitarian_Update_Final.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> *Yemen*, UNICEF (2019), [www.unicef.org/appeals/yemen.html](http://www.unicef.org/appeals/yemen.html); Mentalla Ibrahim, *Another cholera outbreak is threatening Yemen, and doctors say it could get worse*, VICE NEWS (April 6, 2019), [www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/59x7na/another-cholera-outbreak-is-threatening-yemen-and-doctors-say-it-could-get-worse](http://www.vice.com/en_us/article/59x7na/another-cholera-outbreak-is-threatening-yemen-and-doctors-say-it-could-get-worse).

<sup>18</sup> *Second round of oral cholera vaccine reaches nearly 400 000 people in Aden, Taiz and Al Dhale'e*, World Health Organization Regional Offices for the Eastern Mediterranean (Aug. 21, 2019), [www.emro.who.int/yem/yemen-news/oral-cholera-vaccine-reaches-nearly-400-000-people.html](http://www.emro.who.int/yem/yemen-news/oral-cholera-vaccine-reaches-nearly-400-000-people.html).

<sup>19</sup> *Yemen: Attacks on Health*, PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (Jan. 2019), [https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Jan\\_2019-Newsletter\\_FINAL.pdf](https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Jan_2019-Newsletter_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> *130 Children Are Dying Every Day in Yemen, Aid Group Says*, BLOOMBERG NEWS (Nov. 16, 2017), [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-11-16/save-the-children-says-130-children-dieevery-day-in-yemen](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-11-16/save-the-children-says-130-children-dieevery-day-in-yemen).

<sup>22</sup> *Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention*, CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE (Sept. 17, 2019), <https://fas.org/spp/crs/mideast/R43960.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> 82 Fed. Reg. 859 (Jan. 4, 2017), [www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/04/2016-31003/extension-and-redesignation-of-the-republic-of-yemen-for-temporary-protected-status](http://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/04/2016-31003/extension-and-redesignation-of-the-republic-of-yemen-for-temporary-protected-status).

<sup>24</sup> *Yemen: Houthi Landmines Kill Civilians, Block Aid*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (April 22, 2019), [www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/22/yemen-houthi-landmines-kill-civilians-block-aid](http://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/22/yemen-houthi-landmines-kill-civilians-block-aid).

In light of the ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary conditions, we pray that you heed our call to redesignate TPS for Yemen to protect more recently arrived Yemenis and extend the designation for at least another 18 months. TPS holders are an integral part of the fabric of our community; they are our neighbors, peacefully living their lives, caring for their families, and contributing to the U.S. economy. Failure to extend and redesignate TPS for Yemen would risk the lives of thousands of our neighbors as Yemen remains consumed by war. We implore you to think about the moral imperative to love our neighbor and welcome the sojourner, particularly those fleeing violence.

Sincerely,

**Faith Organizations (53)**

ADL (Anti-Defamation League)  
African American Ministers In Action  
American Friends Service Committee  
Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore  
Buddhist Action Coalition  
Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Boston  
Catholic Charities of Central & Northern Missouri/Refugee & Immigration Services  
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington  
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.  
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice  
Church World Service  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces  
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes  
Council on American-Islamic Relations  
Council on American-Islamic Relations, New York (CAIR-NY)  
Crossing Borders Dubuque  
Daughters of Charity  
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries  
East Bay Sanctuary Covenant  
Faith in Public Life  
First Congregational Church of Houston  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quakers)  
Georgia Interfaith Public Policy Center  
HIAS  
Immigration and Refugee Committee St Therese  
Jesuit Social Research Institute  
Justice for Muslims Collective  
Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Council for Jewish Women  
National Council of Churches  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia  
Our Lady Queen of Peace

Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership  
Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana  
Sisters of St. Francis  
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York  
Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Albany Province  
Sojourners  
St. Francis Community Services  
The Interfaith LGBTI Clergy Association  
Together Colorado  
Tri-State Franciscan Solidarity Table  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
United University Church  
Western NC Sanctuary Movement

**Faith Leaders (76)**

Br. Michael Potvin-Frost  
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. Board Sister Sally Duffy, SC  
Coordinator, Peace and Social Justice Committee Karen Jackson  
Dr. Donald N. Nichols  
Dr. Grace Dyrness  
Dr. Timothy Helton  
Dr. Sr. Margaret Shaw  
Earth and Social Justice Pastor Doug Nelson  
Elder Glenda Pawsey  
Father Rick LaBrecque  
Fr. Jim Hoffman OFM  
Fr. Joseph Monahan  
Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, US Area Karen Hartman, SFP  
Jim Myres, OFS  
Lay Leader JL Angell  
Minister to Migrants Larry Trent  
Parishioner Levita Rupp  
Pastor Carolyn Dipboye  
Pastor Richard Fry  
Pastoral Minister Maureen Sheehan  
Rabbi Michael Feinberg  
Rabbi Deborah Bronstein  
Rabbi Dr. David Fox Sandmel  
Rabbi Michael Rothbaum  
Rev. Angie Boissevain  
Rev. Jim Conn  
Rev. Deniray Mueller  
Rev. John Fernandes  
Rev. Joseph Easley  
Rev. Mark Lukens

Rev. Mark Lancaster  
Rev. Laura Speiran  
Rev. Frank Bergen  
Rev. Kay Woike  
Rev. Diane Mettam  
Rev. Julie Peebles  
Rev. Lydia Ferrante-Roseberry  
Rev. Dr. Leo Bistak  
Rev. Dr. Allison Tanner  
Rev. Dr. Sunny Kang  
Rev. Dr. Randy Orso  
Rev. Dr. Lyle J. Dykstra  
Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea  
Rev. Dr. Paul Ziese  
Reverend Emmanuel Orendain  
Reverend Michael Coburn  
Reverend Patricia Mitchell  
Sister Dee Peppard, BVM  
Sister Mary Carr  
Sister Mary Brigid Clingman, OP  
Sister Carol Boschert  
Sister Pat Reinhart  
Sister Joan Agro, O.P.  
Sister Mary Cecile Gunelson  
Sister Elizabeth Fuhr  
Sister Mary Ann Penner  
Sister Kathleen Carr  
Sister Regina Wagner  
Sister Nancy McCarthy  
Sister Carole Freking  
Sister MaryEllen Meckley  
Sister Mary Healey  
Sister Nancy Miller  
Sister Emily TeKolste  
Sister Mary Mahowald  
Sister Mary Dostal  
Sister Mary Synkewecz, RSM  
Sister Rose Mary Meyer  
Sr. Barbara Battista  
Sr. Mary Bradish  
Sr. Karen Conover  
Sr. Carol Spiegel  
Sr. C Jean Hayen, BVM  
Sr. Teri Hadro, BVM  
The Rev Christine Payden-Travers  
The Venerable Catherine Cooke