

July 11, 2018

Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

RE: Request for 18 month extension and redesignation of TPS for Somalia

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

We the 65 undersigned leaders of diverse faith communities and 44 faith-based organizations respectfully urge you to extend for 18 months and redesignate Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for Somalia. Our request is rooted in the morals and values of our faiths: we welcome, protect and offer hospitality to those in need. Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad were all refugees at one point, needing to rely on the kindness of others. The Bible says “you shall not wrong nor oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 22:20). The Quran speaks about helping those who are oppressed and in need, including refugees. “Was not the Earth of God spacious enough for you to flee for refuge?” (Quran 4:97). Somali TPS holders are our brothers and sisters. Their families live and work in our communities, and their children have grown up in the United States. As people of faith, we remain steadfast in our commitment to lift up the marginalized, especially in the case of Somali TPS holders.

Somalia was one of the original countries designated for TPS after it was established through the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990.¹ Since the original designation, disrupted and dangerous living conditions in Somalia have persisted including war and acts of terror, inter- and intra-clan fighting, and famine.² In the last extension of TPS for Somalia, the U.S. government characterized the country’s condition as “a complex protracted emergency that is one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.”³ Accordingly, because safe return has been impossible, TPS for Somalia has continually been extended, as permissible under the law.⁴ Both Republican and Democratic administrations have granted these extensions.⁵

A failure to extend and redesignate TPS for Somalia at this time would fly in the face of our cherished interfaith values and morality, putting the lives of brothers and sisters and their families at risk. At the time of the last TPS extension in 2017, the government found that approximately 5 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance with 1.1 million people internally displaced.⁶ Since that extension, the situation in Somalia has only deteriorated; ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary and temporary conditions remain.

Today, there continues to be ongoing armed conflict in Somalia between Somali government forces, militia, African Union troops, and other foreign fighters against al-Shabaab, which dominates huge

¹ 56 Fed. Reg. 46804 (Sept. 16, 1991); Jill H. Wilson, *Temporary Protect Status: Overview and Current Issues*, CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE (Jan. 17, 2018), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/homsec/RS20844.pdf>.

² 82 Fed. Reg. 4905 (Jan. 17, 2017), www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/17/2016-31861/extension-of-the-designation-of-somalia-for-temporary-protected-status.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ See e.g. 70 Fed. Reg. 43895 (July 29, 2005), www.federalregister.gov/documents/2005/07/29/05-15001/extension-of-the-designation-of-somalia-for-temporary-protected-status; 82 Fed. Reg. 4905 (Jan. 17, 2017), www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/17/2016-31861/extension-of-the-designation-of-somalia-for-temporary-protected-status.

⁶ *Id.*

swaths of territory.⁷ There are over 1.5 million people currently internally displaced in Somalia and nearly 900,000 refugees in the nearby region.⁸ The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia reported 1,228 civilian casualties between January and September 2017, as a result of the conflict.⁹ In October 2017, al-Shabaab carried out a horrific terrorist attack in the capital, Mogadishu, killing 500 people; in February 2018, car bombs killed 40 more.¹⁰ The U.S. has an active military presence in Somalia to combat al-Shabaab with one American killed and four injured in an attack as recently as June 2018.¹¹ Furthermore, in its most recent humanitarian situation report on Somalia from March 2018, UNICEF, “verified 317 grave violations affecting 302 children mostly through abduction, killing, and child recruitment and use by armed forces and groups.”¹²

In March 2018, the UN Security Council expressed “grave concern at the worsening humanitarian crisis and renewed risk of famine in Somalia.” Overall, an estimated 2.7 million people in Somalia are currently facing acute food insecurity, with an additional 2.7 million people experiencing stressed levels of food insecurity.¹³ In March 2018, UNICEF reported a 19 percent increase from the number of children being treated for malnutrition in 2017.¹⁴ Over 300,000 children under the age of five are severely malnourished, including 48,000 who face death if not urgently treated.¹⁵ These situations are elevated due to “ongoing drought, displacement and conflict.”¹⁶ In addition to war, and widespread malnutrition and starvation, lack of access to clean water and healthcare has left nearly 2 million people at risk of death from preventable diseases.¹⁷

In a country where over 40 percent of the population is in dire need of humanitarian assistance with an overwhelming percentage of displaced persons, safe return to Somalia is impossible at this time. As people of faith, united, we call on you to grant the maximum protection possible under the law—18 month extension and redesignation—as the situation in Somalia demands.

Sincerely,

Faith Organizations

American Friends Service Committee

Anti-Defamation League

Cabrini Immigrant Services of NYC

CAIR-Ohio

⁷ *World Report 2018: Somalia*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2018), www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/somalia.

⁸ Somalia Situation 2017, UNHCR (May, 2017), www.unhcr.org/591ae0e17.pdf.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ UN Security Council resolution 2408, S/RES/2408 (2018), www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2408.pdf.

¹¹ *U.S. soldier killed in attack by al Qaeda affiliate in Somalia*, CBS News (June 8, 2018), www.cbsnews.com/news/us-soldier-killed-al-shabaab-attack-somalia-2018-06-08/.

¹² UNICEF Somalia Humanitarian Situation Report, (April 2018), reliefweb.int/report/somalia/unicef-somalia-humanitarian-situation-report-3-1-31-march-2018.

¹³ *Food Assistance Fact Sheet- Somalia*, USAID (May 4, 2018), www.usaid.gov/somalia/food-assistance.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

Capuchin Province of St. Joseph

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Boston

Catholic Charities of Pueblo

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee & Immigration Ministries

Church World Service

Conference of Superiors of Men

Ecumenical Poverty Initiative

ELCA Multicultural Ministries

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Faith in Public Life

Franciscan Action Network

Franciscan Sisters of the Poor

Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, US Area

Glenmary Home Missioners

Holy Name Province-JPIC Office

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Majlis Ash-Shura (Islamic leadership Council) of Metropolitan New York

Mary's Place Refugee Outreach

Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (MuslimARC)

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Council of Jewish Women

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

NHCUCC Immigrant and Refugee Support Group

Northern Valley Catholic Social Service

Our Lady Queen of Peace

Pax Christi Illinois

Pax Christi Metro New York

Province of Saint Joseph of the Capuchin Order

Scalabrini International Migration Network

Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership

Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership

Sisters of Charity of New York

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Institute Justice Team

Thrive International Programs, Inc.

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

United Church of Christ

Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)

Faith Leaders

Brother Larry Johnson, Glenmary Home Missioners

Deacon Thomas Mariconda, Regional Deacon-Naugatuck Valley

Dr. Mary Hunt, Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)

Elder Alice Davis, Hanover Presbyterian Church

Elder Maria Studer, FPC Levittown

Father John Duffell, Church of the Blessed Sacrament

Fr. Jacek Orzechowski, Franciscan Friars of the Holy Name of Jesus

Imam Naeem Baig, Dar al-Hijrah Islamic Center

Lay Leader JL Angell, EDCChurch

Mr. Eric Martinez, St. Barnabas The Apostle Catholic Church

Ms. Dawn Sample, St. Theresa Parish

Ms. Vonny Eckman, St. Paul's United Church of Christ

Rabbi Michael Feinberg, Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition

Rabbi Michael Rothbaum, Congregation Beth Elohim

Rev. Nancy Ross, Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral

Rev. Albert Starr, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Alex Roche, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church

Rev. Charles R. Claycomb, Great Plains Conference, United Methodist Church

Rev. Christine Payden-Travers, Retired Episcopal Priest

Rev. David Jones, Makemie Memorial Presbyterian Church

Rev. Deacon Gail S. Ganter-Toback, St. James' Church- Hyde Park, NY

Rev. Deacon Thomas Mariconda, Regional Deacon- Naugatuck Valley

Rev. Dr. Cheryl Green, Cathedral of Grace-ST. John AMEC

Rev. Dr. Chloe Breyer, The Interfaith Center of New York

Rev. Dr. Donna T. Morton, Fourth Ave. United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Douglas L. Griffin Douglas Griffin, Westminster Presbyterian Church

Rev. Dr. John Long, First Presbyterian Church

Rev. Dr. Lyle J. Dykstra, Retired

Rev. Dr. Paul Ziese, MacArthur Park Lutheran

Rev. Dr. Raymond Rivera, Latina Pastoral Action Center & Sanctuary Church

Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, National City Christian Church

Rev. Elizabeth Doty, New Castle Presbytery

Rev. Elizabeth Maxwell, Church of the Ascension

Rev. Esther Irish, The Baptist Church in Warren

Rev. Francis Gargani, the Redemptorists

Rev. Jason Bense, Lutheran Church of our Redeemer

Rev. Jim Dale and Ms. Barbara Dale, First United Methodist Church

Rev. Jimmie Hawkins, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Rev. Jon Chapman, The Presbyterian Church of Dover

Rev. Jonathan Page, First Congregational Church of Houston

Rev. Kathie Pownall, Concord Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)

Rev. Kay Woike, Nativity United Church of Christ

Rev. Michael Williams, Georgetown Presbyterian Church

Rev. Ross Carmichael, St. Andrew Lutheran Church

Rev. Timothy Woodruff, Presbyterian Church of the Covenant

Rev. Zachary Harmon, St. Christopher's Episcopal Church

Sister Bernadine Karge, Dominican Sister of Sinsinawa, WI

Sister Carol Boschert, Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, MO

Sister Carol De Angelo, Sisters of Charity of New York

Sister Jean Masterson, Congregation of St. Joseph

Sister Joan Agro, Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, NY

Sister Judith Garson, Society of the Sacred Heart

Sister Karen Hartman, Franciscan Sisters of the Poor

Sister Laetitia Bordes, Society of Helpers

Sister Louise Alff, Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities

Sister Maria Orlandini, Catholic

Sister Mary Brigid Clingman, OP, Dominican Sisters, Grand Rapids

Sister Mary Carr, Dominican Sisters of Adrian

Sister Mary Joyce Moeller, Congregation of Divine Providence

Sister Mary McCauley, Sisters of Charity, BVM

Sister Mary McMahan, Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart

Sister Patricia Rogucki, Sisters for Christian Community

Sister Rose Therese Nolta, Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters

Sister Sheilamarie Tobbe, Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland

Sr. Elaine Betoncourt, Sisters of St. Joseph