

June 30, 2023

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

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

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

RE: ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR 18-MONTH EXTENSION AND REDESIGNATION OF TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR SUDAN

Dear President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Secretary Blinken:

The undersigned 110 civil rights, immigrant rights, human rights, faith, educational and grassroots organizations write to urge Secretary Mayorkas to review country conditions and provide an 18-month extension and redesignation of Temporary Protected Status for Sudan in light of the continuing escalation of armed conflict since April 15, 2023.

On April 20, 2023, African Communities Together (ACT) led a letter to the administration about the escalating violence, indiscriminate bombing, and heavy weapon attacks in Khartoum and other cities since April 15 as a result of conflict between General Abdel-Fattah Burhan of the Sudanese Army, and General Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group.¹ Despite the generals' repeated ceasefire agreements over the last two months, airstrikes and shootings continue, leaving over 5,300 civilians injured and 1,800 dead.² Sudan's descent into war deepens amidst the latest failure of peace talks on June 11, 2023.³

According to United Nations (UN) estimates, over 1.5 million people have been forcibly displaced since the conflict erupted, both within Sudan and outside its borders.⁴ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees advised governments to not return civilians fleeing Sudan due to the conflict, calling it a "refugee movement."⁵ It is imperative that the administration grant an 18-month extension and redesignation of **Temporary Protected Status for Sudan due to the ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary and temporary conditions** that threaten the lives of Sudanese nationals in the United States if returned.

¹ "Letter - Extend and Redesignate TPS for Sudan," African Communities Together, April 20, 2023, <https://africans.us/sites/default/files/Letter%20-%20Extend%20and%20Redesignate%20TPS%20for%20Sudan.pdf>

² "Sudan emergency: One million now displaced in ongoing conflict," *UN News*, accessed June 6, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136837>; "Khartoum Islanders Under Siege as Sudan Fighting Rages," *Barron's*, accessed June 6, 2023, <https://www.barrons.com/news/khartoum-islanders-under-siege-as-sudan-fighting-rages-726e5348>.

³ Reuters. "Sudan war traps civilians after ceasefire ends." Reuters. Accessed June 12, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudan-war-traps-civilians-after-ceasefire-ends-2023-06-12/>.

⁴ Id.

⁵ "UN Refugee Agency Calls on Governments Not to Return People to Sudan," *Reuters*, May 5, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/sudan-politics-un-refugees-idAFL8N3722HJ>.

Advocates also request a prompt publication of the Federal Register Notice (FRN), a 180-day registration period for eligible applicants to submit their applications, and a culturally relevant outreach campaign to the directly impacted community for awareness about the relief. As the October 19, 2023 expiration of Special Student Relief for Sudan approaches, advocates also emphasize the need for an extension of Special Student Relief for F-1 nonimmigrant students from Sudan.

A. TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS AND SPECIAL STUDENT RELIEF

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 a life-saving, blanket protection, especially for those who are ineligible for or who have been denied asylum. Hence, TPS is a crucial tool the Biden administration has at its disposal to safeguard vulnerable people in the United States when safe return to their home countries is impossible.

Last year the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced a designation of Sudan for Temporary Protected Status effective until October 19, 2023. The designation allows eligible Sudanese nationals who have continuously resided in the United States since March 1, 2022, and who have been continuously physically present in the United States since April 19, 2022, to apply for TPS. With the expiry fast approaching, and the conflict and extraordinary and temporary conditions exacerbated by the ongoing developments, the Biden administration must provide continued protection to the Sudanese nationals present in the United States. We urge Secretary Mayorkas to provide an extension and a **redesignation of TPS for Sudan with a generous cut-off date to expand eligibility for Sudanese nationals who arrived in the United States after March 1, 2022**, in light of the renewed country conditions.

The Secretary of Homeland Security is authorized to designate Special Student Relief (SSR) for a country experiencing emergent circumstances. SSR suspends certain regulatory requirements for F-1 students from parts of the world that are experiencing natural catastrophes, war, military conflicts, and national or international financial crises. SSR is a relief for F-1 students facing significant financial hardships as a result of emergent circumstances. In light of the emergent circumstances in Sudan, advocates are calling for an extension of Special Student Relief to provide flexibility for F-1 nonimmigrant students from Sudan which is set to expire on October 19, 2023.

B. NEED FOR 18-MONTH EXTENSION AND REDESIGNATION OF TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR SUDAN

1. Armed conflict

The ongoing armed conflict makes safe return to Sudan impossible. Following a reported struggle for control and breakdown in negotiations, armed clashes began between the RSF paramilitary group and the Sudanese Armed Forces on April 15,

2023, in Khartoum and neighboring Omdurman.⁶ Attacks against civilians and between the armed groups intensified over the days that followed, with artillery fire, heavy shelling, gunfire, and airstrikes being reported.⁷ According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix, all of Sudan's eighteen provinces experienced displacement.⁸ The United Nations issued a statement on May 3, indicating that the rival militaries had been locked in ongoing hostilities for nearly three weeks, despite numerous ceasefire announcements and unsuccessful attempts to extend them.⁹ That same week, U.S. Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines told the Senate Armed Services Committee that "both sides believe they can win militarily and have few incentives to come to the negotiating table."¹⁰

Each subsequent ceasefire deal has failed between the Sudanese army and the RSF since the start of the conflict.¹¹ During each ceasefire agreement, fighting, killing, and displacement have continued without regard to the groups' ceasefire commitments.¹² Negotiations that began between the groups on May 6 were ultimately suspended by the Sudanese army on May 31, leaving civilians across the country in dangerous limbo.¹³ At the end of the latest 24-hour ceasefire on June 11, fighting resumed with greater intensity.¹⁴ With insecurity looming in the region, some of the most serious threats to date include the reemergence of Janjaweed, accused of widespread atrocities in Darfur, a region still haunted by the genocide.¹⁵ The West Darfur Doctors' Syndicate provided firsthand accounts of the targeted ethnic violence and killings of

⁶ Khalid Abdelaziz, Nafisa Eltahir, and Nafisa Eltahir, "Sudan Clashes Kill at Least 25 in Power Struggle between Army, Paramilitaries," *Reuters*, April 15, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/heavy-gunfire-heard-south-sudanese-capital-khartoum-witnesses-2023-04-15/>.

⁷ Hamza Mohamed and Nils Adler, "Sudan Updates: Clashes Continue despite Ceasefire," *Al Jazeera*, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2023/4/18/sudan-live-news-rsf-fighting-for-rights-of-our-people>.

⁸ "ABC News." Sudan's war displaces 2 million as fighting rages in Darfur. Accessed June 2, 2023. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/sudans-war-displaces-2-million-fighting-rages-darfur-100071216>.

⁹ "Sudan: 'Secure and Immediate Access' Needed for Lifesaving Aid, Urges Guterres," *UN News*, May 3, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136302>; Mersiha Hafsa and Gadzo Adil, "Sudan Conflict Updates: Battles Continuing despite Ceasefire," *Al Jazeera*, April 29, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2023/4/29/sudan-fighting-live-news-battles-ongoing-despite-ceasefire>.

¹⁰ Khalid Abdelaziz and Mohamed Nouredin, "Heavy Fighting in Khartoum; Sudan's Children Caught in Conflict, UN Says," *Reuters*, May 4, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/heavy-fighting-khartoum-power-struggle-rages-2023-05-04/>.

¹¹ "Sudan Fighting in its 19th Day: A List of Key Events."

¹² Al Jazeera. "Fighting in Sudan: A Timeline of Key Events," *Al Jazeera*, accessed June 6, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/31/fighting-in-sudan-a-timeline-of-key-events>.

¹³ "Sudan Army Suspends Participation in Jeddah Ceasefire Talks," *Al Jazeera*, accessed June 6, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/31/sudan-army-suspends-participation-in-jeddah-ceasefire-talks>.

¹⁴ Al Jazeera. "Most Fearless Fighting in Sudan after 24-hour Ceasefire Ends." *Al Jazeera*, 11 June 2023. Accessed June 15, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/11/most-fearless-fighting-in-sudan-after-24-hour-ceasefire-ends>

¹⁵ Chris Ewoker, "Terrified Sudanese on the Run from Arab Militias in Darfur - Again," *BBC News*, May 2, 2023, sec. Africa, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-65456965>.

over 1000 individuals, describing conditions equivalent to genocide.¹⁶ According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, at least 1,800 people have been killed since the conflict began on April 15, and the UN reports that over 1.5 million people have been forcibly displaced.¹⁷ As harrowing accounts of rape emerge across the country, no woman in Sudan is safe. The nation has a tragic history of employing rape as a weapon of war.¹⁸

2. Other extraordinary and temporary conditions

On May 3, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated that the people of Sudan are “facing a humanitarian catastrophe.”¹⁹ According to the IOM, the number of internally displaced persons in Sudan doubled in just one week in early May; this mass displacement adds to the 3.7 million people already displaced before the crisis due to previous conflicts and humanitarian emergencies.²⁰ In light of the increasing death toll and forced displacement, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned “many will die” due to lack of essential services, as well as disease outbreaks.²¹

The IOM Chief Anh Nguyen described the deteriorating conditions and humanitarian crisis: “Millions are still trapped with soaring food and transportation prices, lack of cash and access to healthcare, supplies, and critical services, destruction of health, water and communication facilities, shortage of supplies and poor conditions at overwhelmed border points as people flee the fighting.”²² With no safe passage, humanitarian workers are unable to provide aid, calling it “extremely difficult,” with limited staff and supplies.²³ At least eight aid workers have been killed, with many life-saving aid efforts thwarted; according to Reuters, “fierce fighting, rampant looting and reams of red tape are hampering efforts to deliver vital humanitarian supplies” to the now 25 million people in need of assistance.²⁴

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned that Sudanese children are exposed to recruitment and sexual violence, as they are now more vulnerable since the beginning of the conflict.²⁵ As of May 31, UNICEF reports that over 13.6 million

¹⁶ Al Jazeera, “Most Fearless Fighting in Sudan after 24-hour Ceasefire Ends.”

¹⁷ Barron's, “Khartoum Islanders Under Siege as Sudan Fighting Rages.”

¹⁸ Africanews. “Sudanese Women Recount the Horror of Rape.” Africanews, 14 June 2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/06/14/sudanese-women-recount-the-horror-of-rape/>.

¹⁹ “Sudan: ‘Secure and Immediate Access’.”

²⁰ “International community must act to prevent further deterioration in Sudan, says UN Special Envoy,” *UN News*, accessed June 6, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136477>.

²¹ “Sudan Latest.”

²² Safa Msehli and Mohammedali Abunajela, “We Must Act Now to Avoid Deeper Humanitarian Catastrophe in Sudan: IOM Chief,” International Organization for Migration, May 3, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/news/we-must-act-now-avoid-deeper-humanitarian-catastrophe-sudan-iom-chief>.

²³ Malak Harb and Noha Elhennawy, “UN Humanitarian Chief in Sudan, Seeking Guarantees on Aid,” *AP News*, May 3, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/sudan-humanitarian-port-un-displaced-evacuations-a5458a5f75b98a9c09b8621cb870b394>.

²⁴ “Aid agencies in Sudan grapple with looting, bureaucracy to deliver relief,” *Reuters*, accessed June 6, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/aid-agencies-sudan-grapple-with-looting-bureaucracy-deliver-relief-2023-06-02/>.

²⁵ Sarah Ferguson, “Children in Sudan at High Risk as Armed Conflict Continues,” UNICEF USA, April 27, 2023, <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/children-sudan-high-risk-armed-conflict-continues>; Abdelaziz and Noureldin, “Heavy Fighting in Khartoum; Sudan’s Children Caught in Conflict, UN Says.”

children require lifesaving assistance and more than 150,000 children have been forced to flee the country.²⁶ It was reported on June 9 that 60 children have died in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, and nearly 300 orphaned children were evacuated.²⁷ The UN Humanitarian Affairs chief Martin Griffiths said that the humanitarian situation in Sudan "is reaching breaking point."²⁸

C. DESIGNATION IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES

An extension and redesignation of TPS for Sudan is in the foreign policy interest of the United States. Secretary Blinken and other foreign counterparts have held high-level discussions sharing "deep concern about the fighting, the violence that's going on in Sudan; the threat that that poses to civilians, that it poses to the Sudanese nation, and potentially even to the region."²⁹ In a Travel Advisory for Sudan issued on April 22, the U.S. State Department warned of "crime, such as kidnapping, armed robbery, home invasion, and carjacking."³⁰ Civilians also reported these conditions – Marwan Ghandour, a Sudanese national that was evacuated to Abu Dhabi, stated, "The situation is very bad. There was fire in the streets, fire in the houses, in the cars. After two, three days of this, the RSF had a shortage of food, water, and power, so they started to invade homes."³¹

The U.S. and other governments, including France, Britain, and Germany, actively evacuated their citizens out of Sudan as the crisis quickly worsened. The U.S. government suspended its operations in the embassy in Khartoum. It was reported that over 2,000 U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, locally employed staff, immediate family members, and nationals from allied and partner countries were evacuated to Port Sudan with the assistance of a convoy organized by the U.S. government.³² On May 4, President Biden imposed sanctions, expanding the scope of the national emergency declared under successive executive orders on the situation in Sudan.³³ President Biden made a commitment to support a future of peace and opportunity.³⁴

²⁶ "UNICEF: More Than 13.6 Million Children in Urgent Need in Sudan," *Forbes*, accessed June 6, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/unicefusa/2023/05/31/unicef-more-than-136-million-children-in-urgent-need-in-sudan/?sh=72fdod3d793d>.

²⁷ Aya Batrawy, "UNICEF and ICRC work with Sudan's government to evacuate 297 orphans," *NPR*, June 9, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/09/1181232202/unicef-and-icrc-work-with-sudans-government-to-evacuate-297-orphans>.

²⁸ "Sudan: UN Relief Chief Heads to the Region as Humanitarian Crisis Nears 'Breaking Point,'" *UN News*, April 30, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/04/1136212>.

²⁹ "Secretary Antony J. Blinken And U.K. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly On the Situation in Sudan," United States Department of State, April 17, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-uk-foreign-secretary-james-cleverly-on-the-situation-in-sudan/>.

³⁰ "Sudan Travel Advisory," U.S. Department of State - Bureau of Consular Affairs, April 22, 2023, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/sudan-travel-advisory.html>.

³¹ Reuters Staff, "UAE Evacuates Citizens, Others from Sudan by Plane," *Reuters*, April 29, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/sudan-politics-emirates-idAFKBN2WQ07R>.

³² Vedant Patel, "Department Press Briefing – May 1, 2023," United States Department of State, May 1, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departement-press-briefing-may-1-2023/>.

³³ The White House, "Executive Order on Imposing Sanctions on Certain Persons Destabilizing Sudan and Undermining the Goal of a Democratic Transition," The White House, May 4, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/05/04/executive-order-on-imposing-sanctions-on-certain-persons-destabilizing-sudan-and-undermining-the-goal-of-a-democratic-transition/>.

³⁴ The White House, "Statement from President Joe Biden on the Conflict in Sudan."

In a briefing on May 2, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre stated, “We remain gravely concerned about the unfolding humanitarian situation in Sudan. We are planning to use all available means, including using the pre-positioned medical and food supplies, to ensure that humanitarian assistance can resume once security conditions permit.”³⁵ Following President Biden’s Executive Order on May 4, the State Department announced on June 1 that it would begin “holding accountable the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and entities under their control for actions that threaten the peace, security, and stability of Sudan.”³⁶ As such, a designation 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 regional security and safety.³⁷

As ACT stated previously, the U.S. Government has acknowledged that the emergent conditions are a threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. An extension and redesignation of TPS is necessary to safeguard vulnerable Sudanese in the United States and reaffirm U.S. commitment to establishing a policy to support the people of Sudan during this crisis.

CONCLUSION

The developments in the past two months have made the safe return of Sudanese nationals impossible. As highlighted above, the armed conflict and country conditions in Sudan meet the statutory requirements for an 18-month extension and redesignation of Temporary Protected Status for Sudan. We urge President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Secretary Blinken to **immediately provide an 18-month extension and redesignation of Temporary Protected Status and Special Student Relief for Sudan**. We also request a prompt publication of the Federal Register Notice (FRN), a 180-day registration period for eligible applicants to submit their applications, and a culturally relevant outreach campaign to the directly impacted community for awareness about the relief.

Sincerely,

International

Accountability Lab
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
Boston University International Human Rights Clinic
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
Church World Service
Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose
Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart
Immigrant Defenders Law Center
InterReligious Task Force on Central America
MADRE
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE)

³⁵ The White House, “Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre,” The White House, May 2, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2023/05/02/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-30/>.

³⁶ U.S. Department of State. “U.S. Measures in Response to the Crisis in Sudan.” Accessed June 6, 2023. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-measures-in-response-to-the-crisis-in-sudan/>.

³⁷ “Letter - Extend and Redesignate TPS for Sudan.”

Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator
Red Eagle Enterprises
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)
World Relief

National

African Immigration Initiative
African Public Affairs Committee
America's Voice
American Immigration Lawyers Association
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
Cameroon Advocacy Network
Care in Action
Caribbean Community Service Center (CCSC)
CASA
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends in Solidarity
FWD.us
Haitian Bridge Alliance
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Immigration Hub
Latino Pastoral Action Center
MomsRising/MamásConPoder
Muslims for Progressive Values
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA)
National Council of Churches
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Employment Law Project
National Immigration Law Center
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR)
National Partnership for New Americans
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nicaraguan American Legal Defense and Education Fund (NALDEF)
Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership
U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph
UndocuBlack Network
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)

State and Local

Adhikaar for Human Rights & Social Justice
Advokato

African Collaborative Network
Al Otro Lado
Alianza Sacramento
Arab American Civic Council
Ayuda
Buen Vecino
Cabrini Immigrant Services of NYC, Inc.
Capuchin Province of St. Mary JPIC
Casa de Venezuela Orlando
Catholic Charities of SW Kansas
Centro Romero
Church Women United in New York State
Clergy And Laity United for Economic Justice Ventura County (CLUE VC)
Commission on Justice for Immigrants, Refugees, Indigenous People, Immaculate Heart
Community
Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services Inc.
Dominican Sisters of San Rafael
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker
Desis Rising Up & Moving (DRUM)
Fellowship Southwest
First Congregational Church of San Jose
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
Florida Immigrant Coalition
Franciscan Justice Circle
Guadalupe Presbyterian Church
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Defenders Law Center
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Immigration Support Services Network
Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America
Interfaith Welcome Coalition
International Institute of New England
Jewish Voice for Peace, Atlanta Chapter
Just Neighbors
Kentucky Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants
Legal Aid Justice Center
Long Island Immigration Clinic/Sisters of St. Joseph
Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants
Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA)
New Hampshire Conference United Church of Christ
Nigerian Center
St. John XXIII Parish
Proyecto Santo Nino de Atocha
Refugee Dream Center
Social Justice Coalition, Central Lutheran Church
Somali Family Service of San Diego
Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC)
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Hidalgo County Texas
Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid, Inc (VIA)

Wayne Action for Racial Equality
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Wilco Justice Alliance