

January 19, 2017

The Honorable Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20016

The Honorable Secretary Rex Tillerson
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Re: Re-designation of Syria for TPS

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Secretary Tillerson:

We are writing on behalf of the American Relief Coalition for Syria (ARCS), its members, and nine humanitarian organizations working on Syria. ARCS is a coalition of American relief and humanitarian organizations dedicated to providing humanitarian assistance and development programs to help millions of vulnerable people, living in Syria and as refugees, during the Syrian crisis and beyond. As humanitarian organizations working directly on the ground in Syria, we maintain that Syria meets all required criteria for Temporary Protected Status re-designation.

Violence in Syria has continued for almost seven years, resulting in the deaths of over 500,000 people, the displacement of at least 6 million people inside Syria, and 5 million registered refugeesⁱ. The UN and humanitarian organizations are overstretched, with 13.5 million civilians in Syria in need of humanitarian assistance and less than 50% of the necessary funding availableⁱⁱ. Humanitarian aid organizations, such as ours, have been on the ground since the beginning. As a part of our activities, we closely monitor the constantly changing situation in Syria, and we can therefore unequivocally state that the security conditions in Syria are by no means improving for civilians. Forcing anyone to return to Syria would pose a serious threat to their personal safety and is tantamount to a death sentence.

The humanitarian situation in Syria has continued to deteriorate; over half of the remaining population in Syria are in dire need of healthcare, protection, and access to clean water.ⁱⁱⁱ In 2017, alone, 1.8 million people were newly displaced, while nearly 3 million are trapped in besieged or hard to reach areas. There is little or no access to essential care. In Eastern Ghouta, a besieged community of nearly 400,000 people, there are only 107 doctors, and medical evacuations have been barred^{iv}. Humanitarian organizations are overwhelmed by the need and challenges in Syria.

The case for the renewal and re-designation of TPS for Syria is a clear one. The estimated 5,800 Syrians with TPS status in the United States^v, should not be forced to return to an unsafe and unstable country. Many of them have been here for years, working and paying taxes, but they remain eager to return home as soon as it is safe to do so. As humanitarian organizations working on the frontlines in Syria, we understand the challenges and complexities on the ground. We see the results of funding gaps and tight budgets for Syrian relief. We strongly urge that you renew and re-designate TPS for Syria.

Signatories,

The American Relief Coalition for Syria and its member organizations:

Hope Foundation for Relief and Development

Karam Foundation

Mercy Without Limits

NuDay Syria

Rahma Relief Foundation

Shaam Relief Foundation

Swasia Charity Foundation

Syria Relief and Development

Syrian American Engineers Association

Syrian American Medical Society

Syrian Community Network

Syrian Expatriates Organization

Syrian Forum USA

CARE USA

Church World Service

Global Communities

Mercy Corps

Multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees

Norwegian Refugee Council

Oxfam America

Refugees International

Save the Children

ⁱ UNHCR, Syria Emergency Webpage, Accessed January 2018.

<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html>

ⁱⁱ UNHCR, 2017 Progress Report, September 30, 2017.

<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=14381>

ⁱⁱⁱ UN OCHA, 2018 Humanitarian Overview. November 21, 2017.

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2018_syr_hno_english.pdf

^{iv} Syrian American Medical Society Report, September, 2017.

<https://www.sams-usa.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/east-ghouta-report-05-1.pdf>

^v Congressional Research Service Report, November 2, 2017.

<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/homsec/RS20844.pdf>