

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 29, 2023

The Honorable President Joe Biden  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
2801 Nebraska Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. State Department  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Dear President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Secretary Blinken,

We are writing today to urge the administration to designate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Special Student Relief (SSR) for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as we continue to receive reports of heinous armed conflict and mounting massacres of civilians.

As you know, the administration can grant TPS to foreign nationals if their country of origin is impacted by armed conflict, unprecedented natural disaster, or other extraordinary, temporary conditions. The administration can also grant SSR when natural disasters, wars, and military conflicts create significant financial hardships for foreign students. We believe the situation in the DRC meets these criteria.

In recent months, fighting between Congolese state forces and a Rwanda-backed rebel group, March 23 Movement (M23), has claimed hundreds of lives, injured thousands, forcibly displaced tens of thousands, and terrorized many more. In December 2022, 300 innocent people were killed in civilian homes, the church where they sought refuge, and while fleeing hostilities.<sup>1</sup> This massacre sparked protests from tens of thousands of Congolese civilians.

The East African Community (EAC) responded by deploying 12,000 troops from its Regional Force to eastern DRC in April 2023 in an attempt to secure the withdrawal of M23. Four months since the EAC reached full troop deployment, reports of unlawful killings, sexual violence, rape, and other apparent war crimes by M23 persist.<sup>2</sup> The insecurity civilians face is now compounded

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/12/comment-un-human-rights-office-spokesperson-marta-hurtado-drc>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/13/dr-congo-killings-rapes-rwanda-backed-m23-rebels>.

by martial law in the region and the alleged collaboration of the Congolese army with various armed groups, mostly along ethnic lines.

The resurgence of M23 is a distinct crisis that has prompted global leaders to respond. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken has called on Rwanda to end its support for M23 and spoke with DRC President Félix Tshisekedi in May of this year on “the ongoing violence and dire humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC.”<sup>3</sup> Due to the threat of armed conflict, the U.S Department of State maintains a Level 4: Do Not Travel advisory in North Kivu, Ituri, The eastern DRC region, and the three Kasai provinces (Kasai, Kasai-Oriental, Kasai-Central).

Given the extreme ongoing violence, deteriorating conditions, and the posture of the Department of State, it is clear that the DRC meets the standards for TPS and SSR. We believe it is critical that a designation be issued for the DRC that reflects the continued extraordinary and temporary conditions on the ground. We urge the Administration to review country conditions and designate Temporary Protected Status and Special Student Relief for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Designating the DRC for TPS will also address a discrepancy in U.S. policy. In the most recent report from Refugee Council USA, DRC topped the list of countries of origin for refugees resettled in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Of the top five countries - DRC, Syria, Sudan, Burma, and Ukraine, DRC is the only country not designated for Temporary Protected Status. This divergence comes as more than 1400 people have already been killed this year, 19.6 million people are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, 27 million people are affected by food insecurity, and an outbreak of Ebola, cholera, measles, polio, yellow fever, monkeypox, and COVID-19 have caused major public health crises.<sup>5</sup>

We believe the armed conflict and humanitarian crisis warrant an immediate designation of Temporary Protected Status and Special Student Relief for DRC. The U.S. has a moral obligation to uphold its promise to vulnerable Congolese, and protect them from being deported to fatal conditions. We strongly urge the Secretary and his counterparts in the administration to take necessary measures to protect the Congolese community in the United States.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.


Sincerely,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-call-with-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-president-tshisekedi/>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://rcusa.org/resources/rcusa-refugee-arrivals-report-q3-fy22/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/democratic-republic-congo;>  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2022-DON404>



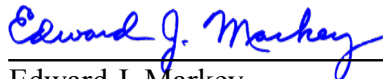
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Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



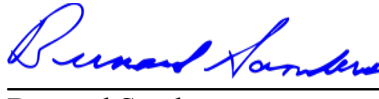
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Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



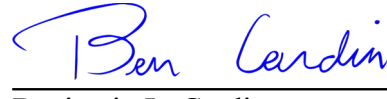
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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



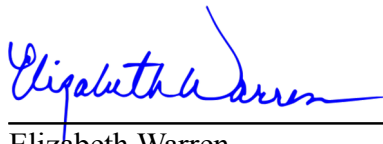
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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



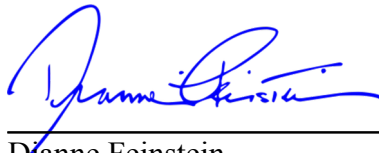
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Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



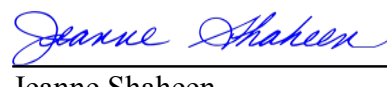
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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



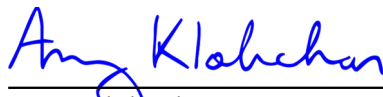
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Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



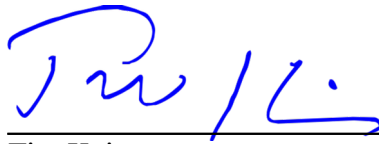
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Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



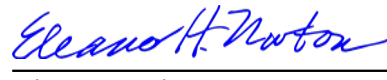
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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



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Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



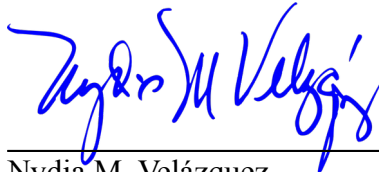
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



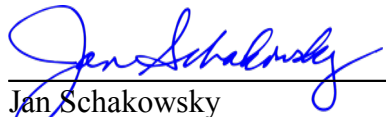
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Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



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Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress



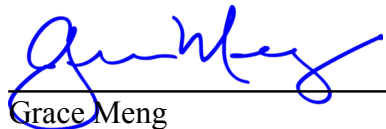
Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



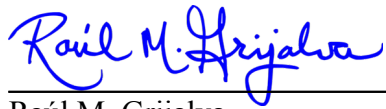
Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



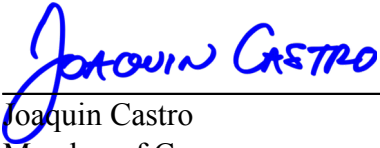
André Carson  
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

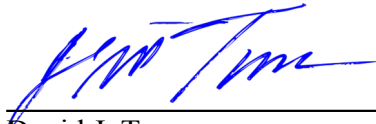


Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



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David J. Trone  
Member of Congress



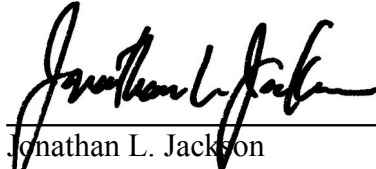
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



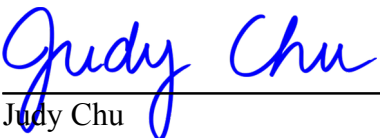
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Jonathan L. Jackson  
Member of Congress



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Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



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Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



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Cori Bush  
Member of Congress



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Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



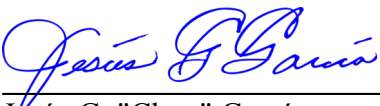
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



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Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



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Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

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Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress

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Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

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Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

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Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress

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Glenn Ivey  
Member of Congress

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Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress

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Shontel M. Brown  
Member of Congress

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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

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Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

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Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress