



June 23, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

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

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

**RE: ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR EXTENSION AND REDESIGNATION OF
TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR VENEZUELA**

Dear President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Secretary Blinken,

The undersigned 190 organizations write today to urge you to extend and redesignate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuela in light of the escalating humanitarian crisis that has made safe return impossible. On March 9, 2021, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) designated TPS for Venezuela for 18 months effective until September 9, 2022.¹ The statute supported the designation on the basis of extraordinary and temporary conditions, as the country was at the crossroads of socio-economic and political crisis.² “The living conditions in Venezuela reveal a country in turmoil, unable to protect its own citizens,” said Secretary Mayorkas.³

The Biden administration must provide redesignation for Venezuela to protect the 323,000 Venezuelans living in the United States who are eligible for TPS.⁴ We are writing to request an 18-month extension and redesignation of TPS for Venezuela as the country conditions as described by Secretary Mayorkas continue to persist and deteriorate, warranting an extension and redesignation of TPS. In addition, we request a generous cut-off date to expand eligibility for Venezuelan nationals who have arrived in the United States after March 9, 2021 in light of the renewed country conditions; a timely publication of a Federal Register Notice (FRN); at least

¹ Federal Register, 86 FR 13574 (March 9, 2021), <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2021-04951>.

² U.S. Code: Immigration and Nationality, 8 U.S.C. § 1254a, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2020-title8/pdf/USCODE-2020-title8-chap12-subchapII-partV-sec1254a.pdf>.

³ “Secretary Mayorkas Designates Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status for 18 Months,” U.S. Department of Homeland Security (March 8, 2021), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/03/08/secretary-mayorkas-designates-venezuela-temporary-protected-status-18-months>.

⁴ Federal Register, 86 FR 13574.

a 180-day registration period for both current TPS holders and those who would benefit under redesignation; and an outreach campaign to inform the impacted community.

The number of new applications received by USCIS in the last reporting period was 11,017, while **there are currently 202,210 TPS cases of Venezuelans pending before USCIS.**⁵ The backlogs have caused a serious impact on Venezuelans, who are denied essential resources, health care, and driver's licenses, and are suffering due to prolonged unemployment and increased fear of deportation. While we urge the extension and redesignation of TPS for Venezuela, it is imperative that the administration takes into account the extreme delay and disadvantage that applicants have faced and waive the application fees (forms I-821 and I-765). In addition, we request the administration to provide dedicated funding for TPS backlogs to advance the USCIS's efforts to reduce backlogs and improve processing times. Finally, we request an engagement with the relevant decision-makers at the DHS, USCIS, State, and the White House, to meet with our country and issue experts to discuss our request further.

I. Temporary Protected Status

TPS allows people from a designated country to remain in the United States while conditions in their home country make safe return impossible. The Secretary of Homeland Security can designate a country for TPS if the country is experiencing ongoing armed conflict, natural disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions. TPS allows its beneficiaries to stay in the United States during the designation period and receive work permits. It is life-saving, blanket protection, especially for those who are ineligible for or who have been denied asylum.

II. Ongoing temporary and extraordinary conditions that make safe return to Venezuela impossible

The designation of TPS for Venezuela on the basis of extraordinary and temporary conditions is set to expire, with the deadline to redesignate approaching on July 11, 2022. The country's conditions persist, however, and are exacerbated by the ongoing humanitarian crisis and human rights abuses under President Maduro's administration. The developments in the last year have threatened the safe return of Venezuelans.

A. Political instability and human rights abuses

“Maduro clings to power through the subversion of democratic institutions, manipulation of elections, and force. His policies are marked by authoritarianism, intolerance for dissent, and violent and systematic repression of human rights and fundamental freedoms – including the use of torture, arbitrary detentions, and extrajudicial killings,” as stated by the Department of State.⁶ The Venezuelan government failed to uphold the rights of its people. Maduro's government is responsible for the persecution of political opponents, curtailment of press freedoms, use of violence and human rights violations and abuses in response to anti-government protests, and arbitrary arrest and detention of anti-government protesters, as well as the exacerbating presence of significant government corruption. On March 3, 2022, President Biden issued Executive Order 13692, declaring a National Emergency with respect to Venezuela citing the above reasons.⁷

⁵ “Form I-821, Application for Temporary Protected Status Receipts, Approvals, Denials, and Pending by Country of Designation Fiscal Year 2022 Q1,” USCIS Immigration and Citizenship Data (March 9, 2022), https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/reports/I821_RADP_FY22_Q1.pdf.

⁶ “U.S. Relations With Venezuela: Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet,” U.S. Department of State (March 10, 2022), <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-venezuela/>.

⁷ “Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Venezuela,” Executive Office of the President (March 7, 2022), <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2022-04908>; “Notice on the Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Venezuela,” The White House (March 03, 2022),

Abductions and assassinations of civilians due to conflict forced people to flee their homes leading to largescale internal displacement within the region.⁸ A U.N. fact-finding mission investigated gross violations of human rights in Venezuela since Maduro’s term in office.⁹ These violations include arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, torture, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, including sexual and gender-based violence. The report concluded that the violations were part of “**a widespread and systematic course of conduct, amounting to crimes against humanity.**” Prompted by the above findings of crimes against humanity, the prosecutor’s office of the International Criminal Court said that it will open an office in Venezuela to investigate allegations of torture and killings by the country’s security forces.¹⁰ The United States issued a **level 4: Do not travel advisory** citing the above reasons not to travel to the country.¹¹

B. Humanitarian Crises

Policies under Maduro’s administration led to an economic collapse in Venezuela. The country has suffered from a scarcity of basic supplies and hyperinflation due to economic mismanagement, corruption, and falling oil prices resulting in the bolivar losing almost all its value, shedding about 73% in 2021 alone.¹² Harsh economic sanctions compounded the impact, resulting in an estimated decline of 74% in the GDP between 2014 and 2020.¹³ The percentage of Venezuelans living in poverty increased from 48.4% in 2014 to 96% in 2019, with over 80% of the population living in extreme poverty.¹⁴ By the end of 2020, more than seven million people were estimated to require humanitarian assistance.¹⁵

Venezuela is at a critical point as healthcare and humanitarian workers are facing restrictions to aid delivery under the control of the authoritarian regime. During the pandemic, the government issued a state of alarm.¹⁶ Many people who questioned the regime’s response to the pandemic, including journalists, health care workers, and opposition leaders, were threatened,

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/03/notice-on-the-continuation-of-the-national-emergency-with-respect-to-venezuela-2/>.

⁸ “Colombia/Venezuela: Border Area Abuses by Armed Groups,” Human Rights Watch (March, 2022), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/28/colombia/venezuela-border-area-abuses-armed-groups>.

⁹ “Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” Human Rights Council (October, 2021), https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFMV/A.HRC.48.69_EN.pdf.

¹⁰ “ICC Prosecutor, Mr Karim A.A. Khan QC, opens an investigation into the Situation in Venezuela and concludes Memorandum of Understanding with the Government,” ICC Office of the Prosecutor (November 5, 2021), <https://www.icc-cpi.int/venezuela>.

¹¹ Venezuela Travel Advisory, U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs (May 19, 2022), <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/venezuela-travel-advisory.html>.

¹² “Venezuela introduces new currency, drops six zeros,” *Al Jazeera* (October, 2021), <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/10/1/venezuela-introduces-new-currency-drops-six-zeros>.

¹³ “Venezuela-Related Sanctions,” U.S. Department of State (2017-2021), <https://2017-2021.state.gov/venezuela-related-sanctions/index.html>.

¹⁴ “How The Venezuela Temporary Protected Status Helps Venezuelans In The Us,” The Borgen Project, April 1, 2021, <https://borgenproject.org/venezuela-temporary-protected-status/>.

¹⁵ “The Venezuela Regional Humanitarian Crisis and COVID-19,” Congressional Research Service (April, 2021), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF11029.pdf>.

¹⁶ Official Gazette of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Decree No. 4,160 (March 13, 2020), <https://pandectasdigital.blogspot.com/2020/03/decreto-n-4160-mediante-el-cual-se-17.html>.

arrested, and charged for crimes.¹⁷ The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the persisting humanitarian crisis¹⁸ under which civilians continue to suffer from insecurity due to lack of access to food, water, and healthcare, with inflation severely curtailing their ability to find an adequate source of income to purchase essential goods and services for survival. Citing the massive food and medicine shortages and the percentage of the population living in poverty, bipartisan members of the Florida Congressional Delegation sent a letter¹⁹ to urge the administration to consider re-designating Venezuela for TPS before the expiration date and **moving the required arrival date forward**. More than half of Venezuelans in the United States live in Florida.²⁰

III. Need for extension and redesignation of TPS for Venezuela

Venezuela is currently facing extraordinary conditions that warrant an immediate 18-month designation of TPS. The U.S. Department of State confirmed the above-mentioned country conditions in its 2021 Country Reports.²¹ Congress created TPS to provide life-saving protection to people who cannot return home safely. Biden promised to protect TPS recipients from being sent back to countries that are unsafe.²² TPS for Venezuela must be designated immediately to meet those goals.

TPS for Venezuela would not only be an appropriate use of the authority granted by Congress but a critical tool to meet the goals of your administration to enhance our nation's security and safety. The conditions in Venezuela continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.²³ The United States, the European Union, and other countries recognize Juan Guaidó as the acting president of the country.²⁴ These countries have held discussions on the importance of scheduling free and fair presidential elections²⁵ under an independent electoral agency no later than 2024. The Venezuela Emergency Relief, Democracy Assistance and Development (VERDAD) Act, a bipartisan deal on federal

¹⁷ "2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Venezuela," U.S. Department of State (2022), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/venezuela/>.

¹⁸ "Venezuela Food Security Assessment," WFP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (January, 2020), https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Main%20Findings%20WFP%20Food%20Security%20Assessment%20in%20Venezuela_January%202020-2.pdf.

¹⁹ "Bipartisan Letter Urging Redesignation of Venezuela for TPS," (March, 2022), <https://demings.house.gov/sites/demings.house.gov/files/VZ%20TPS%20Redesignation.pdf>.

²⁰ "Facts on Hispanics of Venezuelan origin in the United States," Pew Research Center (September 16, 2019),

<https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/fact-sheet/u-s-hispanics-facts-on-venezuelan-origin-latinos/>.

²¹ "2021 Country Report:Venezuela," U.S. Department of State (2022),

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/venezuela/>.

²² The Biden Plan For Securing Our Values as a Nation of Immigrants (2021), <https://joebiden.com/immigration/>.

²³ "Notice on the Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Venezuela," The White House Briefing Room Statement (March, 2022),

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/03/notice-on-the-continuation-of-the-national-emergency-with-respect-to-venezuela-2/>.

²⁴ "U.S. Recognition of Venezuela's 2015 National Assembly and Interim President Guaidó," U.S. Department of State (January 4, 2022),

<https://www.state.gov/u-s-recognition-of-venezuelas-2015-national-assembly-and-interim-president-guaido/>.

²⁵ "The United States Proposes a Framework for a Peaceful Democratic Transition in Venezuela," U.S. Department of State (March 31, 2020),

<https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-united-states-proposes-a-framework-for-a-peaceful-democratic-transition-in-venezuela/>.

government spending was passed in 2019 to reaffirm U.S. support for Interim-President Juan Guaidó, providing for increased humanitarian assistance.²⁶ **An immediate designation of TPS is necessary to safeguard vulnerable Venezuelans in the United States and reaffirm U.S. commitment to establishing a policy to support the people of Venezuela during this crisis.**

The dire humanitarian emergency in Venezuela, the increase in Venezuelans seeking protection in the United States over the course of 2021, and delays in processing asylum applications are reasons to expand eligibility for Venezuelan nationals who have arrived in the United States after March 9, 2021. The Venezuelan American Caucus, along with a coalition of organizations urge President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas to recognize the impact of these conditions on Venezuelans.²⁷ We urge the administration to grant **TPS protection and consider long-term protection for its people.**

IV. Conclusion

The Biden administration must provide redesignation for Venezuela to protect the 323,000 Venezuelans living in the United States who are eligible for TPS.²⁸ With an extension and redesignation of the protection, Venezuelan immigrants will continue to contribute to the economy and will be able to stay reunited with their families here in the United States.

The number of new applications received by USCIS in the last reporting period was 11,017, while there are currently 202,210 TPS cases of Venezuelans pending before USCIS.²⁹ While we urge the extension and redesignation of TPS for Venezuela, it is imperative that the administration takes into account the extreme delay and disadvantage that applicants have faced and **waive the application fees** (forms I-821 and I-765). In addition, we request the administration to provide **dedicated funding for TPS backlogs** to advance the USCIS's efforts to reduce backlogs and improve processing times.

The statutory conditions supporting Venezuela's designation for TPS on the basis of extraordinary and temporary conditions are met. The undersigned organizations are calling on you to extend TPS for 18 months and redesignate Venezuela. We request a generous cut-off date to expand eligibility for Venezuelan nationals who have arrived in the United States after March 9, 2021 in light of the renewed country conditions. In addition, we request a timely publication of a Federal Register Notice (FRN), at least a 180-day registration period for both current TPS holders and those who would benefit under redesignation, and an outreach campaign to inform the impacted community. Finally, **we request an engagement with the relevant decision-makers at the DHS, USCIS, State, and the White House, to meet with our country and issue experts to discuss our request further.** Please contact Yanira Arias (varias@alianzaamericas.org), Adelys Ferro (aferro@venezuelanamericancaucus.com), or Lora Adams (lora@masadc.com) with any queries regarding this letter.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

²⁶ S.1025 - VERDAD Act of 2019, 116th Congress (2019), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1025/>.

²⁷ Letter to President Biden on TPS for Venezuelans, Venezuelan American Caucus (VAC) (February 17, 2022), <https://www.venezuelablog.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Letter-TPS-for-Venezuelans-for-President-Biden-PDF.pdf>.

²⁸ Fed. Reg., 86 FR 13574, <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2021-04951>.

²⁹ Form I-821 Pending by Country of Designation 2022, USCIS Data (March 2022), https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/reports/I821_RADP_FY22_Q1.pdf.

National

African Communities Together
Alianza Americas
All For Venezuela
America's Voice
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
American Immigration Lawyers Association
Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)
Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)
Bridges Faith Initiative
Cameroon Advocacy Network
CASA REINA
Catholic Labor Network
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Central American Black Organization
Church World Service
Colectivo de Mujeres Transnacionales
Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)
Community Change Action
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Diaspora Hondureña Internacional
Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel
Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM) Action
Familias Presentes Movement
Foro Penal
FWD.us
Haitian Bridge Alliance
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights First
Immigration Hub
InReach
Justice in Motion
Latinas en Poder
Latino Commission on AIDS
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
National Employment Law Project
National Immigration Law Center
National Partnership for New Americans
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
ONG. Blanca Nieves Sierra
Panamerican and Caribbean Union for Humans Rights
Philanthrartist
Poder Latinx
Pulso
Red Mexicana de Lideres y Organizaciones de Migrantes
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Sisters of Charity Federation
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph
UnidosUS
Venezuela American Caucus
Venezolanos en Kedall / Unidos X Venezuela USA
Visión Democrática
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)

State/Local

1 Michigan for the Global Majority
Access Living / Cambiando Vidas
Adhikaar
Al Otro Lado
Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice (ACIJ)
Alabama Latino AIDS Coalition
Alianza for Progress
Arkansas United
Arte CabelloHansel
Asociación de Guatemaltecos Sin Fronteras
Asociación de Venezolanos en Puerto Rico.
Asociación Venezolana Virgen de Coromoto
Ayuda
Binational Institute of Human Development
Cabrini Immigrant Services of NYC, Inc.
CARECEN DC
Caribbean Community Service Center (CCSC)
CASA DC VENEZUELA
Casa de la Cultura El Salvador
Casa de Venezuela Delaware
Casa de Venezuela Greater Philadelphia
Casa de Venezuela Orlando
Casa Mary Johanna
Casa Venezuela Atlanta
Casa Venezuela Columbus Ohio
Casa Venezuela Dallas
Casa Yurumein
Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc.
Catholic Charities Of Acadiana
Center for Immigrant Progress
Central American Resource Center of Los Angeles
Central American Resource Center of Northern CA (CARECEN SF)
Centro Presente
Centro Romero
Centro San Bonifacio
Chacon Center for Immigrant Justice at Maryland Carey Law
Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center
Chicago Religious Leadership Network (CRLN)
Church of Our Saviour/La Iglesia de Nuestro Salvador
Church Women United in New York State
Churches United For Fair Housing
Colorado Jobs with Justice

Commission on Justice for Immigrants and Refugees, Immaculate Heart Community
Communities Organizing Latinx Power and Action -COPAL Minnesota
Convencion Bautista Hispana de Texas
CRECEN Houston
Dominican Development Center
Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids (MI)
Durango Unido
El Venezolano Newspaper
Emerald Isle Immigration Center
Familias Unidas en Acción
Fe y Justicia Worker Center
FEDECFMI - La Federación de Clubes Michoacanos en Illinois (Casa Michoacan)
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
Florida Immigrant Coalition
Foro Penal Chapter Houston
Gente de Venezuela Philadelphia
Greater Cleveland Immigrant Support Network
Heartland Workers Center
Hispanic Center of West Michigan
Hondurans Against AIDS
Houston America For All
Hts. Friends of Immigrants
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Illinois Venezuelan Alliance
Immigrant Hope - Brooklyn, NY
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Independent Scholar
International Institute of New England
Jovenex Florida
Just Neighbors Ministry
justice center of southeast ma
Justice for Our Neighbors El Paso
La Colaborativa
La Comunidad, Inc
Latin American Coalition
Latinas Time
Latino Policy Forum
Latinos Progresando
Law Office of Peggy J. Bristol
Legal Aid Justice Center
Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates
Lila LGBTQ Inc
Living Hope Wheelchair Association
Long Island Immigration Clinic, Sisters of St. Joseph
Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer
Macomb Immigrant Service Center
Made in Venezuela Business Club
Michigan United
MIRC
Mission Graduates

Mundo Verde PCS
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Justice for Our Neighbors, Inc.
Office of Latino/Latin American Studies (OLLA)
Participacion venezolana Georgia
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Rays Of Freedom
Red de Pueblos Transnacionales
Redes en Acción Massachusetts
Rian Immigrant Center
Rural Women Health Project
Salvadoran Association of Los Angeles (ASOSAL)
Seattle Immigrant Rights Action Group
Seeds of Resistance
Sisters of Saint Joseph
Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Social Justice Coalition, Central Lutheran Church
Strangers No Longer
Telpochacalli Community Education Project
Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition
The Legal Aid Society (New York)
The Legal Project
True Alliance Center INC
United for a Fair Economy
University of San Francisco Immigration & Deportation Defense Clinic
Venezolanos en Wisconsin
Venezuela USA Foundation, Inc.
Venezuelan American Association of Texas
Venezuelan Association of Massachusetts
Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA)
VIP Community SVS
Wayne Action for Racial Equality
WeCount!
Wesley Foundation Serving UCLA
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Wilco Justice Alliance (Williamson County, TX)
WIN! The Welcome Immigrant Network
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
Women Working Together U.S.A