



National Task Force to End Sexual & Domestic Violence

The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (NTF), comprised of national, state, tribal, territorial and local leadership organizations representing thousands of advocates and others working to end domestic violence and sexual assault, denounces the Administration's termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for El Salvador. If expelled from the United States, many of the 200,000 individuals now protected by TPS will face grave danger and high levels of violence, including gender-based violence.

The administration has justified the termination of TPS designation for nationals of El Salvador by suggesting that conditions have improved in that country. Yet the country is widely recognized for extreme levels of violence and insecurity.¹ In fact, the State Department reports that El Salvador has one of the highest murder rates in the world.² Many families have fled the region in recent years seeking humanitarian protection from this violence as a result of the increasing control of criminal armed groups, including gangs and drug cartels, over large areas of El Salvador.³

According to a 2015 study by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), many women are fleeing epidemic levels of violence, including gender-based violence, in El Salvador.⁴ If forced to return to El Salvador, current TPS holders and their U.S. citizen children are likely to face extortion, sexual violence, human trafficking, kidnapping, exploitation by gangs, and possibly murder. Ending TPS for El Salvador under these conditions is callous and inhumane and broadcasts the message to the rest of the world that the United States is not concerned with the protection of human rights.

This is only the latest rollback of immigration policies that previously had bipartisan support. The current Administration has also terminated TPS for foreign nationals from Sudan, and Haiti, where overall country conditions remain precarious and levels of gender-based violence are exceptionally high.⁵

¹ Amnesty International, Annual Report 2016/2017: El Salvador. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/americas/el-salvador/report-el-salvador/>

² U.S. Department of State, El Salvador 2017 Crime and Safety Report. Available at <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=21308>

³ "Home Sweet Home?: Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador's Role in a Deepening Refugee Crisis," Amnesty International (2016). Available at https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/central_american_refugees_-report_eng_1-min.pdf

⁴ "Women on the Run: First Hand Accounts of Refugees Fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico," United Nations High Commission for Refugees (2015). Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/56fc31a37.pdf>

⁵ USAID "Haiti: Women and Gender Fact Sheet March 2017" Available at: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1862/FINAL_Women_and_Gender_Fact_Sheet_March_2017.pdf. See also United Nations Development Program "Vulnerable to Violence: Empowering women in South Sudan" (2017). Available at: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2017/06/22/vulnerable-to-violence-empowering-women-in-south-sudan.html>

Current TPS holders have become important members of our communities, raising families, paying taxes, and playing a critical role in the economy. In particular, those from El Salvador, Sudan, and Nicaragua have been in the United States for over a decade, and some for over twenty years.

The Administration's decision to end TPS to El Salvador also punishes the U.S. citizen children of long-term residents in this country through forced separation or relocation to a country that is unable to protect them as targets of violence and harm. Ending TPS and its accompanying employment authorization for Salvadorans and other long-term residents who previously had TPS protections cruelly leaves these families with the decision to either leave the U.S. and return to their countries of origin –or stay in the United States and live without legal status, vulnerable to exploitation and abuse due to fear of immigration enforcement. Recent surveys show that other changes to enforcement practices during this Administration have led to a climate wherein immigrant victims of sexual and domestic violence “are now less likely to call the police for help or go to court to protect themselves and their children from abuse and violence.”⁶

The termination of the TPS designation takes effect on Sept. 9, 2019, giving current beneficiaries from El Salvador 18 months to arrange for departure or seek alternative immigration status. Unfortunately, without legislative solutions, few options remain. We urge the Trump Administration to reconsider its decision to place TPS holders at risk of expulsion. We further call upon Congress to enact a permanent legislative solution for current TPS holders rather than risk pushing over a quarter of a million individuals back into the shadows, vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and undermining the health and well-being of families and communities.

For more information, please contact

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⁶ “Key Findings: 2017 Advocate and Legal Service Survey Regarding Immigrant Survivors.” Available at <http://nationallatinonetwork.org/images/2017%20Advocate%20and%20Legal%20Service%20Survey%20Key%20Findings.pdf>