



**117 ORGANIZATIONS CALL ON ADMINISTRATION TO DESIGNATE TURKIYE
FOR TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS**

The U.N. has called the earthquake that struck Turkiye and Syria an “epic disaster.”

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CONTACT: ramya@masadc.com

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, 117 local, state, national, and international organizations have come together and wrote to President Joe Biden, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken to urge an 18-month designation of [Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\) for Turkiye](#). TPS provides life-saving protection to noncitizens in the United States, including undocumented immigrants, who cannot be safely returned to their home country.

On February 6, a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck southern Turkiye, with its epicenter located in the Pazarcik district of Kahramanmaras province, near the northern Syria border. Numerous aftershocks followed, culminating in a second major 7.5 magnitude quake nine hours later, causing further destruction and exacerbating the damage to already weakened structures. **These catastrophic events have resulted in the loss of over 50,096 lives and 108,368 injuries in Turkiye.** Damage assessments reveal that 307,000 buildings across eleven provinces either collapsed or suffered immediately apparent extensive damage.

Enes Demirel, a Turkish Immigration Attorney at Karam Law stated: “The situation in Turkiye is dire and urgent. The people of Turkiye are suffering from a disaster that has shattered their lives and livelihoods. Everyone on the ground has been working tirelessly to provide relief and recovery efforts, but they are overwhelmed by the scale and complexity of the challenges. They need more time and resources to cope with the aftermath of the earthquakes and to rebuild their country. TPS would enable Turkish nationals who are currently in the U.S. to remain here legally and support their homeland's recovery and reconstruction efforts through remittances. This would not only be a compassionate gesture, but also a strategic one, as Turkiye is a vital ally and partner of the U.S. in a volatile region. They need our help and protection now more than ever.”

Due to the risk of additional damage from aftershocks, Turkish residents have been advised against entering their homes, with many currently living in camps across the country. Considering these dire circumstances, advocates strongly urge the administration to take

necessary measures to protect Turkish nationals residing in the United States and provide an initial 18-month Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for Turkiye.

Gaye Ozpinar, a member of an activist group called Bostonbul stated: “Imagine losing 28 members of your family, your friends, and your neighbors you grew up with. You’ve got no home left to return to. Your childhood neighborhood is gone, your city is gone. We know that there are hundreds of people from Turkey who are in this situation, who would benefit from TPS.”

Arif Gozel, a Turkish Immigration Attorney stated: “I’ve received many heartbreaking messages from the Turkish community in the U.S. after the devastating earthquake. That’s why I am proud to be part of the coalition of 117 immigration and human rights organizations advocating for Turkiye’s TPS designation. This would offer a secure space for Turkish citizens to live and work in the U.S. while recovery efforts are underway. It’s a humane and practical solution that we urge the government to grant without delay.”

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The [TPS-DED AAC](#) is a national coalition of more than 100 organizations with deep expertise in law and policy surrounding TPS and DED. Member organizations range from community-based organizations directly serving impacted communities in the United States to international NGOs, working in and providing insight from affected countries.