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JUNE 26, 2018 (/BLOG-X/TPS-LETTER)

# NATIONAL SECURITY EXPERTS CALL ON ADMINISTRATION TO EXTEND TPS FOR YEMENIS (/BLOG-X/TPS- LETTER)

WILL PICARD (/BLOG-X/?AUTHOR=586AB8255149BFFE86789FA1)

*Today, more than 30 former US federal government officials sent a letter to Secretary of Homeland Security Nielsen and Secretary of State Pompeo, urging them to extend and re-designate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Yemen. The full text of their letter is below.*

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Secretary Pompeo:

We, the undersigned national security experts, many of whom are former United States officials, have watched Yemen's ongoing civil war and humanitarian crisis with grave concern. We write to affirm that the country's ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary and temporary conditions, which justified the extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to people from Yemen living in the United States in March 2017, persist. These conditions demand both the extension of TPS for an estimated 1,200 individuals in the United States and its re-designation for Yemeni immigrants who seek to reside here without fear of deportation and separation from their families. We urge you to take these steps as a small but vital protective measure that neither they nor the United States can do without.

Yemen's ongoing armed conflict risks the life and freedom of Yemenis should they be forced to return to the country. The conflict has deepened significantly since the previous TPS extension, making life impossible for many living within Yemen. All parties are indiscriminately targeting civilians in a war that, according to both the United Nations Security Council and successive U.S. administrations, does not have a military solution. Civilian casualties stem from mortar and sniper fire into civilian areas, use of landmines, and recruitment of child soldiers, in addition to ongoing airstrikes, which have repeatedly struck residences, marketplaces, hospitals, and electrical and water infrastructure.

The on-the-ground fighting and the air campaign, combined with the access restrictions on Yemen's major air, sea and land ports and war profiteering by parties to the conflict, has contributed to what the UN describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, an extraordinary condition. 22.2 million Yemenis--roughly 75 percent of the population--need some form of humanitarian assistance. Yemen suffers from major food insecurity with an increasing threat of famine, where 8.4 million people do not know when or how they will get their next meal. Preventable diseases are rampant, with over one million suspected cases of cholera recorded since the start of the conflict. As long as the war continues, external powers restrict access to the country's ports, and militias profit from an expanding war economy, the humanitarian crisis will worsen, making the involuntary return of Yemenis inconceivable.

The United States has increasingly been involved in the ongoing war in Yemen since March 2015. The U.S. government has provided material assistance to a major intervening coalition of regional actors, led by Saudi Arabia, in the form of air refueling, targeting support, and weapons transfers, and thus bears, at the very least, what current U.S.

Ambassador to Yemen Matthew Tueller has called a “moral responsibility” toward the conflict. At the same time, the current administration has repeatedly stated both its support for the conflict’s political settlement and its commitment to alleviating the worst aspects of the humanitarian crisis.

The sudden return of over one thousand individuals, however, will undermine the developmental and diplomatic tools available to the United States for a strong, principled foreign policy and national security strategy towards Yemen. If forced to return, these Yemenis are likely to be targeted by militias, join the swelling numbers of internal refugees, or otherwise find themselves in acute need of humanitarian relief. Such a return could also bolster the propaganda efforts of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the self-described Islamic State, whose defeat in Yemen is an ongoing U.S. national security objective. Finally, ending TPS for Yemen would harm U.S. standing among the international community, as our allies look to us for leadership in addressing the world’s extraordinary humanitarian crises.

It is in the United States national security interest to redesignate and extend TPS for Yemen. The administration must consider and understand the full weight of its security and moral responsibility toward Yemen in making this decision. We strongly encourage you to grant TPS status for Yemen, so that those who have escaped the civil war are not forcibly returned.

Sincerely,

**Jon B. Alterman**

Senior Vice President, Director of Middle East Program, & Zbigniew Brzezinski Chair in Global Security and Geostrategy, Center for Strategic and International Studies

**Daniel Benaim**

Former Middle East Advisor to the Vice President

**Antony Blinken**

Former Deputy Secretary of State

**Barbara Bodine**

Former U.S. Ambassador to Yemen (1997-2001)

Director of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University

**Amanda Catanzano**

Former National Security Council Director for Strategic Planning and Policy Planning Staff

**Sarah Charles**

Former National Security Council Director for Strategic Planning

**Bathsheba Crocker**

Former Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs

**Elisa Catalano Ewers**

Former National Security Council and Department of State Official

**Gerald Feierstein**

Former U.S. Ambassador to Yemen (2010 - 2013)

**Jonathan Finer**

Former Chief of Staff and Director of Policy Planning, U.S. Department of State

**Ilan Goldenberg**

Former Chief of Staff to the Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations

**Philip Gordon**

Former White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region

**Cindy Huang**

Former Director of Policy, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, U.S. Department of State

**Brian Katulis**

Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress

**Nabeel Khoury**

Former Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in San'a

**Jeremy Konyndyk**

Former Director, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, United States Agency for International Development

**Paul R. Pillar**

Former National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia

**Dan Mahanty**

Former Director, Office of Security and Human Rights, Department of State

**Robert Malley**

Former White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region  
President & CEO, International Crisis Group

**Andrew Miller**

Former National Security Council Director for Egypt

**Suzanne Nossel**

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations

**Wendy Patten**

Former Director for Multilateral and Humanitarian Affairs, National Security Council

**Anne Patterson**

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Middle East and North Africa

**Jeffrey Prescott**

Former National Security Council Senior Director for Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf States

**Samantha Power**

Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations

**Bruce Riedel**

Former Special Assistant to the President for Near East and South Asia Affairs

**William Rugh**

Former U.S. Ambassador to Yemen (1981-1984)

**Stephen A. Seche**

Former U.S. Ambassador to Yemen (2007-2010)

**Wendy R. Sherman**

Former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs

**Anne-Marie Slaughter**

Former Director of Policy Planning, U.S. Department of State

## Dana Shell Smith

Former Ambassador to the State of Qatar (2014-2017)

Senior Non-Resident Fellow, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University

## Joshua Weinberg

Former Senior Analyst, Special Operations Command - Central, and Defense Intelligence Agency

## Lawrence Wilkerson

U.S. Army Colonel (Ret.), and former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell

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