



March 28, 2024

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

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 2052

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

RE: 117 ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR EXTENSION AND REDESIGNATION OF TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR ETHIOPIA

Dear President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Secretary Blinken:

The undersigned 117 organizations request an immediate extension and redesignation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ethiopia in response to ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary and temporary conditions in the country.

While protections for Ethiopian TPS holders are set to expire on June 12, 2024, the conditions that led the administration to the initial granting of TPS status for Ethiopia on October 21, 2022, have not only persisted but also substantially deteriorated in the interim. Ethiopia is currently experiencing multiple crises, including escalating armed conflict, widespread mass displacement, devastating drought and climate shocks, and severe food insecurity. In 2023, the International Organization for Migration reported that over 4.30 million people were internally displaced across Ethiopia, with the main contributing factor being the [ongoing armed conflicts](#). The prolonged conflict, including violence against civilians and constant threat of ransom, coupled with inadequate access to healthcare and clean water, amongst other factors makes it difficult for Ethiopians in the U.S. to return safely to their country.

I. Temporary Protected Status

TPS is a statutory status given to nationals of a certain country residing in the United States when conditions in their home country make return unsafe. The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) may designate, extend or redesignate a country for TPS if conditions in the country meet requirements regarding ongoing armed conflict, natural disasters, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions in the country that prevent safe return while in effect. TPS provides protection from deportation and permission to work in the United States for the duration of the designation.

II. Country Conditions in Ethiopia Render Safe Return Impossible

A. Ongoing armed conflict

Ethiopia has been in crisis since the end of 2020, when conflict broke out in Tigray, the country's northernmost region, between the Ethiopian federal government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the ruling party of Tigray. The two-year long war resulted in numerous atrocities and war crimes, notably massacres of civilians in Tigray, Amhara, and Afar regions, ethnic profiling of Tigrayans with targeted killings and violence, widespread conflict-related sexual abuse, famine conditions affecting hundreds of thousands of people, and destruction of health and school infrastructure. Despite the formal end of the war with the signing of a peace agreement between the federal government and the TPLF in Pretoria, South Africa, on November 2, 2022, conditions in the region have not improved to a level that makes return safe.

Concurrently, armed conflicts in other regions of Ethiopia have both ignited and escalated to worrying degrees, posing a significant threat to the lives and safety of millions.

A longstanding conflict in Oromia, Ethiopia's largest region, has also seen [ongoing massacres](#) of minority civilians in the region, specifically ethnic Amharas, and also killings of the locals, with both the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and the federal government trading accusations of responsibility. The rampant [kidnappings](#) of civilians for ransom in Oromia by armed militants and informal criminal networks have made travel outside of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital city, extremely unsafe for many. The recent escalation of the years-long conflict in the region can be attributed to the continued weakening of the federal and local governments military and security apparatuses, as well as the [breakdown](#) of peace talks in November 2023.

Conflict in Amhara, Ethiopia's second largest region, broke out last April following local resistance to a decision by the federal government to disarm and integrate regional special forces into the federal security infrastructure. A simmering insurgency led by decentralized militias known as Fano turned into large-scale conflict in August 2023 after the militias overran several large cities in the Amhara region, leading the Ethiopian government to [declare](#) a state of emergency on August 4, 2023 (which was [renewed](#) on February 2, 2024). The conflict in Amhara has been marked by [regular drone](#) strikes and [frequent reports](#) of targeted killings of civilians.

B. Extraordinary and temporary conditions

In Tigray, recovery from the war has been slow to non-existent. Over 80% of healthcare facilities remain non-functional. [Schools](#) that were not destroyed are currently non-operational as they are used as temporary shelter for internally displaced persons. An estimated one million people remain [displaced](#) due to forced expulsion from parts of the region by occupying Eritrean forces and neighboring regional militias. [Landmines](#) and other unexploded ordinances litter the landscape and have rendered normal activities like farming dangerous. The ongoing [food crisis](#) caused by drought and lingering effects of the conflict threatens the survival of much of the population. International nonprofit organizations such as the [World Food Program](#) are struggling to fill the gaps. In regions such as Tigray, Afar, and Amhara, droughts have impacted close to [4 million people](#), leaving them susceptible to the impacts of famine.

The prolonged conflict between the Federal Government of Ethiopia and the TPLF has led to a substantial impact on community health, both in accessing and supplying [critical health care](#)

[services to vulnerable groups](#), contributing to the spike in diseases such as [malaria, measles, and cholera](#) where the scarcity of clean water due to droughts have burdened the public health system.

The devastating war in Tigray, coupled with the ongoing and escalating armed conflicts in Oromia and Amhara, has plunged Ethiopia into a catastrophic economic crisis, characterized by a sharp decline in growth from an average of 11% to 3.8%. Unprecedented inflation and elevated living costs have made essential commodities increasingly scarce and unaffordable for the millions of already destitute families. Furthermore, the disruption of key economic sectors such as farming, trade, tourism, and construction has further deepened the crisis resulting in widespread job losses and financial insecurity for citizens. The persistent internal conflicts have not only destroyed Ethiopia's once-thriving economy but have also left millions facing an uncertain future filled with despair.

Under such conditions, the safe return of Ethiopians in the U.S. is impossible without risking their lives.

III. TPS for Ethiopia is in line with U.S. interests

The Biden Administration has consistently acknowledged and [expressed](#) concern about deteriorating conditions in Ethiopia. In March 2023, the State Department [determined](#) the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and allied forces were responsible for crimes against humanity. On February 8, 2024, U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ervin Massinga, issued a [statement](#) of concern about targeted drone-strike killings of about 138 innocent civilians allegedly committed by the ENDF in the town of Merawi.

On September 7, 2023, President Biden [issued](#) a Notice on the Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to Ethiopia, declaring that "The situation in and in relation to northern Ethiopia, which has been marked by activities that threaten the peace, security, and stability of Ethiopia and the greater Horn of Africa region, continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States". The State Department currently [advises](#) against travel to most of Ethiopia outside of the capital city.

IV. Conclusion

Given the current extraordinary conditions, we strongly urge the Administration to extend the 2022 designation and redesignate TPS for Ethiopia. We also request that the Administration publish a timely Federal Register Notice, establish a minimum 180-day registration period, and launch a public information campaign to notify the impacted community of the decision and any actions they must take. Please contact Diana Konate at <diana@africans.us>, with any questions or to arrange stakeholder engagement. We thank you for your consideration of this matter, and look forward to engaging further.

Sincerely,

ACLU People Power - Fairfax

ACLU Virginia

African Career Education and Resource Inc

African Communities Together

African Life Centre

African Services Committee

Alianza Americas

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

American Jewish Committee

Americans for Immigrant Justice

Amnesty International USA

ARIZONA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SERVICES

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asmlash-Grant Foundation (AGF)

Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)

AYUDA

Bread for the World

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Center for Popular Democracy

Central American Resource Center

Centreville Immigration Forum

Church Women United in New York State

Church World Services - Virginia

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)

Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans of Virginia

Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)

Congregation Action Network

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Connecticut Shoreline Indivisible

Cornerstone

Della Lamb Community Services

Domestic Workers Alliance

Dream Project

Dreamers Mothers In Action (DMIA)

The Ethiopian Community Development Council

Edu Futuro

EMGAGE

Estrella del Paso (Formerly DMRS)

Ethiopian Community Mutual Assistance Association

Ethiopian Community Mutual Assistance Association (ECMAA)

FIRM - Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Fuego Coalition

Global Refuge

Hamkae Center

Health Professionals Network for Tigray (HPN4T)

Hispanic Organization of Leadership and Action

HUBUB

Human Rights Watch

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project

Immigrant Legal Center + Refugee Empowerment Center

Immigrant Legal Resource Center

Immigrants Rising

Immigration Hub

Jewish Community Relations Council

Just Neighbors

Justice Action Center

Korean American Association of Northern Virginia

Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice-Virginia

League of United Latin America Citizens - National

Legal Aid Justice Center

Louisiana African Solidarity Response

Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA)

Merck & Co

Mini VSN LLC

Multicultural Community Center

Multicultural Community Resource Center

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Immigrant Justice Center

National Network of Arab American Communities

National Partnership for New Americans

Neighbor's Keeper

New Virginia Majority Education Fund

New York Immigration Coalition

Nigerian Center

North Carolina African Services Coalition, Inc.

Omna Tigray

Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness

Progress Virginia

Refugees International

Resettlement Agency

Sacred Heart Catholic Community Center

SEIU 512

SEIU32BJ

Shirlington Employment and Education Center

Sin Barreras

Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership

Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership

Sisters of St Joseph of Carondelet

Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York

Social Justice Coalition, Central Lutheran Church

Tenants and Workers United

The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis

The Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago, Inc.

The Legal Project, Albany, New York

Tigray Action Committee

Tigray Disaster Relief Fund

TPS-DED AAC

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)

Union for Reform Judaism

Unitarian Universalist for Social Justice

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 400

United Women of the Horn

Uplift Charity

Virginia Civic Engagement Table

Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations

Virginia Immigration Intercollegiate Alliance

Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy

Virginia League of Planned Parenthood

Virginia Organizing

WESPAC Foundation, Inc.

Whosoever Will Christian Church

Wilco Justice Alliance (Williamson County, TX)

Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center