Nos. 25-1083 and 25-1084

In the Supreme Court of the United States

MARKWAYNE MULLIN, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, ET AL., PETITIONERS

v.

DAHLIA DOE, ET AL.

DONALD J. TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, ET AL., PETITIONERS

v.

FRITZ EMMANUEL LESLY MIOT, ET AL.

ON WRITS OF CERTIORARI BEFORE JUDGMENT
TO THE UNITED STATES COURTS OF APPEALS
FOR THE SECOND AND DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUITS

JOINT APPENDIX
(Volume 1)

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
----------x

DAHLIA DOE, *et al*,

Plaintiffs,

v. 25 Civ. 8686 (KPF)

KRISTI NOEM, Secretary, United States Department of Homeland Security, in her official capacity, *et al*,

Defendants.

Oral Argument
----------x

New York, N.Y.
November 18, 2025
12:00 p.m.

Before:

HON. KATHERINE POLK FAILLA,

District Judge

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(Case called; the Court and all parties appearing by videoconference)

MS. AGUIRRE: Good afternoon, your Honor. Guadalupe Aguirre, International Refugee Assistance Project, for the plaintiffs.

THE COURT: Good afternoon. And thank you.

And I see several of your colleagues on the screen, as well. I see Ms. Hauptman, and I see Ms. Schwarz. And I understand Mr. Van Der Hout is also appearing. Thank you very much. Again, thank you for appearing on short notice.

Representing the defendants this afternoon?

MR. OSMOND: Mark Osmond, from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

THE COURT: Mr. Osmond, thank you very much.

And I see Ms. Tinio, as well. Thank you.

So, counsel, as was suggested by the ECF alert that went out yesterday, after I saw you on Monday, I spent the rest of the time trying to put together a decision as quickly as I could, recognizing the time sensitivities we have here. So I want to begin by thanking you, once again, for your preparation and for your flexibility and for participating on this terribly foreshortened schedule.

I also want to give a special thanks to my oralists from Monday, because three hours of oral argument is intense. I know it. I was on the giving end of it, but it was still

intense.

So, I have this oral decision. It is lengthy — that's all I can say — and I've done my best with it. I will appreciate your attention as I give it. I might not be looking up to you, so take no offense at my inability to maintain eye contact. I just think it's more important that I read what I have written.

I am expecting one or both sides to order the transcript on an expedited basis, and I'm just going to -- ah, thank you, the government has volunteered. Many thanks.

I'm going to ask, and I see that you've all muted yourselves, so I will begin now.

The parties are familiar with the facts and procedural history of this matter, and, at a high-level, plaintiffs are seven Syrian nationals with family ties to the United States, who argue that they will face harms of many types if they are forced to return to Syria. They further argue that the conduct of defendants — the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, that department, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the United States — in terminating temporary protected status, or TPS, for Syria, effective November 21st, 2025, is contrary to law, arbitrary and capricious, and unconstitutional, and, for these reasons, they move for its postponement while their challenges to the termination can be litigated.

For the reasons I'm about to describe, I agree with certain of plaintiffs' arguments, and I am granting the motion to postpone. I do want to pause and note here that my decision is based on the record before me at this time, at this stage in the litigation. It might be different on a more complete record. The fact remains that plaintiffs have presented a wealth of evidence supporting their claims of impropriety as to this and other TPS termination decisions this year, and defendants have limited their evidence to the Secretary's Federal Register notice regarding the termination and assertions that I either lack jurisdiction to consider these claims or assertions that I'm not permitted to consider large swathes of the plaintiffs' evidence.

I want to also underscore that I have reviewed — and I know the parties have, as well — the limited number of federal court decisions concerning TPS designations that have been issued over the past eight or so years. I think I only referred to a few of them specifically in my decision, but I have read and considered each of them carefully.

I also do want to recognize that I am issuing this decision in the shadow of two Supreme Court stays of similar relief granted in what I've called, perhaps incorrectly, the NTPSA cases. I'm not sure how people pronounce that particular acronym. The defendants asked me to read into those stays the conclusion that the Court "necessarily determined that the

government was likely to succeed on the merits and that the balance of harms favored giving effect to the termination during litigation."

Defendants' counsel may ultimately be right, but I don't feel comfortable doing that on this record, although I do note that it would seem that if that's correct, then at least I have jurisdiction to consider these issues.

In the first stay, the Supreme Court did not address the merits, but simply noted that the particular order was stayed pending the disposition of the appeal in the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and disposition of a petition for writ of certiorari, if such a writ is timely sought.

That particular case, Noem *v. National TPS Alliance*, is at 145 S. Ct. 2728 (2025). From my perspective, any decisions or any conclusions or inferences I might draw from that case would really be in the vein of speculation.

In the second stay, the Court noted that the stay was granted, and they said although the posture of the case has changed, the parties' legal arguments and relative harms generally have not. The same result that we reached in May is appropriate here. And that case is *Noem v. National TPS Alliance*, 2025 WL 2812732. In dissent, Justice Jackson provided a hint at the majority's reasoning when she commented that "the Court plainly misjudges the irreparable harm and

balance-of-the-equities factors by privileging the bald assertion of unconstrained executive power over countless families' pleas for the stability our government has promised them." Once again, however, I'm not privy to the specifics of the Court's stay decision, and I therefore must wait, along with the rest of you, to see how the Court resolves this specific jurisdictional and merits issues, some of which are being repeated in my case.

The relief sought is a stay pursuant to Section 705 of the APA, which does allow this Court to issue necessary and appropriate process to postpone the effective date of an agency action. A sister court in this district has observed that the standard under Section 705 is the same or similar to the standard for a preliminary injunction. I'm quoting here from *Rural & Migrant Ministry v. United States Environmental Protection Agency*, 565 F. Supp. 3d 578 -- one moment, please.

I'm noting I lost Mr. Osmond. Oh, he's back, okay. Thank you. Excuse me.

And you'll excuse me if I occasionally pause because you're all jumping around on the screen ahead of me, so it's fine. Let me, please, go back to the decision.

I was quoting from Judge Liman's case, *Rural & Migrant Ministry v. United States Environmental Protection Agency*, 565 F. Supp. 3d 578, 595 (S.D.N.Y. 2020). Judge Castel, as well, in *African Communities Together v. Lyons*,

2025 WL 2633396, at *10. But under that standard, the moving party must show that, number (1), it is likely to prevail on the merits; number (2), without a stay, it will suffer irreparable injury; number (3), there is no substantial harm to other interested persons; and number (4), the public interest will not be harmed. Now, other cases dealing with similar standards include *Winter v. Natural Resources Defense Council Incorporated*, 555 U.S. 7, 20 (2008), and in that instance, the slight modification is the discussion of a success on the merits, irreparable harm, the balance of equities tipping in the movant's favor, and an injunction being in the public interest. And then *Nken v.Holder*, 556 U.S. 418, which noted that in an action challenging agency action, the third and fourth prongs merge.

Now, as we discussed at the oral argument, there are certain instances in which a preliminary injunction can also be obtained upon a showing of irreparable harm and either likelihood of success on the merits or sufficiently serious questions going to the merits to make them a fair ground for litigation and a balance of hardships tipping decidedly toward the party requesting the preliminary relief. I've just been quoting from *Citigroup Global Markets, Incorporated v. VCG Special Opportunities Master Fund Ltd.*, 598 F.3d 30, 35 (2d Cir. 2010). But the Second Circuit has also found that when plaintiffs seek a preliminary injunction or a temporary

restraining order that will affect government action taken in the public interest pursuant to a statutory or regulatory scheme, they must establish a clear or substantial likelihood of success on the merits. I'm quoting here from *Sussman v. Crawford*, 488 F.3d 136, 140 (2d Cir. 2007).

Plaintiffs here argue that the relevant standard is the substantial question standard, but that they can succeed under either standard. And the theory is that because the government conduct of which they complain is not, they argue, taken in the public interest, the substantial question standard applies. As I suggested at oral argument, I find that particular argument to be too clever by half. The government proffers that termination of TPS status for Syrian nationals is taken in the public interest, and it is clearly pursuant to a statutory scheme. I might find default with defendants' decision, but I'm not ready to say that they were acting in a manner contrary to the public interest. I find them to be acting within an existing regulatory framework, even if I may otherwise find that they failed to abide by certain requirements of that framework.

Of course — and let me just put this out here — if a reviewing court disagrees with my analysis, that provides an even stronger basis for my decision, because each of plaintiffs' arguments discussed in this opinion raises a substantial question going to the merits, and the balance of

hardships tips decidedly in plaintiffs' favor.

Again, as I suggested at oral argument, I find that the irreparable harm factor is squarely in defendants' favor. And I focused the bulk of my inquiries, and I focused the bulk of this decision, on whether plaintiffs have a likelihood of success as to any of their claims.

Before I get there, I do have to address the issue of my jurisdiction to consider plaintiffs' claims, as defendants are quick to note Title 8, United States Code, Section 12 -- excuse me, irreparable harm factor is in plaintiffs' favor. I may have misspoken a moment ago.

Let me go back to my issue of jurisdiction. Section 1254a(b)(5)(A) specifies that there is no judicial review of any termination -- determination of the Attorney General with respect to the designation, or termination or extension of a designation, of a foreign state under this subsection.

In case you had any doubts, I take very seriously the limits on my jurisdiction, but I also take seriously recent decisions from the Second Circuit and courts within the circuit making clear the restrictive manner in which jurisdiction-stripping provisions are construed. There's a recent decision from the Second Circuit, *Ozturk v. Hyde*, 136 F.4th 382, a Second Circuit decision from 2025, which makes clear or focuses on the presumption favoring interpretations of

statutes to allow judicial review absent clear statement. And I will just commend the parties to page 394 of that case, which has a series of citations to cases making clear the very high standards for finding that a court has no jurisdiction.

One of those cases is *McNary v. Haitian Refugee Center, Inc.*, 498 U.S. 479, from 1991, and courts and our friends at the Eastern District have concluded, reasoning from this *McNary* in the specific context of this TPS statute, that it is clear from context that the judicial review provision in the TPS statute refers to an individual designation, termination, or extension of a designation with respect to a particular country, not to defendants' determination practices or adoption of general policies or practices employed in making such determinations. The quote I just gave you was from -- I'll call it *Saget* for now. It may also be *Saget v. Trump*, 345 F. Supp 3d 287, at 295, an Eastern District decision from 2018. It is then cited in *Haitian Evangelical Clergy Association v. Trump*, 789 F. Supp. 3d 255, 269, and that decision was issued in 2025.

I'll also note, as plaintiffs note, that every court to have considered analogous challenges to changes in TPS designations has found that it has jurisdiction to consider the challenges. And those cases are set forth at pages 11 and 12 of plaintiffs' brief. This Court joins that chorus, and finds that while it does not have jurisdiction to review the

Secretary's substantive (and discretionary) analysis of specific TPS determinations, it does retain jurisdiction to consider collateral agency patterns and practices that impact those determinations.

So let me now proceed to discuss the evidence that I can, and that I have, considered in resolving this motion.

For their part, plaintiffs suggest that I can consider statements made during the election campaigns and in the course of both Trump administrations, as well as Executive Order 14159, which, as we discussed at oral argument, appears to be predicated on a legally erroneous understanding of the TPS statute. They also suggest that I may consider significant procedural irregularities in the Secretary's decision to terminate; repeated disconnects between the proffered factual bases for termination of TPS status and the actual country conditions reported by other federal agencies; reliance on *post hoc* justifications for termination; and the failure to engage with the stated bases for continuing TPS designations, including in Syria.

Let me note that while I've been asked to consider statements from the first Trump Administration, I think that statements are, generally speaking, too attenuated to be useful to my analysis, and, thus, I have not considered them. However, what I have considered are the records developed by courts considering the first administration's TPS

determinations, and that includes the *Saget* decision and *Ramos v. Nielsen*, 336 F. Supp. 3d 1075, a Northern District of California decision from 2018, and to the extent relevant, I have considered the legal analyses of courts reviewing pre-2025 TPS determinations.

The defendants have also argued that I should not set much store by statements made on the campaign trail, or in confirmation hearings, or by individuals other than the Secretary. I have given only limited significance to campaign statements. In particular, I have considered them only to the extent that they were confirmed by and through writings and other actions like executive order 14159. I do believe it is appropriate for me to consider statements made by the President and Vice President, in addition to those of the Secretary, because my interpretation of the administration's policy with respect to certain classes of immigrants — for example, the degree to which that policy proceeds from discriminatory animus — may be informed by individuals other than the Secretary.

Finally, in this category, defendants suggest or argue that I may not consider materials relating to the termination of TPS status for any country but Syria. And here, too, I disagree. It is plain from the record of the terminations that have occurred to date — all of which, I believe, have involved non-European, majority non-White populations — that the

executive is engaging in a coordinated effort to end TPS status if and as each renewal comes up, and, with respect to Venezuela and Haiti, perhaps even before that time. The rationales are coordinated. The procedural errors are virtually identical, and each termination is of a piece with a stated policy to reduce immigrant population.

So what, then, are the claims that I am to consider?

As defined by the plaintiffs, they are three:

An APA claim that TPS termination was contrary to law based on its purported compliance with Section 1254a. This claim includes allegations that the termination was predetermined and that the Secretary improperly relied on the national interest.

There is a second APA claim — which has a degree of overlap with the first — that the termination is arbitrary and capricious because, among other things, it improperly relied on the national interest, it was politically influenced, it was pretextual, and it broke with longstanding government practice.

And then there's a claim under the Fifth Amendment's due process clause, making equal protection arguments.

So let me, please, consider each claim in turn. And I do so by beginning with the language of the TPS statute, Section 1254a. And in 1254a(b), the statute explains the bases for an initial designation of a foreign state or portion thereof. These bases include: Number (1) an ongoing armed

conflict, number (2) a natural or environmental disaster, or number (3) extraordinary and temporary conditions in the foreign state that prevent aliens who are nationals of the state from returning to the state in safety, unless the Attorney General finds that permitting the aliens to remain temporarily in the United States is contrary to the national interest of the United States.

After the initial designation, the Secretary must undertake a periodic review. And the specific language is: After consultation with the appropriate agencies of the government, the Secretary — I believe it says the Attorney General — shall review the conditions in the foreign state, or part of such foreign state, for which a designation is in effect under this subsection, and shall determine whether the conditions for such designation under this subsection continue to be met.

There is, as well, a provision for termination of designation, which provides that if the Attorney General determines under subparagraph (A) — which, to note, is the periodic review of country conditions — that a foreign state, or part of such foreign state, no longer continues to meet the conditions for designation under paragraph (1), the Attorney General shall terminate the designation by publishing notice in the Federal Register of the determination under this subparagraph, including the basis for the determination.

In the absence of termination, it is my understanding that TPS status is extended. This Court agrees with Judge Kuntz, from the Eastern District, that Congress' directive that the Secretary shall review the conditions in the foreign state, evinces congressional intent that the Secretary undertake a periodic review grounded in fact — that is, based on objective conditions in the foreign country and regardless of any government official's political motives — and in good faith. I'm quoting here from 375 F. Supp. 3d at 346.

Now, unfortunately, on the record before me, that does not appear to have happened. Once again, for avoidance of doubt, this Court is not opining on the substance of the Secretary's termination decision or on her authority to make such a decision. But, again, on the record before it, this Court finds instances of noncompliance with the procedural requirements of the TPS statute that are sufficient to give plaintiffs a likelihood of success on their first APA claim.

To begin, the context in which the Secretary's decision was reached belies any notion of considered and good-faith review of country conditions. The President campaigned on revoking TPS if elected because, in his opinion, it's not legal, which is plainly incorrect. In other statements, he referred to immigrants poisoning the blood of this country. The Vice President displayed a similar misperception of the TPS program in referring to program

participants as illegal immigrants, despite their status in this country.

The Secretary did make statements at her confirmation hearing. I don't find them to be anything more than statements of opinion that are not readily disproven. I do want to be clear that these statements are relevant to this Court's decision on this motion insofar as they foretell or dovetail with later, postelection statements and conduct of the administration and confirmatory action — in particular here, the mass termination of TPS status.

Now, the campaign promises were quickly followed by executive order 14159, titled "Protecting The American People Against Invasion," issued on the same day as the President's inauguration. And, among other things, the President directed the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, and the Secretary of DHS to ensure that designations of temporary protected status are appropriately limited in scope and made for only so long as may be necessary to fulfill the textual requirements of that statute. Here, too, the significance of this statement is the later confirmatory action.

In particular, in early 2025, and continuing through the present, the Secretary has been taking a hatchet to the TPS system. Separate and apart from Venezuela and Haiti, where the Secretary sought to revoke or curtail previously granted extensions, the Secretary has announced termination of TPS

status for virtually every country that has come up for consideration, including Afghanistan, Cameroon, Nepal, Honduras, Nicaragua, and South Sudan. In the Federal Register notice for South Sudan, the Secretary makes clear that the only reason she did not terminate it earlier, and extended it from May through November of 2025, occurred because she had a noncurrent record, but she did move for termination at the end of that extension period.

As to Haiti, DHS's website makes note its disagreement with the E.D.N.Y. decision postponing the effective date of termination.

When TPS was terminated for Syria on September 19, 2025, DHS trumpeted it as evidence of restoring sanity to America's immigration system. Somewhat curiously, DHS also remarked that Syria had been a hotbed of terrorism and extremism even as the President sought to restore diplomatic relations with an interim president, Ahmed Al Sharaa, who was the reputed head of a group designated by the U.S. Government as a terrorist organization.

Here's the point: On this record, it confounds logic that as to a group of disparate countries, with disparate bases of designation, in different parts of the world, that in a few months all of them could resolve troubles that were so severe as to warrant TPS designation in the first instance, and have them immediately resolved, such that termination is appropriate

for all of them, and that is because that is not the case. As demonstrated in plaintiffs' submissions, as to at least four countries — Nicaragua, Cameroon, Nepal, and Venezuela — the record makes clear that the requisite interagency consultation did not occur.

There is an extensive record of *post hoc* justifications, and because of that, this Court cannot find that the Secretary engaged in a good-faith and objective review of country conditions in Syria, nor that she engaged in the requisite interagency consultation. There is no way to square the Secretary's determination that the armed conflict had subsided and that conditions in Syria that prevented Syrian nationals from returning in safety no longer existed, with, for example, the evidence that she cites, which makes plain that the armed conflict remains widespread, the State Department advisories, which, as plaintiffs' counsel noted, are not citizenship-specific, and the evidence of intervening events, including, but not limited to, Israeli incursions. I derive no confidence from the Secretary's reliance in her termination notice on a U.N. report that postdated the deadline for her to make a final decision.

A separate issue concerns the Secretary's reliance, both as to Syria and as to other countries for which she has issued termination notices, on the issue of whether termination is contrary to the national interest of the United States. I

agree with plaintiffs, to a degree, that under the TPS statute reliance on the national interest divorced from an analysis of country conditions — in this case, these would include promotion of the administration's America First policy, criminal cases taking place in this country, and foreign policy objectives — is not appropriately considered in the periodic review or termination inquiries.

So to review, Section 1254a(b)(1)(C) allows for TPS designation upon a finding that extraordinary and temporary conditions in the foreign state exist that prevent aliens who are nationals from the state from returning to the state in safety, unless the Attorney General finds that permitting the aliens to remain temporarily in the United States is contrary to the national interest of the United States.

However, 1254a(b)(3)(A) limits the periodic review process with the requisite interagency consultation to the conditions in the foreign state or part of such foreign state for which a designation is in effect under this subsection. In addition, in subsection (b)(3)(B), the statute specifies a process for termination of designation if the Secretary determines under subparagraph (A), which, as I noted, is the review of country conditions in the foreign state, that the foreign state no longer continues to meet the conditions for designation under paragraph (1). These provisions read together make clear that periodic review, including review for

termination, is limited to consideration of country conditions, and not to proclamations of the national interest divorced from those country conditions.

Further support for this Court's interpretation is found in the declaration of plaintiffs' expert witness, Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, who noted, among other things, that: (1) the sole rationale cited to justify termination of TPS has been an end to the temporary country conditions which authorized the initial designation; and (2) until 2025, no Attorney General or Secretary has explained their conclusion that it is not contrary to the national interest to permit TPS beneficiaries to remain temporarily in the United States or has ever justified a termination on national interest grounds.

By contrast, the Secretary has invoked the "contrary to the national interest" standard in the 2025 termination notices for Venezuela, Haiti, Afghanistan, Cameroon, Nepal, Honduras, Nicaragua, and South Sudan, in addition to Syria. This Court can reasonably infer — indeed, can only infer — from the Secretary's across-the-board invocation of the "contrary to the national interest" standard that the specific conditions of each of the nine countries are completely irrelevant to the national interest determination. The Secretary's consideration of the national interest divorced from country conditions in the termination inquiry of a particular TPS designee is not only not the silver bullet that she believes it to be, but, in

fact, is contrary to the statute. With particular respect to Syria, the Secretary's heavy-handed reliance on the national interest divorced from country conditions — including as discussed earlier, her heavy reliance on the promotion of an America First policy, certain criminal cases in the U.S., and certain foreign policy objectives — renders her termination decision unlawful under the APA.

Let me underscore that I'm not saying the Secretary weighed the evidence incorrectly or that she came up with the wrong decision. What I'm saying is that I have nothing but the Federal Register notice from which I can conclude that the Secretary undertook either an interagency consultation or an objective review of country-condition materials. That notice is internally inconsistent, and flawed in the manners I've just described. Worse yet, the termination analysis in the notice contravenes Section 1254a by considering national interest divorced from country conditions. And it is for these reasons that I find, on this record, that plaintiffs have a substantial likelihood of success on their APA claim predicated on noncompliance with the TPS statute.

But, as noted, plaintiffs claim that the termination of TPS for Syria is also arbitrary and capricious because, among other reasons, it was pretextual, it was politically influenced, or it contravened the change-in-policy doctrine.

Now, as was suggested at oral argument, there is a

degree of factual overlap between the evidentiary support for plaintiffs' first and second APA claims; where the first claim focuses on what the Secretary did, the second adds the inquiry of why she did it.

I believe the parties are familiar with the arbitrary and capricious standard. It was discussed at some length in Judge Furman's decision in *New York v. Wolf*, 2020 WL 6047817 at page 5. One quote I'll just extract from that analysis is that, normally, an agency rule or decision would qualify as arbitrary and capricious if the agency has relied on factors which Congress has not intended it to consider, entirely failed to consider an important aspect of the problem, offered an explanation for its decision that runs counter to the evidence before the agency, or is so implausible that it could not be ascribed to a difference in view or the product of agency expertise.

So, as an initial matter, given the procedural deficiencies that I've outlined in my preceding section, I find that the Syrian termination notice was arbitrary and capricious insofar as there was a failure to comply with the relevant statute.

I turn now to the issue of pretext. That was discussed in the Supreme Court decision of *Dep't of Commerce v. New York*, 588 U.S. 572, 780. And in that section, the Supreme Court agreed with Judge Furman, of this district, that the

Secretary of Commerce's decision to reintroduce a citizenship question into the census should be set aside for resting on a pretextual basis. But for me, what is important is that the Supreme Court presented what I believe to be a number of guardrails for the lower court's review of a decision on pretext. These guardrails include the facts that the agency must disclose the basis of its action, a court is ordinarily limited to evaluating the agency's contemporaneous explanation in light of the existing administrative record; a court may not reject an agency's stated reason for acting simply because the agency might also have had other unstated reasons; a court may not set aside an agency's policy-making decision solely because it might have been influenced by political considerations or prompted by administration policies, and a recognition of a narrow exception against the general rule of inquiring into the mental processes of administrative decision-makers, which could be found on a strong showing of bad faith or improper behavior.

Ultimately, the Supreme Court found with Judge Furman because it found that it was rare to review a record as extensive as the one before it when evaluating informal agency action — and it should be. This is their quote: But having done so for the sufficient reasons we have explained, we cannot ignore the disconnect between the decision made and the explanation given.

Let me summarize it this way: This Court does not

have a record analogous to that present in the *Dep't of Commerce* case, which it believes it needs to find that plaintiffs have shown a substantial likelihood of success on their pretext claim. Judge Furman, as I recall, had a multiday trial and extra-record disclosure that was discussed in the Supreme Court opinion. And that record may some day be developed in this case, but I don't have it today.

Relatedly, this Court recognizes that the Eastern District judge in the *Saget* decision found an acting Secretary's decision to be pretextual, but that, too, was on a far more developed record than I have.

I turn, then, to plaintiffs' next arbitrary and capricious argument, which claims undue political influence. Those standards are set forth in the *Saget* decision at 375 F. Supp. 3d, pages, I believe, 359 and 360. And I'll just very briefly summarize it. There must be some showing that the political pressure was intended to, and did, cause the agency's action to be influenced by factors not relevant under the controlling statute. And there are many cases cited for that proposition.

In resolving the political influence issue, the *Saget* court relied heavily on the case of that *Tummino v. Torti*, 603 F. Supp. 2d, 519, an Eastern District decision from 2009. And in the *Tummino* case, there was evidence of an FDA commissioner who had been improperly influenced by the White House, with the

promise of facilitation of the confirmation of another FDA commissioner. In the *Saget* case, the evidence of political influence included explicit coordination between the acting Secretary and the White House concerning the placement of the decision in the Administration's America First strategy, meetings with the White House to coordinate TPS decisions, and pressure from the Attorney General to make a decision and not leave it for a successor Secretary.

Though I concede it is a close call, I find that plaintiffs have demonstrated a likelihood of success on the political influence issue. As noted, the President made sweeping and erroneous statements concerning his belief in the legality of the TPS program and its inutility to what can only be fairly described as an anti-immigrant agenda. Once in office, the President issued a sweeping and, again, erroneous executive order, which paid lip service to the TPS statute while *sub silentio* calling for its demise. In a similar vein, once the Secretary was confirmed, she endeavored to terminate TPS status whenever presented with an opportunity to do so, resulting in termination decisions that are ground not in law and not in fact, but that are in political considerations simply not relevant under the TPS statute.

There is a final claim of arbitrary and capricious conduct, and that is the change in DHS position concerning the national interest and the length of time given for transition

periods. The case that was cited to me by the parties was *Food & Drug Admin. v. Wages & White Lion Invs. LLC*, 604 U.S. 542 from 2025. It was discussed slightly more recently in a case from a sister court in this district, Judge Vargas, in *New York v. Trump*, 778 F. Supp. 3d, 578 at 595-596.

The important thing for me to call to the parties' attention is this: As Judge Vargas noted, the change of position doctrine only applies if an agency changed existing policy. Judge Vargas subsequently notes that, as the Supreme Court explained in *Wages & White Lion Invs.*, for an agency position to constitute a policy within the meaning of the change-in-position doctrine, it must typically have been set forth in some formal manner, such as a regulation, a guidance memorandum or an agency enforcement action.

I do agree that plaintiffs have demonstrated practices in these two areas — the areas of national interest and transition periods, that have lasted as long as the TPS statute has been in existence. I don't have evidence sufficient to transform these practices into policies in the manner described, but the Supreme Court in *Wages & White Lion Invs.* and by Judge Vargas in the New York v. Trump indication and I, therefore, cannot find that plaintiffs have established a likelihood of success on this claim.

Now, changing topics, plaintiffs have separately alleged that the termination of TPS for Syria is violative of

the Fifth Amendment's due process clause. Plaintiffs allege an equal protection violation in that termination of TPS for Syria was motivated by defendants' animus toward noncitizens who are not White or of European origin.

Now, for reasons that I will just describe to you briefly, I find that plaintiffs win the battle in terms of the standard of review but lose the war in terms of the likelihood of success on their claim. I won't delve deeply because I know the parties are aware of equal protection clause jurisprudence, but, as noted by the Supreme Court, classifications based on race, national origin or alienage are subject to strict scrutiny and must narrowly tailored to serve a compelling state interest. I'm quoting from or citing to *City of Cleburne, Tex. v. Cleburne Living Ctr.*, 473 U.S. 432, 440, issued in 1985. A plaintiff can show intentional discrimination where a discriminatory purpose was a motivating factor in the government's action. I'm quoting here from *Vill. of Arlington Heights v. Metro. Hous. Dev. Corp.*, 429 U.S. 252 (1977).

The dispute between the parties concerns the appropriate standard of review. Plaintiffs are arguing for strict scrutiny and analysis under *Arlington Heights*. Defendants are arguing for rational basis scrutiny and more deference to the executive under *Trump v. Hawaii*, the Supreme Court decision from 2018 at 585 U.S. 667.

On this issue, the Court finds that plaintiffs have

the stronger of the argument. As was discussed in the *Saget* decision, the Supreme Court's analysis in *Trump v. Hawaii* was informed by at least two factors that aren't present here: Number one, plaintiffs sought to invalidate a national security directive regulating the entry of aliens abroad; and, number two, the executive order was facially neutral toward religion and required probing the sincerity of the stated justifications for the policy by reference to extrinsic statements, many of which were made before the President took the oath of office.

Here, plaintiffs have legal status in this country under a congressionally created program that implicates the national security and foreign policy concerns to a much lesser degree than that present in *Trump v. Hawaii*, and, in this regard, my decision accords with that of other courts to have considered the issue, including *Nat'l TPS All. v. Noem*, 25 WL 2233985, the *Ramos v. Nielsen* case I mentioned earlier, and *Centro Presente v. United States Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, 332 F. Supp. 3d, 393, a District of Massachusetts decision from 2018.

Where plaintiffs falter is in their definition of the protected class as "non-White, non-European." I find such a definition to be too expansive, too amorphous, and I'm not able to conduct the equal protection analysis. In this regard, I agree with Mr. Osmond that to accept the protected class would sweep in too much. I am aware that other courts have concluded

differently, and, indeed, I believe one of the NTPSA judges has adopted a class of immigrants, but I am not comfortable making factual determinations on so broad a class. And, as plaintiffs would seem to recognize by their briefing, at least implicitly, there is not sufficient evidence of Syrian-specific animus to support a finding of likelihood of success on the merits.

Once again, and for any reviewing court that might see this, if my perspective is unduly myopic, one can find plenty of evidence of race- and national origin-based animus in this record, but on this definition of the class, I do not feel comfortable doing so.

Let me, please, continue with the other elements of the stay motion.

We continue with irreparable harm.

Plaintiffs easily satisfy the irreparable harm prong of the preliminary injunction standard. Their submissions make plain the list of harms that can, and very likely will, befall them if the TPS termination date is not postponed.

Syrian TPS holders will lose their lawful status to reside and to work in the U.S. as of November 21, 2025. This will result in immediate vulnerability to arrest, detention, deportation, and family separation. They will lose their employment authorization. They will lose their livelihoods. And those with U.S. citizen children and family members will face decisions no one should have to make regarding family

separation.

Conversely, the record — particularly the information from the State Department — reflects a variety of risks to plaintiffs' lives and safety upon their return to Syria, including ongoing armed conflict, food insecurity, lack of healthcare, and widespread displacement.

I also find that plaintiffs have the stronger of the argument regarding their inability to pursue other -- or their diminished ability to pursue other avenues of immigration relief, which was something suggested by defendants. The short time frame afforded by the termination is insufficient, as a practical matter, to allow plaintiffs to make these contingency plans. Moreover, the anticipated gap in status occasioned by the termination of TPS will foreclose certain opportunities.

On the issue of the remaining two prongs, the balance of equities and the public interest, which are considered together, I find that they favor plaintiffs. There is no public interest in allowing the government to proceed with unlawful or arbitrary and capricious actions that violate the INA or the APA. The public has a substantial interest in ensuring that government agencies comply with federal laws. And I also accept plaintiffs' showing about the contributions that they and other Syrian TPS holders make to our communities and to our nation.

More fundamentally, I agree with plaintiffs that the

TPS statute springs from an appropriate concern regarding protecting vulnerable populations from deportation to countries experiencing armed conflict, human rights abuses, and humanitarian crises. There is a public interest in upholding those humanitarian principles.

Again, conversely, I don't see sufficient support in this record for defendants' conclusions that allowing these fewer than 7,000 people to remain in this country while this litigation proceeds would adversely impact national security or compromise the executive's ability to engage in foreign relations.

The final issue concerns the scope of relief — whether it is limited to the plaintiffs in this case or extends more broadly to those Syrian nationals who have been granted TPS status. Defendants raise two principal challenges in this regard. This Court finds that neither succeeds at this stage.

In the case of *Trump v. CASA, Inc.*, 606 U.S. 831, a 2025 decision, the Supreme Court held that injunctions asserting the power to prohibit enforcement of a law or policy against anyone likely exceed the equitable authority that Congress has granted to federal courts. However, the Court was careful to note in footnote 10 — and I quote — nothing we say today resolves the distinct question whether the Administrative Procedure Act authorizes federal courts to vacate agency action.

A sister court in this district recently observed — and that sister court is Judge Kaplan — in *Mercado v. Noem*, 2025 WL 2658779 at *17, he recognized that in the Supreme Court's decision in *AARP v. Trump*, the Supreme Court recently held that courts may issue temporary relief to a putative class, and citing the "Newberg and Rubenstein on Class Actions" treatise, he noted that those treatise authors found that the filing of a class suit, coupled with a showing that the standard for interim relief has been met, should be sufficient to enable such relief to the entire putative class and that nothing more was necessary, although that treatise did note that it might be safer practice to go through the entire Rule 23 analysis prior to granting preliminary relief.

It is true that plaintiffs here have filed this action as a class action. I don't think they should be penalized because I declined their generous offer to submit a class certification motion. If a reviewing court believes that footnote 10 in *CASA* is not sufficient for me to postpone the termination date, which I don't consider to be injunctive relief, for all Syrian TPS beneficiaries in this country, and that, instead, I need to certify a class, the Court can remand the matter back to me for an expedited decision on interim class relief.

Defendants have also suggested that Section 1252(f)(1) of Title 8 of the United States Code, which provides that no

court, other than the Supreme Court, shall have jurisdiction or authority to enjoin or restrain the operation of the provisions of Part V of this subchapter, other than with respect to the application of such provisions to the individual alien against whom proceedings under such part have been initiated. There's an initial tussle between the parties as to whether the statute in question is in Part IV or Part V. I do think defendants have the better of that argument. However, I do join those courts that have rejected arguments predicated on this provision because I find that the relief sought is an order pursuant to 705. It is not injunctive relief. The *Haitian Evangelical Clergy Ass'n* that I mentioned earlier came that that conclusion, and I give that as one example.

I consider the postponement under Section 705 to be a stay of agency action, not injunctive relief on the merits. I think it operates on the agency action itself. I think it's what is considered and set aside in the *CASA* decision, and I believe it to be permissible.

So, for all of these reasons, and with my deep thanks to those of you who have listened for this long, as I've read this decision into the record, I am granting the plaintiffs' motion in part. I am ordering a postponement of the termination date of TPS status for Syria pending further order of this or a reviewing court.

I know what's going to happen, friends. I know the

next stage is appeal. I will, later today, issue a written notice that's just a bottom-line order, indicating what I've done today, so that gives one side, perhaps both sides, the opportunity to file their notices of appeal. And I will expect that you will keep me apprised of what is happening in the appeal.

Again, I thank you, and I'm going to let you go. We are adjourned.

MR. OSMOND: Your Honor, could the government be heard on one point before we sign off?

THE COURT: Yes, sir.

MR. OSMOND: We understand that the Court has ruled, but the government would respectfully request that the Court stay its decision for 14 days so that the government can seek authorization from the Solicitor General to appeal to the Second Circuit.

As you know, the Ninth Circuit and Supreme Court have stayed district court decisions in similar TPS cases, and the Fourth Circuit recently refused plaintiffs' motion for a stay in a TPS case where the district judge had denied plaintiffs' request to postpone the Secretary's TPS determination.

If the Court would find it useful, I can go through the factors governing the stay, but those are integral to the factors that you just discussed, so I don't know if that would be helpful.

THE COURT: Sir, I understand exactly why you're making this request. You know, as well as I do, that if I do that, then effectively the termination takes place on Friday, and that's my concern. I, who have no horse in this race, am here to preserve the status quo and not to disrupt it.

I do want you to understand that I'm aware of both -- well, candidly, from my life before this job, as to the hurdles you will have to deal with internally — by "hurdles," I mean the steps you will have to take — so with appropriate regard for your arguments, which I know, with an understanding of what the Supreme Court has done and what the Fourth Circuit has done, only because this thing otherwise terminates on Friday, I am denying your request for a stay. And if the Second Circuit disagrees with me, I know they'll let me know.

So I'm genuinely sorry that I can't give that relief, sir, because it's not my goal to make your life any more difficult. And I know, sir, you know that you and I both lost a lot of time because of the timing of the complaint, but I just can't do it, and I'm sorry. But you have your record, sir. Thank you.

Anything else, Mr. Osmond?

MR. OSMOND: Nothing else, Judge. Thank you.

THE COURT: All right. Thank you, all. We're adjourned. Take care, everyone.

(Adjourned)

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

DAHLIA DOE, SARA DOE, NESMA DOE, LAILA DOE, WALEED DOE, MUSTAFA DOE, and AHMAD DOE,

Plaintiffs,

-v.-

SECRETARY KRISTI NOEM, *United States Department of Homeland Security, in her official capacity*; UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY; UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES; and UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Defendants.

25 Civ. 8686 (KPF)

ORDER

KATHERINE POLK FAILLA, District Judge:

For the reasons set forth on the record at the November 19, 2025 conference, Plaintiffs' motion for a preliminary injunction (Dkt. #19) is GRANTED in part. Defendants' termination of Temporary Protective Status for Syrians in the United States is hereby POSTPONED, pending further order from this Court or a reviewing court, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 705.

Given the anticipated appeal in this matter, Plaintiffs' motion to compel production of the Certified Administrative Record (Dkt. #35) is DENIED without prejudice as to its renewal at a later date.

The Clerk of Court is directed to terminate the pending motions at docket entries 19 and 35.

SO ORDERED.

Dated: November 19, 2025
New York, New York

KATHERINE POLK FAILLA
United States District Judge

United States Court of Appeals
FOR THE
SECOND CIRCUIT

At a stated term of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, held at the Thurgood Marshall United States Courthouse, 40 Foley Square, in the City of New York, on the 17th day of February, two thousand twenty-six.

Present:

Beth Robinson,
Alison J. Nathan,
Maria Araújo Kahn,
Circuit Judges.

Dahlia Doe, et al.,

Plaintiffs-Appellees,

v. 25-2995

Kristi Noem, Secretary, United States Department of Homeland Security, in her official capacity, et al.,

Defendants-Appellants.

On November 25, 2025, the Government appealed from the district court's postponement order issued pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 705. One week later, the Government moved to stay that order pending appeal. No administrative stay was granted by the applications judge, and the motion was calendared to be decided on submission by this three-judge motions panel sitting January 13, 2026. On January 15, 2026, given that the Government's motion papers did not address the basis for our interlocutory appellate jurisdiction over a § 705 postponement order, we ordered both parties to submit supplemental letter briefs identifying the source of our jurisdiction.

Based on that briefing, we conclude that we have appellate jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1292(a)(1) and *Carson v. American Brands, Inc.*, 450 U.S. 79 (1981).

Having assured ourselves of our jurisdiction, and for the reasons discussed below, the Government's motion for a stay pending appeal is **DENIED**.

First, for purposes of this stay pending appeal, we have considered the Supreme Court's stay orders related to a different Temporary Protected Status (TPS) termination. However, those orders involved a TPS designation of a different country, with different factual circumstances, and different grounds for resolution by the district court. In light of these differences, and because the Supreme Court's stay orders contained no explanation of their grounds for granting emergency relief, they are not dispositive of our analysis of the merits in this dispute. *See Nat'l Insts. of Health v. Am. Pub. Health Ass'n*, 145 S. Ct. 2658, 2663 (2025) (Gorsuch, J., concurring in part) ("[R]egardless of a decision's procedural posture, its reasoning—its *ratio decidendi*—carries precedential weight in future cases." (internal quotations omitted)).

We go on to consider the four stay factors: "(1) whether the stay applicant has made a strong showing that he is likely to succeed on the merits; (2) whether the applicant will be irreparably injured absent a stay; (3) whether issuance of the stay will substantially injure the other parties interested in the proceeding; and (4) where the public interest lies." *Nken v. Holder*, 556 U.S. 418, 426 (2009) (internal quotations omitted).

At this juncture, we conclude that the Government has not made the requisite strong showing of likely success on the merits. First, while the TPS statute bars judicial review of "any determination of the [Secretary] with respect to the . . . termination . . . of a [TPS] designation," 8 U.S.C § 1254a(b)(5)(A), it does not bar judicial review of the Secretary's compliance with that statute's procedural requirements—the contrary interpretation runs headlong into both *McNary v. Haitian Refugee Center, Inc.*, 498 U.S. 479 (1991), and the "presumption favoring judicial review of administrative action," *Kucana v. Holder*, 558 U.S. 233, 251 (2010). Next, the district court's postponement order under APA § 705 does not operate as an injunction requiring the Secretary to take any particular action; rather, it merely postpones the effective date of the Secretary's purported termination and thus does not run afoul of 8 U.S.C. § 1252(f)(1). *See Make the Road N.Y. v. Noem*, No. 25-5320, 2025 WL 3563313, at *15–18 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 22, 2025); *Immigrant Defs. L. Ctr. v. Noem*, 145 F.4th 972, 989–90 (9th Cir. 2025); *Texas v. United States*, 40 F.4th 205, 219–20 (5th Cir. 2022); *cf. Nken*, 556 U.S. at 428 (an injunction "is a means by which a court tells someone what to do or not to do"). Finally, the Government is unlikely to succeed on its argument that the Secretary engaged in the required inter-agency consultation under 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(A) before

terminating Syria's TPS designation. Because the Government has not established a likelihood of success, its stay application must be denied.

Even if the Government had established a likelihood of success, it must also demonstrate that it will suffer irreparable harm absent a stay. On this posture, the Government must establish "an injury that is neither remote nor speculative, but actual and imminent[.]" *Grand River Enter. Six Nations, Ltd. v. Pryor*, 481 F.3d 60, 66 (2d Cir. 2007) (internal quotations omitted). Unlike in prior TPS cases, which involved over 300,000 TPS holders, the Government here has not claimed that allowing the 6,100 Syrian TPS holders to remain in the country during the pendency of this litigation would "strain[] police stations, city shelters, and aid services in local communities that had reached a breaking point." Stay Application at 37, *Noem v. Nat'l TPS All.*, No. 24A1059; *see also* Stay Application at 24, *Noem v. Nat'l TPS All.*, No. 25A326. Nor has it alleged that the district court's postponement order will imminently threaten "complex and *ongoing* negotiations" with Syria. Stay Application at 37, *Noem v. Nat'l TPS All.*, No. 24A1059 (emphasis added). The Government has not explained how general harm to "public safety" and "the national interest," Stay Motion at 25, is sufficiently "actual and imminent" to justify immediate intervention, *Pryor*, 481 F.3d at 66 (internal quotations omitted).

Although the Government's failure to demonstrate irreparable harm is a sufficient basis to deny the stay, we also conclude that the final two stay factors—the balance of equities and the public interest—decidedly favor the Plaintiffs-Appellees, who have demonstrated that upon termination of their TPS they will be stripped of their authorization to work in the United States and face immediate removability to Syria.

For the foregoing reasons, it is hereby **ORDERED** that the Government's motion for a stay pending appeal is **DENIED**. The current time frame by which this matter will advance to a merits panel for resolution of the appeal reflects the Government's choice to proceed on a non-expedited basis. Its opening brief is currently due on the date it requested: March 11, 2026. If the Government wishes to file its brief sooner, it may move to expedite the briefing schedule.

FOR THE COURT:
Catherine O'Hagan Wolfe, Clerk of Court

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

DAHLIA DOE; SARA DOE; NESMA DOE; LAILA DOE; WALEED DOE; MUSTAFA DOE; and AHMAD DOE, on their own behalf and on behalf of others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

– versus –

Kristi NOEM, Secretary, United States Department of Homeland Security, in her official capacity; UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY; UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES; and UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Defendants.

Case No. 1:25-cv-08686

COMPLAINT
CLASS ACTION

INTRODUCTION

1. Syria is a country in humanitarian crisis. In recognition of a brutal civil war that began in 2011, the United States has repeatedly granted Syrian nationals a form of statutory and humanitarian protection called Temporary Protected Status ("TPS"), which protects certain individuals from removal to countries designated unsafe on account of dire country conditions like armed conflict, natural disaster, or other extraordinary circumstances. TPS provides eligible beneficiaries with the right to live and work legally in the United States during a period when it is unsafe for them to return to their countries of origin. Over 6,100 Syrian nationals currently have TPS and, as a result, find refuge in the United States; and over 800 Syrian nationals have pending applications hoping for that same protection.

2. Plaintiffs are seven Syrian nationals with TPS or pending applications for TPS, who have lived in the United States for years and have deep ties to this country and their communities. They bring this class action to challenge Defendants' remarkable and unlawful decision to terminate Syria's TPS designation, effective November 21, 2025. Defendants' actions put Plaintiffs with existing TPS at imminent risk of losing the critical humanitarian protection that TPS provides and rob Plaintiffs with pending applications of the opportunity to have their applications adjudicated. Should TPS for Syria be terminated, all Plaintiffs will face impossible choices: to uproot their lives yet again in search of a pathway to safety in a third country; to remain in the United States without lawful immigration status, at risk of imminent immigration detention and removal; or to relocate—some for the first time—to Syria, a country plagued by violent conflict, including air strikes, civil unrest, humanitarian crisis, and volatile country conditions.

3. Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") Secretary Kristi Noem's decision to terminate TPS for Syria—giving TPS-holders merely 60 days to plan for life without TPS—is

the latest in a series of premeditated terminations[1] of TPS for several non-white, non-European countries. The decisions to terminate TPS for these countries, including Syria, were made as part of the Trump Administration's ongoing effort to effectively eliminate the Congressionally-authorized TPS program and significantly reduce the number of non-white immigrants in the United States.

4. Specifically, here, Defendants' decision to terminate TPS for Syria—made prior to consulting appropriate executive agencies, without regard to Syria's dire country conditions, and by relying on impermissible factors—violates the TPS program's statutory requirements and the Administrative Procedure Act ("APA"). Defendants' unexplained decision to provide only 60 days' notice before the termination takes effect is a stark departure from past practice of providing an orderly transition period and separately violates the APA. And because these decisions were motivated, at least in part, by racial, ethnic, and national-origin-based animus, they also violate the Constitution. Although it has become alarmingly normalized, Secretary Noem, President Trump, and members of the Trump presidential campaign and Administration have consistently used racist invective to describe and justify their TPS decisions involving immigrants from non-white, non-European countries, including Syria.

5. For these reasons, this Court should set aside DHS's illegal decision terminating TPS for Syrian nationals.

[1] To date, the current Trump Administration has terminated TPS for eight of nine countries whose designations have been up for review. The countries subject to termination are: Syria, Nicaragua, Honduras, Nepal, Cameroon, Afghanistan, Haiti, and Venezuela. Only South Sudan's TPS designation was extended.

THE PARTIES

Plaintiffs

6. **Plaintiff Dahlia Doe** is a Syrian national and TPS holder who has lived in the United States since 2015 and currently resides in Bronx, New York. She works as a research director and is the primary caregiver for her elderly U.S. citizen father, who suffers from Parkinson's disease. Unless her pending application for alternative relief is granted before November 21, she will lose her protection from deportation if TPS for Syria is terminated. Losing TPS will force her to relocate to Syria where she has never lived, has no immediate family ties, and fears she will be targeted as a Syrian Christian religious minority. Dahlia will also be forcibly separated from her immediate U.S. citizen and lawful permanent resident family members.

7. **Plaintiff Sara Doe** is a Syrian national and TPS holder who has lived in the United States since 2014 and currently resides in New York State. Sara moved to the United States after her brothers were killed during the civil war in Syria, and she herself was targeted by the government as a volunteer providing medical services. Sara is a medical practitioner and a highly sought-after pediatrician. She will lose her work authorization, employer-based health insurance, and protection from deportation if TPS is terminated. Losing TPS will mean Sara will be unable to continue working as a highly-specialized pediatrician, a career she has spent decades training for, and will not be able to provide crucial care to children across New York. Sara no longer has a home or anyone to return to in Syria.

8. **Plaintiff Nesma Doe** is a Syrian national and TPS holder who has lived in the United States since 2013 and currently resides in Florida. Nesma is in her late 70s and suffers from various health issues. Members of her close family—including two nieces who serve as her

caregivers—all reside in the United States and most are U.S. citizens. She will lose her protection from deportation and be forcibly separated from her only family in the United States. Losing TPS will force her to relocate to Syria without any family ties and where elderly people have increasingly been targets of crime and armed robberies due to the dire economic instability in the country. She also faces uncertainty over whether she could receive and afford the medical care she requires.

9. **Plaintiff Laila Doe** is a Syrian national and TPS holder who has lived in the United States since 2013 and currently resides in Illinois. She is a full-time special needs teacher and is studying to become a nurse. She is a single mother providing for her minor daughter (also a Syrian TPS holder) and is the primary caregiver for her elderly U.S. citizen mother. She will lose her work authorization and protection from deportation if TPS is terminated. Losing TPS will force Laila and her daughter to return to Syria where she fears for her safety as a divorced single woman, and where her daughter would not be able to pursue her education. She will also be forcibly separated from her U.S. citizen mother and sisters.

10. **Plaintiff Waleed Doe** is a Syrian national and TPS holder who has lived in the United States since 2011 and currently resides in New Jersey. He is the primary breadwinner for his family and supports his wife, who is also a Syrian TPS holder, and three U.S. citizen children, the youngest of whom is nine months old. He works full-time as a senior manager for a private company and recently started his own business. He will lose his work authorization, employer-based health insurance and protection from deportation if TPS is terminated. Losing TPS will prevent Waleed from providing for his family and force him to make the devastating choice of leaving his U.S. citizen children behind or taking them to a country where they would lack medical care, education and basic necessities.

11. **Plaintiff Mustafa Doe** is a Syrian national and TPS holder who has lived in the United States since 2021 and currently resides in New York, New York. He recently graduated from college and has temporary status and work authorization as an extension of his student visa. When that status expires, he will be left without work authorization and protection from detention or deportation and could be forcibly returned to a country where he was sexually trafficked as a child and will face persecution for his LGBTQI identity. Mustafa will also be forcibly separated from his parents who are lawful permanent residents.

12. Plaintiff **Ahmad Doe** is a Syrian citizen with a pending initial application for TPS who has lived in the United States since 2022 and resides in Virginia. Ahmad is a highly sought-after journalist and media producer, but without work authorization cannot accept any of several job offers he has from reputable media companies. Ahmad's only current eligibility for work authorization is through his pending TPS application. If TPS is terminated, Ahmad will lose his protection from deportation as a pending applicant and lose his pathway to obtain work authorization. He fears that, if he is forced to relocate to Syria, he would be killed or targeted due to his criticism of current and past regimes as a journalist. Further, he could be forcibly separated from his non-Syrian national wife.

Defendants

13. **Defendant Kristi Noem** is the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. As the highest-ranking officer for DHS, Defendant Noem has ultimate statutory authority over all TPS extension, termination, and designation decisions.[2] She is sued in her official capacity.

[2] *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b); *see also* 6 U.S.C. § 557 (transferring certain functions from the Attorney General).

14. **Defendant Department of Homeland Security** is a Cabinet-level department in the U.S. federal government and is an "agency" within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 551(1). Its components include U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS"), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), and U.S. Customs and Border Protection ("CBP"). DHS, together with its component agencies, is responsible for administering and enforcing the TPS program.

15. **Defendant U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services** is the sub-agency within DHS charged with adjudicating applications for immigration benefits, including TPS.

16. **Defendant United States of America** includes all other government agencies and departments responsible for changes in TPS policies and the implementation and administration of those policies.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

17. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1331 because this action arises under the Constitution and laws of the United States, and the case presents a justiciable case or controversy within the meaning of Article III of the U.S. Constitution. The Court also has jurisdiction over Plaintiffs' claim under the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Court has additional remedial authority under the Declaratory Judgment Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2201 *et seq.*, and the APA, 5 U.S.C. § 701 *et seq*.

18. The federal government has waived its sovereign immunity and permitted judicial review of agency action under 5 U.S.C. § 702.[3] In addition, sovereign immunity does not bar

[3] *See Sharkey v. Quarantillo*, 541 F.3d 75, 91 (2d Cir. 2008).

claims against federal officials seeking to prevent violations of federal law, rather than monetary relief.[4]

19. Venue is proper in this district under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e)(1) because Defendants are agencies of the United States or officers of the United States acting in their official capacity, and because at least one named Plaintiff, as well as unnamed members of the putative class, reside in this judicial district.

THE STATUTORY SCHEME FOR TPS

20. Congress created TPS in response to unconstrained executive discretion in humanitarian relief programs. Prior to 1990, the executive used "extended voluntary departure" to confer blanket nationality-based humanitarian relief. *See* Lynda J. Oswald, *Extended Voluntary Departure: Limiting the Attorney General's Discretion in Immigration Matters*, 85 Mich. L. Rev. 152, 157–60 (1986). Between 1960 and 1989, the Attorney General granted extended voluntary departure to approximately sixteen countries, with periods of protection ranging from eight months to 15 years.[5] This practice lacked "any specific … criteria." *Id.* at 178 n.153 (quoting Letter from William F. Smith, Att'y Gen., to Lawrence J. Smith, Rep. (July 19, 1983)). The arbitrary, overtly political decisions surrounding extended voluntary departure resulted in congressional pressure to reform the system, particularly in the wake of the Attorney General's refusal to grant extended voluntary departure for Salvadoran refugees at the time. *See Hotel & Rest. Emps. Union v. Smith*, 846 F.2d 1499, 1510–11 (D.C. Cir. 1988) (discussing termination of extended voluntary departure for El Salvador) (separate opinion of Mikva, J.).

[4] *See, e.g.*, *id.*; *Lunney v. United States*, 319 F.3d 550, 557–58 (2d Cir. 2003); *Larson v. Domestic & Foreign Com. Corp.*, 337 U.S. 682, 697–99 & nn.18–19 (1949); *Shields v. Utah Idaho Cent. R.R. Co.*, 305 U.S. 177, 183–84 (1938).
[5] *See* Bill Frelick & Barbara Kohnen, *Filling the Gap: Temporary Protected Status*, 8 J. of Refugee Stud. 339, 362–63 (1995).

21. Congress designed TPS to ensure that future nationality-based protections would be based on "identifiable conditions" rather than "the vagaries of our domestic politics." 101 Cong. Rec. H25811, 25838 (daily ed. Oct. 25, 1989) (statement of Rep. Sander Levine) (debating the immediate precursor to the TPS statute). Congress also sought to replace the "ad hoc, haphazard . . . procedures" that existed before, and provide beneficiaries with certainty about "what [their] rights are, how the Justice Department determines what countries merit [protected] status," and "how long they will be able to stay." *Id.* at 25837 (statement of Rep. Bill Richardson). While establishing criteria to govern blanket humanitarian protection, Congress also overrode the executive branch and statutorily designated El Salvador for TPS. *See* Immigration Act of 1990, Pub. L. 101-649, Title III, §§ 302–303.

22. Since 1990, the TPS statute has given the executive branch authority to provide nationality-based humanitarian relief to certain citizens of countries stricken by war, natural disaster or other catastrophe, who are already present in the United States. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1254a. The statute provides that the Secretary of DHS may designate a country for TPS where (1) "there is an ongoing armed conflict within the state" and returning nationals "to that state . . . would pose a serious threat to their personal safety"; (2) "there has been an earthquake, flood, drought, epidemic, or other environmental disaster in the state" and it is "unable, temporarily, to handle adequately the return" of nationals; and (3) "there exist extraordinary and temporary conditions in the foreign state that prevent . . . nationals of the state from returning to the state in safety, unless the Attorney General finds that permitting the [noncitizens] to remain temporarily in the United States is contrary to the national interest of the United States." *Id.* § 1254a(b)(1)(A)–(C).

23. Under the statute, the "national interest" provision limits designation only under subsection (C)'s "extraordinary and temporary conditions" ground; it does not apply to designations under subsections (A) (armed conflict) or (B) (natural disasters).

24. In keeping with its intent to free the process of designating countries for humanitarian protection from domestic politics, Congress established a statutory framework that governs the designations of countries for TPS. The statute first requires the Secretary to consult with "appropriate agencies. 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1). After that, the Secretary "may designate" a country based on armed conflict, environmental disaster, or other extraordinary conditions. *Id.* A designation lasts between six and eighteen months, effective either upon notice in the Federal Register or "such later date as the [Secretary] may specify." *Id.* §1254a(b)(2).

25. The Secretary thus has substantial discretion over initial TPS designations. So long as she determines certain country conditions exist, she may choose whether and when to designate a country for TPS.

26. By contrast, Congress limited, in important ways, the Secretary's discretion to review TPS designations after the initial designation is made. *See* U.S. Gov't Accountability Off., GAO-20-134, *Temporary Protected Status: Steps Taken to Inform and Communicate Secretary of Homeland Security's Decisions* (2020) ("GAO Report") at 15–18, 27 (differentiating between the discretion afforded before and after an initial designation). The statutory requirements are clear: "At least 60 days before [the] end of the . . . period of designation, . . . the [Secretary], after consultation with appropriate agencies of the Government, shall review the conditions in the foreign state . . . for which a designation is in effect . . . and shall determine whether the conditions for such designation under this subsection continue to be met." 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(A).

27. The review process typically begins months before the 60-day deadline. *See* GAO Report at 20–21. As part of the process, both USCIS and the State Department generally prepare country conditions memoranda and recommendations for the Secretary. *See id.* 15–16; *see also Ramos v. Nielsen*, 336 F. Supp. 3d 1075, 1082 (N.D. Cal. 2018) *vacated and remanded sub nom. Ramos v. Wolf*, 975 F.3d 872 (9th Cir. 2020), *reh'g en banc granted, opinion vacated*, 59 F.4th 1010 (9th Cir. 2023) (describing the TPS review process).[6] Generally, USCIS manages and coordinates the TPS review process for the Secretary, soliciting a country conditions report from the Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations (RAIO) unit within USCIS and soliciting a country conditions report and recommendation from the State Department. *See* GAO Report at 15–21; *see also Saget v. Trump*, 375 F. Supp. 3d 280, 299–300 (E.D.N.Y. 2019). After considering the materials provided, USCIS prepares a detailed recommendation, based on country conditions, for the Secretary. *Id.* USCIS's recommendation is called a "Director Memo." *Saget*, 375 F. Supp. 3d at 299–300.

28. Once the Secretary makes her decision, the statute requires that she "shall provide on a timely basis for the publication of notice of each such determination (including the basis for the determination, and, in the case of an affirmative determination, the period of extension of designation under subparagraph (C)) in the Federal Register." 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(A).

29. Unless the Secretary timely determines and publishes notice of her decision that the country "no longer continues to meet the conditions for designation," the designation "is extended" automatically for 6 months or "in [her] discretion . . . a period of 12 or 18 months." 8

[6] The district court's decision was reversed on appeal in a 2-1 ruling on jurisdictional grounds, but a majority of active judges voted to rehear the case in banc so the panel decision was vacated. *See Ramos v. Wolf*, 975 F.3d 872 (9th Cir. 2020), *reh'g en banc granted, opinion vacated*, 59 F.4th 1010 (9th Cir. 2023).

U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(C). The statute thus "essentially provides extension as a default." *Nat'l TPS All. v. Noem*, 773 F. Supp. 3d 807, 851 (N.D. Cal.), *aff'd*, 150 F.4th 1000 (9th Cir. 2025) ("*NTPSA I* PI Decision").

30. In contrast, if the Secretary timely "determine[s]" that a country "no longer continues to meet the conditions for designation under" § 1254a(b)(1), she "shall terminate the designation by publishing notice in the Federal register." 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(B). Termination "shall not be effective earlier than 60 days after the date the notice is published or, if later, the expiration of the most recent previous extension." *Id.* The statute provides no grounds for the termination of TPS other than a determination that a country no longer meets the conditions for designation.

31. The Secretary has discretion to further postpone the effective date of a termination "in order to provide for an orderly transition." 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(d)(3). For the twelve most recent terminations of TPS that preceded the Trump Administration's second term in office, the agency provided at least a six-month period for an orderly transition—and more commonly a twelve- or eighteen-month period. Only four TPS designations have been terminated without any such period, and each of those terminations occurred more than twenty years ago and involved a designation that had been in place for three years or less.

32. Once the Secretary has designated a particular country for TPS, individuals from that country (and persons without nationality who last habitually resided in that country) may apply for immigration status under the program. To be eligible for TPS, individuals from a designated country must meet stringent requirements. These requirements include, among other things, (1) continuous physical presence in the United States from the most recent date of designation; (2) continuous residence in the United States from a (potentially earlier) date

designated by the Secretary; (3) satisfaction of the criteria for admissibility as an immigrant or, for certain grounds of inadmissibility, a waiver of those grounds; (4) a lack of disqualifying criminal history such as convictions for a single felony or multiple misdemeanors; and (5) the submission of an application, extensive documentation, and fees. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(c)(1); *see also* 8 C.F.R. §§ 244.2, 244.4, 244.9. Further, an individual is not eligible for TPS if "there are reasonable grounds for regarding [them] as a danger to the security of the United States." *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(c)(2)(B)(ii) (incorporating 8 U.S.C. § 1158(b)(2)(A)).

33. Congress ensured that people who are ultimately granted TPS would enjoy the freedom to live and work in the United States without fear of deportation. Under the statute's clear directives, anyone who receives and maintains TPS "shall [be] authorize[d]" to work in the United States; "shall not be detained" by the Secretary of Homeland Security on the basis of immigration status; and "shall not [be] remove[d]" from the United States. 8 U.S.C. §§ 1254a(a)(1), (d)(4). The statute affords protection to qualifying individuals regardless of whether they meet the requirements for asylum or other immigration relief. *See id*. § 1254a(b)(1).

34. Individuals who apply for TPS and who are *prima facie* eligible for TPS may receive work authorization and are protected from deportation while the application is pending. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(a)(4)(B); 8 C.F.R. § 244.10(a), (e).

SYRIA'S PRIOR TPS DESIGNATIONS AND CURRENT COUNTRY CONDITIONS

35. Syria is a Muslim-majority country in southwest Asia. Following its independence from the French colonial empire in 1947, Syria went through decades of political instability, internal conflict, and tumult. In 1970, Syria came under the authoritarian rule of Hafez al-Assad, and upon his death in 2000, the rule of al-Assad's son, Bashar al-Assad. The

Assad's decades-long rule over Syria was infamous for systemic human rights abuses, war crimes, and repressive policies.

36. In 2011, in response to pro-democracy protests calling for the end of the Assad regime, the Syrian government began killing protestors. Opposition militias formed in response to the government violence, and by the following year, the conflict expanded into a full-fledged civil war. The Assad regime committed grave human rights atrocities: systemic torture, unlawful killings, sexual violence, forced disappearances, and arbitrary detention. These atrocities are well-documented, including by prominent international human rights organizations[7] and the U.S. Department of State.[8]

37. The Secretary of DHS first designated Syria for TPS in March 2012, in recognition of the country's escalating civil war, widespread civilian casualties, and mass displacement caused by government and non-state armed forces.[9] The Federal Register notice of designation stated that Syria's armed conflict and humanitarian collapse created "extraordinary and temporary conditions" preventing the safe return of its nationals.[10] In October 2013, DHS extended the initial designation based on "extraordinary and temporary conditions" preventing the safe return of Syrian nationals; in that same Federal Register notice, DHS redesignated Syria for TPS based on its ongoing armed conflict and worsening conditions.[11]

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[7] *See Syria 2024*, Amnesty Int'l, https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/report-syria/ (last visited Oct. 19, 2025).
[8] *See* U.S. Dep't of State, Bureau of Democracy, H.R. and Lab., *Syria 2024 Human Rights Report* (2024), https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/624521_ISYRIA-2024-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf.
[9] *See* Designation of Syrian Arab Republic for Temporary Protective Status, 77 Fed. Reg. 19,026, 19,026–27 (Mar. 29, 2012).
[10] *Id*.
[11] Extension and Redesignation of Syria for Temporary Protected Status, 78 Fed. Reg. 36,223, 36,224–25 (June 17, 2013).

38. Successive Secretaries of Homeland Security repeatedly extended and redesignated Syria for TPS, each time citing ongoing armed conflict, human rights abuses, and humanitarian catastrophe.[12] Each extension and redesignation underscored that conditions of armed conflict and humanitarian collapse in Syria prevent safe return for people in its diaspora.

39. DHS reviewed Syria's TPS on January 29, 2024, and extended TPS for Syria through September 30, 2025. It did so on two bases: (1) an "ongoing armed conflict" and (2) the continuation of "extraordinary and temporary conditions".[13] As to armed conflict, DHS found that "the ongoing civil war in Syria … has involved large-scale destruction of infrastructure, widespread civilian casualties, and human rights abuses and violations."[14] DHS also found that an earthquake had further destroyed Syrian infrastructure and deepened its economic collapse, and that food insecurity and limited access to healthcare and clean water persisted, leaving Syria incapable of supporting safe returns.[15]

40. Although the Assad regime fell in December 2024, Syria continues to suffer from armed conflict and humanitarian crisis marked by over a decade of civil war. Throughout 2025, civilians in Syria have been routinely killed and displaced by clashes between forces loyal to the interim government that replaced the Assad regime, sectarian militias, and armed groups from other nations.

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[12] *See, e.g.*, Extension and Redesignation of Syria for Temporary Protected Status, 89 Fed. Reg. 5,562, 5,565 (Jan. 29, 2024); Extension of the Designation of Syria for Temporary Protected Status, 83 Fed. Reg. 9,329, 9,331–32 (Mar. 5, 2018); Extension and Redesignation of the Syrian Arab Republic for Temporary Protected Status, 80 Fed. Reg. 245, 247–48 (Jan. 5, 2015).
[13] Extension and Redesignation of Syria for Temporary Protective Status, 89 Fed. Reg. 5,562, 5,565 (Jan. 29, 2024).
[14] *Id.*
[15] *See id.* at 5,565-67.

41. These conditions are well-documented. For example, the Congressional Research Service reported in September 2025 that "instances of sectarian violence involving members of minority communities, Syrian security forces, nonstate armed groups, and armed vigilantes have threatened Syria's stability since March," with thousands of civilian deaths and more than 200,000 people newly displaced.[16] Indeed, the report makes clear that Syria is not a unified country: the interim government "does not exercise control over all of Syria, with areas of the northeast under the control of ethnic Kurdish-led forces and areas south of the capital, Damascus, controlled by members of [a] religious minority."[17] In addition, "Turkish forces remain in parts of the north, while Israeli forces have moved into formerly demilitarized areas between Syria and Israel and into some Syrian territory near" the two countries' shared border.[18] Israel also launches air strikes, and makes ground incursions, deeper into Syria.[19]

42. In June 2025, the Council of the European Union found that Syria remains in a "continued catastrophic humanitarian situation."[20] Noting its "alarm[]" due to "widespread violence in Syria's coastal region and in other areas around Damascus," it called on the transitional government to "ensure control over armed groups."[21] The Council also warned that conditions in Syria remain dire, with "90 percent of Syrians living below the poverty line, 16.5 million Syrians relying on humanitarian aid, [and] over 7.2 million people internally

[16] Christopher M. Blanchard, Cong. Rsch. Serv., RL33487, *Syria: Transition and U.S. Policy* 2, 9 (2025).
[17] *Id.*
[18] *Id.*
[19] *See* Danish Immig. Serv., *Syria – Security Situation* 21–22 (2025), https://us.dk/media/uhxnvfwp/syria-security-situation-final-20062025.pdf.
[20] Gen. Secretariat of the Council, *Council Conclusions on Syria* 9 (June 23, 2025), https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10688-2025-INIT/en/pdf.
[21] *Id.* at 3.

displaced."[22] The "food security situation continues to deteriorate, the healthcare system is in ruin, access to basic services remains extremely limited, including due to continued hostilities with attacks on critical infrastructure."[23]

43. The U.S. Department of State continues to maintain a Level 4 "Do Not Travel" advisory for Syria, which warns that "no part of Syria is safe from violence" and of risks from "terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, hostage taking, and *armed conflict.*"[24]

DEFENDANTS' UNLAWFUL TERMINATION OF SYRIA'S TPS DESIGNATION

44. On September 19, 2025, Defendant Noem announced the termination of Syria's TPS designation. The termination was published in the Federal Register on September 22, 2025, with a termination date of November 21, 2025—a mere 60 days later and the minimum required by statute. *See* Termination of the Designation of Syria for TPS Status, 90 Fed. Reg. 45,398 (Sep. 22, 2025).

45. Defendant Noem acknowledged that "the civil war in Syria displaced over half of the country's population, resulted in the deaths of more than 500,000 people, destroyed critical infrastructure, and significantly weakened the Syrian economy."[25] However, she stated that, in large part due to the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, "the situation [in Syria] no

[22] *Id.* at 9.
[23] *Id.*
[24] *Syria Travel Advisory*, U.S. DEP'T OF STATE, https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/syria-travel-advisory.html (last visited Oct. 19, 2025) (emphasis added).
[25] Termination of the Designation of Syria for TPS Status, 90 Fed. Reg. 45,398, 45,400 (Sept. 22, 2025).

longer meets the criteria for an ongoing armed conflict that poses a serious threat to the personal safety of returning Syrian nationals."[26]

46. With respect to Syria's designation due to "extraordinary and temporary conditions," Defendant Noem dismissed the dire security and humanitarian situation, acknowledging that "most Syrians require some form of humanitarian assistance" but nonetheless concluding that "this does not prevent nationals from returning in safety."[27]

47. Defendant Noem also stated that, "even assuming the relevant conditions in Syria remain both 'extraordinary' and 'temporary,' termination of the Syria [TPS] designation is required because it is contrary to the national interest to permit Syrian nationals . . . to remain temporarily in the United States."[28] To justify this statement, Defendant Noem relied on Syria's placement on the government's list of "state sponsors of terrorism," the lack of U.S. diplomatic presence in Syria, and the purported unavailability of reliable methods by which the U.S. could "meaningful[ly]" vet Syrian nationals.[29] Defendant Noem provided two anecdotes of Syrian nationals—neither one identified as a TPS recipient—who had been indicted, charged, or investigated for crimes related to their alleged roles in the Assad regime or their support for designated terrorist organizations.[30] She also asserted without elaboration that "there are Syrian nationals . . . who are [TPS] beneficiaries or applicants who are or have been the subject of administrative investigations for fraud, public safety, and national security."[31] The same

[26] *Id.* ("[W]hile some sporadic and episodic violence occurs in Syria, the situation no longer meets the criteria for an ongoing armed conflict that poses a serious threat to the personal safety of returning Syrian nationals.").
[27] *Id.*
[28] *Id.*
[29] *Id.* at 45,401.
[30] *See id.*
[31] *Id.*

conclusory statement appears in Defendant Noem's justification for terminating TPS for Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Haiti.

48. Defendant Noem did not point to any situation in which even one of the more than 6,000 Syrian TPS holders had ever been convicted of a serious crime, implicated in the atrocities perpetrated by the Assad regime, or charged with supporting a terrorist organization.

49. Finally, Secretary Noem noted both domestic and foreign policy reasons for the termination, citing President Trump's "America First Policy Directive to the Secretary of State," which mandated that, moving forward, "the foreign policy of the United States shall champion core American interests and always put America and American citizens first."[32]

50. Remarkably, the Trump Administration took a contradictory position regarding Syria's country conditions on September 30, 2025, days *after* DHS announced the termination of TPS for Syria. On that date, President Trump renewed Syria's "national emergency" designation pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, finding that the "situation in and in relation to Syria undermines the campaign to defeat . . . ISIS, endangers civilians, and threatens to undermine the peace, security, and stability in the region." Continuation of the National Emergency With Situation in and in Relation to Syria, 90 Fed. Reg. 47,967 (Oct. 2, 2025).

51. On information and belief, Defendant Noem failed to consult with other federal agencies about the presence of armed conflict in Syria, or other country conditions in Syria, before making her decision to terminate TPS for that country. On information and belief, Defendant Noem's decision also was not based on an objective review of Syria's country conditions. Rather, the decision to terminate TPS for Syria was made as part of a preordained

[32] *Id.* (quoting Exec. Order No. 14150, 90 Fed. Reg. 8,837) (Jan. 29, 2025).

plan to eliminate existing TPS designations consistent with the Trump Administration's political goals and campaign promises to curb non-white immigration.[33]

THE FIRST TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE TPS PROTECTIONS

52. The first Trump Administration attempted to end TPS designations for six non-white, non-European countries. Between 2017 and 2018, DHS announced terminations of TPS designations for Sudan, Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nepal. *See Ramos v. Nielsen*, 709 F. Supp. 3d 871, 877–78 (N.D. Cal. 2023). If the terminations had taken effect, they would have ended TPS protection for approximately 400,000 people, approximately 98 percent of all TPS holders at the time.[34] In each case, the Secretary announced either a 12- or 18-month orderly transition period, which would have delayed the effective date of termination.

53. Litigation and congressional investigations subsequently revealed that the termination decisions were not based on an objective review of country conditions as required by statute—and as had been the past practice over multiple administrations, both Democratic and Republican—but rather were part of a "predetermined presidential agenda to end TPS." *Ramos v. Nielsen*, 336 F. Supp. 3d 1075, 1094–99 (N.D. Cal. 2018) (vacated and remanded on different grounds; quoting then-DHS Secretary Duke's assurance to the White House that terminating Nicaragua's TPS would "send a clear signal that TPS in general is coming to a close").[35]

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[33] *See, e.g.*, Hannah Fingerhut & Ali Swenson, *At Iowa Rally, Trump Doubles Down on Comments About Immigrants Poisoning the Nation's Blood*, PBS (Dec. 20, 2023), https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/at-iowa-rally-trump-doubles-down-on-comments-about-immigrants-poisoning-the-nations-blood.

[34] Marcela Valdes, *Their Lawsuit Prevented 400,000 Deportations. Now It's Biden's Call*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 7, 2021), https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/07/magazine/immigration-el-salvador.html.

[35] *See also* Minority Staff of S. Comm. on Foreign Rels., 116th Cong., *Playing Politics with Humanitarian Protections: How Political Aims Trumped U.S. National Security and the Safety of TPS Recipients* 41 (U.S. Gov't Publ'g Off. Wash. 2019) (finding that termination decision was

54. Moreover, every district court to consider the question of whether animus was a motivating factor for the agency action found that the terminations were part of a policy "to decrease the presence of non-white immigrants in the United States."[36]

55. DHS Secretaries faced unrelenting pressure from the White House to reach its "desired result of terminating TPS" and responded by ordering pre-textual terminations of TPS designations for nearly everyone who held the status. *Ramos*, 336 F. Supp. 3d at 1101. For example, in terminating TPS for Nepal, career officials were instructed not to devote research to crises not directly related to the earthquake, and when drafts did not adequately support the proposal to terminate, career officials omitted or deemphasized ongoing problems in Nepal.

56. The courts considering challenges to these decisions consistently found that DHS had radically changed the way it approached TPS decisions, justifying the terminations by considering a much narrower range of country conditions than had been considered in the past. *See Saget v. Trump*, 375 F. Supp. 3d 280, 346 (E.D.N.Y. 2019); *Ramos*, 336 F. Supp. 3d at 1097–98; *Centro Presente v. DHS*, 332 F. Supp. 3d 393, 412–14 (D. Mass. 2018); *CASA de Maryland, Inc. v. Trump*, 355 F. Supp. 3d 307, 321 (D. Md. 2018).

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influenced by considerations related to upcoming elections and disregarded risks to national security and safety of returnees).

[36] *Saget*, 375 F. Supp. 3d at 368–372 (also finding that "evidence of White House . . . animus toward non-white immigrants, including Haitians specifically, raises at the very least serious questions going to the merits of Plaintiffs' equal protection claim" challenging the termination of TPS for Haiti); *see also Ramos*, 336 F. Supp. 3d at 1100 (noting "evidence that President Trump harbors an animus against non-white, non-European [noncitizens] which influenced his (and thereby the Secretary's) decision to end . . . TPS designation[s]"); *Centro Presente v. DHS*, 332 F. Supp. 3d 393, 415 (D. Mass. 2018) ("find[ing] that the combination of a disparate impact on particular racial groups, statements of animus by people plausibly alleged to be involved in the decision-making process, and an allegedly unreasoned shift in policy sufficient to allege plausibly that a discriminatory purpose was a motivating factor in a decision" to terminate TPS for Haiti, El Salvador and Honduras).

57. To justify the termination of designations, and undermine the TPS program, political appointees during the first Trump Administration sought to paint TPS holders as criminals and manufactured evidence to support this implausible claim. A court in the Eastern District of New York found that Acting Secretary Duke decided to terminate TPS for Haiti for the sake of "agenda adherence" to the "America first" platform, without regard to her consideration of country conditions under the TPS statute. *Saget*, 375 F. Supp. 3d at 343, 347–48, 359–62. Acting Secretary Duke specifically sought out a rationale to "[s]eparate out Haiti." *Id.* at 348. Additionally, subordinates of then-DHS Secretary John Kelly covertly sought data on the number of Haitian TPS holders who committed crimes and relied on public assistance, despite the fact that virtually any criminal record is disqualifying for TPS. *Id.* at 307-09. Secretary Kelly and other DHS and USCIS personnel tried to use these data to demonstrate that extending TPS to Haitians would not be in the "national interest." *See id.* at 352; *cf.* 8 U.S.C. § 1254a (b)(1)(C), (c)(2)(B). Another federal district court found that "[t]he information sought by the Secretary [Kelly] coincides with racial stereotypes – *i.e.*, that non-whites commit crimes and are on the public dole." *Ramos*, 336 F. Supp. 3d at 1105.

58. After analyzing "a wealth of record evidence" regarding the terminations of TPS for El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Sudan, a federal district court found that "DHS made a deliberate choice to base the TPS decision solely on whether the originating conditions or conditions directly related thereto persisted, regardless of other current conditions no matter how bad . . . The evidence . . . suggests this change may have been made in order to implement and justify a pre-ordained result." *Id.* at 1092, 1097–98; *see also Centro Presente v. DHS*, 332 F. Supp. 3d at 416 (denying motion to dismiss and explaining "there is no justification, explicit or otherwise, for Defendants' switch to focusing on whether the conditions that caused the initial

designation had abated rather than a fuller evaluation of whether the country would be able to safely accept returnees"). A court in the Eastern District of New York came to the same conclusion after a four-day bench trial regarding Haiti's TPS termination, finding that the termination "was preordained and pretextual" and "was made in part due to political influence," violating the TPS statute's requirement that decisions be based on country conditions. *Saget*, 375 F. Supp. 3d at 346.

59. Indeed, then-Acting Secretary Duke's writings revealed that "she, in her role at DHS, was largely carrying out or conforming with a predetermined presidential agenda to end TPS." *Ramos*, 336 F. Supp. 3d at 1099. Specifically, she expressed that her TPS decision-making was based on "an America first view," a term that invoked President Trump's preference for immigration from majority-white European countries. *Id.* at 1099–1100, 1104. Notably, Defendant Noem expressly included the same "America First" objectives in the published Federal Register Notice terminating TPS for Syria and other countries in 2025.

60. As a result of injunctions issued in these cases and subsequent stipulated orders, the terminations sought by the first Trump Administration did not go into effect. *See, e.g.*, *Ramos*, 709 F. Supp. 3d at 878–79. And in 2023, DHS rescinded the TPS terminations for Honduras, Nicaragua, Nepal, and El Salvador and extended TPS designations for those countries instead. *See id.* DHS issued new extensions for Haiti and Sudan on May 21, 2021, and April 19, 2022, respectively, effectively overturning their TPS terminations.[37] *See id.* In doing so, DHS

[37] *See* Designation of Haiti for Temporary Protected Status, 86 Fed. Reg. 41,863 (Aug. 3, 2021); Designation of Sudan for Temporary Protected Status, 87 Fed. Reg. 23,202 (Apr. 19, 2022).

extensively criticized the flawed country-conditions analyses in the termination decisions issued under the first Trump Administration.[38]

THE SECOND TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S PROMISE TO END TPS

Secretary Noem, President Trump, and Vice President Vance Publicly Commit to Terminating TPS

61. Even before she became Secretary of DHS, Defendant Noem publicly committed to ending TPS for reasons unrelated to the situation in Syria, or any other country. During her confirmation hearing, she claimed that TPS "has been abused and manipulated by the Biden Administration," and suggested that the "extensions" of TPS were impermissible because "[t]he program was intended to be temporary."[39]

62. Defendant Noem repeatedly insinuated that TPS was an illegal program. In announcing her decision to end TPS for Venezuela, for instance, she said she would not allow Venezuelan TPS holders to "stay here and violate our laws."[40] In her press statement announcing the partial vacatur of TPS for Haiti, Defendant Noem emphasized that "TPS is a type of immigration status available to nationals of certain designated countries that allows aliens, *even*

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[38] *See* Extension of the Temporary Protected Status Designation for Honduras, 88 Fed. Reg. 40,304, 40,307 (June 21, 2023) ("[T]he conditions in Honduras that gave rise to its TPS designation in 1999 persisted in 2018 and continue to this day."); Extension of the Temporary Protected Status Designation for Nicaragua, 88 Fed. Reg. 40294, 40,297 (June 21, 2013) (same for Nicaragua); Extension of the Temporary Protected Status Designation for Nepal, 88 Fed. Reg. 40,317 (June 21, 2023) (same for Nepal).

[39] *Homeland Security Secretary Nominee Gov. Kristi Noem Testifies at Confirmation Hearing*, C-SPAN (Jan. 15, 2025), https://www.c-span.org/program/senate-committee/homeland-security-secretary-nominee-governor-kristi-noem-testifies-at-confirmation-hearing/654484 (at approximately 1:50:54); *see also* NBC News (@NBCNews), *Meet the Press full broadcast – Feb. 2*, YouTube (Feb. 2, 2025), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpeMXrvxHco (at approximately 16:25).

[40] *DHS Sec. Noem Announces End to Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelan Migrants*, Fox & Friends (Jan. 29, 2025), https://www.foxnews.com/video/6367942790112?msockid=30416397acd261bf24f1707bad686037 (at approximately 1:00).

if they entered the country illegally, the ability to reside *temporarily* in the U.S."[41] Defendant Noem further cited Haiti as an "example" of the "exploit[ation]" of the system because "Haiti has been designated for TPS since 2010"; and because "more Haitian nationals, even those who entered the U.S. illegally" have benefited from "each extension."[42]

63. President Trump, Vice President Vance, and Trump surrogates have likewise expressed their disagreement with TPS, characterizing designations as illegal, or, in the Vice President Vance's words, "a magic amnesty wand."[43]

64. Both the President and the Vice-President made clear their intent to target TPS and TPS designations for termination before taking office.[44] President Trump, while campaigning, said that he would "[a]bsolutely … revoke" TPS from Haitians, saying, "You have to remove the people; you cannot destroy our country . . . In my opinion, it's not legal."[45]

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[41] Press Release, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec., Secretary Noem Rescinds Previous Administration's Extension of Haiti's TPS (Feb. 20, 2025), https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/02/20/secretary-noem-rescinds-extension-haitis-temporary-protected-status (emphasis in original).

[42] *Id.* (Here, Defendant Noem presumably meant each "redesignation," because an extension does not allow additional Haitian nationals to benefit from TPS).

[43] Gabe Whisnant, *JD Vance Confronted on Putting Constituents 'at Risk' With Haitian Claims*, NEWSWEEK (Sept. 16, 2024), https://www.newsweek.com/jd-vance-cnn-confronted-ohio-haitian-immigrant-claims-1954036.

[44] *See* Chris Cameron, *Vance Vows an End to Programs for Legal Immigrants*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 22, 2024), *https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/22/us/politics/vance-trump-legal-immigrants.html*; Miriam Jordan & Hamed Aleaziz, *Trump Immigration Targets: Ukrainians, Venezuelans, Haitians*, N.Y. Times (Nov. 15, 2024), https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/15/us/trump-immigrants-temporary-protected-status.html.

[45] Damita Menezes & Ali Bradley, *Trump on Springfield Haitian Migrants: 'They Have to Be Removed,* NEWSNATION (Oct. 2, 2024), https://www.newsnationnow.com/politics/2024-election/trump-springfield-haitian-migrants-removed/ (starting at approximately 12:00); *see also* Maggie Astor, *Trump Says He Would Try Again to Revoke Haitian Immigrants' Protections*, N.Y. Times (Oct. 3, 2024), https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/03/us/politics/trump-haitian-immigrants-legal-status.html.

He decried TPS as a "little trick," asserting that Haitian migrants "are illegal immigrants" who were "destroying the town"[46] and that he would "do large deportations" of Haitian TPS holders.[47]

65. For his part, Vice-President Vance, said that "[w]e're going to stop doing mass grants of Temporary Protected Status. Of course, you're going to have people fleeing from tyranny, but that happens on a case-by-case basis, not by waving the magic government wand."[48] Given that TPS is, by statute, designed by Congress to be a mass grant for all eligible individuals (unlike asylum and other forms of fear-based immigration relief grounded in individualized assessments), this statement can only be understood as an attack on TPS itself. Vice President Vance expressed this view repeatedly while campaigning.[49]

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[46] Charisma Madarang, *Trump Says Legal Haitian Migrants Are Illegal 'As Far As I'm Concernced'*, ROLLINGSTONE (Oct. 9, 2024), https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/trump-claims-legal-haitian-migrants-illegal-1235129621/.

[47] Soo Rin Kim et al., *Trump calls US 'garbage can for the world' in latest anti-immigrant rhetoric*, ABC NEWS (Oct. 24, 2024), https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-calls-us-garbage-world-latest-anti-immigrant/story?id=115149893; Alexandra Ulmer et al., *Trump Pledges to Deport Haitians in Ohio City if Elected*, REUTERS, (Sept. 14, 2024), https://www.reuters.com/world/us/biden-says-attacks-haitian-immigrants-have-stop-2024-09-13/.

[48] Timothy Nerozzi, *Trump ends Temporary Protected Status for more than 300,000 Venezuelans in US*, WASH. EXAM'R (Feb. 3, 2025), https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/immigration/3308462/trump-ends-temporary-protected-status-venezuelans/.

[49] *See, e.g.*, CNN-News 18 (@cnnnews18), *CNN's Dana Bash And JD Vance Clash Over Claims About Haitian Immigrants*, YouTube (Sept. 16, 2024), http://youtube.com/watch?v=djpTr5r0zMQ (at approximately 5:10, disputing anchor's characterization of TPS holders as being in the United States legally and calling TPS designations a "magic amnesty wand."); *Senator JD Vance Campaigns in Raleigh, North Carolina*, C-SPAN (Sept. 18, 2024), https://www.c-span.org/program/campaign-2024/senator-jd-vance-campaigns-in-raleigh-north-carolina/649012 (at approximately 41:00, "The media loves to say that the Haitian migrants, hundreds of thousands of them, by the way . . . they are here legally . . . . if Kamala Harris waves the wand illegally and says these people are now here legally. I'm still going to call them an illegal alien.").

66. According to the New York Times, Stephen Miller, President Trump's Deputy Chief of Staff and chief architect of his immigration policy platform, and other top advisers flagged the revocation of TPS as a priority for the incoming administration, again without consideration of country conditions or the merit of any individual designation.[50]

67. Project 2025, "the 2025 Presidential Transition Project," a product of current and former Trump political appointees, also called for the "[r]epeal [of] TPS designations" without elaboration as to any consideration of individual country conditions or any other statutory requirements.[51]

DEFENDANTS' RENEWED EFFORTS TO END TPS

68. Neither the adverse decisions of federal courts nor DHS's 2023 analysis have deterred the second Trump Administration from reinstating its plan to effectively end TPS consistent with campaign promises. To date, the Administration has attempted to terminate eight of nine TPS designations that have come up for review. The termination decisions—including the termination of TPS for Syria—reflect preordained outcomes driven by the very sort of partisan politics the statute is intended to forestall.

69. On his first day in office, President Trump issued an executive order titled "Protecting the American People Against Invasion." Exec. Order No. 14159 § 16(b), 90 Fed. Reg. 8,443, 8,446 (Jan. 20, 2025) ("Invasion EO"). The supposed "invasion" at issue involved

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[50] *See* Charlie Savage et al., *Sweeping Raids, Giant Camps and Mass Deportations: Inside Trump's 2025 Immigration Plans*, N.Y. TIMES (Nov. 11, 2023), https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/11/us/politics/trump-2025-immigration-agenda.html ("People who were granted temporary protected status because they are from certain countries deemed unsafe, allowing them to lawfully live and work in the United States, would have that status revoked.").

[51] *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise* 150 (Paul Dans & Steven Groves eds., 2025) (chapter written by Ken Cuccinelli), https://static.project2025.org/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf.

purportedly "unprecedented" levels of irregular entry into the United States. *Id.* § 1. The executive order describes immigrants, including lawfully present TPS holders, as invaders committing "vile and heinous acts against innocent Americans." *Id.* "Invasion" is a "code word" often used to "express[] that Racial/Ethnic Minorities spread something harmful within communities, institutions, or other societal domains." Deirdre Pfeiffer & Xiaoqian Hu, *Deconstructing Racial Code Words*, 58 L. & Soc'y Rev. 294, 310 (2024).

70. The Executive Order directs the DHS Secretary to "promptly take all appropriate action, consistent with law, to rescind the policy decisions of the previous administration that led to the increased or continued presence of illegal aliens in the United States," including by reviewing "designations of Temporary Protected Status." Invasion EO § 16(b). Although TPS holders are, by definition, lawfully present in the United States, the Executive Order demanded that TPS designations be "appropriately limited in scope" to restrict the "continued presence of illegal aliens[52] in the United States." *Id.*

71. Immediately after Defendant Noem was confirmed as Secretary of DHS, Defendants began to implement the Executive Order's mandate and several of Defendant Noem's termination orders rely explicitly on this order. In fact, when publicizing the Venezuela TPS vacatur described below, Defendant Noem explained that the vacatur reflected President

[52] "Illegal alien" is widely recognized as a derogatory term used to vilify and dehumanize non-white immigrants without lawful status (or people perceived as such). *See, e.g.*, Kai Wei, et al., *The Role of Language in Anti-Immigrant Prejudice: What Can We Learn from Immigrants' Historical Experiences?*, 8(3) SOC. SCIS. J. 1, 10–11 (2019), https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/8/3/93#B63-socsci-08-00093.
The administration's use of this term "conveys a message of rejection and exclusion" and further evinces its animus against non-white immigrants. *See also infra* ¶¶ 91-113.

Trump's "desire" to make sure TPS was "used properly," adding that "when the President gives a directive, the Department of Homeland Security will follow it."[53]

Venezuela

72. Within days of taking office, Defendant Noem made the unprecedented decision to *reverse* the prior Administration's extension of Venezuela's 2023 TPS designation.[54] The termination of Venezuelan TPS followed soon after. A federal court later found that Defendant Noem's official justification for her unprecedented vacatur was a pretext to cover "the desire to totally undo" the redesignation signed by then-Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.[55]

73. Secretary Noem's decision was not based on the statutorily required country conditions review. Rather, the limited review the agency conducted was designed to find support for a termination decision that had already been made. The hasty process Defendants' undertook for Venezuela illustrates the decision's pretextual nature; "just two days after a draft of the vacatur decision was prepared and/or circulated . . . a draft of the termination decision was prepared and/or circulation," indeed the termination notice was prepared "even *before* the

[53] Secretary Kristi Noem (@Sec_Noem), X (Jan. 29, 2025, 6:57 PM), https://x.com/sec_noem/status/1884752724194963594?s=46&t=DFMGDqrcqeJ4X9klKmN2s (statement appears in posted video clip from CNN interview).
[54] *See NTPSA I* PI Decision at 819–20.
[55] *Id.* at 855. This decision issuing preliminary relief was stayed by the Supreme Court in a non-precedential decision with no analysis. *See Noem v. Nat'l TPS All.*, 145 S. Ct. 2728 (2025). The Ninth Circuit later upheld the district court's preliminary relief decision in a detailed opinion, *Nat'l TPS All. v. Noem*, 150 F.4th 1000 (9th Cir. 2025), terminating the Supreme Court's stay, 145 S. Ct. at 2729. Meanwhile, the district court issued a decision on summary judgment in the same case, holding that plaintiffs had established that the agency's vacatur and termination decisions were unlawful and/or arbitrary and capricious. *Nat'l TPS All. v. Noem,* No. 25-CV-01766-EMC, 2025 WL 2578045 (N.D. Cal. Sep. 5, 2025) ("*NTPSA I* SJ Decision"). That merits decision was then stayed as to the vacatur by the Supreme Court in another non-precedential decision with no analysis. *Noem v. Nat'l TPS All.,* No. 25A326, 2025 WL 2812732, at *1 (U.S. Oct. 3, 2025).

vacatur decision was finalized," and "DHS staff was asked to 'focus on any improvements in Venezuela,' implicitly to advance and support termination of Venezuela's TPS."[56]

74. A comparison of Venezuela's two competing decision memos—dated only three weeks apart—is illustrative. USCIS's earlier decision memo, dated January 9, 2025, recommended extension, describing Venezuela's country conditions as a "complex, serious and multidimensional humanitarian crisis." In sharp contrast, USCIS's January 31, 2025 memo recommended termination and was terse. In justifying its recommendation, it focused on insignificant positive changes, including a "permit for [a U.S. corporation] to operate in Venezuela," while ignoring relevant country conditions the January 9th memo assessed, including food insecurity, political repression and human rights abuses, and restricted access to certain basic services.

75. Defendants could not even agree on a justification for terminating Venezuelan TPS. USCIS suggested—despite the absence of supporting evidence—that conditions in Venezuela had improved. Defendant Noem, however, based her decision primarily on national interest grounds, asserting that—because Venezuela was designated for TPS on the grounds of extraordinary and temporary conditions (rather than natural disaster or war)—she did not need to find improved conditions in order to terminate its TPS. Termination of the October 3, 2023 Designation of Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. 9,040, 9,042 ("[E]ven assuming the relevant conditions in Venezuela remain both 'extraordinary' and 'temporary,' termination of the 2023 Venezuela TPS designation is required because it is contrary to the national interest to permit the Venezuelan nationals . . . to remain temporarily in the United

[56] *NTPSA I* SJ Decision at *29 (emphasis added).

States."). The Venezuela termination was the first termination in the history of the TPS program based on national-interest grounds.

Haiti

76. Defendants targeted Haiti next. DHS partially vacated an existing TPS extension for Haiti and purported to retroactively shorten the expiration dates of all documents issued under the prior Secretary's extension by six months. Defendants' hasty and limited review process for Haiti mirrored that of Venezuela and, as a district court has found, similarly reflects Defendants' preordained plan to terminate TPS designations.[57]

77. Defendant Noem's press statement on Haiti's partial vacatur also underscores the pretextual nature of her decision. The release announced that Secretary Noem "vacated a decision by the previous administration to extend Haiti's [TPS] by 18 months" as "part of President Trump's promise to rescind policies that were magnets for illegal immigration and inconsistent with the law."[58] The press statement also referenced the recission of Venezuela's TPS extension, explicitly linking the two vacaturs as part of the same project to change "the TPS system."[59]

78. The justifications provided by Defendant Noem in the Federal Register for the partial vacatur of TPS for Haiti had no basis in the TPS statute and were inconsistent with the history of TPS decision-making. For example, Defendant Noem substantially based the vacatur decision on a critique of former DHS Secretary Mayorkas for purportedly failing to explain why

[57] *NTPSA I* SJ Decision at *34.
[58] Press Release, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec., Secretary Noem Rescinds Previous Administration's Extension of Haiti's Temporary Protected Status (Feb. 20, 2025), https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/02/20/secretary-noem-rescinds-extension-haitis-temporary-protected-status [hereinafter "Haiti Termination Press Release"].
[59] *Id*.

he chose an 18-month extension period or why extension and redesignation for Haiti's TPS were not contrary to the national interest. Partial Vacatur of 2024 Temporary Protected Status Decision for Haiti, 90 Fed. Reg. 10,511, 10,513–14 (Feb. 24, 2025). But as a federal district court found, "the absence of a specific justification for the length of a [TPS] extension" once that decision has been made, is neither "unusual or impermissible."[60] Similarly, "DHS Secretaries typically have not given explanations as to why allowing TPS holders to remain in the United States is not contrary to the national interest." *Id.* at *34. The court held that Defendants' decision "was preordained" and made without "any meaning[ful] analysis and review [of country conditions]." *Id.*

79. On June 27, 2025, Defendants terminated Haiti's TPS designation. Termination of the Designation of Haiti for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. 28,760 (July 1, 2025). Because Haiti, like Venezuela, was designated for TPS on the grounds of extraordinary and temporary conditions, the Secretary believed she could justify termination based solely on a finding that extension is not in the national interest. And that is what she did—claiming that crisis-level conditions actually *required* termination because continuing TPS for a country facing total societal collapse is contrary to the U.S. national interest. *Id.* at 28,763(terminating Haitian TPS despite acknowledging "[w]idespread gang violence … sustained by the country's lack of functional governmental authority" has "destabilized Haiti," and that "'Haiti in the grip of severe humanitarian and human rights crisis'"). Defendant Noem also identified the actions of one individual convicted of numerous violent crimes as "underscor[ing] the broader risk posed by

[60] *NTPSA I* SJ Decision at *33.

rising Haitian migration." DHS' press release, however, proclaimed that "country conditions have improved to the point where Haitians can return home in safety."[61]

Afghanistan

80. On May 12, 2025, DHS announced the termination of TPS for Afghanistan. Despite an ongoing State Department warning against any travel to the country "due to civil unrest, crime, terrorism, risk of wrongful detention, kidnapping, and limited health facilities,"[62] Defendant Noem claimed that conditions had "notabl[y] improve[d]." She cited the fact that only 23.7 million (rather than 29 million) Afghan nationals relied on humanitarian assistance to support the conclusion that "the return of Afghan nationals to Afghanistan does not pose a threat to their personal safety." Termination of the Designation of Afghanistan for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. 20,309, 20,310 (May 13, 2025). She also failed to address entire categories of conditions previously identified as bases for Afghanistan's TPS designation and prior extensions, including human rights abuses and the welfare of women and girls. *Compare* Extension and Redesignation of Afghanistan for Temporary Protected Status, 88 Fed. Reg. 65,728, 65,730–33 (Sept. 25, 2023), *with* Termination of the Designation of Afghanistan for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. at 20,310.

81. Defendant Noem also asserted that extending TPS would be contrary to the national interest. Her sole explanation for this conclusion was that "DHS records indicate that there are Afghan nationals who are TPS recipients who have been the subject of administrative

[61] *See DHS Terminates Haiti TPS, Encourages Haitians to Obtain Lawful Status*, U.S. Citizenship & Immigr. Serv., https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/dhs-terminates-haiti-tps-encourages-haitians-to-obtain-lawful-status.
[62] *Travel Advisory*, U.S. Dep't of State, https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Afghanistan.html.

investigations for fraud, public safety, and national security." Termination of the Designation of Afghanistan for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. at 20,311.

Cameroon

82. Defendants terminated TPS for Cameroon on June 4, 2025. Termination of the Designation of Cameroon for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. 23,697 (June 4, 2025). Cameroon had been designated for TPS because of the existence of armed conflict and extraordinary and temporary conditions. Defendant Noem issued the termination despite acknowledging that "Cameroon is experiencing two major conflicts" that "remain active." *Id*. at 23,698. Defendant Noem again failed to address conditions previously cited as a basis for TPS, including human rights abuses, food insecurity, a cholera epidemic, and ongoing mass displacement. *Compare* Extension and Redesignation of Cameroon for Temporary Protected Status, 88 Fed. Reg. 69,945 (Oct. 10, 2023), *with* Termination of the Designation of Cameroon for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. at 23,697. As with the other terminations, she insisted that continuing TPS would be "contrary to the national interest." Termination of the Designation of Cameroon for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. at 23,698. In this instance, Defendant Noem reached her conclusion based solely on the executive order directing her to limit TPS and President's Trump's broader "policy imperatives" related to immigration. *Id.*

Nepal

83. On June 6, 2025, Defendants terminated TPS for Nepal. Termination of the Designation of Nepal for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. 24,151 (June 6, 2025). Repeating the pattern developed in the prior terminations, Defendant Noem claimed that "notable improvements" justified ending Nepal's designation while ignoring entire categories of

conditions—such as widespread food insecurity and lack of access to sanitation—that DHS had previously considered. *Compare* Extension of the Temporary Protected Status Designation for Nepal, 88 Fed. Reg. 40,317 (June 21, 2023), *with* Termination of the Designation of Nepal for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. at 24,151.

Honduras and Nicaragua

84. On July 8, 2025, Defendants announced the termination of TPS for Honduras and Nicaragua. Termination of the Designation of Honduras for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. 30,089 (July 8, 2025) ("Honduras Termination Notice"); Termination of the Designation of Nicaragua for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. 30,087 (July, 8, 2025) ("Nicaragua Termination Notice"). These notices came two days after the expiration of the most recent previous extension for each country and were thus untimely. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(B).

85. The Honduras Termination Notice cites to the Invasion E.O., noting that "the Secretary should … ensur[e] that designations of Temporary Protected Status . . . are appropriately limited in scope and made for only so long as may be necessarily to fulfill the textual requirements of that statute."[63]

86. Repeating the pattern developed in the prior terminations, Secretary Noem identified certain positive indicators—such as increasing tourism and real estate investment—while ignoring major categories of conditions that had previously been considered, including "political violence" and "staggering levels of crime" with "[g]angs that originated in the United States . . . la[ying] siege to communities and . . . plung[ing] the country into a state of crisis." Extension of the Temporary Protected Status Designation for Honduras, 88 Fed. Reg. 40,304 (June 21, 2023) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted); *see* Honduras Termination

[63] Honduras Termination Notice, n.10.

Notice (not addressing political violence or crime). The Nicaragua Termination Notice similarly relies on the Invasion E.O.[64] It recognizes that "certain conditions for the TPS designation of Nicaragua may continue," but nonetheless terminates Nicaragua's designation on the ground that "notable improvements … allow Nicaragua to adequately handle the return of its nationals." Nicaragua Termination Notice, at 30,088. The Termination Notice fails to acknowledge or consider numerous categories of conditions that formed the basis of prior extensions, including "political instability," a "deteriorat[ing]" "human rights situation," and a related "humanitarian crisis."[65]

87. In finding that Honduras and Nicaragua can "handle adequately the return" of their nationals, *see* 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1)(B), Secretary Noem adopted a new definition of "adequate," defining the term to mean "[s]atisfactory, but worthy of no stronger praise or recommendation; barely reaching an acceptable standard; just good enough."[66]

88. Discovery produced in litigation challenging Defendants' termination of TPS for Nepal, Honduras and Nicaragua[67] confirms that USCIS drafted decision memoranda recommending termination for Honduras and Nicaragua *before* drafters had reviewed USCIS country conditions reports—and for Nepal and Nicaragua, without ever receiving any recommendation or contemporaneous conditions report from the State Department. This process violated the statutory directives to engage in interagency consultation and further evidences Defendants' ends-oriented approach.

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[64] Nicaragua Termination Notice, n.4.
[65] Extension of the Temporary Protected Status Designation for Nicaragua, 88 Fed. Reg. 40,294, 40,300. *See* Nicaragua Termination Notice (failing to address the political or humanitarian situation).
[66] *See* Honduras Termination Notice at n.23; Nicaraguan Termination Notice at n.14.
[67] *See Nat'l TPS All. v. Noem*, No. 25-cv-05687-TLT (N.D. Cal. Aug. 21, 2025) ("*NTPSA II*").

89. In another break with past practice, Secretary Noem provided that, for every country whose TPS designation was terminated (Venezuela, Haiti, Cameroon, Afghanistan, Nepal, Nicaragua, and Honduras), the TPS termination would take effect in 60 days—the minimum period permitted under the TPS statute. 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(B).

90. With the exception of Afghanistan, Cameroon, and Venezuela,[68] each terminated country had been designated since at least 2015. Rather than demonstrating awareness of DHS's longstanding practice of providing at least a six-month orderly transition period when ending a TPS designation of substantial length, the Secretary denied that there was any such practice. *See* Termination of the Designation of Nepal for Temporary Protected Status, 90 Fed. Reg. at 24,153–54 n.24. While acknowledging "that certain previous TPS terminations allowed for an extended transition," she noted that "certain other TPS designations were terminated without allowing for an extended transition period," indicating her view that the agency had no particular practice. *Id.* That is incorrect. DHS maintained a clear practice over the past twenty years of providing at least a six-month orderly transition period for any TPS termination, and even before that had provided at least a six-month transition for any country designated for TPS for more than three years.

SECRETARY NOEM AND PRESIDENT TRUMP EXPRESSED DISCRIMINATORY ANIMUS TOWARDS NON-WHITE, NON-EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS

91. President Trump, Secretary Noem, and other members of the Trump Administration have built their political platforms and public-facing personas on unabashed animus toward non-white people, particularly non-white immigrants. This animus significantly motivated the Trump Administration's plan to end TPS designations and is evidenced by

[68] Afghanistan and Cameroon were initially designated in 2022 and Venezuela was initially designated in 2021.

numerous statements made by Defendant Noem, President Trump, and other Administration officials. A limited number of those statements are described herein.

92. Members of the Trump Administration have publicly expressed strong biases against Syrians, communities in the Middle East that encompass Syria, and other Muslim-majority countries.

93. At a campaign event in Iowa in October 2023, President Trump boasted of his successes at excluding non-white migrants, defending his Administration's travel ban for Muslim-majority countries as:

> [T]otally constitutional because we want to keep bad people out that want to destroy our country. . . . I banned refugees from Syria. I banned refugees from Somalia, very dangerous places, and from all of the most dangerous places all over the world . . .[I]n my second term, we're going to expand each and every one of those bans because we have no choice. Some very rough people, some very, very rough people come out of these areas. They want to blow up our country. We aren't bringing in anyone from Gaza, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, or Libya or anywhere else that threatens our security.[69]

Throughout his campaign, President Trump repeated similar statements, depicting people from Muslim-majority countries as "dangerous terrorists."[70]

94. In April 2024, at a speech to law enforcement officials in Grand Rapids, Michigan, President Trump claimed that immigrants have "wrecked our country," claiming that other countries were "sending prisoners, murderers, drug dealers, mental patients, and terrorists. .

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[69] *Speech: Donald Trump Holds a Campaign Event in Clive, Iowa - October 16, 2023*, ROLL CALL, https://rollcall.com/factbase/trump/transcript/donald-trump-speech-campaign-event-clive-iowa-october-16-2023/#101.

[70] *See also Speech: Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Robstown, Texas - October 22, 2022*, ROLL CALL, ("They include Syria, Somalia, Yemen, Russia, China, Iran, all of Africa. They're storming our country. They're storming our borders. We have no idea who they are, where they come from.") https://rollcall.com/factbase/trump/transcript/donald-trump-speech-political-rally-robstown-texas-october-22-2022/#20.

. this isn't just in South America. They're coming from Congo, from Yemen, from Somalia, from Syria."[71]

95. In his Republican Convention speech in July 2024, President Trump, repeating the invasion talking point, stated: "The greatest invasion in history is taking place right here in our country. They are coming in from every corner of the earth, not just from South America, but from Africa, Asia, Middle East. . . . They're coming at levels that we've never seen before. . . . and [the Biden] administration does absolutely nothing to stop them."[72]

96. At a rally in Arizona in August of 2024, President Trump described immigrants as "mak[ing] our criminals look like the nicest people on earth. That's how tough they are. They come from the Middle East. They come from areas that we're fighting. They come from enemy terrain."[73]

97. In June 2025, ICE Director Todd Lyons insinuated that Syrians, Iranians, and Somalians as a whole posed threats to national security, warning that the public was "going to see an uptick in Syrian arrests, Somalis, anyone that pose [*sic*] that national security threat."[74]

98. Stephen Miller has long expressed support for white nationalism, has "promoted white nationalist literature," and "pushed racist immigration stories" to the media.[75] As an

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[71] *Speech: Donald Trump Addresses Law Enforcement Officials in Grand Rapids - April 2, 2024*, ROLL CALL, https://rollcall.com/factbase/trump/transcript/donald-trump-speech-law-enforcement-officials-grand-rapids-michigan-april-2-2024/.
[72] *Read the Transcript of Donald J. Trump's Convention Speech*, N.Y. TIMES (July 19, 2024), https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/19/us/politics/trump-rnc-speech-transcript.html.
[73] *Speech: Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Glendale, Arizona - August 23, 2024*, ROLL CALL, https://rollcall.com/factbase/trump/transcript/donald-trump-speech-political-rally-glendale-arizona-august-23-2024/#90.
[74] Ali Bradley & Jeff Arnaold, *Iranian nationals part of larger ICE enforcement focus: Lyons*, NEWSNATION (June 26, 2025), https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/immigration/iranian-nationals-ice-enforcement-lyons/.
[75] Michael Edison Hayden, *Stephen Miller's Affinity for White Nationalism Revealed in Leaked Emails*, SOTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER (Nov. 12, 2019).

undergrad student at Duke, Miller was the national coordinator for a "Terrorism Awareness Project" whose mission was to "make our fellow students aware of the Islamic jihad and the terrorist threat, and to mobilize support for the defense of America and the civilization of the West."[76] Miller also lauded historical immigration laws that imposed quotas based on racist assumptions.[77]

99. Consistent with the support of Miller and other Administration officials for white nationalism, the so-called "replacement theory" is a unifying theme of the Trump Administration's racist statements and immigration policies. This conspiracy theory turns on the idea that non-white immigrants will "replace" the white race, and in doing so undermine the country's perceived white foundation, history, and culture.[78] Secretary Noem has endorsed this core premise, describing irregular immigration across the U.S.-Mexico border as an "invasion happening on purpose … to remake the foundation of this country."[79]

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https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2019/11/12/stephen-millers-affinity-white-nationalism-revealed-leaked-emails.

[76] Andrew Kaczynski & Chris Massie, *In college, Trump aide Stephen Miller led controversial 'Terrorism Awareness Project' warning of 'Islamofascism'*, CNN (Feb. 15, 2017, 3:40 PM), https://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/15/politics/kfile-stephen-miller-terrorism-awareness; *see also* Nicole Narea, *Stephen Miller Sought to Link Immigrants to Crime and Terrorism in Private Emails to Breitbart,* VOX (Nov. 25, 2019), https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/11/12/20961458/stephen-miller-white-supremacist-anti-immigrant-emails-breitbart-southern-poverty-law-center.

[77] Adam Serwer, *Trump's White-Nationalist Vanguard*, THE ATLANTIC (Nov. 19, 2019), https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/11/stephen-miller-alarming-emails/602242/ ("A cache of Miller's emails . . . show Miller praising racist immigration reactions from a century ago, while bitterly lamenting the law that repealed them.").

[78] *See The 'Great Replacement' Theory, Explained*, National Immigration Forum, https://immigrationforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Replacement-Theory-Explainer-1122.pdf.

[79] *South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem Calls on Nikki Haley to Exit 2024 Race*, CBS NEWS (Mar. 5, 2024), https://www.cbsnews.com/video/kristi-noem-calls-on-nikki-haley-to-exit-2024-race/ (at approximately 4:57).

100. DHS recently posted a one-word tweet: "Remigrate."[80] This word "refer[s] to the mass deportation of non-white immigrants," "has ties to white nationalism and has been seen as a euphemism for ethnic cleansing."[81] Consistent with the so-called "replacement" theory, President Trump and members of his Administrations have long expressed animus against non-white immigrants in general and non-white TPS-holders in particular.

101. On September 23, 2025, President Trump used his platform at the U.N. General Assembly to critique the United Nations' humanitarian aid for migrants as "funding an assault on Western countries and their borders," railing that "immigration and their suicidal energy ideas will be the death of Western Europe."[82]

102. Secretary Noem has repeatedly described non-white, non-European immigrants as "dirt bags"[83] and TPS holders as criminals.

103. In many comments between February 2024 through the present, Secretary Noem has "equated Venezuelan immigrants and/or TPS holders with gang members, criminals, mentally unstable persons, and the like." *NTPSA I* PI Decision at *39–45 (finding Plaintiffs likely to succeed on their claim that the Secretary's decision to vacate and terminate Venezuela's

[80] Homeland Security (@DHSgov), X (Oct. 14, 2025, 3:06 PM), https://x.com/DHSgov/status/1978175527329358094.
[81] Connor Greene, *Trump's Department of Homeland Security Embraces a Word with Ties to White Nationalism*, TIME (Oct. 16, 2025), https://time.com/7326233/trump-remigrate-homeland-security/.
[82] *Trump Speaks at U.N.*, REV, https://www.rev.com/transcripts/trump-speaks-at-un.
[83] Secretary Kristi Noem (@Sec_Noem), X (Jan. 28, 2025, 7:35 AM), https://x.com/Sec_Noem/status/1884264039158800547 ("Getting the dirt bags off the streets."); CBS Mornings (@CBSMornings), *DHS Secretary Kristi Noem Joins Federal Agents on Immigration Raids in New York*, YouTube (Jan. 29, 2025), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tODarHnNiNs ("These guys are dirtbags. They have come in and perpetuated violence in this country."). The CBS reporter who accompanied Secretary Noem on New York City raids she references reported that nearly half of those arrested had no criminal history.

TPS designation was motivated by animus in violation of the Constitution); *see also*, Homeland Security (@DHSgov), X (May 19, 2025, 5:18 PM), https://x.com/DHSgov/status/1924575437344186612 (criticizing the TPS program for allegedly facilitating the entrance of "half a million poorly vetted migrants into this country—from MS-13 gang members to known terrorists and murderers," even though TPS is available only to individuals who are already present in the United States and anyone with more than a single misdemeanor conviction is ineligible for protection).

104. President Trump has repeatedly conflated immigrants with "criminals, gang members and terrorists."[84] At a rally one week before the 2024 election, President Trump described the country as "occupied," and as "invaded and conquered" by criminal immigrants.[85]

105. While campaigning in 2023, President Trump repeatedly said that non-white, non-European, and non-Christian immigrants are "poisoning the blood of our country."[86] Similar phrases pepper discussions of Jewish people in Adolf Hitler's infamous book *Mein Kampf*.[87] President Trump also has repeatedly "retweeted" avowed white nationalists, such as

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[84] *See, e.g.*, Donald Trump, *Donald Trump: This Is How I Will End Joe Biden's Border Disaster on Day One*, DES MOINES REGISTER (Jan. 3, 2024), https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/columnists/caucus/2024/01/03/donald-trump-joe-biden-border-disaster/72093156007/; *Read the Full Transcripts of Donald Trump's Interviews with TIME*, TIME (Apr. 2024), https://time.com/6972022/donald-trump-transcript-2024-election/ ("This is an invasion of our country. An invasion like probably no country has ever seen before. They're coming in by the millions.").

[85] *FULL* LiveNOW from FOX (@kivenowfox), *SPEECH: Trump holds MSG rally in NYC*, YouTube(Oct. 27, 2024), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzVT4YEYsuI (Speech by Donald Trump at Madison Square Garden presidential campaign rally, at approximately 16:13).

[86] *Donald Trump on Illegal Immigrants 'Poisoning the Blood of Our Country"*, C-SPAN (Dec. 16, 2023), https://www.c-span.org/clip/campaign-2024/donald-trump-on-illegal-immigrants-poisoning-the-blood-of-our-country/5098439 (at approximately 00:15); Raheem J. Kassam (@RaheemKassam), *Raheem Kassam Interviews Donald Trump*, YouTube (Sept. 2023), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v283kLQbe1M&t=89s (at approximately 1:34 to 1:45).

[87] *See* ADOLF HITLER, MEIN KEMPF (1943).

@WhiteGenocideTM, and publicly dined with prominent, self-declared white supremacists, thereby endorsing their racist views and amplifying their racist message.[88]

106. In October 2024, during an interview with conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt, President Trump further emphasized his belief about the genetic inferiority of non-white, non-European immigrants. Speaking about "allowing people to come to an open border," he said, "many of them murdered far more than one person, and they're now happily living in the United States. You know now a murderer, I believe this, it's in their genes. And we got a lot of bad genes in our country right now."[89] By contrast, he told a predominately white crowd at a campaign rally in Minnesota that they have "good genes."[90]

107. President Trump has used overtly dehumanizing rhetoric to described non-white, non-European immigrants, referring to them as "animals,"[91] including snakes that will bite and kill anyone foolish enough to shelter them.[92] When discussing undocumented immigrants during

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[88] Benjy Sarlin, *Donald Trump Retweets Apparent Neo-Nazi Supporter*, NBC NEWS (Jan. 22, 2016), https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/donald-trump-tweets-apparent-neo-nazi-supporter-n502136; Eric Lichtblau, *OPINION: Trump amplifies racist lies, giving neo-Nazis 'real power.' Where are GOP leaders?* USA TODAY (Sept. 23, 2024), https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2024/09/23/trump-far-right-haitian-immigrants-springfield/75301951007/.

[89] Jack Traylor et al., *Trump Suggests Immigrants Have 'Bad Genes' in Latest Disparagement of Migrants*, NBC NEWS (Oct. 7, 2024), https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trumpsuggests-immigrants-bad-genes-latest-disparagement-migrants-rcna174271.

[90] *Id*.

[91] Miriam Valverde, *In Context: Donald Trump's comments about immigrations, 'animals,'* POLITIFACT (May 17, 2018), https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2018/may/17/context-donald-trumps-comments-about-immigrants-an/ (relying on MS-13 to claim that undocumented immigrants "aren't people. These are animals.").

[92] *See, e.g.*, Dara Lind, *"The Snake": Donald Trump Brings Back His Favorite Anti-Immigrant Fable at CPAC*, VOX (Feb. 23, 2018), www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/2/23/17044744/trump-snake-speech-cpac; *see also* Julie Hirschfeld Davis, *Trump Calls Some Unauthorized Immigrants 'Animals' in Rant*, N.Y. TIMES (May 16, 2018), www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/us/politics/trump-undocumented-immigrants-animals.html; *see also* John Bennett, *"Dumping Ground": Trump Echoes Conservative "Project 2025" at First Rally as Felon*, ROLL CALL (June 10, 2024), https://rollcall.com/2024/06/10/dumping-ground-

a March 2024 rally, he stated, "I don't know if you call them people. In some cases they're not people, in my opinion, but I'm not allowed to say that[.]"[93]

108. He has also specifically targeted non-white TPS holders. For months, he repeated and amplified the false claim that Haitian TPS holders were "eating the dogs" "eating the cats," and "eating the pets of the people that live" in Springfield, Ohio.[94] President Trump called Haitians in Springfield with lawful TPS status "illegal migrant[s]" who "descended upon a town of 58,000 people, destroying their way of life."[95] Following these statements, there were several bomb threats against hospitals, government buildings, and schools in Springfield.[96]

109. Vice President Vance has unapologetically repeated these knowing unfounded rumors, stating that if he "ha[s] to create stories" about Haitian migrants "so that the American media actually pays attention to the suffering of the American people, then that's what I'm going

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trump-echoes-conservative-project-2025-at-first-rally-as-a-felon/ ("[W]e're taking in people that are a disaster for our country. So it's all happening at our border. . . . And we're not going to let it happen, we're not going to let them ruin our country, we're not going to let them destroy our country. . . . The whole country is being turned into an absolute dumping ground[.]").

[93] Ariana Figueroa, *Trump Promises Mass Deportations of Undocumented People. How Would That Work?*, MISSOURI INDEPENDENT (Aug. 23, 2024), https://missouriindependent.com/2024/08/23/trump-promises-mass-deportations-of-undocumented-people-how-would-that-work/.

[94] *See, e.g.*, *Simulcast – ABC News Presidential Debate*, C-SPAN (Sept. 10, 2024), https://www.c-span.org/program/campaign-2024/simulcast-abc-news-presidential-debate/648383 (at approximately 29:26).

[95] Sam Levine, *'They've Destroyed the Place': Trump Repeats Racist, Anti-immigrant Lies*, THE GUARDIAN (Sept. 13, 2024), https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/sep/13/trump-repeats-lies-haitian-immigrants; *see also* Damita Menezes & Ali Bradley, *Trump on Springfield Haitian Migrants: 'They Have to Be Removed,'* NEWSNATION (Oct. 2, 2024), https://www.newsnationnow.com/politics/2024-election/trump-springfield-haitian-migrants-removed/ (at approximately 12:45, "Springfield is such a beautiful place. Have you seen what's happened to it? It's been overrun. You can't do that to people. . . . I'd revoke [TPS], and I'd bring [the migrants] back to their country.").

[96] Edward Helmore, *More bomb threats hit Springfield, Ohio, after Trump elevates false claims about Haitians*, THE GUARDIAN (Sept. 14, 2024), https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/sep/14/more-bomb-threats-hit-springfield-ohio-after-trump-elevates-false-claims-about-haitians.

to do."[97] Additionally, Vice President Vance disparaged Haitian TPS holders with longstanding stereotypes[98] of immigrants as dangerous criminals and spreaders of disease. He accused Haitians in Springfield of triggering "a massive rise in communicable diseases, rent prices, car insurance rates, and crime," stating "[t]his is what happens when you drop 20,000 people into a small community."[99] He specifically stated that Haitians caused "TB and HIV" to be "on the rise."[100]

110. During his First Administration, President Trump repeatedly denigrated immigrants from countries designated for TPS. Most infamously, he referred to countries designated for TPS as "shithole" countries in a conversation with legislators about TPS, saying "Why do we need more Haitians?" He asked officials to "take them out" of the immigration proposal. He expressed a preference, instead, for immigrants from countries "such as Norway."[101]

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[97] Kit Maher & Chris Boyette, *JD Vance Defends Baseless Rumor About Haitian Immigrants Eating Pets*, CNN (Sept. 15, 2024), https://www.cnn.com/2024/09/15/politics/vance-immigrants-pets-springfield-ohio-cnntv/index.html; *see also* Rachel Leingang, *Republicans spread baseless slurs about 'cat-eating migrants' in Ohio city*, THE GUARDIAN (Sept. 9, 2024), https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/sep/09/republicans-haitian-migrants-pets-wildlife-ohio.

[98] Expert Declaration of Elliott Young in Support of Plaintiff's Motion to Postpone Effective Date of Agency Action ¶¶ 20, 22, 23, 25, *NTPSA I*, 2025 WL 2578045 (No. 25-CV-01766-EMC) (expert declaration of Professor Elliott Young tracing the historical use of these tropes).

[99] JD Vance (@JDVance), X (Sept. 13, 2024, 9:25 AM), https://x.com/jdvance/status/1834584115825226087?s=46; *see also* WCNC (@WCNC), *JD Vance Has Heated Exchange Over Claims Migrants Are Eating Pets in Ohio*, YouTube (Sept. 11, 2024), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqjLoSNkyDs ("That small migrant community has caused a lot of problems. It's led to higher rates of communicable diseases, that's a verifiable fact. It's led to animals disappearing, many of my constituents have said that has been happening.").

[100] JD Vance (@JDVance), X (Sept. 10, 2024, 9:58 AM), https://x.com/jdvance/status/1833505359513661762?s=46.

[101] Josh Dawsey, *Trump derides protections for immigrants from 'shithole' countries*, WASH. POST (Jan. 12, 2018), https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-attacks-protections-for-

111. During his recent campaign, President Trump doubled down on these remarks, reiterating comparisons between "nice countries, you know like Denmark, Switzerland" and "Norway," and "unbelievable places and countries, countries that are a disaster," when speaking about immigrants.[102]

112. President Trump has stated that Venezuelans have "destroyed the fabric of our country."[103] In 2024 he asserted that, "[e]very day, Americans . . . are living in fear all because [former Vice President] Kamala Harris decided to empty the slums and prison cells of Caracas [,Venezuela] and many other places . . . . And we have to live with these animals, but we're not going to live with them for long, you watch."[104] He also stated that he was "talking a lot about Venezuela because Aurora[,Colorado] is really *infected* by Venezuela."[105] One analysis by Axios

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immigrants-from-shithole-countries-in-oval-office-meeting/2018/01/11/bfc0725c-f711-11e7-91af-31ac729add94_story.html?utm_term=.06cbc70bfaec.

[102] Maggie Haberman & Michael Gold, *Trump, at Fund-Raiser, Says He Wants Immigrants from 'Nice' Countries*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 7, 2024), https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/07/us/politics/trump-immigrants-nice-countries.html ("These are people coming in from prisons and jails. They're coming in from just unbelievable places and countries, countries that are a disaster.").

[103] *See also Simulcast – ABC News Presidential Debate*, C-SPAN (Sept. 10, 2024), https://www.c-span.org/program/campaign-2024/simulcast-abc-news-presidential-debate/648383 (at approximately 33:40, "They allowed people to come in, drug dealers, to come into our country, and they're now in the United States. And told by their countries like Venezuela don't ever come back or we're going to kill you. . . . There's never been anything done like this at all. They've destroyed the fabric of our country. Millions of people let in.").

[104] FOX 4 Dallas-Fort Worth (@fox4news), *Trump rally in Aurora, Colorado: FULL SPEECH*, YouTube (Oct. 12, 2024), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xguaneoZ5A (at approximately 41:05); *see also* NBC News (@NBCNews), *Meet the Press full broadcast — Dec. 8*, YouTube (Dec. 8, 2024), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UsHJWEAj_I (at approximately 8:52, "Did you know that Venezuela their prisons are . . . at the lowest point in terms of emptiness that they've ever been? They're taking their people out of those prisons by the thousands and they're drop—."); Fox News (@FoxNews), *Donald Trump delivers remarks at rally in Reading, PA*, YouTube (Oct. 9, 2024), https://www.youtube.com/live/QuoT6T3fbU0?t=1791s (at approximately 29:55, 30:07, similar).

[105] FOX 4 Dallas-Fort Worth (@fox4news), *Trump rally in Aurora, Colorado: FULL SPEECH*, YouTube (Oct. 12, 2024), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xguaneoZ5A (emphasis added) (at approximately 43:15).

of 109 of President Trump's speeches, debates, and interviews found that he called Venezuelan immigrants "criminals" at least seventy times between September 1, 2023 and October 2, 2024.[106]

113. In March 2025, the Trump Administration dramatically escalated its rhetoric and actions against Venezuelans, relying on purported Tren de Aragua ("TdA")[107] membership as justification for deporting more than 200 Venezuelans to an infamous Salvadoran terrorist detention center, in apparent violation of a court order.[108] The Administration cited the Alien Enemies Act—a 1798 law that facilitates deportation during wartime—despite the lack of armed conflict between Venezuela and the United States. In a March 15, 2025 "Proclamation"—"Invocation of the Alien Enemies Act Regarding the Invasion of the United States by Tren de Aragua"—President Trump asserted that TdA members "are conducting irregular warfare and undertaking hostile actions against the United States" and proclaimed them "Alien Enemies" subject to immediate and summary apprehension, detention, and removal if they are not U.S.

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[106] Russell Contreras et al., *Trump keeps calling Venezuelan and Congolese migrants criminals*, AXIOS (Oct. 5, 2024), https://www.axios.com/2024/10/05/trump-migrants-venezuelan-congolese-rhetoric.

[107] Tren de Aragua reportedly is a criminal group with origins in a Venezuelan prison and whose operations extend past the country. *See* John Otis, *Tren de Aragua—all you need to know about the Venezuelan Gang*, NPR (Mar. 16, 2025), https://www.npr.org/2025/03/16/nx-s1-5329777/tren-de-aragua-all-you-need-to-know-about-the-venezuelan-gang.

[108] *President Trump Delivers Justice to Terrorists, Security for Americans*, THE WHITE HOUSE (Mar. 17, 2025), https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/03/president-trump-delivers-justice-for-terrorists-security-for-americans/#:~:text=America%20First%20Legal%3A%20%E2%80%9CPresident%20Trump,the%20country's%20maximum%2Dsecurity%20prison ("America First Legal: "President Trump has deported 238 criminals in the violent Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua to El Salvador to be imprisoned in CECOT, the country's maximum-security prison."); Nicholas Riccardi & Regina Garcia Cano, *Trump administration deports hundreds of immigrants even as a judge orders their removals be stopped*, AP (Mar. 17, 2025), https://apnews.com/article/trump-venezuela-el-salvador-immigration-dd4f61999f85c4dd8bcaba7d4fc7c9af.

citizens or lawful permanent residents.[109] President Trump applauded the deportations on social media, using dehumanizing language. He posted a video of deported Venezuelans being roughly hustled off a plane in El Salvador in the dark of night, bent over, amid a massive security presence, describing the Venezuelans as "monsters."[110]

114. In stark contrast, the Trump Administration has shown a strong bias in favor of immigrant populations perceived as white. On February 7, 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order No. 14204, *Addressing Egregious Actions of the Republic of South Africa*, which directs Secretary Noem (among others) to:

> [T]ake appropriate steps, consistent with law, to prioritize humanitarian relief, including admission and resettlement through the United States Refugee Admissions Program, for Afrikaners in South Africa who are victims of unjust racial discrimination.[111]

HARMS CAUSED BY DEFENDANTS' TERMINATION OF TPS FOR SYRIA

Harms to TPS Holders and Their Families

115. Defendants' decision to terminate TPS for Syria would strip TPS status from more than 6,100 Syrians and prevent over 800 Syrian nationals with pending applications from securing protection. Many of these individuals have lived in the United States for close to or over a decade, have children or close relatives who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents, and are deeply embedded in their communities. Should Defendants' biased and unlawful termination stand, the harm caused by that action would be massive.

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[109] Proclamation by the President, Invocation of the Alien Enemies Act Regarding the Invasion of the United States by Tren de Aragua (Mar. 15, 2025), https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/invocation-of-the-alien-enemies-act-regarding-the-invasion-of-the-united-states-by-tren-de-aragua/.
[110] Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), TRUTH (Mar. 16, 2025), https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114173862724361939.
[111] Exec. Order No. 14204, 90 Fed. Reg. 9497, 9497 (Feb. 12, 2025).

116. With the loss of their legal status, Syrian TPS holders may face imminent detention and/or deportation and must make the impossible choice whether to relocate to a country in dire humanitarian crisis and at the peak of political transition, remain in the United States without lawful immigration status, or uproot themselves once again to find refuge in a third country.

117. Some TPS holders may currently be seeking other legal avenues to remain in this country (such as asylum, adjustment of status, or employment-based nonimmigrant status). However, due to the years-long asylum backlog, affirmative asylum applications remain long pending and do not guarantee protection from either detention or deportation in the interim. Defendants' actions also threaten detention and deportation for TPS holders who do not presently have alternative paths to legal status, even though TPS was established expressly to serve this population—individuals who cannot safely return to Syria but may not fit the specific legal requirements of asylum. The loss of TPS in some instances also limits the possibility of acquiring an alternative legal status for which an individual would otherwise be eligible, but for which present legal status is a prerequisite.[112] TPS holders who lose their status may also face a years-long statutory bar to re-entry whether they depart on their own or are deported.[113]

118. TPS holders who may be entitled to a fear-based form of immigration relief—such as withholding of removal or protection pursuant to the Convention Against Torture—face the prospect of deportation to unsafe countries. The government has sought to remove people to third countries "without adequate notice and a 'meaningful opportunity' to present a claim under

[112] *See Temporary Protected Status: An Overview*, AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL (June 2025), Temporary-Protected-Status-An-Overview-0925.pdf (noting some TPS recipients may be eligible to adjust status).
[113] 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(9)(A)(ii), (B)(i)(II).

the Convention," even if they may be subject to a fear-based form of relief. *Dep't of Homeland Sec. v. D.V.D.*, 145 S. Ct. 2153, 2155 (2025) (Sotomayor, J. dissenting). While this issue is being litigated, the Supreme Court has allowed such third-country removals to move forward, including to South Sudan. *Id*.

119. TPS holders also face the prospect of losing employment authorization. This may result in their summary dismissal from their jobs, jeopardizing their and their families' financial stability. Without stable employment, some TPS holders risk losing their homes or other material assets, leading to further economic harm. Many TPS holders also face the imminent loss of their driver's licenses (or state identification cards) and, with them, their mobility and freedom of movement, because in many states driver's licenses and state-issued identification are limited to those with legal immigration status.[114] In addition, because the Secretary's termination goes into effect so quickly, TPS holders have been afforded almost no time to make alternative arrangements for themselves and their families, including by applying for other forms of immigration relief, employment authorization, or driver's licenses for which they may be eligible.

120. Compounding the destabilizing harms of loss of legal status, employment authorization, and driver's licenses and state identification cards are the severe risks of family separation, loss of healthcare, psychological harm, and stigma.

121. The loss of legal status renders TPS holders vulnerable to separation from U.S. citizen children and other loved ones. There are many Syrian TPS holders in mixed-status families—with children, spouses, partners, elderly parents, and other family members who are

[114] *See, e.g.*, *REAL ID Checklist*, California DMV, https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/driver-licenses-identification-cards/real-id/real-id-checklist/ (listing documents showing immigration status as requirements for REAL ID driver's licenses).

U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, or who hold other forms of lawful status. These TPS holders face the risk of being forced to leave their family members behind or bringing their U.S. citizen children (or other family members) to a country that is unsafe and in dire straits, where the children have never lived and, in many cases, have never even visited.

122. TPS holders and their families will be deprived of employer-sponsored health insurance and in some cases public health care. Despite having paid into Social Security for decades, in many cases, TPS holders also face the loss of this crucial benefit.

123. Meanwhile, the fear of deportation inflicts severe psychological harm on TPS holders and their loved ones. Syrian TPS holders have been experiencing tremendous emotional and psychological harm since the challenged decision was announced, resulting in heightened anxiety, trauma, insomnia, and depression. The psychological harms resulting from Defendants' actions will only intensify as the effective date approaches.

124. TPS holders have also suffered the additional constitutional harm of being subject to an agency action motivated by racial, ethnic, or national-origin discrimination.

Harms to the Named Plaintiffs

125. Dahlia Doe is a Syrian national in her 20s. She has lived in the United States since 2015 and currently lives in Bronx, New York. She has had TPS since 2021. Dahlia grew up outside of Syria and came to the United States to pursue a bachelor's degree in business. All of her immediate family members are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents. Dahlia provides crucial financial and emotional support for her elderly U.S. citizen father who suffers from Parkinson's disease.

126. Dahlia has invested significant time and energy into her career as a market researcher. Over the last 6 years, she has climbed the ranks of her profession and now serves as a

research director at her place of employment, where she manages and mentors several of her colleagues. Without TPS, Dahlia will lose her legal status and fears her job and career will be compromised.

127. Dahlia also fears separation from her immediate family in the United States and forcible return to Syria. Dahlia has never lived in Syria and has no remaining family connections to Syria. As a Syrian-Christian—a minority in Syria—Dahlia would also be a target for violence against minority communities in the country.[115]

128. Sara Doe is a Syrian national who has had TPS since 2015. She has lived in the United States since 2014 and currently lives in New York state. Sara came to the United States from Aleppo—one of the cities most devastated by the civil war—after her brothers were killed. Following targeted threats from the Assad regime on account of her work in the medical field, Sara fled Syria to seek safety and rebuild her life in the United States.

129. Sara is licensed to practice medicine in the United States and is highly sought after in her field. She leads a team of specialists treating children with serious heart issues.

130. Without TPS, Sara risks losing work authorization and, with it, her ability to practice medicine and treat her patients—work to which she has dedicated her life and for which she was targeted in Syria. Given the short notice of termination, she will not be able to pursue an employment-based change of status applications if TPS ends, which would require her to maintain lawful status until the start date of her new status.

[115] *See, e.g.*, *European Parliament resolution of 10 July 2025 on the urgent need to protect religious minorities in Syria following recent terrorist attack on Mar Elias Church in Damascus*, European Parliament, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0163_EN.html.

131. Sara fears for her safety and well-being if she is forced to return to Syria. Aleppo, where she lived before coming to the United States, continues to be a site of armed conflict and lacks basic infrastructure. Given the destruction of the medical system in Syria, Sara fears she will not be able to find employment in her specialty, or in any medical field, if she is deported. Sara has no close family ties in Syria because her family was killed and her house in Aleppo was destroyed. After losing her immediate family to the civil war, she now faces forcible separation from her extended family in the United States, who are U.S. citizens and have served as her support system as she built a new life.

132. Nesma Doe is a Syrian national who has had TPS since 2013. She is in her late 70s and has been living in the United States since 2013. She currently lives in Florida. Nesma fled violence in Syria and sought safety in the United States, where her U.S. citizen siblings have been living for decades. Nesma has significant medical issues, including chronic lung disease, thyroid issues, and arthritis, and she has undergone knee-replacement and shoulder-replacement surgeries.

133. If TPS is terminated, Nesma will lose her status and protection from deportation. Since the announcement of the end of TPS, Nesma has already encountered issues renewing her driver's license, which is her only form of identification. She will also lose her medical insurance and access to necessary medications and medical care.

134. If forcibly returned to Syria, Nesma will not be able to obtain the medical treatment she requires, as the Syrian health-care system has largely collapsed and services are not readily available. Nesma would also be separated from her family, who all live in the United States, including two nieces who serve as her primary caregivers. She has no family in Syria who

could take care of her. As an elderly woman, she faces increased risk of being targeted for crime in Syria.

135. Laila Doe is in her 40s and is a Syrian national. She has both lived in the United States and has had TPS since 2013. She currently lives in Illinois and works full time as an educator working with adults and young people with special needs. Laila is the primary and only available caretaker for her elderly U.S. citizen mother.

136. Laila came to the United States with her minor child fleeing Syria's civil war after her daughter's daycare was bombed. TPS is Laila's (and her child's) only form of protection from confinement and deportation. TPS is also Laila's only form of work authorization. Laila is the only breadwinner in her household and the loss of her work authorization through TPS would jeopardize her ability to provide for her child and mother, including being able to afford her daughter's educational expenses and mother's medical care and medications.

137. If her TPS is terminated, Laila is terrified that she will be forced to relocate to Syria where she and her daughter would be in danger. And as a single mother and divorced woman living alone, Laila faces increased risk of violence if she were to return to Syria.

138. Waleed Doe is in his 40s and is a Syrian national. Even though he was born in the United States, Waleed grew up outside of Syria and has no meaningful connections to Syria. Waleed came to the United States in 2011 on a student visa to obtain a master's degree in business and obtained TPS in 2012 due to the increasing violence from Syria's civil war.

139. Waleed currently lives in New Jersey with his wife (also a Syrian TPS holder) and three U.S. citizen children who are ages seven, four, and nine months. Waleed works as a senior manager at his place of employment and is the primary breadwinner for his family.

140. TPS is Waleed's only form of protection against confinement, deportation, and work authorization. The loss of his TPS would jeopardize his ability to support his family and because his wife also relies on TPS for work authorization they face the loss of any source of income. If Waleed's TPS and work authorization is terminated, his family would also lose their health insurance, which is covered through his employer.

141. The prospect of losing TPS has caused Waleed and his family significant stress and fear. Waleed especially fears being separated from his extended family in the United States and for his and his family's safety if they have to relocate to Syria—a place he's never lived.

142. Mustafa Doe is in his 20s and is a Syrian national. He has had TPS since 2023. Mustafa experienced sexual abuse and trafficking as a minor in Syria, which left him with lasting psychological trauma. He is a member of the LGBTQI community and has found safety and freedom to authentically express his identity in the United States, after he moved in 2021 to pursue his bachelor's degree.

143. Mustafa recently graduated from college and has temporary status and work authorization as an extension of his student visa, which has allowed him to accept a job in philanthropy and social impact at a global corporation. His temporary status expires next summer, at which point he will lose his work authorization and his job, as well as his protection from detention and deportation. Without TPS, Mustafa loses a crucial safety net and is left in limbo, unable to plan for his future in the United States.

144. The possibility of losing TPS and having to return to Syria has caused Mustafa significant anxiety and has triggered his PTSD based on fears of returning to harm and persecution. If returned to Syria, he would face violence from individuals who abused him in the past as well as persecution and prosecution based on his LGBTQI identity. Returning to Syria

would also separate Mustafa from his parents, both of whom live in the United States and are lawful permanent residents, along with his extended family, who are all U.S. citizens.

145. Ahmad Doe is a Syrian citizen in his 40s. He came to the United States on an exchange visitor visa to work as a journalist and has lived in the United States since 2022. Even though he is a Syrian citizen, he was born and raised outside of Syria.

146. Due to layoffs at his prior place of employment in April 2025, Ahmad lost his job, his exchange visitor visa, and work authorization. In May 2025 he applied for TPS.

147. Because Ahmad has built a highly respected career in journalism and speaks several languages, several U.S. media companies have sought his services. However, Ahmad is unable to accept any of the many job offers he has received because he lacks work authorization. Currently, TPS is his only pathway to obtaining work authorization and protection from deportation. Ahmad also cannot renew his driver's license without work authorization.

148. Due to Defendants' unlawful termination of Syria's TPS designation, Ahmad's application cannot be adjudicated. Without access to TPS, Ahmad fears and is a risk of imminent confinement and deportation to a country where he fears he could be killed. Because of this, Ahmad suffers from severe stress and feelings of depression.

149. All Plaintiffs have expressed fear and anxiety over forcibly returning to Syria given the widespread shortages of food, fuel, electricity, clean water; in addition to kidnappings, killings, and violence that have persisted across the country after the Assad regime fell in December 2024.

150. Syrian TPS serves the purpose intended by Congress—providing nationality-based humanitarian relief regardless of whether individuals meet the more stringent eligibility requirements for other forms of humanitarian protection, such as asylum. Immigrants, including

TPS holders, are integral to the social and economic fabric of the United States and, as the named Plaintiffs exemplify, contribute to their communities and this country in countless ways. The length of time TPS holders have lived in the United States and the deep ties they have built with families and communities make the loss of legal status especially devastating and, equally important, highlight the real human cost of Defendants' unlawful actions challenged here.

CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS

151. This case is brought as a class action pursuant to Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 23(a) and 23(b) on behalf of Syrian nationals (or individuals having no nationality who last habitually resided in Syria) who had TPS status on September 19, 2025 (recipient class) and Syrian nationals (or individuals having no nationality who last habitually resided in Syria) with pending TPS applications (applicant class).

152. The proposed classes are each sufficiently numerous so as to make joinder impracticable. Based on Defendants' own accounting in the Federal Register notice, the recipient class consists of 6,132 TPS holders and the applicant class consists of 833 people with pending applications.

153. There are common questions of law and fact affecting the members of both classes, including (a) whether Defendants' decision to terminate of Syrian TPS was preordained, without regard to country conditions and prior to consulting with other appropriate agencies in violation of the TPS statute; (b) whether the TPS statute authorizes the Secretary to consider national interest as a sole justification to terminate TPS; (c) whether Defendants' decision to terminate TPS was impermissibly motivated by animus based on race, ethnicity, or national origin; and (d) whether Defendants' failure to provide more than the minimum 60-day notice before terminating Syria's TPS designation violates the APA.

154. The claims of Dahlia Doe, Sara Doe, Nesma Doe, Laila Doe, Waleed Doe, and Mustafa Doe are typical of those of the recipient class with respect to the legality of Defendants' actions. Plaintiffs will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class. None of the named Plaintiffs are aware of any conflicts that would preclude fair and adequate representation.

155. Plaintiff Ahmad Doe's claims are typical of those of the applicant class with respect to the legality of Defendants' actions. Ahmad Doe will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class. Ahmad Doe is unaware of any conflicts that would preclude fair and adequate representation.

156. Proposed class counsel has substantial experience litigating both cases involving challenges to federal immigration policies and class actions.

157. Defendants' illegal termination of TPS for Syria applies to the entire class, making class-wide relief appropriate.

CLAIMS FOR RELIEF

FIRST CLAIM
(Administrative Procedure Act)

158. The foregoing allegations are repeated and incorporated as though fully set forth herein.

159. The Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. § 701 *et seq.*, ensures that executive agencies are accountable to the public by providing a "right of review" to any "person suffering legal wrong because of agency action, or adversely affected or aggrieved by agency action." 5 U.S.C. 702.

160. The APA provides that a Court "shall hold unlawful and set aside agency action, findings, and conclusions found to be—(A) arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law; (B) contrary to constitutional right, power, privilege, or

immunity; (C) in excess of statutory jurisdiction, authority, or limitations, or short of statutory right; [or] (D) without observance of procedure required by law." 5 U.S.C. § 706(2). The right of review under the APA includes a right to judicial review of actions that "fail[] to meet statutory, procedural, or constitutional requirements."[116]

161. Defendants' termination of the TPS designations for Syria is a "final agency action for which there is no other adequate remedy in a court." 5 U.S.C. § 704.

162. Defendants' termination of the TPS designation for Syria violate the APA because, among other things:

a. Defendants' decision to terminate TPS for Syria occurred prior to the requisite consultation with other appropriate agencies as required by 8 U.S.C. § 1245a(b)(3);

b. Defendants' decision to terminate was not based on an objective review of country conditions, as required by 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3). Rather, it was based on a predetermined, political decision to erode the TPS program writ large; a consideration of extra-statutory factors; and a selective review of country conditions designed to identify only improvements and ignore entire categories of conditions that did not support Defendant's preordained end goal to terminate TPS;

c. The research, consultation, and review process leading up to the termination of Syria's TPS designation deviated dramatically from past practice without explanation;

[116] *Widakuswara v. Lake*, 773 F. Supp. 3d 46, 56 (S.D.N.Y. 2025) (quoting *Citizens to Pres. Overton Park, Inc. v. Volpe*, 401 U.S. 402, 414 (1971); *accord FCC v. Fox Television Stations, Inc.*, 556 U.S. 502, 513 (2009).

d. To the extent Defendants engaged in any process, it was so deficient as to amount to no process at all, defeating the purpose of the TPS statute;

e. Defendants' decision to terminate occurred under circumstances and a timeline that reflect that they were pretextual and animated by animus based on the perceived race and ethnicity of Syrian TPS holders;

163. Plaintiffs will suffer irreparable injury from the unlawful termination.

164. Defendants' decision to terminate Syria's TPS designation must therefore be held unlawful, set aside, or otherwise vacated.

SECOND CLAIM
(Administrative Procedure Act)

165. All the foregoing allegations are repeated and realleged as though fully set forth herein.

166. To engage in appropriate decision-making, an agency must ordinarily "display awareness that it *is* changing position."[117] Agencies "may not . . . depart from a prior policy *sub silentio* or simply disregard rules that are still on the books."[118] And the APA requires a "more detailed justification . . . for disregarding facts and circumstances that underlay . . . the prior policy."[119]

167. Defendants' termination of the TPS designation for Syria with only 60-days' notice was arbitrary, capricious, and contrary to law in violation of the APA because it represented an unacknowledged and unexplained departure from decades of decision-making practices and ordinary procedures.

[117] *Fox Television Stations, Inc.*, 556 U.S. at 515.
[118] *Id.*
[119] *Id.* at 515–16.

168. Plaintiffs will suffer irreparable injury from the unlawful terminations.

THIRD CLAIM
(Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution)

169. All the foregoing allegations are repeated and incorporated as though fully set forth herein.

170. The Fifth Amendment contains an implicit guarantee of equal protection that prohibits any official action that motivated in part by a racially discriminatory intent or purpose. Classifications based on race, ethnicity, or national origin receive exacting scrutiny, and even facially neutral policies and practices will be held unconstitutional when they reflect a pattern unexplainable on grounds other than race.[120]

171. Defendants' decision to terminate Syria's TPS designation impermissibly and intentionally discriminates against Plaintiffs because of their race, ethnicity, or national origin.

172. Plaintiffs will suffer irreparable injury resulting from the unlawful termination.

173. Defendants' termination of Syria's TPS designation must therefore be held unlawful, set aside, or otherwise vacated as violative of the Fifth Amendment's guarantee of equal protection.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs respectfully request that this Court:

174. Declare that Defendants' terminations of TPS for Syria was unlawful under the APA and unconstitutional under the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment;

175. Declare that the decision to provide only 60 days' notice before the terminations of TPS for Syria take effect was unlawful under the APA;

[120] *Bolling v. Sharpe*, 347 U.S. 497, 499 (1954); *Vill. of Arlington Heights v. Metro. Hous. Dev. Corp.*, 429 U.S. 252, 265–66 (1977).

176. Set aside or otherwise vacate the termination of TPS for Syria as beyond Defendants' authority and/or unlawful under the APA;

177. Postpone or stay the termination of TPS for Syria from taking effect or being put into effect;

178. Enjoin and restrain all Defendants, and their officers, agents, servants, employees, attorneys, and all other persons who are in active concert or participation with any of them, from enforcing the termination of TPS for Syria;

179. Order Defendants to take all steps necessary to ensure that the TPS designation for Syria remains in full force and effect;

180. Award Plaintiffs' attorneys' fees and costs under 28 U.S.C. § 2412 and any other applicable statute or regulation; and

181. Award such other and further relief that the Court may deem just, equitable, and proper.

Dated: October 20, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

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**Application for admission Pro Hac Vice forthcoming*

Exhibit 1

United States Government Accountability Office

Report to Congressional Requesters

April 2020

TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS

Steps Taken to Inform and Communicate Secretary of Homeland Security's Decisions

April 2020

TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS

Steps Taken to Inform and Communicate Secretary of Homeland Security's Decisions

GAO Highlights

Highlights of GAO-20-134, a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The INA includes provisions for eligible foreign nationals residing in the United States to obtain temporary humanitarian protection from removal, as well as work authorization, when their country of origin is designated for TPS. Since 1990, nationals of 22 countries have received TPS. The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a country for TPS after consulting with other agencies and determining that the country meets statutory criteria related to armed conflict, environmental disaster, or extraordinary or temporary conditions that prevent its nationals from returning in safety. The Secretary may designate a country for TPS for periods of 6 to 18 months and can extend a TPS designation if deemed appropriate.

GAO was asked to review the TPS decision process. This report, among other things, (1) describes the approach DHS takes to inform the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS reviews and (2) examines DHS's communication to the public regarding TPS decisions and related information, including employment authorization. GAO reviewed documentation and data related to TPS decisions, including a nongeneralizable sample of 26 decisions for eight countries in fiscal years 2014 through 2018. GAO selected the countries to reflect various types of TPS decisions, among other factors. GAO also interviewed agency officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends USCIS consistently identify in published guidance the mechanisms used to communicate automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents. DHS concurred with GAO's recommendation.

View GAO-20-134. For more information, contact Chelsa Gurkin at (202) 512-2964 or GurkinC@gao.gov, or Rebecca Gambler at (202) 512-6912 or GamblerR@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) reviews of countries for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) include three main steps, according to DHS and other agencies' documents and officials. First, the Secretary of Homeland Security may initiate a review of a country for TPS designation in response to various triggering factors, such as a request from a foreign government, on the basis of one or more statutory conditions. The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) requires subsequent reviews after an initial designation. Second, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)—which manages and coordinates the TPS review process for DHS—and the Department of State (State) compile country conditions reports and recommendations to inform the Secretary's decision. Although the INA does not prescribe the other agencies that must be consulted for a TPS review,State generally has a role in providing input for the Secretary of Homeland Security's consideration. GAO found DHS collected country conditions reports and recommendations from USCIS and State for all eight of the countries GAO selected for its review. Other DHS components and non-DHS entities may also provide information. Third, under the INA,the Secretary of Homeland Security exercises discretion in deciding whether to initially designate a country for TPS. For an existing designation, the Secretary determines whether country conditions warrant an extension or termination of TPS. DHS provides official notice of decisions in the Federal Register.

Three Primary Steps in the Secretary of Homeland Security's Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Reviews

Source: GAO analysis of documentary and testimonial information from the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State. | GAO-20-134

DHS has communicated TPS decisions to the public through required Federal Register notices as well as other mechanisms. However, DHS has not provided consistent guidance regarding mechanisms it uses to communicate automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents. USCIS officials stated that the agency has typically communicated these extensions of documents for TPS beneficiaries through Federal Register notices. However, for five recent automatic extensions, USCIS instead mailed individual notifications to thousands of beneficiaries. USCIS guidance on its website identifies the individual notifications as a mechanism for communicating automatic extensions, but an employers' handbook and related guidance do not. As a result, some employers reportedly terminated TPS beneficiaries' employment because the employers did not understand or accept the notifications as proof of employment authorization. Consistent guidance about the mechanisms USCIS uses could help reduce the risk that TPS beneficiaries will lose their jobs because of confusion about their authorization to work in the United States.

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Abbreviations

DHS	Department of Homeland Security
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
RAIO	Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate
State	Department of State
TPS	Temporary Protected Status
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCIS	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

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U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

April 3, 2020

Congressional Requesters

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a form of humanitarian protection that provides a temporary benefit to eligible foreign nationals from designated countries who are residing in the United States. TPS protects beneficiaries from removal and permits work authorization.[1] Countries may be designated for TPS on the basis of statutory criteria related to armed conflict, such as civil war; an environmental disaster, such as an earthquake or hurricane; or extraordinary and temporary conditions in the country that prevent nationals from returning in safety.[2] Under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA),[3] the Secretary of Homeland

[1]Pub. L. No. 82-414, title II, ch. 5, § 244, 66 Stat. 163 (1952), as added by the Immigration Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-649, title III, § 302(a), 104 Stat. 4978, 5030-5036 (classified, as amended by the Immigration Act of 1990 and subsequent acts, at 8 U.S.C. § 1254a).

[2]Under 8 U.S.C. § 1254a, the Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a country (or a part of a country) for TPS, after consultation with appropriate agencies of the government, when the Secretary finds that conditions in a country meet certain statutory criteria related to ongoing armed conflict, an environmental disaster, or extraordinary and temporary conditions that prevent nationals from returning in safety. Specifically, regarding armed conflict, the Secretary may designate a country for TPS if the Secretary finds that there is an ongoing armed conflict within the foreign country and that, because of the conflict, requiring the return of foreign nationals to that country would pose a serious threat to their personal safety. Regarding environmental disaster, the Secretary may designate a country for TPS if the Secretary finds that there has been an earthquake, flood, drought, epidemic, or other environmental disaster in the foreign country resulting in a substantial, but temporary, disruption in living conditions; the foreign country is temporarily unable to adequately handle the return of foreign nationals to the country; and the foreign country has officially requested TPS designation. Regarding extraordinary and temporary conditions, the Secretary may designate a country for TPS if the Secretary finds that there are extraordinary and temporary conditions in the foreign country that prevent foreign nationals from returning to the country safely, unless the Secretary finds that permitting foreign nationals to remain temporarily in the United States is contrary to the national interests of the United States.

[3]Unless specified otherwise, all references to the INA in this report refer to section 244 of the act.

Security,[4] after consultation with other agencies, may grant TPS to eligible foreign nationals in the United States from foreign countries that the Secretary has designated for TPS.[5] Although the INA does not prescribe the other agencies that must be consulted, the Department of State (State) generally has a role in providing input for the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS reviews.[6]

Since TPS was established in 1990, 22 countries have received TPS designations.[7] In fiscal year 2018, more than 400,000 TPS beneficiaries were living in the United States, according to data from DHS's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). These beneficiaries were from 10 countries—El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen—with the majority from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti.[8] Since the beginning of fiscal year 2018, the Secretary of Homeland Security has announced decisions to terminate TPS for six countries—El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, and Sudan; these decisions are currently the subject of litigation.

You asked us to review the decision-making process for TPS designations. This report (1) describes TPS determinations and numbers

[4]The authority to designate countries for TPS was transferred from the Attorney General to the Secretary of Homeland Security in 2003, after the Department of Justice's Immigration and Naturalization Service was abolished and its immigration services and enforcement functions were transferred to the Department of Homeland Security pursuant to the Homeland Security Act of 2002. Pub. L. No. 107-296, title I & IV, §§ 101, 102, 456, 471, 478, 116 Stat. 2135, 2142, 2143-44, 2200-01, 2205, 2211-12 (2002) (classified, as amended, at 6 U.S.C. §§ 111, 112, 275, 291, 298). See also 8 U.S.C. § 1103(a) (powers and duties of the Secretary of Homeland Security).

[5]According to 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(a)(1), the Secretary of Homeland Security may grant TPS to nationals of a foreign state designated for TPS by the Secretary or to stateless individuals whose last habitual residence was in a foreign state designated for TPS.

[6]The Secretary of Homeland Security is required to consult with appropriate agencies of the government before making a designation according to 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1), and prior to periodic reviews of existing designations, according to 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3). The statute does not prescribe the other agencies that must be consulted.

[7]Deferred Enforcement Departure is another example of discretionary humanitarian protection from removal that allows eligible foreign nationals from designated countries to remain in the United States on a temporary basis. Deferred Enforcement Departure is not within the scope of this review.

[8]TPS designations for the remaining 12 countries had been terminated as of the beginning of fiscal year 2018.

of beneficiaries since TPS was established; (2) describes the approach that DHS, in consultation with State and other relevant agencies, uses to inform the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS reviews; and (3) examines DHS's public communication regarding TPS decisions and related information, including work authorization.

To describe TPS determinations and numbers of beneficiaries since TPS was established, we reviewed information and data in Federal Register notices for TPS designations for fiscal years 1990 through 2019 and analyzed USCIS data on numbers of TPS beneficiaries for fiscal years 1990 through 2018.[9] To assess the reliability of the USCIS data, we reviewed related documentation and interviewed USCIS officials to identify any missing or erroneous data and resolve any discrepancies. We determined that the data for fiscal years 2000 through 2018 were sufficiently reliable to provide general information about the size and characteristics of TPS beneficiaries.

To describe the approach that DHS uses to inform TPS reviews, we reviewed provisions in the INA related to TPS as well as DHS and State documentation related to the processes they have used since fiscal year 2014 to collect information for these reviews. This documentation included information that DHS and State provided for a judgmental, nongeneralizable sample of eight countries (El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, Syria, and Yemen), representing 26 TPS decisions in fiscal years 2014 through 2018.[10] We selected this sample to represent a range of decision types and designation reasons, among other factors. While this sample cannot be generalized to the countries or decisions we did not review, it provided information about the approach DHS uses for TPS reviews. Additionally, we reviewed examples of information that other agencies—for example, the Department of Defense, the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Agency for International Development—and entities such as members of Congress or nongovernmental organizations

[9]Fiscal year 1990 is the year when TPS was established under the INA, and fiscal year 2018 is the most recent year for which data on TPS beneficiaries were available.

[10]We selected a judgmental, nongeneralizable sample of eight countries with initial or existing TPS designations in fiscal years 2014 through 2018, representing 26 of a total of 42 TPS decisions for eight of 13 countries in that period, to incorporate a range of decision types and reasons in recent years, among other factors. Because of ongoing litigation related to TPS, certain information had been redacted from some of the documentation that we reviewed. See appendix I for additional details of our objectives, scope, and methodology.

provided to DHS to inform TPS reviews. We also interviewed officials from DHS, State, the Department of Defense, the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

To examine DHS's public communication regarding TPS decisions and related information, we reviewed information that DHS published in Federal Register notices from November 29, 1990, through October 1, 2019. We also examined DHS guidance published on its website and DHS procedures as of fiscal year 2019 for communicating TPS work authorization. We compared DHS's guidance and procedures with relevant federal internal control standards.[11] Additionally, we reviewed information from the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division's website related to automatic extensions of employment authorization documents for TPS beneficiaries.[12] We also interviewed DHS officials.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2018 to March 2020 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that our evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Immigration and Nationality Act Provisions for Temporary Protected Status

The INA provides for the Secretary of Homeland Security, after consultation with other agencies, to designate a foreign country for TPS if the conditions in that country fall into one or more of three statutory categories. These categories are generally described as consisting of (1) ongoing armed conflict, (2) environmental disaster, and (3) extraordinary

[11]GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO-14-704G (Washington, D.C.: September 2014).

[12]Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, "Telephone Interventions," accessed June 27, 2019, https://www.justice.gov/crt/telephone-interventions-2.

and temporary conditions.[13] The Secretary may designate a country for a period of at least 6 months but no more than 18 months.

At least 60 days before the end of the designation period, the Secretary is required, after consulting with other appropriate agencies, to undertake a review of the conditions in the foreign country for which a designation is in effect and to determine whether the conditions for such designation continue to be met. The Secretary must subsequently take one of the following actions:

- Extend the country's TPS designation for a period of 6, 12, or 18 months, if the Secretary determines that country conditions warrant an extension of TPS.[14] This provides TPS beneficiaries with an extended period of protection from removal.
- Terminate the country's TPS designation, if the Secretary determines that the country no longer meets the statutory criteria. This results in an expiration of the period of protection for foreign nationals who were granted TPS under a country's designation.[15]

In addition, the Secretary may exercise his or her discretion, on the basis of this review, to redesignate the country for TPS.[16] With a redesignation, the Secretary allows eligible nationals from the designated foreign country who have arrived in the United States since the initial designation, or another date established by the Secretary, to apply for TPS.

[13]See 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b), which provides that the Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a country for TPS if nationals are unable to return safely to the country because of armed conflict or extraordinary and temporary conditions or if an environmental disaster in the country temporarily prevents a country from adequately handling the return of its nationals. In addition, 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1)(B)(3) requires that a designation based on environmental disaster must be officially requested by a foreign state. According to USCIS officials, such a request is generally submitted in writing and may be provided to DHS through State. USCIS officials stated that this request is required only for an initial designation based on environmental disaster and that official requests from the foreign government are not required for any subsequent TPS extensions.

[14]See 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(C). Under this section of the INA, a designation period is automatically extended for 6 months if the Secretary does not make a determination to terminate a country's TPS designation before the end date of the current designation.

[15]See 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(B).

[16]See 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b). According to USCIS officials, from 1997 through 2017, DHS used the term "redesignate" for instances in which the Secretary of Homeland Security newly designated a country for TPS after an initial designation or extension period. Beginning in 2018, DHS began using the term "newly designate" for these decisions.

TPS provides temporary humanitarian protection to eligible foreign nationals in the United States who, for various reasons, may not have otherwise lawful status and therefore, in the absence of TPS, would be subject to enforcement and removal under the INA. Foreign nationals may be present in the United States without valid status and potentially removable for various reasons, such as having entered without inspection and admission at a port of entry or having remained in the country beyond the expiration of previous temporary status (e.g., tourist, foreign student). Eligible foreign nationals may also seek TPS when they currently have another lawful status, according to USCIS officials. USCIS officials noted that this may occur, for example, when a foreign national has a temporary nonimmigrant status nearing its end date when TPS is designated for his or her country and applies for TPS before the existing status expires.

Under the INA, applicants for TPS must apply during the registration period established by the Secretary of Homeland Security for a particular country designation. To be eligible for TPS, an applicant from a designated country must have been physically present in the United States continuously since the most recent designation's effective date and must have resided in the United States continuously since the date established by the Secretary of Homeland Security.[17] The INA also specifies that an individual is ineligible for TPS if he or she has been convicted of any felony or of two or more misdemeanors committed in the United States; if any of the statutory bars to asylum apply, such as involvement in persecution of others; or if he or she is reasonably regarded as a danger to the security of the United States, among other bases.[18]

[17]See 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(c). In accordance with the statute, applicants must have been continuously physically present since the effective date of the most recent TPS designation of their country of origin. The Secretary of Homeland Security sets the continuous physical presence date as either the publication date of the Federal Register notice or such later date as the Secretary determines. In addition, applicants must have been living, or continuously residing, in the United States as of the date prescribed by the Secretary of Homeland Security. For example, Yemen's initial TPS designation had an effective date and continuous physical presence date of September 3, 2015; the Secretary of Homeland Security prescribed the same date for continuous residence. See 80 Fed. Reg. 53319 (Sept. 3, 2015). For Yemen's 2017 redesignation, with an effective date and continuous physical presence date of March 4, 2017, the Secretary of Homeland Security prescribed January 4, 2017, as the continuous residence date. See 82 Fed. Reg. 859 (Jan. 4, 2017).

[18]See 8 U.S.C. §1254a(c)(2).

In addition to protecting beneficiaries from removal, TPS authorizes them to work in the United States for the designation period.[19] To receive evidence of work authorization, TPS beneficiaries generally apply to USCIS for an employment authorization document, Form I-766. USCIS provides this document as a plastic card that shows proof of the individual's authorization to work in the United States and includes a photograph of the individual.[20] Although USCIS does not require beneficiaries to apply for an employment authorization document, according to USCIS officials, beneficiaries typically apply to obtain these cards as evidence of their authorization to work in the United States. Figure 1 shows an example of an employment authorization document issued by USCIS.

[19]TPS allows beneficiaries to work in the United States and protects them from removal for the designation period, provided that they continue to meet TPS eligibility criteria and are not otherwise subject to removal proceedings or withdrawal of their status. See INA § 244(c)(3)(A-B); 8 C.F.R. § 244.14 regarding withdrawal of TPS.

[20]A TPS beneficiary continues to be authorized to work for as long as he or she has TPS. See INA § 244(a)(1)(B). TPS beneficiaries, like all employees, must provide a document or combination of documents to their employers evidencing their identity and employment authorization from a list of acceptable documents. An employment authorization document (Form I-766) is one of the acceptable documents that may be used to establish both identity and authorization to work in the United States. However, TPS beneficiaries may present any document from the list of acceptable documents that are available to demonstrate identity and eligibility to work in the United States. To apply for an employment authorization document, TPS beneficiaries must submit a completed Form I–765, "Application for Employment Authorization" (OMB Control No. 1615–0040), to USCIS, which has jurisdiction over the form, within the current TPS designation period. According to USCIS officials, applicants do not have to submit Form I-765 concurrently with an application to reregister for TPS.

Figure 1: Example of Employment Authorization Document Issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. | GAO-20-134

Key DHS and State Components That May Be Involved in TPS Reviews

Several key DHS and State components may be involved in the TPS decision process, as table 1 shows. Additionally, other DHS offices and components, as well as agencies such as the Department of Defense or U.S. Agency for International Development, may provide information about country conditions to help inform the Secretary of Homeland Security's decisions.

Table 1: Key Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of State (State) Components Involved in Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Decision Process

Agency	Component or official	Role
DHS	Secretary of Homeland Security	Responsible for determining whether to initially designate, extend, terminate, or redesignate TPS for a country.
	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services	Administers the United States' immigration services function by adjudicating requests for immigration benefits, including TPS.
State[a]	Secretary of State	Provides input for the Secretary of Homeland Security's consideration for TPS decisions.
	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration	Responsible for humanitarian policy and diplomacy, and also provides humanitarian assistance. Has a role in supporting efforts to protect and assist refugees and vulnerable migrants around the world.
	Regional bureaus[b]	Serve as the liaison between the overseas posts and State's headquarters bureaus and offices.
	Overseas posts[c]	Typically provide information about country conditions for a TPS review.

Source: GAO analysis of DHS and State documentary and testimonial information. | GAO-20-134

[a]The Secretary of Homeland Security is required to consult with appropriate agencies of the government before making a TPS designation, according to 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1), and prior to periodic reviews of existing designations, according to 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3). Although the INA does not prescribe the other agencies that must be consulted, State generally has a role in providing input for the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS reviews.

[b]State has six regional bureaus that support the department's mission in specific global regions: the Bureau of African Affairs, the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs.

[c]Overseas posts include U.S. embassies and other posts in many countries.

Foreign Nationals from 22 Countries Have Received TPS, Totaling About 430,000 Beneficiaries in Fiscal Years 2000-2018

TPS Has Been Granted to Foreign Nationals from 22 Countries since It Was Established

Since TPS was established in 1990, foreign nationals in the United States from 22 countries[21] have been granted TPS.[22] Our review of Federal Register notices published in fiscal years 1990 through 2019 found varying bases for the 22 countries' TPS designations. We also found that designations for 20 of these countries were subsequently extended or the countries were redesignated one or more times.[23] Somalia, first designated for TPS in September 1991, had the longest overall designation period since TPS was established. As of the end of fiscal

[21]The 22 countries designated for TPS in fiscal years 1990 through 2019 included El Salvador, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Montserrat, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Kosovo, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Haiti, South Sudan, Syria, Guinea, Nepal, and Yemen. When Kosovo was designated for TPS in 1998, it was a province of Serbia. In February 2008, the Kosovo Parliament declared Kosovo independent and the United States recognized Kosovo as an independent state.

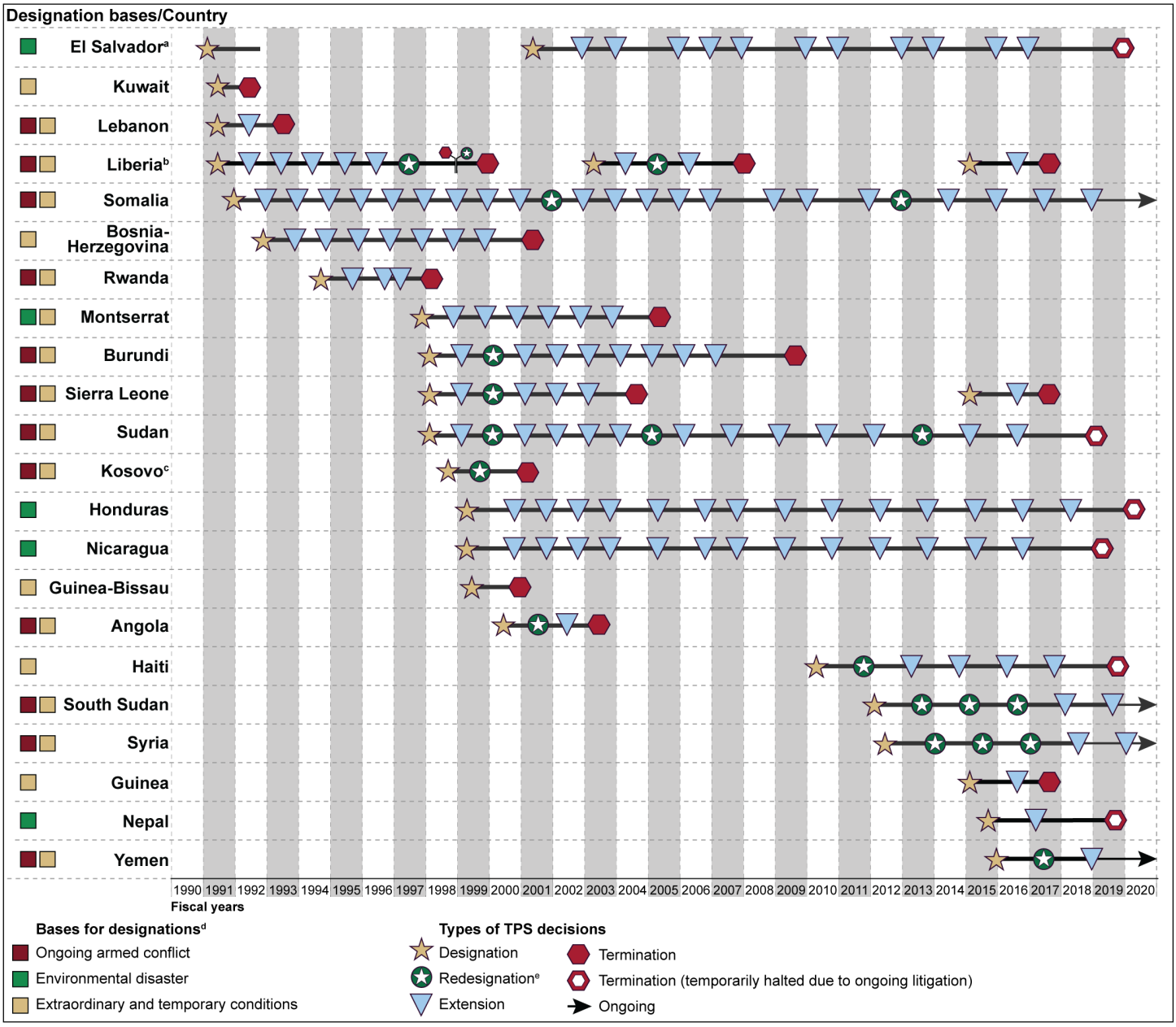
[22]The authority to designate countries for TPS was transferred from the Attorney General to the Secretary of Homeland Security in 2003, after the Department of Justice's Immigration and Naturalization Service was abolished and its immigration services and enforcement functions were transferred to DHS pursuant to the Homeland Security Act of 2002. Pub. L. No. 107-296, title I & IV, §§ 101, 102, 456, 471, 478, 116 Stat. 2135, 2142, 2143-44, 2200-01, 2205, 2211-12 (2002) (classified, as amended, at 6 U.S.C. §§ 111, 112, 275, 291, 298). See also 8 U.S.C. § 1103(a) (powers and duties of the Secretary of Homeland Security).

[23]A redesignation of TPS may allow eligible nationals from the designated foreign country who have arrived in the United States since the date of the initial designation to apply for TPS, whereas an extension allows existing beneficiaries to retain TPS as long as they continue to meet eligibility requirements.

year 2019, Somalia's designation had been extended 21 times and the country had been redesignated twice;[24] its most recent extension was set to expire in March 2020. Designations for only two countries were terminated without any extensions or redesignations—Kuwait, designated in 1991, and Guinea-Bissau, designated in 1999. Figure 2 shows all effective dates of TPS designations and subsequent decisions, including extensions, terminations, and redesignations, as well as the bases for the designations for each of the 22 countries in fiscal years 1990 through 2019.

[24]Somalia's redesignations were coupled with simultaneous extensions of TPS.

Figure 2: Effective Dates, Designation Bases, and Types of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Decisions, Fiscal Years 1990-2019



Source: GAO analysis of information provided in Department of Homeland Security Federal Register notices. | GAO-20-134

[a]El Salvador was first designated for TPS in the Immigration Act of 1990. When the original 18-month designation expired in 1992, it was not extended and the country was not redesignated.

[b]One redesignation of Liberia followed a prior termination of the previous designation (1998), and another redesignation of the country was coupled with a simultaneous termination of the previous

designation (2004). Section 7611 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 allows Liberian nationals who meet all applicable eligibility criteria—including continuous presence in the United States from November 20, 2014, until the date an application is timely filed—and their qualifying family members to become lawful permanent residents (i.e., Green Card holders). See Pub. L. No. 116-92, div. F, title LXXVI, subtitle B, § 7611, 133 Stat. 1198 (2019).

[c]When Kosovo was designated for TPS in 1998, it was a province of Serbia. In February 2008, the Kosovo Parliament declared Kosovo independent and the United States recognized Kosovo as an independent state.

[d]The listed designation bases represent statutorily defined categories of conditions on which a TPS designation—either an initial designation or any subsequent redesignation—may be based. When more than one designation basis is shown for a country, the bases shown do not distinguish between the category for the initial designation and categories that were added or removed at the time of any redesignations or subsequent designations.

[e]According to USCIS officials, from 1997 through 2017, "redesignation" was used to describe the Secretary of Homeland Security's designation of a country for TPS after an initial designation or extension period. Officials stated that in 2018, the Department of Homeland Security began using the term "newly designate" for these decisions. From fiscal year 1990, when TPS was established, through fiscal year 2019, all TPS redesignations except two for Liberia were coupled with a simultaneous extension of TPS. Extensions or terminations that occurred with a redesignation are not marked as such in the graphic.

As figure 2 shows, 26 TPS designations occurred in fiscal years 1990 through 2019, and 22 designations were extended at least once. As of September 30, 2019, the designations for all but four countries had been terminated and the termination of six countries' designations since fiscal year 2018 had been temporarily halted because of ongoing litigation. Redesignations occurred 20 times. [25]

- **Designations.** Of the 26 TPS designations, three were for one country, Liberia, and four were for two countries, El Salvador and Sierra Leone, that were each designated twice.
- **Extensions.** The majority of TPS designations (17 of 26 designations) were extended up to eight times. Designations for five countries—El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Somalia, and Sudan—were extended more than 10 times each. Three of the 22 countries' designations were not extended before termination.
- **Terminations**. The TPS designations for all countries except Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen had been terminated as of September 30, 2019. The termination of six countries' designations

[25]Since fiscal year 1990, when TPS was established, through fiscal year 2019, all redesignations except two for Liberia were coupled with a simultaneous extension of TPS. One redesignation for Liberia followed a prior termination of the previous designation, and another redesignation for Liberia was coupled with a simultaneous termination of the previous designation. For the purposes of our review, in counting any extensions or terminations for each country, we did not include an extension or termination that occurred simultaneously with a redesignation.

since fiscal year 2018 had been temporarily halted because of ongoing litigation. Several lawsuits had been filed regarding the Secretary of Homeland Security's decisions to terminate TPS for El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, and Sudan.[26] In October 2018, a U.S. district judge in California issued a preliminary injunction for one of the lawsuits, temporarily blocking DHS from enforcing the Secretary's TPS termination decisions for El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Sudan. The U.S. government filed an appeal in response to the preliminary injunction. According to USCIS officials, DHS has regularly published notices of its continued compliance with the court's injunction and has stated that it will continue to publish such notices pending resolution of the case In April 2019, a district court judge in New York issued a second preliminary injunction covering Haiti, which the U.S. government appealed in June 2019. Additionally, under an agreement to stay the proceedings in response to a lawsuit filed in California in February 2019, the government stipulated that it would temporarily halt terminations for Honduras and Nepal until the appeal of the October 2018 injunction had been resolved.

- **Redesignations.** Of the 20 TPS redesignations, six were for countries that were redesignated once, two were for one country that was redesignated twice, and twelve were for four countries that each were redesignated thrice—the largest number of TPS redesignations.[27]

About 430,000 Eligible Foreign Nationals Received TPS in Fiscal Years 2000-2018

USCIS data show that applications for TPS were approved for a total of 431,848 foreign nationals in fiscal years 2000 through 2018 and that the number of TPS beneficiaries each year[28] grew from about 70,000 in fiscal

[26]We previously reported on issues related to the reintegration of migrants in Central America, including potential returnees affected by recent terminations of TPS designations for El Salvador and Honduras. See GAO, *Central America: USAID Assists Migrants Returning to their Home Countries, but Effectiveness of Reintegration Efforts Remains to Be Determined*, GAO-19-62 (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 8, 2018).

[27]All but two of these redesignations were coupled with a simultaneous extension of TPS.

[28]The data on TPS beneficiaries in a given fiscal year include individuals who had been granted TPS as of September 30 of each fiscal year, including beneficiaries who were granted TPS in prior years and whose status was not withdrawn.

year 2000 to about 420,000 in fiscal year 2018.[29] The number of TPS beneficiaries increased most rapidly in fiscal years 2000 through 2005, particularly after the designation of Honduras in 1999 and El Salvador in 2001. According to USCIS officials, because adjudicating all TPS applications can take years, depending on the number of applicants from a country, the number of TPS beneficiaries for a designated country may continue rising after the established registration period for the specific designation. For example, although Honduras was initially designated for TPS in 1999, with an applicant registration period that ended on July 5, 1999, USCIS data show that the number of beneficiaries from Honduras who were granted TPS peaked in 2007 at 85,759 foreign nationals. See appendix II for additional information on the numbers of TPS beneficiaries in fiscal years 2000 through 2018, by country.

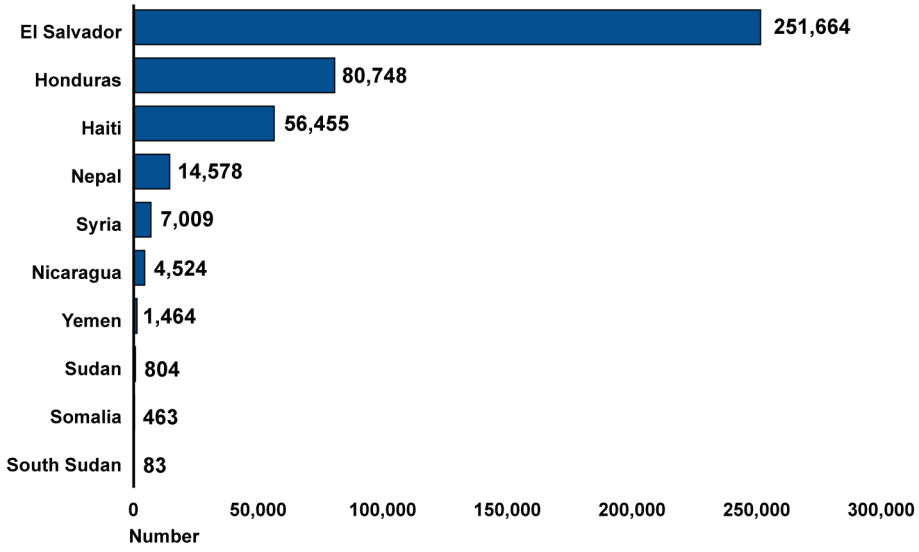
Data on the number of TPS beneficiaries for fiscal year 2018—the most recent available—show that the majority of TPS beneficiaries were from three countries (El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti), as figure 3 shows.[30] About 98 percent of beneficiaries from six countries (Sudan, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Haiti, and Nepal) in fiscal year 2018—408,773 foreign nationals—held TPS because the termination of their country's TPS designation was temporarily halted because of ongoing litigation. In addition, about 2 percent of beneficiaries from four countries (Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) in fiscal year 2018—9,019 foreign

[29]According to USCIS officials, USCIS data on TPS beneficiaries during this period may include some individuals who adjusted to another immigration status as well as some who left the United States or died. We determined that USCIS data for fiscal years 2000 through 2018 were sufficiently reliable to provide general information on numbers of TPS beneficiaries. USCIS was not able to provide reliable data on numbers of TPS beneficiaries before fiscal year 2000 because, according to USCIS officials, these data were not consistently entered electronically in USCIS information systems before fiscal year 2000. Some of the individuals may have later had their TPS withdrawn because of individual ineligibility or because they became naturalized U.S. citizens. According to USCIS officials, TPS beneficiaries who become U.S. citizens or whose status has been withdrawn, either because they no longer meet eligibility requirements or because they requested that USCIS withdraw their status, are removed from USCIS data in the fiscal year that their status changes.

[30]El Salvador was designated for TPS in 1990, in the statute that created TPS, and was designated again in 2001 after two major earthquakes in the country. Haiti was initially designated for TPS in 2010, after a major earthquake; the Secretary of Homeland Security redesignated Haiti in 2011 to allow eligible Haitians who arrived in the United States up to 1 year after the earthquake to apply for TPS. Honduras was initially designated for TPS after Hurricane Mitch struck the country in 1999. Ongoing insecurity due to violence and criminal activity, lack of economic opportunity, weak governance, and recurrent natural disasters have contributed to continual flows of migrants from Central American countries, including El Salvador and Honduras, as well as from Haiti, to the United States in recent years.

nationals—held TPS because their country's designation was extended. See appendix II for additional information about beneficiary characteristics in fiscal year 2018, including age, gender, and location.

Figure 3: Temporary Protected Status Beneficiaries, by Country of Citizenship, Fiscal Year 2018



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services data. | GAO-20-134

Note: The data shown reflect eligible foreign nationals who had been granted Temporary Protected Status as of September 30, 2018. According to USCIS officials, these data may include some foreign nationals who had an additional immigration status, as well as some who had left the United States or died, since receiving TPS.

DHS's Approach to Inform the Secretary's TPS Reviews Includes Three Primary Steps

Our review of documentation for selected TPS decisions in fiscal years 2014 through 2018 and our interviews with DHS, USCIS, and State officials indicated that DHS's approach for initial or subsequent reviews of countries for TPS consists of three primary steps:

1. The Secretary of Homeland Security initiates a review of a country for TPS. For an initial TPS designation, the Secretary may initiate consideration of a country in response to various triggering factors. Such factors may include, for example, a request from a U.S. government entity or a foreign government for a TPS designation based on the statutory conditions for TPS (i.e., armed conflict, environmental disaster, or extraordinary and temporary conditions). For an existing designation approaching its end date, a statutory deadline requires the Secretary to undertake a review.

2. DHS collects information on country conditions and recommendations from USCIS and State and provides this information to the Secretary of Homeland Security to inform his or her decision regarding an initial or existing TPS designation. Other DHS components and non-DHS entities, including other agencies and nongovernmental organizations, may also provide information to the Secretary or USCIS.
3. The Secretary of Homeland Security receives the information and recommendations and makes a decision about TPS for the country. The Secretary exercises discretion in determining whether to initially designate a country for TPS. For an existing designation, under the INA, the Secretary is required to determine whether country conditions warrant an extension of TPS or whether the country no longer meets the statutory criteria and TPS must be terminated. Also, the Secretary exercises discretion in determining whether to redesignate a country that was previously designated for TPS.

Figure 4 illustrates these three steps.

Figure 4: Three Primary Steps in Secretary of Homeland Security's Review for Initial or Existing Designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

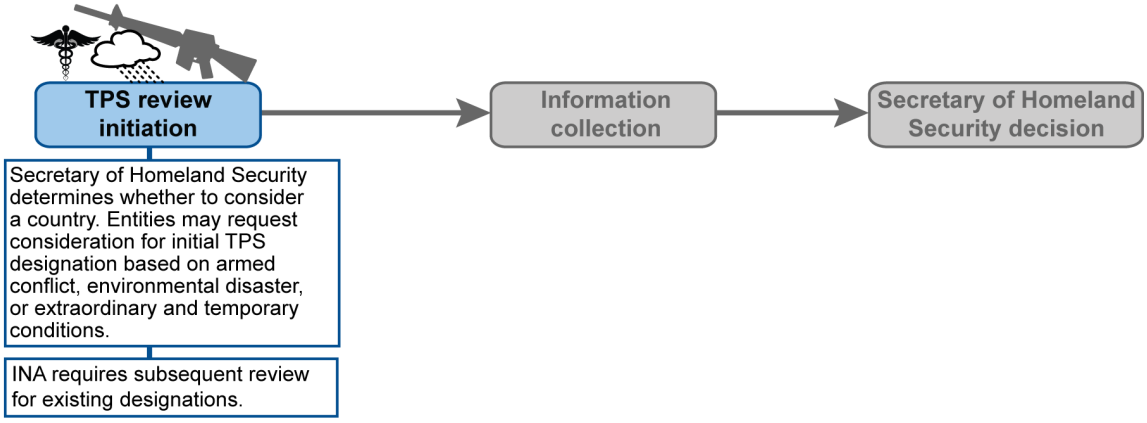
Source: GAO analysis of documentary and testimonial information from the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State. | GAO-20-134

Note: For an initial TPS designation, the Secretary of Homeland Security may initiate consideration of a country for TPS in response to various triggering factors. For an existing designation, a statutory deadline requires the Secretary to undertake a review. See 8 U.S.C. §1254a (b).

Secretary of Homeland Security May Consider a Country for Initial TPS Designation in Response to Various Factors, and Statute Requires Subsequent Reviews

Various factors may trigger consideration of a country for an initial TPS designation, according to USCIS officials. Officials stated that the Secretary of Homeland Security's consideration of a country for an initial designation is discretionary. However, subsequent reviews of existing designations are required by statute. See figure 5.

Figure 5: Initiation of Secretary of Homeland Security's Review for Initial or Existing Designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS)



Legend: INA = Immigration and Nationality Act.

Source: GAO analysis of documentary and testimonial information from Department of Homeland Security and Department of State. | GAO-20-134

Note: For an initial TPS designation, the Secretary of Homeland Security may initiate consideration of a country for TPS in response to various triggering factors, such as a request from a U.S. government entity or a foreign government. For an existing TPS designation, the Secretary is required, after consulting with appropriate agencies, to undertake a review of the conditions in the designated country at least 60 days before the designation's end date. 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3).

USCIS and State officials stated that for initial TPS designations, a request from DHS, State, the White House, members of Congress, or foreign governments may trigger consideration of whether to designate a country on the basis of one or more of the three statutory categories (i.e., armed conflict, environmental disaster, or extraordinary and temporary conditions).[31] USCIS officials added that, under the INA, the Secretary of Homeland Security has the sole authority to determine whether and when to consider a country for an initial TPS designation. Further, they noted that a request does not automatically result in a formal review of a country for TPS even if the country has experienced country conditions specified in one or more of the statutory categories, such as an armed conflict or environmental disaster.

For subsequent reviews of existing TPS designations, at least 60 days before the end of the designation period, the Secretary is required, after

[31]USCIS officials noted that a request from a foreign government is not required for DHS to consider a country for an initial TPS designation. They added that in some cases, DHS does not receive a request from any entity before the Secretary makes a determination to consider a country for an initial TPS designation.

consulting with other appropriate agencies, to undertake a review of the conditions in the foreign country for which a designation is in effect.[32]

DHS Collects Country Conditions Reports and Recommendations to Inform the Secretary's TPS Decision

DHS collects similar information for each review of a country for TPS, according to DHS officials and our review of selected decisions. DHS officials identified four primary sources of information that the department collects to inform the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS decisions: country conditions reports compiled by USCIS and State and recommendations from USCIS and State leadership. According to DHS and State officials, DHS generally consults with State on TPS decisions, although it is not specifically required to do so under the statute.[33] Our review of 26 TPS decisions for the eight selected countries found that DHS collected the following documents to inform each decision:

1. a country conditions report compiled by USCIS,
2. a memo with a recommendation from the USCIS Director to the Secretary of Homeland Security,
3. a country conditions report compiled by State, and
4. a letter with a recommendation from the Secretary of State to the Secretary of Homeland Security.[34]

USCIS manages and coordinates the TPS information-gathering process for the Secretary of Homeland Security. While State formally provides its input through the Secretary of State's letter and recommendation to the

[32]8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3).

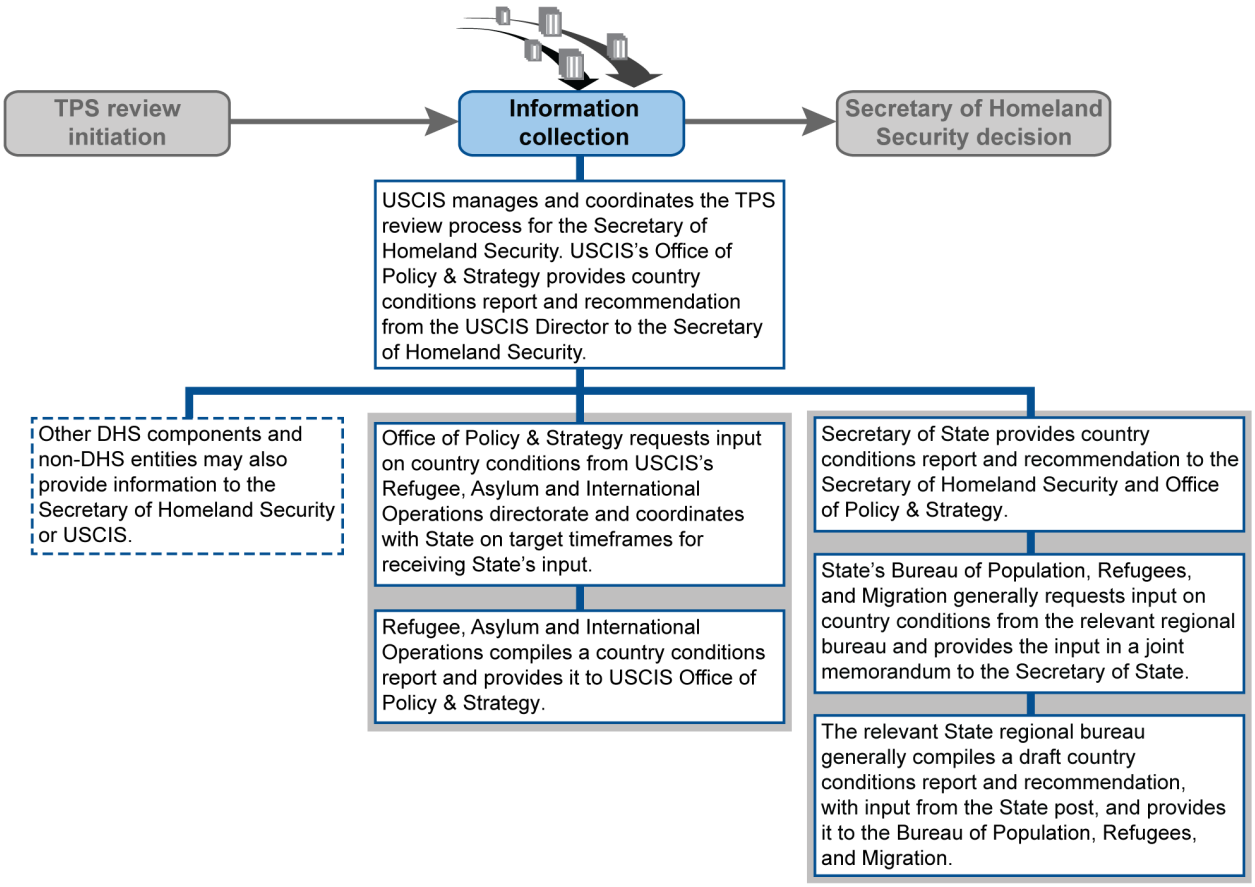
[33]The Secretary of Homeland Security is required to consult with appropriate agencies of the government before making a designation according to 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1), and prior to periodic reviews of existing designations, according to 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3). The statute does not prescribe the other agencies that must be consulted.

[34]Although the INA does not prescribe the type of input that must be provided by any agencies that the Secretary of Homeland Security consults with for a TPS review, we found that State generally has a role in providing input, including a country conditions report and recommendation, for the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS reviews. We reviewed documentation that DHS collected to inform the Secretary's decisions for a judgmental, nongeneralizable sample of eight of the 13 countries for which TPS decisions were rendered in fiscal years 2014 through 2018. Our sample included 26 TPS decisions (specifically, two initial designation decisions, three redesignation decisions, 15 extension decisions, and six termination decisions) from a total of 42 decisions during that period. Because of ongoing litigation, certain information had been redacted from documents for 13 of the 26 TPS decisions in our judgmental sample. See appendix I for additional details of our objectives, scope, and methodology.

Secretary of Homeland Security, USCIS officials said that USCIS generally incorporates the input from State into USCIS's country conditions report and recommendation on TPS.[35] DHS officials noted that other internal DHS components, government agencies, and other entities may also provide information about country conditions or other factors to inform the Secretary of Homeland Security's decisions. Figure 6 shows the information collected to support the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS reviews.

[35]According to USCIS officials, the Secretary of State's letter and recommendation to the Secretary of Homeland Security, as well as State's country conditions report, are generally attached to USCIS's country conditions report and recommendation to inform the Secretary of Homeland Security's review.

Figure 6: Information Collected for the Secretary of Homeland Security's Review for Initial or Existing Designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS)



Legend: DHS = Department of Homeland Security; INA = Immigration and Nationality Act; State = Department of State; USCIS = U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.
Source: GAO analysis of documentary and testimonial information from DHS and State. | GAO-20-134

Note: The Secretary of Homeland Security is required to consult with appropriate agencies of the government before making a TPS designation, according to 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1), and prior to periodic reviews of existing designations, according to 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3). Although the INA does not prescribe the other agencies that must be consulted, State generally has a role in providing input for the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS reviews, based on our review of documentation for selected TPS decisions in fiscal years 2014 through 2018 and our interviews with DHS, USCIS, and State officials.

USCIS officials indicated that the time frames for conducting TPS reviews may vary. They noted that a review for an initial designation may have a shorter time frame than a review for an existing designation, depending on the situation. In addition, the officials noted that USCIS generally starts the review process for an existing TPS designation about 6 months to a year before the end date of the country's current designation. They added

that they generally start the review process within this timeframe, given the INA requirement that the Secretary of Homeland Security either undertake a review and make a determination regarding country conditions at least 60 days in advance of the prior designation's end date or automatically extend the designation for 6 months.[36] According to USCIS officials, at the start of a review for an initial or existing designation, USCIS's Office of Policy & Strategy generally reaches out to USCIS's Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate (RAIO) to request input on country conditions. USCIS officials also said that the office coordinates with State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration regarding the target time frame for receiving State's input. In general, once USCIS receives the input from RAIO and State, USCIS finalizes its country conditions report and recommendation memo for the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Our review of documentation for the eight countries in our nongeneralizable sample of 26 TPS decisions found variation in the time frames for USCIS's recommendation memos and for State's recommendation letters. For the 24 reviews of existing TPS designations, USCIS provided recommendation memos to the Secretary of Homeland Security about 2 to 7 months before the end date of the prior

[36]According to 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1)(C), after the Secretary of Homeland Security makes a decision regarding an initial TPS designation, the designation shall not become effective unless notice of the designation is published in the Federal Register. With regard to decisions to terminate or extend a designation after a required periodic review of an existing designation, the Secretary of Homeland Security is required to provide for the publication of notice of the determination in the Federal Register on a timely basis. Under the law, terminations may not take effect earlier than 60 days after the date of publication of the Federal Register notice announcing the termination decision or, if later, the expiration of the most recent previous extension. See 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3).

designations.[37] Most of State's 26 recommendation letters were dated about 2 days to 6 months before the USCIS recommendation memos.[38]

RAIO officials noted that they use an internal template as informal guidance for the draft country conditions reports that they compile for USCIS's Office of Policy & Strategy for reviews for initial or existing TPS designations. We reviewed the RAIO template and found, for example, that for reporting on a country being considered for a TPS designation on the basis of an environmental disaster, the template includes sections (e.g., several paragraphs) about the population harmed, damage to infrastructure, disruption in services, and status of disaster response and reconstruction. Officials added that country conditions reports may deviate from the template, because its use is not required; instead, it serves as general, informal guidance. RAIO officials also noted that information in the country conditions reports they compile is generally based on publicly available information or data related to country conditions. According to the officials, sources for such information may include U.S. agencies, foreign governments, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and news articles.

According to State officials, after State initiates its internal process for compiling information for the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS

[37]Specifically, of the 24 TPS decisions for existing designations in our sample, nine of the USCIS recommendation memos were dated about 2 to 2.5 months in advance of the prior designation end date; six were dated about 3 to 4.5 months in advance of the prior designation end date; and eight were dated about 5 to 7 months in advance of the prior designation end date. One of the 24 USCIS recommendation memos provided to us was not dated, although USCIS provided an earlier draft memo for that TPS decision to us that was dated about 1.5 months in advance of the prior designation end date. Our sample also included two TPS decisions for initial designations (for a total of 26 decisions); because those designations did not have a prior end date, we did not include them in our analysis.

[38]Specifically, State's recommendation letters for 23 of the 26 TPS decisions were dated in advance of the USCIS recommendation memos for those reviews. Six State letters were dated 2 days to 2 weeks in advance of the USCIS recommendation memo, six were dated 1 to 2 months in advance, seven were dated 2.5 to 4 months in advance, and four were dated 4.5 to 6 months in advance. Three of the 26 State recommendation letters were dated about 1 to 2 weeks after the USCIS recommendation memo. For those three instances, USCIS officials indicated that USCIS officials had communicated with State officials at the working level about the ongoing TPS reviews; however, USCIS did not receive State's final letters in time to incorporate the input into USCIS's memos for the Secretary of Homeland Security. They added that, because State formally provides its input directly to the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary has always received State's input in advance of a TPS decision. State officials indicated that although State strives to adhere to USCIS timelines, complex TPS cases with significant foreign policy considerations may require additional time for internal review.

review, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration generally requests input internally from the relevant regional bureau and post before compiling information for the Secretary of State's consideration. See the text box for more details of State's internal process for developing country conditions reports and recommendation letters to inform the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS reviews.

State Department's Internal Process for Compiling Information for the Secretary of Homeland Security's Temporary Protected Status Reviews

The Department of State's (State) internal process for developing input for the Secretary of Homeland Security's Temporary Protected Status (TPS) reviews generally includes compiling information on country conditions as well as proposed recommendations from the relevant regional bureau and overseas post, according to documentation for selected TPS decisions in fiscal years 2014 through 2018 and our interviews with DHS, USCIS, and State officials. State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) facilitates and coordinates State's internal process for developing this input, according to informal guidance, which State officials said the bureau has used at the working level since 2012, as well as our interviews with State officials.

After DHS initiates a TPS review, PRM generally directs the relevant regional bureau to reach out to overseas posts for information about country conditions, according to State officials. State officials noted that in some cases, the regional bureau's country desk officer takes the lead in drafting the country conditions report, depending on the country context. Officials stated that the regional bureau generally uses a questionnaire on country conditions to request information from the post for a TPS review and that the post generally also provides a recommendation, in addition to the questionnaire responses, via cable or email to the regional bureau. For example, for a country that had an existing TPS designation based on ongoing armed conflict in the country, a country conditions cable provided, among other things, information about the status of the armed conflict, an assessment of whether the return of foreign nationals would pose a serious threat to their personal safety and whether the country was unable to handle the return of nationals, and information about the impact of the conflict on economic and humanitarian conditions. State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) officials noted that other agencies represented at the overseas posts, such as USAID, may provide information for a post's input on country conditions, including information gathered "on the ground" as well as from publicly available sources.

Once the regional bureau receives any input from post, the bureau desk officer prepares a draft country conditions report and recommendation, and the regional bureau works with PRM to compile a joint action memo. PRM generally provides the joint action memo, which includes a country conditions report, to the Secretary of State, according to State officials. The memo may include a joint recommendation or varying recommendations (e.g., from PRM and the regional bureau) for the Secretary's consideration. After the Secretary determines what the department will recommend, State provides a final country conditions report and recommendation letter to the Secretary of Homeland Security as well as to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' Office of Policy & Strategy.

Source: GAO summary of documentary and testimonial information provided by State and USAID. | GAO-20-134

We found that the USCIS and State country conditions reports and recommendation memos or letters that DHS and State provided for our nongeneralizable sample of 26 TPS decisions included information such as background on the cause (or reason for consideration) of the initial

TPS designation and a summary of the country's recovery from, or the status of, the situation to date. In addition, documentation provided to us for some of the TPS decisions included other information, such as certain economic indicators or broader country context. Specifically:

- **Cause and recovery or status.** USCIS and State documentation for each of the 26 TPS decisions in our review generally included (1) information related to the cause (or reason for consideration) of the initial TPS designation and (2) a summary of the country's recovery from, or the status of, the situation to date. For example, documentation for a country designated on the basis of armed conflict described the status of the conflict and ceasefire agreements; provided information about violence against civilians and recruitment of child soldiers; provided an update on civilian casualties since the prior review; and described humanitarian challenges stemming from the conflict, such as the risk of famine. For a country designated on the basis of environmental disaster, documentation described the status of investments in recovery and efforts to rebuild after the disaster, including the number of houses and schools that had been rebuilt or repaired. This documentation also included assessments of disruption in living conditions and the extent to which economic activity and basic services had been restored.
- **Economic indicators.** USCIS documentation for 16 TPS decisions and State documentation for 12 TPS decisions in our review included information about economic indicators. Examples of such information included an estimate of damages from an environmental disaster as a percentage of a country's gross domestic product, a summary of growth in a country's gross domestic product in recent years, and data on the increase in food prices as a result of armed conflict in a country.[39]
- **Broader country context.** USCIS documentation for 23 TPS decisions in our review and State documentation for 20 TPS decisions provided information about broader country context. For example, documentation for a country designated on the basis of armed conflict included broader context regarding topics such as recent natural disasters and the country's geography. As another example, documentation for a country designated on the basis of environmental

[39]We determined that USCIS and State documentation (e.g., country conditions reports and recommendation memos or letters) for a TPS decision included information about economic indicators if the documentation provided information about one or more indicators, such as gross domestic product, consumer prices, or unemployment statistics.

disaster provided information about subsequent natural disasters as well as violence, criminal activity, and corruption in the country.

In addition to USCIS and State, other DHS offices and components and non-DHS entities may provide information to inform the Secretary's decision. DHS officials noted that such information varies, may be solicited or unsolicited, and may be provided directly to the Secretary of Homeland Security or to USCIS. We reviewed examples of such information for several of the TPS decisions in our nongeneralizable sample.[40] This information included items such as

- immigration data or intelligence analyses from other DHS offices and components—for example, the Office of Immigration Statistics, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement;
- updates from the Department of Defense on the security situation in a country;
- technical input from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding the status of an epidemic; and
- input from other entities, including letters from members of Congress, foreign government officials, and nongovernmental organizations.[41]

In addition, DHS officials stated that the Secretary of Homeland Security may hold briefings or meetings on TPS reviews both internally and with

[40]DHS and State provided examples of other information compiled for each of the eight countries in our nongeneralizable sample, representing 15 of 26 TPS decisions.

[41]For example, a senior official from DHS's Office of Immigration Statistics provided us with several examples of immigration data that the office provided to DHS and USCIS officials for recent TPS reviews. The official noted that the office routinely provides immigration data—in particular, estimates of unauthorized individuals residing in the United States who would be eligible for an initial designation or redesignation—to both DHS and USCIS for TPS reviews. In addition, DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis developed an intelligence assessment that provided an overview of implications, including homeland security considerations and operational considerations for law enforcement, if TPS were to expire for certain countries. According to officials from the Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the office developed the assessment on its own initiative, and it was provided to the Secretary of Homeland Security as part of a daily briefing book as well as posted to an internal dissemination portal for cleared users. As another example, DHS's Office of the Military Advisor requested and received information from the Commander of a Department of Defense combatant command about the security situation, humanitarian challenges, and implications of terminating TPS for a country. Department of Defense officials stated that the department has not provided formal input for TPS reviews.

external entities, such as White House officials, foreign government officials, and nongovernmental organizations or advocacy groups.[42]

According to DHS officials, after USCIS and State compile their country conditions reports and recommendations for the Secretary of Homeland Security's consideration, other DHS components—including the Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans; the Office of the General Counsel; and the Management Directorate—review the documents as part of the standard departmental clearance process before providing them to the Secretary. Officials from these DHS components noted that the purpose of their review is generally to provide relevant technical comments and ensure that complete information has been gathered for the Secretary's review.

Secretary of Homeland Security Makes a TPS Decision

According to USCIS officials, after receiving the information and recommendations from USCIS and State, as well as information from any other sources, the Secretary of Homeland Security makes a decision regarding a country's initial or existing TPS designation.[43] USCIS officials indicated that the Secretary's decisions may not always follow the recommendations of the USCIS Director or the Secretary of State. For example, among the 26 TPS decisions from 2014 through 2018 that we reviewed, the Secretary of Homeland Security's decision was the same as State's recommendation in 21 cases and differed from State's recommendation in five cases.[44]

- **Initial designation.** USCIS officials stated that if the Secretary of Homeland Security determines a country meets the statutory criteria

[42]For example, we reviewed an agenda and materials for a briefing related to a TPS review for a country. Participants included officials from the White House, DHS, State, and the Department of Justice. The agenda included an overview of TPS and discussion of decision options. Attached materials included background on TPS and the statutory authorities governing TPS, as well as a summary of country conditions and decision options.

[43]Although we reviewed the steps that DHS takes to inform the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS decisions, we did not review the Secretary's decision-making for specific TPS decisions for the countries we selected for our review. See appendix I for additional details of our objectives, scope, and methodology.

[44]The Secretary of State's recommendations in the five cases varied. These cases included instances when State recommended terminating a designation that DHS decided to extend or when State recommended extending a designation that DHS decided to terminate. Because of redactions that had been made in the information we received, we were unable to discern whether any of the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS decisions differed from USCIS's recommendations.

for designation, the Secretary may then exercise discretion in deciding whether to initially designate the country for TPS.

- **Existing designation.** According to USCIS officials, the Secretary of Homeland Security exercises discretion in determining whether the conditions in a country satisfy statutory conditions for retaining an existing designation. However, the officials indicated that if the Secretary determines that the conditions for TPS designation continue to be met, the Secretary is required under the INA to extend the designation.[45] Additionally, USCIS officials stated that if the Secretary determines a country no longer meets conditions for TPS designation, the Secretary is required under the INA to terminate the designation. Finally, USCIS officials stated that the Secretary may exercise discretion in deciding to redesignate a country with an existing designation and that factors such as a significant deterioration in country conditions may weigh in favor of a redesignation.[46]

Once the Secretary of Homeland Security decides whether to designate a country or to extend or terminate TPS, the decision may be documented through a signed memorandum or communicated orally to USCIS, according to USCIS officials. DHS provided memorandums or notices documenting the Secretary's TPS decisions for all 26 decisions in our nongeneralizable sample.[47] After the Secretary makes a TPS decision, DHS typically communicates the decision to State before announcing it to the general public. Either DHS or State then communicates the decision to the foreign embassy in Washington, D.C., and State may communicate it to the foreign government overseas. Finally, under INA provisions

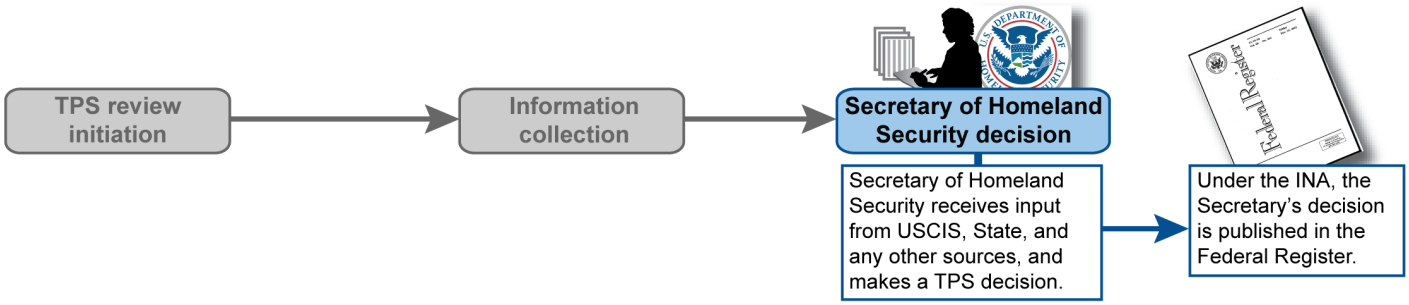
[45]8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3).

[46]USCIS officials noted that, while factors such as a significant deterioration in country conditions may weigh in favor of a redesignation, there is no single factor that the Secretary of Homeland Security has generally considered in exercising discretion to redesignate a country for TPS.

[47]Specifically, DHS provided a completed signature page from a USCIS recommendation memo as documentation of the Secretary of Homeland Security's decisions in six cases. DHS provided a separate memorandum from the Secretary to the Director of USCIS documenting the TPS decision in two cases, a completed signature page for a memorandum from DHS's Office of the General Counsel documenting the Secretary's decision in another case, and completed signature pages for draft Federal Register notices documenting the Secretary's decisions in 17 cases.

related to TPS, the Secretary's decision is published in the Federal Register (see fig. 7).[48]

Figure 7: Secretary of Homeland Security's Decision on Temporary Protected Status (TPS)



Legend: INA = Immigration and Nationality Act; State = Department of State; USCIS = U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Source: GAO analysis of documentary and testimonial information from the Department of Homeland Security and from State. | GAO-20-134

Note: The Secretary of Homeland Security exercises discretion in determining whether to initially designate or redesignate a country for TPS. For an existing designation, under the INA, the Secretary of Homeland Security is required to determine whether country conditions warrant an extension of TPS or whether the country no longer meets the statutory criteria and TPS must be terminated. The INA requires DHS to provide official notice of TPS decisions through the Federal Register. A decision to designate a country for TPS is effective once published in the Federal Register or on a later date specified by the Secretary of Homeland Security. For subsequent TPS reviews of existing designations, DHS is required to provide timely notice of the Secretary of Homeland Security's decision in the Federal Register, and the effective date is generally the day after the end date of the current designation period. The INA provides that a termination shall not be effective earlier than 60 days after the date that a Federal Register notice is published or, if later, the expiration of the most recent previous extension. 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b).

[48]According to 8 U.S.C. §1254A (b)(1), after the Secretary of Homeland Security makes a decision regarding an initial TPS designation, the designation shall not become effective unless notice of the designation is published in the Federal Register. With regard to decisions to extend or terminate a designation after a required periodic review of an existing designation, the Secretary of Homeland Security is required to provide for the publication of notice of the determination in the Federal Register on a timely basis. Under the law, terminations may not take effect earlier than 60 days after the date of publication of the Federal Register notice announcing the termination decision or, if later, the expiration of the most recent previous extension. See 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3).

DHS Has Communicated TPS Decisions through Required Federal Register Notices but Provided Inconsistent Guidance on Employment Authorizations

DHS Has Communicated TPS Decisions to the Public through Required Federal Register Notices and Other Mechanisms

Since 1990, all TPS decisions have been communicated to the public through statutorily required notices in the Federal Register.[49] DHS has also used other mechanisms, including press releases and its website, to help disseminate TPS-related information to the public.

We found that a Federal Register notice was published for all TPS decisions, as required under the INA, from November 1990 to September 2019.[50] In addition, DHS frequently used Federal Register notices as a mechanism for communicating other related information, such as effective dates for TPS designation periods, applicant registration periods, TPS beneficiary eligibility requirements, and information about employment authorization for beneficiaries. For example, the Federal Register notice

[49]The authority to designate countries for TPS was transferred from the Attorney General to the Secretary of Homeland Security in 2003, after the Department of Justice's Immigration and Naturalization Service was abolished and its immigration services and enforcement functions were transferred to the Department of Homeland Security pursuant to the Homeland Security Act of 2002. Pub. L. No. 107-296, title I & IV, §§ 101, 102, 456, 471, 478, 116 Stat. 2135, 2142, 2143-44, 2200-01, 2205, 2211-12 (2002) (classified, as amended, at 6 U.S.C. §§ 111, 112, 275, 291, 298). See also 8 U.S.C. § 1103(a) (powers and duties of the Secretary of Homeland Security).

[50]INA provisions related to TPS state that TPS decisions, including designations, extensions, and terminations, shall be published in the Federal Register. The effective dates of TPS decisions may vary, in accordance with the statute. See 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b).

extending the TPS designation of El Salvador, published on July 8, 2016, included the following[51]:

- summary information about the extension, such as the period of extension and the start and end date of the extension;
- procedures and eligibility information for beneficiaries to register or reregister for TPS and to apply for renewal of employment authorization documents, including required forms and fees to register or reregister;[52]
- directions for obtaining additional information and help with questions by accessing the USCIS website or by contacting an identified USCIS official or a USCIS customer contact center; and
- general information about TPS as well as information about El Salvador's initial TPS designation and about the Secretary's authority and reason for extending TPS for El Salvador.

For a Federal Register notice of a TPS decision, according to USCIS officials, USCIS generally takes about 2 weeks to draft the notice. DHS then completes an internal review before submitting the notice to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for interagency review, according to officials. OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs coordinates the notice review process, including gathering comments or proposed revisions from relevant executive branch agencies. For example, we reviewed examples of technical comments from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding draft notices of TPS decisions for the Ebola-affected countries that included information and data on the status of the epidemic and an assessment of health care infrastructure. According to USCIS officials, OMB comments are returned to DHS without identifying the agency that made each comment, and additional interagency review and comment may occur before DHS publishes the notice in the Federal Register. USCIS officials also noted that, under regulation, OMB can take up to 90 days to complete the

[51]See 81 Fed. Reg. 44645 (July 8, 2016).

[52]Once granted TPS, an individual must reregister during each reregistration period, in the case of an extension or redesignation, to maintain TPS benefits. TPS beneficiaries generally have 60 days to reregister. However, late reregistration is permitted if good cause is met and USCIS officials are instructed to give beneficiaries the benefit of any doubt, according to USCIS officials. According to USCIS officials, because of ongoing TPS litigation, eligible beneficiaries from six countries (Haiti, El Salvador, Sudan, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Nepal) are allowed to maintain their TPS, provided they have reregistered during at least one or more of the reregistration periods specified in footnote 1 of the Federal Register notice published at 84 Fed. Reg. 59403 (Nov. 4, 2019).

interagency review, although the officials added that OMB aims to complete the process in a timely manner for TPS notices and generally takes about a month.

According to USCIS officials, to help raise awareness of TPS decisions, USCIS has generally also issued press releases announcing all TPS decisions and published them on its website in addition to publishing Federal Register notices. Table 2 summarizes information from DHS's publication of a press release and Federal Register notice for a 2016 TPS decision.

Table 2: Department of Homeland Security's Public Communication of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Extension for Honduras in 2016

Type of communication	Publication date	Description
Press release	May 16, 2016	The prior extension of Honduras's TPS designation was set to end on July 5, 2016. In May, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published a press release on its website announcing that the Secretary of Homeland Security had extended TPS for eligible nationals of Honduras for an additional 18 months, effective July 6, 2016, through Jan. 5, 2018. The press release included guidance for TPS beneficiaries regarding TPS reregistration requirements. In addition, the press release stated that, for eligible foreign nationals who reregistered for TPS, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services would issue new employment authorization documents with a Jan. 5, 2018, expiration date.
Federal Register notice	May 16, 2016	DHS published a Federal Register notice of the decision to extend the designation of Honduras for TPS. The notice included additional details of the decision as well as guidance for TPS beneficiaries regarding reregistration requirements.

Source: GAO analysis of DHS documentation and information provided in Federal Register notices. | GAO-20-134

USCIS has also taken other steps to communicate TPS decisions and related information to the public. USCIS has updated its TPS country-specific webpages with alerts about the latest TPS decisions and registration periods, among other information. Further, according to USCIS officials, the Office of Public Affairs hosted periodic national TPS teleconferences for stakeholders and conducted outreach meetings to respond to questions and discuss TPS information in communities where there might be a large number of TPS beneficiaries. For example, a teleconference invitation from USCIS to stakeholders to discuss the extension of Haiti's TPS designation in May 2017 indicated that USCIS officials would share information about the TPS reregistration period and procedures for eligible Haitian nationals and would respond to stakeholder questions. Officials from USCIS's Office of Public Affairs also stated that the office has drafted guidance for communicating most TPS decisions. We reviewed examples of the guidance, which included planned time lines for publishing the press releases and information to

USCIS's website as well as for conducting outreach to Congress, stakeholder groups, and TPS beneficiaries.

DHS Published Most Federal Register Notices of Decisions on Existing TPS Designations before Previous Designations' End Date

USCIS officials noted that once the Secretary of Homeland Security makes a TPS decision, time frames for publishing the Federal Register notice may vary.[53] USCIS officials stated that, in an effort to ensure public awareness of the decisions as soon as possible, USCIS has in some cases published a press release before the Federal Register notice of a decision was finalized and published.

In reviewing TPS decisions for existing designations (i.e., extensions, terminations, and redesignations) in fiscal years 1990 through 2019, we found the following:

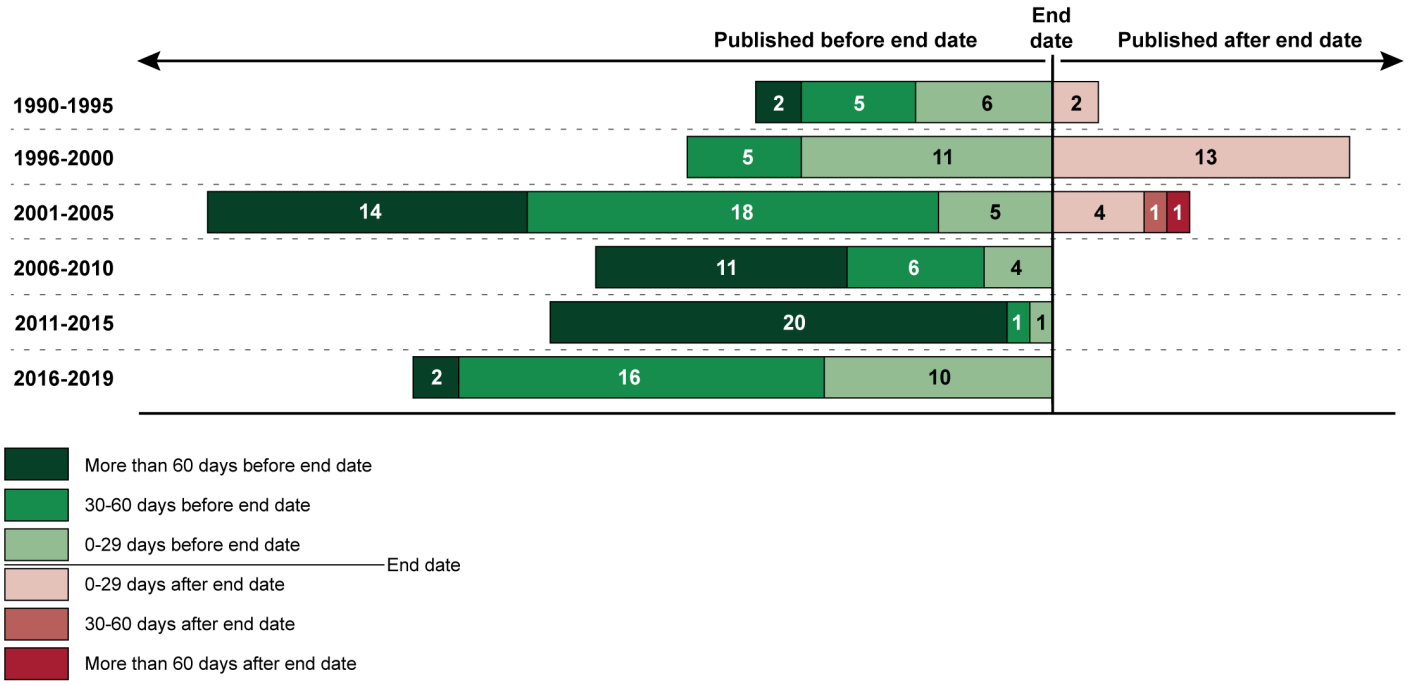
- About two-thirds of Federal Register notices announcing TPS decisions for these existing designations were published at least 30 days before the end date of the previous designation period (100 of 158 total notices).
- In fiscal years 1990 through 2005, 21 Federal Register notices announcing TPS decisions for existing designations were published after the end of the previous designation period.[54]
- In fiscal years 2006 through 2019, all 71 Federal Register notices announcing TPS decisions for existing designations were published 4 to 159 days before the end date of the previous designation period.

See figure 8 for more details.

[53]The INA requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to undertake a review of country conditions for an existing TPS designation at least 60 days before the end of the current designation period. Under the INA, DHS must publish decisions to extend or terminate a country's TPS designation in the Federal Register on a "timely basis." 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3). USCIS officials noted that they aim to publish a Federal Register notice as expeditiously as possible after the Secretary makes a TPS decision. However, the officials said that timeframes for publishing the Federal Register notice of a TPS decision may vary, depending on the OMB interagency review process, among other factors.

[54]Under 8 U.S.C. § 1254a, a TPS country designation shall remain in effect until the effective date of the termination of the designation. Therefore, in instances in which the publication of a notice in the Federal Register occurred after the end date of the previous TPS designation, such TPS designation would continue unless and until terminated by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Figure 8: Numbers of Federal Register Notices of Extensions, Terminations, or Redesignations of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Designations Published before and after End Dates of Previous Designation Periods, Fiscal Years 1990-2019



Source: GAO analysis of information provided in Department of Homeland Security Federal Register notices. | GAO-20-134

Note: Under 8 U.S.C. § 1254a, DHS must publish decisions to extend or terminate a country's TPS designation in the Federal Register on a timely basis. A TPS country designation remains in effect until the effective date of the termination of the designation. Therefore, while publication of a notice in the Federal Register may occur after the previous period of TPS designation has lapsed, the TPS designation will continue unless and until terminated by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

USCIS Published Guidance Has Not Consistently Identified All Mechanisms Used to Communicate Automatic Extensions of TPS Employment Authorization Documents

Since 1990, two mechanisms—Federal Register notices and individually mailed notifications, which TPS beneficiaries may use as evidence of their eligibility for employment—have been used to communicate automatic extensions of employment authorization documents. However, USCIS's published guidance has not consistently identified each of these as official mechanisms to verify eligibility, resulting in confusion among employers about TPS beneficiaries' employment eligibility. The INA states that DHS shall provide TPS beneficiaries with "an 'employment authorized' endorsement or other appropriate work permit" but does not specify the mechanisms that DHS should use to communicate TPS employment authorization. To receive documentation of work authorization, TPS beneficiaries generally apply for an employment authorization document after an initial TPS designation and also after any

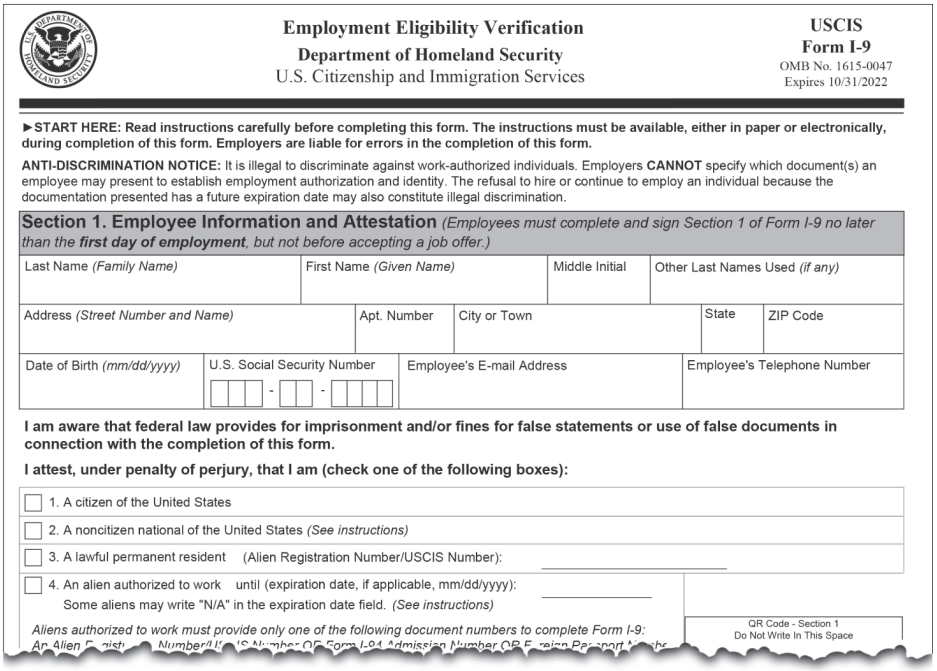
subsequent extensions or redesignations of TPS.[55] See the text box for a description of the process that TPS beneficiaries and employers must follow to verify beneficiaries' employment eligibility.

[55]According to USCIS officials, TPS registrants and reregistrants are not required to apply for an employment authorization document; however, TPS beneficiaries typically apply for the document to obtain evidence of authorization to work in the United States.

Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9) Process

Form I-9 lays out a process for verifying that an employee is authorized to work in the United States. First, Form I-9 requires the employee to attest to his or her citizenship or immigration status and provide acceptable documentation of identity and employment authorization. Such documents may establish both identity and employment eligibility (e.g., an employment authorization document—Form I-766—that contains a photograph) or may establish identity only (e.g., a driver's license) or employment eligibility only (e.g., a Social Security card).

Next, Form I-9 requires the employer to attest that he or she has examined the documents presented by the employee; that the documents appear to be genuine and relate to the employee; and that, to the best of the employer's knowledge, the employee is authorized to work in the United States. In examining the documents, the employer must reject any that do not reasonably appear to be genuine and to relate to the individual presenting them or that are not on the list of acceptable documents; the employer must then ask for other documents that satisfy the requirements of Form I-9.



Employment Eligibility Verification
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS
Form I-9
OMB No. 1615-0047
Expires 10/31/2022

►**START HERE: Read instructions carefully before completing this form. The instructions must be available, either in paper or electronically, during completion of this form. Employers are liable for errors in the completion of this form.**

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION NOTICE: It is illegal to discriminate against work-authorized individuals. Employers **CANNOT** specify which document(s) an employee may present to establish employment authorization and identity. The refusal to hire or continue to employ an individual because the documentation presented has a future expiration date may also constitute illegal discrimination.

Section 1. Employee Information and Attestation *(Employees must complete and sign Section 1 of Form I-9 no later than the **first day of employment**, but not before accepting a job offer.)*

Last Name *(Family Name)*	First Name *(Given Name)*	Middle Initial	Other Last Names Used *(if any)*

Address *(Street Number and Name)*	Apt. Number	City or Town	State	ZIP Code

Date of Birth *(mm/dd/yyyy)*	U.S. Social Security Number	Employee's E-mail Address	Employee's Telephone Number
	☐☐☐ - ☐☐ - ☐☐☐☐		

I am aware that federal law provides for imprisonment and/or fines for false statements or use of false documents in connection with the completion of this form.

I attest, under penalty of perjury, that I am (check one of the following boxes):

☐ 1. A citizen of the United States
☐ 2. A noncitizen national of the United States *(See instructions)*
☐ 3. A lawful permanent resident (Alien Registration Number/USCIS Number): _____
☐ 4. An alien authorized to work until (expiration date, if applicable, mm/dd/yyyy): _____
Some aliens may write "N/A" in the expiration date field. *(See instructions)*

Aliens authorized to work must provide only one of the following document numbers to complete Form I-9:
An Alien Registration Number/USCIS Number OR Form I-94 Admission Number OR Foreign Passport Number

QR Code - Section 1
Do Not Write In This Space

Source: GAO summary of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services documents and guidance. | GAO-20-134

According to USCIS officials, USCIS aims to adjudicate both initial employment authorization applications and renewal applications within 90 days after receiving an application. When it is unable to process the adjudications in this time frame, USCIS issues automatic extensions of expiring employment authorization documents for TPS beneficiaries from

a specific country, to allow time for USCIS to process the volume of applications associated with a TPS reregistration period.[56] In some instances, USCIS may issue additional automatic extensions of employment authorization documents for specific countries if it has been unable to process all pending applications within the initial automatic extension period, according to USCIS officials.

When employment authorization documents are automatically extended for eligible TPS beneficiaries, the documents may appear to have expired even though they remain valid. According to USCIS officials, DHS has used the Federal Register notices announcing TPS decisions to communicate most automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents. For example, on January 17, 2017, DHS published a Federal Register notice extending the TPS designation of Somalia for 18 months and, in the same notice, automatically extended for 6 months the validity of employment authorization documents issued under Somalia's TPS designation.[57] DHS has also communicated automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents through Federal Register notices independent of a TPS decision. Generally, Federal Register notices announcing automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents include instructions for employers for completing the Form I-9, among other things. Additionally, some notices state that, to reduce employer confusion regarding automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents, beneficiaries should explain the extension to their employer and may also provide their employer with a copy of the relevant Federal Register notice.

[56]According to USCIS guidance, automatic extensions of employment authorization documents for TPS beneficiaries may be valid for up to 180 days. USCIS officials told us that beneficiaries must generally reregister during the reregistration period for an extension of their status and that reregistration is required for beneficiaries to obtain a new employment authorization document with the validity dates of the new TPS designation period. Individual TPS beneficiaries may also receive an automatic extension of their expiring employment authorization document on the basis of timely filing of a renewal application. According to USCIS officials, these extensions are issued on an individual basis. See 8 CFR 274a.13(d).

[57]According to USCIS officials, the majority of Federal Register notices announcing TPS decisions have included an automatic extension of employment authorization documents. However, some automatic extensions have been announced through Federal Register notices independent of TPS decisions. For example, on July 7, 2005, DHS published a Federal Register notice solely to announce an automatic extension of employment authorization documentation for Honduran and Nicaraguan TPS beneficiaries. See 70 Fed. Reg. 39325 (July 7, 2005).

In five cases, beginning in fiscal year 2018, USCIS mailed notifications of automatic extensions of employment authorization documents to thousands of TPS beneficiaries from Haiti, El Salvador, Syria, and Honduras as an alternative or a supplement to posting the information in Federal Register notices.[58] USCIS officials told us that in these cases, they mailed individual notifications of the automatic extensions to ensure that the beneficiaries would not experience any gaps in employment authorization. According to the officials, they began this practice because of the large number of affected beneficiaries. Our examination of USCIS documents found that in four of these five cases, USCIS mailed individual notifications to the TPS beneficiaries without also posting a Federal Register notice communicating the automatic extension.

In all five cases, USCIS published guidance on its website to inform TPS beneficiaries and employers about the use of individually mailed notifications to communicate employment authorization document extensions. USCIS's website states that TPS beneficiaries may present the Federal Register notice or individually mailed notification to their employer along with their expired employment authorization documents to show proof of continued employment authorization. The individual notifications also state that beneficiaries may show the notifications, along with the expired employment authorization document, to any U.S. employer as proof of continued employment authorization.[59]

However, a USCIS handbook for employers and related guidance do not specifically identify the individually mailed notifications as an official means of communicating these extensions.

- USCIS's *Handbook for Employers: Guidance for Completing Form I-9 (M-274)* provides guidance for employers on how to properly complete Form I-9, which helps employers verify that individuals are authorized to work in the United States. The handbook contains a section about

[58]Specifically, USCIS mailed notifications of automatic extensions of employment authorization documents for Haiti on January 22, 2018, and on July 18, 2018; for El Salvador on August 23, 2018; for Syria on September 11, 2018; and for Honduras on December 6, 2018. USCIS communicated an automatic extension of employment authorization documents for TPS beneficiaries from Haiti through the individually mailed notification, sent on January 22, 2018, as well as through a Federal Register notice published on January 18, 2018.

[59]USCIS officials noted that USCIS also provides information about automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents in E-Verify, a voluntary web-based system that allows employers to confirm the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States.

automatic employment authorization document extensions for TPS beneficiaries that references USCIS's use of Federal Register notices to inform the public of these extensions. However, the handbook for employers does not mention USCIS's use of individually mailed notifications to communicate the automatic extensions.

- USCIS's *Instructions for Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification* notes that certain employees, including TPS beneficiaries, may present an expired employment authorization document, which may be considered unexpired if the document has been extended by USCIS. The guidance also notes that employees should enter the expiration date of an automatic extension on Form I-9. However, the instructions for Form I-9 do not detail USCIS's mechanisms for communicating these extensions, including its use of individually mailed notifications.

Some employers have reportedly refused to accept expired employment authorization documents as proof of work authorization when the documents had been automatically extended. For example, the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division telephone interventions website indicates that on approximately 50 occasions from September 2017 through May 2019, the Immigrant and Employee Rights Section intervened to deter employers or medical licensing boards from rejecting valid work authorization documents and, in some cases, from terminating employment for TPS beneficiaries whose employment authorization documents had been automatically extended.[60] Also, a letter to USCIS signed by 70 law professors and scholars states that some legal service providers have reported instances of employers' terminating TPS beneficiaries' employment because the employer did not understand or accept the individually mailed notifications.[61] Further, USCIS has received feedback from certain stakeholders concerned that beneficiaries might not be receiving the individual notifications in time to avoid any potential gaps in work authorization, according to USCIS officials.

USCIS officials told us that the Federal Register process may be beneficial for communicating employment authorization in some cases but that they may also continue to use the individually mailed notifications

[60]Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, "Telephone Interventions," accessed June 27, 2019, https://www.justice.gov/crt/telephone-interventions-2.

[61]Catholic Legal Immigration Network, letter to Secretary of Homeland Security and Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, November 28, 2018, accessed March 27, 2019, https://cliniclegal.org/resources/humanitarian-relief/letter-70-law-professors-and-scholars-uscis-and-dhs-regarding-work.

as a mechanism to communicate future extensions, depending on the circumstances. USCIS has acknowledged the potential benefits of updating external guidance regarding automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents. However, as of December 2019, USCIS had not taken action to do so. Replying to a letter of concern from an advocacy group, USCIS stated that it could consider updating the handbook for employers to add additional guidance regarding individually mailed notifications.[62]

Effective information and communication are vital for an entity to achieve its objectives. According to *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, management should document policies in the appropriate level of detail and externally communicate the necessary quality information to achieve an entity's objectives.[63] Updating external guidance, such as the employer handbook, to clearly identify each of the official mechanisms that USCIS may use to communicate automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents could help USCIS ensure that employers understand and accept each of its official mechanisms for communicating these automatic extensions. This, in turn, would help to reduce the risk of employers' terminating beneficiaries from their jobs as a result of confusion caused by unclear or inconsistent guidance.

Conclusions

The Secretary of Homeland Security has granted TPS, providing work authorization and protection from removal, to foreign nationals from 22 countries since TPS was established in 1990. DHS has generally communicated information about employment authorization for TPS beneficiaries in a Federal Register notice, although in some cases USCIS used individually mailed notifications to communicate automatic extensions of employment authorization documents. However, USCIS's published guidance has not consistently identified individually mailed notifications as a mechanism that may be used, leading to confusion about beneficiaries' employment eligibility and reportedly resulting in termination of some beneficiaries' employment. Consistent published guidance that clearly identifies each of the mechanisms used to communicate automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization

[62]U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, letter to Director of Advocacy at the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, December 6, 2018, accessed June 27, 2019, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/nativedocuments/Work_Authorization_extensions_for_individuals_with_TPS_from_Haiti_El_Salvador_and_Syria_-_Bussey.pdf.

[63]GAO-14-704G.

documents could help USCIS ensure that employers understand and accept the evidence USCIS provides for employment authorization, reducing the risk of erroneous termination of beneficiaries' employment.

Recommendation for Executive Action

The Director of USCIS should update published guidance, such as *Handbook for Employers: Guidance for Completing Form I-9 (M-274)*, to consistently identify each of the official mechanisms that USCIS may use to communicate automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents.

(Recommendation 1)

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to DHS, State, the Department of Defense, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Agency for International Development for review and comment. In its written comments, reproduced in appendix III, DHS agreed with our recommendation and noted planned actions to implement it, including updating guidance in DHS's M-274 handbook. DHS's planned actions will address the intent of our recommendation if they include updating guidance regarding each of the official mechanisms that USCIS may use to communicate automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents, including the use of individually mailed notifications. The U.S. Agency for International Development also provided written comments, which are reproduced in appendix IV. In addition, DHS and State provided technical comments that we incorporated as appropriate. The Department of Defense and the Department of Health and Human Services did not provide comments.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, and the Acting Secretary of Homeland Security and Secretary of State, as well as the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact Chelsa Gurkin at (202) 512-2964 or GurkinC@gao.gov, or Rebecca Gambler at (202) 512-6912 or GamblerR@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this reports are listed in appendix V.

Chelsa Gurkin
Director, International Affairs and Trade

Rebecca Gambler
Director, Homeland Security and Justice

List of Requesters

The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate

The Honorable Cory A. Booker
United States Senate

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senate

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
United States Senate

The Honorable Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senate

The Honorable Gary C. Peters
United States Senate

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Our objectives were to (1) describe Temporary Protected Status (TPS) determinations and numbers of beneficiaries since TPS was established in 1990; (2) describe the approach that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in consultation with the Department of State (State) and other relevant agencies, takes to inform the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS reviews; and (3) examine DHS's public communication regarding TPS decisions and related information, including work authorization.

To describe TPS determinations since TPS was established in 1990, we reviewed information and data in Federal Register notices for all TPS designations in fiscal years 1990 through 2019. Specifically, we reviewed the designation time frames and bases (i.e., ongoing armed conflict, environmental disaster, or extraordinary and temporary conditions) for each designation since TPS was established. We also analyzed U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) data on numbers of TPS beneficiaries for fiscal years 1990 through 2018. In addition, we analyzed USCIS data on TPS beneficiaries' characteristics, such as numbers, location, age, and gender of foreign nationals granted TPS, for fiscal year 2018.[1]

To assess the reliability of USCIS data on TPS beneficiaries, we reviewed documentation and interviewed USCIS officials to identify and rectify any missing or erroneous data. According to USCIS officials, USCIS removes from its data on TPS beneficiaries any who become U.S. citizens or whose status is withdrawn, either because they no longer meet eligibility requirements or because they requested that USCIS withdraw their status. However, according to officials, the data may include foreign nationals who have since died, moved out of the country, or have an additional immigration status. Additionally, because the data comprise information provided by TPS applicants, the data may include a small number of applicant errors, according to officials. We determined that the data for fiscal years 2000 through 2018 were sufficiently reliable to provide general information about the size and characteristics of TPS

[1]We selected this time period to include data on beneficiaries from the fiscal year when TPS was established through the most recent fiscal year for which data were available.

beneficiaries.[2] USCIS was not able to provide reliable data on numbers of TPS beneficiaries before fiscal year 2000 because, according to USCIS officials, these data were not consistently entered electronically in USCIS information systems.

To describe the approach that DHS, in consultation with State and other relevant agencies, takes to inform the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS reviews, we reviewed provisions in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) related to TPS as well as DHS and State documentation, such as informal guidance documents used since fiscal year 2014 or earlier regarding steps taken for a TPS review.[3] We also conducted interviews with DHS and State officials related to the processes they have used to collect information for TPS reviews since fiscal year 2014. Specifically, we interviewed DHS officials from U.S. Customs and Border Protection; the U.S. Coast Guard; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; the Management Directorate; the Office of the Executive Secretary; the Office of Intelligence and Analysis; the Office of Legislative Affairs; the Office of Partnership and Engagement; the Office of Public Affairs; the Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans, including the Office of Immigration Statistics; and USCIS—in particular, USCIS's Office of Policy and Strategy and USCIS's Refugees, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate. We interviewed State officials from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration and several regional bureaus, including desk officers from the Bureaus of African Affairs, Near Eastern Affairs, South and Central Asian Affairs, and Western Hemisphere Affairs. We also interviewed State

[2]USCIS also compiles estimates of expected TPS reregistrants based on reregistration trends; according to USCIS officials, these estimates help USCIS to forecast its budget. According to officials, USCIS recently stopped including expected TPS reregistration numbers in the Federal Register notices because the public found the data confusing. The officials added that the estimates could also be misleading depending on the circumstances, because, although the estimates are based largely on numbers of prior reregistrants, additional individuals from a country that is redesignated for TPS may be able to newly register for TPS. Therefore, we have not included USCIS data on expected TPS reregistrants in this report.

[3]We reviewed an internal template that USCIS's Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate (RAIO) officials told us that they use as informal guidance for the draft country conditions reports that they compile for USCIS's Office of Policy & Strategy for reviews for initial or existing TPS designations. We did not assess the extent to which the RAIO country condition reports in our judgmental sample aligned with RAIO's internal template for these reports; rather, our methodology consisted of reviewing the reports in our sample to provide a general overview of the content and types of information included in each report.

officials from overseas posts for countries that we selected for our review, including El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Sudan, and Yemen.[4]

We reviewed documentation that DHS and State provided for a judgmental, nongeneralizable sample of eight countries for which DHS rendered TPS decisions in fiscal years 2014 through 2018 (El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen); the TPS decisions for these eight countries represented 26 of a total of 42 TPS decisions for 13 countries in that period.[5] We selected this sample to represent a range of decision types and designation reasons, among other factors. While this sample cannot be generalized to the countries or decisions we did not review, it provided valuable information about the approach that DHS uses for TPS reviews. The primary documents that we reviewed for each decision included information about country conditions that USCIS and State had compiled and recommendations that USCIS and State leadership had provided to the Secretary of Homeland Security. Some of the documents that we received had been redacted because of ongoing litigation related to TPS. Table 3 provides additional details of the decisions in our judgmental sample.

[4]We were not able to interview officials from the post in Nicaragua, because the mission had been evacuated after the latest TPS review and State officials informed us that those present at the post at the time of our review would not be able to respond to our questions. However, we were able to interview the regional bureau desk officer for Nicaragua, who was previously posted in Nicaragua during the latest TPS review for Nicaragua. In addition, regional bureau officials told us that State did not obtain country conditions information directly from the post for TPS reviews for Syria, because the embassy was closed due to hostilities in the country.

[5]Although we reviewed the approach that DHS takes to inform the Secretary of Homeland Security's TPS reviews, we did not review the Secretary of Homeland Security's decision-making for specific TPS decisions for the eight countries in our sample.

Table 3: Judgmental Sample of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Decisions

No.	Country	Decision type	Designation basis	Federal Register notice date
1	El Salvador	Extension	Environmental disaster	Jan. 7, 2015
2	El Salvador	Extension	Environmental disaster	July 8, 2016
3	El Salvador	Termination	Environmental disaster	Jan. 18, 2018
4	Haiti	Extension	Extraordinary and temporary conditions	Mar. 3, 2014
5	Haiti	Extension	Extraordinary and temporary conditions	Aug. 25, 2015
6	Haiti	Extension	Extraordinary and temporary conditions	May 24. 2017
7	Haiti	Termination	Extraordinary and temporary conditions	Jan. 18, 2018
8	Honduras	Extension	Environmental disaster	Oct. 16, 2014
9	Honduras	Extension	Environmental disaster	May 16, 2016
10	Honduras	Extension	Environmental disaster	Dec. 15, 2017
11	Honduras	Termination	Environmental disaster	June 5, 2018
12	Nepal	Designation	Environmental disaster	June 24. 2015
13	Nepal	Extension	Environmental disaster	Oct. 26, 2016
14	Nepal	Termination	Environmental disaster	May 22, 2018
15	Nicaragua	Extension	Environmental disaster	Oct. 16, 2014
16	Nicaragua	Extension	Environmental disaster	May 16, 2016
17	Nicaragua	Termination	Environmental disaster	Dec. 15, 2017
18	Sudan	Extension	Armed conflict; extraordinary and temporary conditions	Sept. 2, 2014
19	Sudan	Extension	Armed conflict; extraordinary and temporary conditions	Jan. 25, 2016
20	Sudan	Termination	Armed conflict; extraordinary and temporary conditions	Oct. 11, 2017
21	Syria	Extension, redesignation[a]	Armed conflict; extraordinary and temporary conditions	Jan. 5, 2015
22	Syria	Extension, redesignation	Armed conflict; extraordinary and temporary conditions	Aug. 1, 2016
23	Syria	Extension	Armed conflict; extraordinary and temporary conditions	Mar. 5, 2018
24	Yemen	Designation	Armed conflict	Sept. 3, 2015
25	Yemen	Extension, redesignation	Armed conflict; extraordinary and temporary conditions	Jan. 4, 2017
26	Yemen	Extension	Armed conflict; extraordinary and temporary conditions	Aug. 14, 2018

Source: GAO summary of information about our judgmental sample of TPS decisions. | GAO-20-134

[a]According to USCIS officials, from 1997 through 2017, DHS used the term "'redesignate"' for instances in which the Secretary of Homeland Security newly designated a country for TPS after an initial designation or extension period. Beginning in 2018, DHS began using the term "'newly designate"' for these decisions. See 8 U.S.C. §1254a(b).

In addition, we reviewed examples of other information that may be provided for a TPS review, including examples of input from other DHS components, other U.S. agencies, the White House, members of Congress, foreign governments, and nongovernmental organizations. Specifically, we received examples of this type of information for each of the eight countries in our judgmental, nongeneralizable sample, representing 15 of the 26 TPS decisions. For example, this information included immigration data and internal intelligence analyses compiled by DHS's Office of Immigration Statistics, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Office of Intelligence and Analysis. We also reviewed examples of updates provided by senior Department of Defense officials for the Secretary of Homeland Security regarding the security situation in a country; technical input from the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about the status of an epidemic in a country; and information from the U.S. Agency for International Development about country conditions on the ground. In addition, we interviewed officials from these three agencies regarding the types of information that they may provide for TPS reviews. Further, we reviewed examples of letters from members of Congress, foreign government officials, and nongovernmental organizations related to TPS reviews. Moreover, we reviewed examples of briefing or meeting agendas and related materials for internal and external briefings, including external briefings with White House officials, foreign government officials, and nongovernmental organizations.

To examine DHS's public communication regarding TPS decisions and related information, including work authorization, we reviewed DHS's public communications related to TPS, including Federal Register notices, press releases, and USCIS's website, among other information. We analyzed information in Federal Register notices published from November 29, 1990, through October 1, 2019 (the most recent available at the time of our review), to determine the timing of notices for TPS decisions and the types of information included in the notices. We reviewed examples of USCIS's Office of Public Affairs guidance for public communication of TPS decisions. We also interviewed USCIS officials regarding the mechanisms that DHS used to communicate TPS decisions and related information, including DHS's process for drafting and publishing Federal Register notices.

Further, we examined DHS's guidance and procedures as of fiscal year 2019 for communicating TPS employment authorization, including automatic extensions of employment authorization. We reviewed USCIS's

public communications related to automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization for both beneficiaries and employers in Federal Register notices, individually mailed notifications, an employer handbook, and information published on USCIS's website. We interviewed USCIS officials regarding USCIS's approach to communicating TPS employment authorization, including automatic extensions. We also reviewed information from the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division's website related to confusion over automatic extensions of employment authorization documents for TPS beneficiaries.[6] Additionally, we reviewed a letter to USCIS signed by 70 law professors and scholars related to instances of employers terminating TPS beneficiaries.[7] Finally, we compared DHS's guidance and procedures with federal internal control standards related to documenting policies and externally communicating information.[8]

We conducted this performance audit from September 2018 to March 2020 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

[6]Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, "Telephone Interventions," accessed June 27, 2019, https://www.justice.gov/crt/telephone-interventions-2.

[7]Catholic Legal Immigration Network, letter to Secretary of DHS and Director of USCIS, November 18, 2018, accessed March 27, 2019, https://cliniclegal.org/resources/humanitarian-relief/letter-70-law-professors-and-scholars-uscis-and-dhs-regarding-work. We did not independently verify the issues cited in this letter.

[8]GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO-14-704G (Washington, D.C.: September 2014).

Appendix II: Numbers and Characteristics of Temporary Protected Status Beneficiaries, Fiscal Years 2000-2018

Table 4 lists the numbers of TPS beneficiaries, by country of citizenship, in fiscal years 2000 through 2018. During this period, the country with the largest number of TPS beneficiaries in any given fiscal year was El Salvador, with 262,262 in fiscal year 2010; followed by Honduras, with 85,759 in fiscal year 2007; and Haiti, with 58,294 in fiscal year 2014. In contrast, during the same period, Montserrat had the smallest maximum number of TPS beneficiaries in any given fiscal year, with a maximum of 21 in fiscal year 2004; followed by Angola, with a maximum of 47 in fiscal year 2002; and Burundi, with a maximum of 50 in fiscal year 2007.

Table 4: Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Beneficiaries, by Country of Citizenship, Fiscal Years 2000-2018

Year	Somalia	Monserrat	Burundi	Sierra Leone	Sudan	Honduras	Nicaragu[a]	Angola	El Salvador	Haiti	South Sudan	Syria	Guinea	Liberia	Nepal	Yemen
2000	10	15	19	961	179	65,874	3,581	22	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2001	10	20	25	1,048	191	69,573	3,751	39	21,890	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2002	37	20	25	1,082	193	72,812	4,013	47	98,364	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2003	156	20	29	1,113	193	75,467	4,209	–	166,654	–	–	–	–	1,596	–	–
2004	167	21	29	–	192	78,183	4,433	–	225,301	–	–	–	–	1,959	–	–
2005	173	–	31	–	222	83,874	4,734	–	242,713	–	–	–	–	2,081	–	–
2006	385	–	49	–	603	85,414	4,850	–	252,786	–	–	–	–	4,474	–	–
2007	408	–	50	–	637	85,759	4,910	–	257,345	–	–	–	–	4,508	–	–
2008	414	–	49	–	645	85,461	4,935	–	261,181	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2009	421	–	–	–	658	85,101	4,970	–	262,006	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2010	440	–	–	–	668	85,150	4,966	–	262,262	42,132	–	–	–	–	–	–
2011	440	–	–	–	659	84,498	4,925	–	261,227	48,695	–	–	–	–	–	–
2012	436	_	_	_	659	84,005	4,891	_	260,476	58,031	1	177	_	–	_	_
2013	461	–	–	–	682	83,747	4,850	–	259,926	58,232	3	2,036	–	–	–	–
2014	479	–	–	-	829	83,049	4,790	–	258,071	58,294	20	4,471	–	–	–	–
2015	476	–	–	840	834	82,515	4,730	–	256,631	57,987	26	4,830	542	1,612	1,085	–
2016	480	–	–	1,256	830	81,635	4,657	–	253,619	57,638	42	6,008	1,013	2,303	12,139	780
2017	477	–	–	–	829	80,637	4,567	–	250,932	57,152	74	6,831	–	–	14,516	1,090
2018	463	–	–	–	804	80,748	4,524	–	251,664	56,455	83	7,009	–	–	14,578	1,464

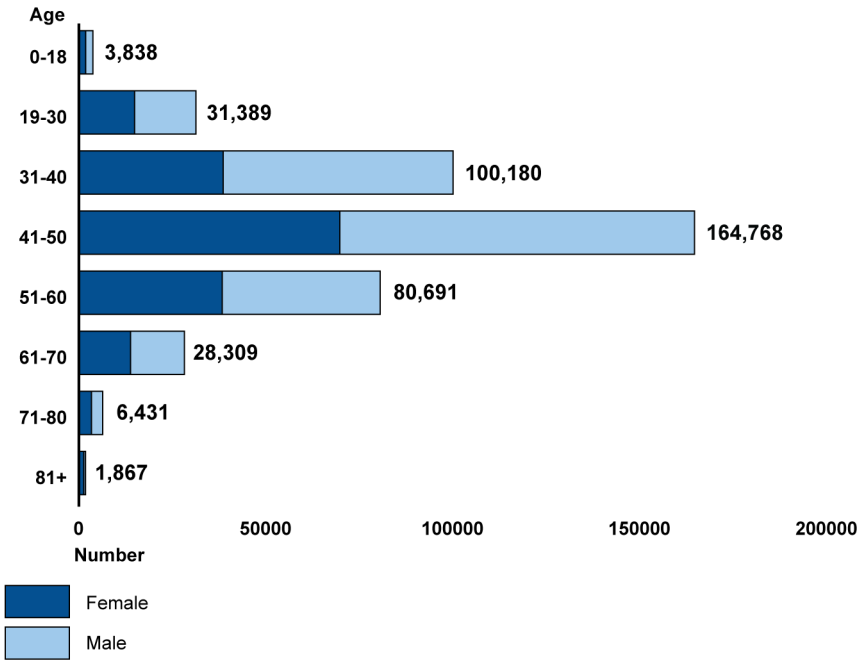
Legend: – = no TPS beneficiaries.

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services data. | GAO-20-134

Notes: The data shown for each fiscal year represent eligible foreign nationals who were granted TPS and whose status was valid as of September 30 of that fiscal year. According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officials, foreign nationals granted TPS may be included in the data for multiple fiscal years as long as they maintain valid status. Officials noted that, depending on the population size, it may take USCIS years to adjudicate all applications for TPS from nationals of a given country. Therefore, numbers of TPS beneficiaries may continue to increase after the established registration period for a specific designation. The data shown may also include some eligible foreign nationals who have an additional immigration status as well as some who have left the United States or died, according to USCIS officials. USCIS officials noted that TPS beneficiaries who become U.S. citizens or whose status is withdrawn, either because they no longer meet eligibility requirements or because they requested that USCIS withdraw their status, are removed from the data in the fiscal year that their status changes. According to USCIS officials, data for TPS beneficiaries were not consistently entered electronically in USCIS's information system before fiscal year 2000. As a result, we determined that USCIS data on numbers of TPS beneficiaries before fiscal year 2000 were not sufficiently reliable for our purposes.

Figure 9 presents the ages and genders of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) beneficiaries in fiscal year 2018, based on U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services information and data. The majority of TPS beneficiaries in fiscal year 2018 were 31 to 50 years of age (62 percent) and male (55 percent).

Figure 9: Age and Gender of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Beneficiaries, Fiscal Year 2018

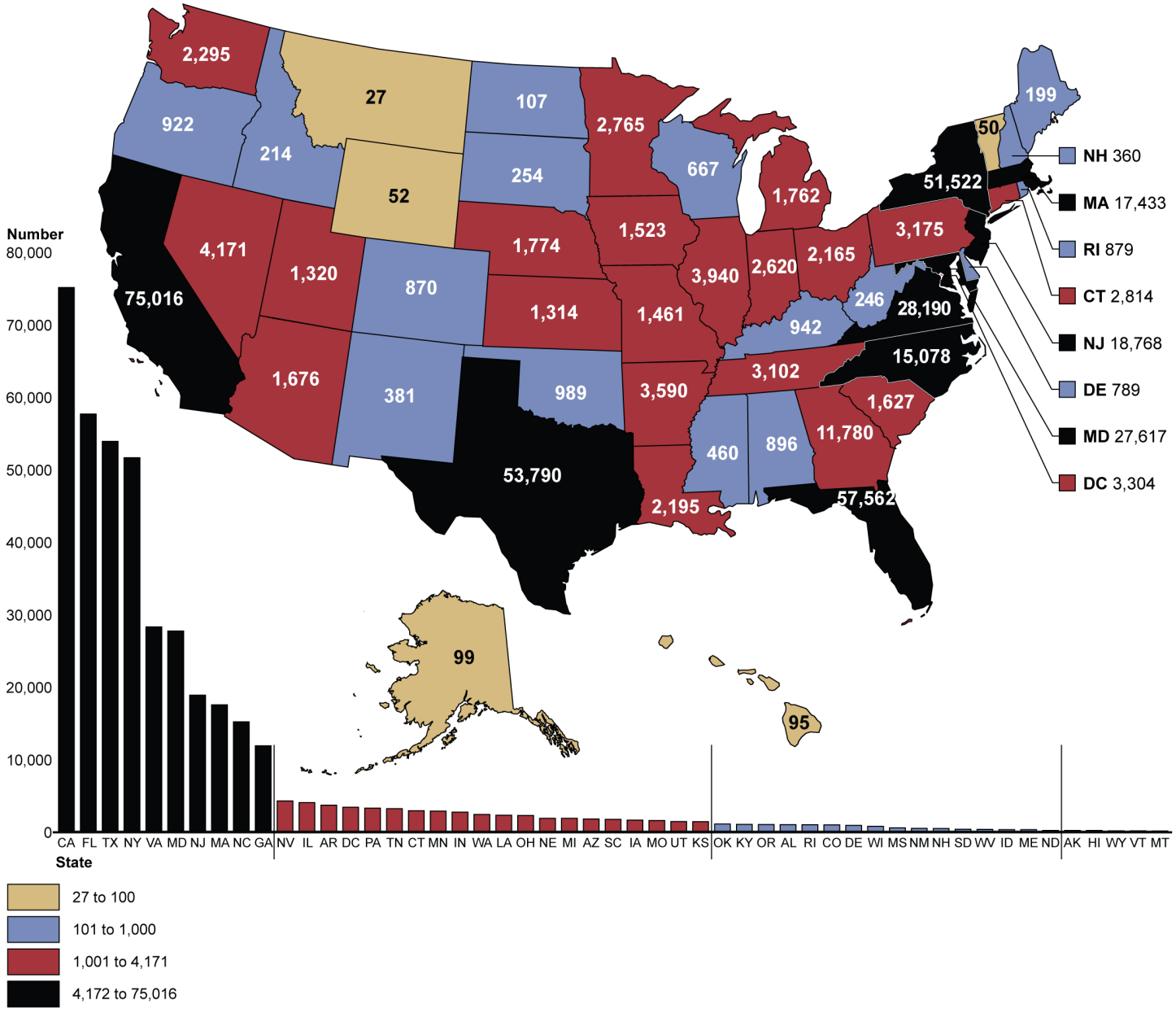


Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services data. | GAO-20-134

Note: The data shown represent foreign nationals who were granted TPS as of September 30, 2018. According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), data are self-reported by Temporary Protected Status beneficiaries and may therefore include a small number of records with applicant error. As a result, the data shown do not sum precisely to the total number of TPS beneficiaries in fiscal year 2018 (417,792). According to USCIS officials, data may include some eligible foreign nationals who have an additional immigration status as well as some who have left the United States or died.

Figure 10 shows the location, by state of residency, of TPS beneficiaries in fiscal year 2018. TPS beneficiaries resided in all 50 states and the District of Columbia in fiscal year 2018, with the highest populations in California, Florida, Texas, and New York.

Figure 10: Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Beneficiaries, by State of Residency, Fiscal Year 2018



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services data. | GAO-20-134

Note: The data shown reflect addresses in U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) information system at the time of the most recently approved TPS applications for eligible foreign nationals who were granted TPS as of September 30, 2018. According to USCIS officials, the data do not reflect any address changes after the most recently approved application. The data shown are

self-reported by TPS beneficiaries and therefore may include a small number of records with applicant error, according to USCIS officials. Additionally, the data do not reflect TPS beneficiaries residing in U.S. territories or serving in the U.S. armed forces. As a result, the data shown do not sum precisely to the total number of TPS beneficiaries in fiscal year 2018 (417,792). According to officials, the data may include some eligible foreign nationals who have an additional immigration status as well as some who have left the United States or died.

Appendix III: Comments from Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Homeland Security

March 6, 2020

Chelsa Gurkin
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Rebecca Gambler
Director, Homeland Security and Justice
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Management Response to Draft Report GAO-20-134, "TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS: Steps Taken to Inform and Communicate Secretary of Homeland Security's Decisions"

Dear Ms. Gurkin and Ms. Gambler:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

The Department is pleased to note GAO's (1) reporting of DHS's decision-making process for determining whether to designate, extend, or terminate a foreign state's designation for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and (2) recognition that DHS communicates all TPS decisions to the public through required Federal Register notices and other mechanisms, such as website postings. DHS remains committed to making all TPS determinations in full compliance with the law.

The draft report contained one recommendation with which the Department concurs. Attached find our detailed response to the recommendation. DHS previously submitted technical comments under a separate cover for GAO's consideration.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,

JIM H. CRUMPACKER, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Attachment

Attachment: Management Response to Recommendation Contained in GAO-20-134

GAO recommended that the Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS):

Recommendation 1: Update published guidance, such as Handbook for Employers: Guidance for Completing Form I-9 (M-274), to consistently identify each of the official mechanisms that USCIS may use to communicate automatic extensions of TPS employment authorization documents.

Response: Concur. USCIS's Immigration Records and Identity Services Directorate (IRIS)-Verification Division is currently revising the M-274. The revised M-274 will provide additional information on completing the Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9) for TPS beneficiaries. Specifically, these revisions will include additional subsections of instructions for completing Form I-9 when a TPS beneficiary's Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is automatically extended by a Federal Register notice and/or a TPS beneficiary receives a Notice of Action, Form I-797C, automatically extending their expired EAD after applying for a new EAD. Also, the IRIS-Verification Division will revise TPS guidance on I-9 Central, the online Form I-9 resource center, to reflect the information added to the M-274. Estimated Completion Date: April 30, 2020.

Appendix IV: Comments from U.S. Agency for International Development

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MAR 1 0 2020

Thomas Melito
Managing Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20226

Re: TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS – Steps Taken to Inform and Communicate Secretary of Homeland Security's Decisions (GAO-20-134)

Dear Mr. Melito:

Thank you for providing the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) with an opportunity to review and comment on the draft report produced by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) titled, *Temporary Protected Status: Steps Taken to Inform and Communicate Secretary of Homeland Security's Decisions* (GAO-20-134). USAID does not have any comments on the draft report.

In this engagement, the GAO reviewed the internal decision-making process at the U.S. Department of State for designating and/or extending Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for select nationalities. The GAO also reviewed the State Department's process for seeking input for the review of TPS by the Secretary for Homeland Security. USAID is not involved in the decision-making process for TPS designations; however, the State Department might ask the Agency to provide information gathered "on the ground" or from publicly available sources.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft report.

Sincerely,

Frederick M. Nutt
Assistant Administrator,
Bureau for Management

Enclosure: a/s

Appendix V: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contacts

Chelsa Gurkin, (202) 512-2964 or GurkinC@gao.gov

Rebecca Gambler, (202) 512-6912 or GamblerR@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contacts named above, Miriam Carroll Fenton and Taylor Matheson (Assistant Directors), Elisabeth Helmer, Cristina Norland, Ben DeYoung, Martin De Alteriis, Neil Doherty, Jenny Grover, Reid Lowe, Mary Moutsos, Jan Montgomery, Jon Najmi, Nicole Willems, and Bailey Wong made key contributions to this report. Alana Miller and Danielle Rudstein provided technical assistance.

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Exhibit 3

January 15, 2025

Confirmation Hearing of Homeland Security

Secretary Nominee Gov. Kristi Noem

SENATOR PAUL: ... that the department and its components engage in. In other words, we do so much stuff and we're so big we can't describe it for you. But if we can't describe what we have, we got a problem. In plain language, the DHS had really no idea. Think about it. An agency commanding over $110 billion annually can't account for its own activities. This is not just bureaucratic incompetence, it's emblematic of a deeper issue, an agency unsure of its own boundaries and commitments. How can an agency fulfill its mission or earn the American people's trust if it doesn't even know the extent of its own operations?

But the problems don't stop there. Instead of focusing on critical threats like securing the southwest border, DHS has shifted its gaze inward, targeting law-abiding Americans. DHS, under the Biden administration, has often used its vast powers to target Americans exercising their constitutional rights. It's become an agency more focused on policing speech, monitoring social media, and labeling political dissent as "domestic terrorism" than addressing genuine security threats. While cartels traffic

people and fentanyl across an unguarded border, DHS has spent its time and resources creating partisan disinformation boards, spying on Americans through invasive surveillance technologies. The mission drift is dangerous. Every dollar spent monitoring law-abiding citizens is a dollar not spent securing the homeland. Every moment spent targeting political opponents is a moment not addressing real threats like border security, cyber-attacks, or the rising influence of adversarial nation states. The priorities of DHS have been deeply distorted, and the American people are paying the price.

And what about DHS's response to COVID-19, arguably one of the greatest threats to homeland security? The answer is clear: nothing. They knew nothing of the origins, they didn't study the issue, and they had no information about gain-of-function research. We've seen firsthand how unchecked government overreach leads to waste, fraud, and abuse. We cannot let DHS become yet another agency that operates behind a veil of secrecy. The American people deserve transparency, accountability, and leadership that puts national security and

liberty hand in hand, not at odds with each other.

Today we gather to consider the nomination of Governor Kristi Noem to serve as the Secretary of Department of Homeland Security. I hope this hearing will set the tone for this committee's work in the new Congress to restore transparency and accountability to an executive branch that has grown unchecked. Governor Noem, if confirmed, you will lead an agency that has lost its way. Your record as governor of South Dakota and a former member of Congress demonstrates your willingness to make difficult decisions in the face of significant political pressure, and to put the interest of American people first. You have the opportunity today to address how your background and vision will translate to leading one of the most critical and scrutinized departments in the federal government.

This is the first of many consequential moments for this committee as we renew our commitment to the constitutional oversight role that Congress must assert. I have no doubt that the nominee we'll consider in the coming weeks

and months that you will be up for the challenge. Governor Noem, thank you for your willingness to serve, and I yield to the Ranking Member for his opening remarks.

SENATOR PETERS: Thank you, Chairman Paul. Governor Noem, it's great to see you here today, and I want to first thank you for making yourself available not only to the entire committee, but to the discussions that we had in my office. Going perhaps a little more in-depth on the issues than is possible in a hearing like this and having that open and frank conversation is something that I appreciate. Also appreciate your willingness to spend time with committee staff as we conduct our due diligence and review of your qualifications and the background to serve as secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

As our third-largest federal agency, with more than 240,000 employees and an operating budget of more than $100 billion, the Department of Homeland Security requires strong, stable, and principled leadership. Our nation faces serious threats and security challenges, from securing our borders and combating terrorism to preventing

cyber-attacks and responding to our nation's increasing number of natural disasters, and DHS is the first line of defense in all of those areas. I appreciated the conversations we had at today's hearing, where we discussed the importance of ensuring that our nation's borders are safe and secure. And while we must address the significant challenges we face on the southern border, we also need to ensure that there are sufficient resources to secure our northern border, something I know you're very familiar with as the governor of your state, including building out our Northern Border Mission Center.

This is especially important in my home state of Michigan, which has two of the nation's busiest border crossings, and we're going to be adding another span shortly, the Gordie Howe International Bridge, which will open later this year. To facilitate the lawful trade and travel out those ports of entry that are absolutely critical to our economy, I've worked on legislation to hire additional U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers to meet increased staffing demands. We must secure our borders,

companies. There's no question that DHS must continue to lead the way in protecting our networks from foreign adversaries, cyber criminals, and so-called "hacktivists" to prevent cyber-attacks from becoming increasingly devastating to our security as well as to our economy.

And finally, the Department of Federal Emergency Management Agency must continue to work hard to address the increasing number of natural disasters affecting our communities as a result of climate change. From violent storms like hurricanes that brought destruction to states across the South, to the devastating wildfires in California, and countless other severe storms and flooding events all across our country, we need leadership at the department that will ensure our nation effectively responds to communities when disaster strikes them.

The safety and security of our nation and the American people depend on the department's ability to effectively address these wide-ranging threats. So, Governor Noem, thank you again for your willingness to serve in this incredibly important position, and thank you for

but we also know it is well time passed to streamline our immigration and our asylum process as well.

In addition to border security, DHS is responsible for addressing many threats that face our nation. Just a few weeks ago, unfortunately, Americans were shocked to see two horrific incidents in New Orleans and Las Vegas, a deadly reminder that terrorism and radicalization remain very real and ongoing threats to our homeland. In my role on this committee, I've made combating foreign and domestic terrorism, as well as extremism, a top priority. In this complex environment, it is essential that DHS continue to focus on all terrorism threats, track, and report data to Congress and to the American people, and coordinate between all components to ensure the department is effectively addressing all types of terrorist threats.

We've also seen that persistent cyber-attacks are still a very serious threat. In fact, an increasing threat. A recent attack from Chinese-based hackers infiltrated the Treasury Department, on top of ongoing Salt Typhoon hack that comprised numerous U.S. telecommunications

being here today. I look forward to having a comprehensive discussion about how you intend to lead this critical department through a series of national security challenges, if indeed you are confirmed.

SENATOR PAUL: This morning, Governor Noem will be introduced by Majority Leader John Thune and Senator Kevin Cramer. Senator Thune, you're recognized.

SENATOR THUNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member Peters, and members of the committee. I'm very pleased to be able to be here today to introduce South Dakota's outstanding governor who has been nominated by President Trump to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. I've known Kristi Noem for a long time. She has a very compelling personal and family story, which inspired her entrance into the public arena, and I'm sure you'll hear a little bit more about that from her. But I've observed as she has gone through the state legislature as a leader there, state House of Representatives, the U.S. House of Representatives, where she was our only member from South Dakota representing our state's

interests there for eight years, and now currently as South Dakota's governor, and I think she brings to this job a number of things that are going to be really essential.

And one is obviously a skill set when it comes to managing hard problems. She led our state through the pandemic, managed what were extraordinary circumstances all across this country in a way that made South Dakota, frankly, a magnet for people from other states who were trying to flee or get away from some of the heavy-handed requirements that were imposed in other states around the country. Our state stayed open, stayed free, and that was largely due to her leadership.

And I would say too, as we tackle what is an enormously complicated and hard issue, which is our southern border, it's going to require a skill set which I believe she possesses, it's going to require a tremendous amount of persistence and determination, which I think she has, an enormous amount of energy, which she has in abundance. And frankly, what I would say is just absolute toughness. It's going to take some tough and hard leadership to get

things back in order.

And I want to refer to something she said in her state of the state address earlier this week to South Dakotans, and that is that "Over the past four years, we've seen a complete disregard for the security of our borders and the safety of the American people, to say nothing for the rule of law. Chaos at our southern border and the Biden administration has left our country vulnerable to a whole host of security concerns, from terrorist entries to cross-border criminal activity like drug trafficking." I think it's well documented, and I think it's high time that it gets fixed, and we have somebody nominated by the President that I believe has the capabilities, the qualities, the experience, and again, frankly, the determination and toughness to solve what is a very, very tough issue, and one which is desperately in need of solutions.

So, I'm pleased to be able to be here today to introduce our great governor and to thank you for your consideration. I look forward to this committee acting on her nomination, and I look forward to voting for her on the floor of the United States Senate to be the next Secretary

of the Department of Homeland Security. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR PAUL: Senator Cramer?

SENATOR CRAMER: Thank you, Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters, colleagues. Once again, I find myself in full agreement with the majority leader. It's a good place to be in our business.

So, this is a very special opportunity for me, and first thing I want to do is thank nearly all of you. I got into almost every one of your offices with Kristi as her very amateurish sitting Senator Sherpa. And the blessing for me was not only to be with my good friend and former colleague, but to learn a lot about this committee that I'm not on and to get an inside view. And Gary, especially learning how we can work together at the northern border and how similar, although very different, Michigan and North Dakota are. So, thank you for your hospitality, you were all very kind to Kristi and to me.

But Kristi is a former colleague. When you're the only member of a body of 435 from an entire state, it's really important to have

friends. So, together, Kristi and I were two, two out of 435, and if we could get Montana, Wyoming, and Alaska, there'd be five of us that could take on the fight. But I know this. I remember our very first year, my first year, it was not hers, my first year in the House, the unthinkable happened, and the House of Representatives failed to pass a farm bill. And all I can tell you was the least secure homeland person in America was the Speaker of the House and the Majority Leader the next day, when Kristi and I doubled up, and eventually we got a farm bill done.

I say that because we are living at a time, and Senator Peters, you used the words "strong, stable, and principled". I can't think of three better words to describe Kristi Noem than those three words. I would add this. I'm not surprised that President Trump turned to Governor Noem. Securing the homeland is the number one priority, our number one priority, our number one constitutional priority, as a Congress. And it is for sure the number one priority of the voters in the last election. And it is the number one priority for President

Donald Trump. So, naturally he would say, "Hmm, who is the toughest, smartest, most capable protector that I know? I think I'd like to find a ranch woman, mom, grandmother, who knows how to protect her own." And when you grow up on a ranch in the prairies or the West, nobody else is going to look out for your critters. No one else is protecting your family. You do it.

And she brings this skill set, as Senator Thune said, as a leader, as a legislator, as a member of Congress, as a governor, a very important... By the way, when I get into the room with other governors, Senator Hassan, I might as well have just left, because I was not part of a club where I don't belong. But anyway, it was very, very rich, because there's an alliance there that's really, really important. And so, for me, it's just a really special opportunity to be able to be here with her and to have had this time in your offices introducing her to you.

But I want to wrap up with this, because last night I received a very touching letter, unsolicited by either Kristi or me, from the tribal chairwoman from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, which straddles North Dakota and

South Dakota. They don't really care who wins the South Dakota State/North Dakota State football game, but they do care about their reservation. And Chairwoman Alkire sent me this letter. Standing Rock is the home of Sitting Bull in case you were wondering about the credentials of their ability to protect the homeland.

I'll just read a few words. "On multiple occasions, Governor Noem has invited the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to her table at the South Dakota State Capitol to enter into meaningful discussions." That's what I witnessed when she came to your offices. And Janet writes, "It is of great excitement and enthusiasm that our North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum will be at the helm of the Department of Interior, and my hopes remain high that you will feel the same about Governor Kristi Noem at the helm of the Department of Homeland Security. These two governors understand the needs in Indian country, and what words like tribal sovereignty, jurisdiction, and consultation mean to the Indigenous people." Speaks volumes to her leadership and to her character. It's my honor

to support her and turn it over to her.

SENATOR PAUL: Thank you for those great introductions. The committee has also received several statements in support of Governor Noem's nomination, including a letter from 22 fellow governors, the International Association of Firefighters, and six other organizations. Without objection, these letters of support will be made part of the hearing record. And I know our Senators are going to have to go but thank you for coming and doing those introductions.

It's the practice of this committee to swear in the witnesses. Governor Noem, please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear that the testimony you will give before this committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

GOVERNOR NOEM: I will.

SENATOR PAUL: Governor Noem, you are now recognized for your opening statement.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Thank you, and good morning, Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters, and the distinguished members of this committee. I'm honored to appear before all of you today as

the nominee for the Secretary of Homeland Security. I want to thank President-elect Donald J. Trump for his confidence in my leadership, and the people of South Dakota for their fantastic support throughout my time in public service. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Senator Cramer. He has been an invaluable resource to me throughout this process, and given me much wisdom, as well as insight, into the thoughts and the procedures of the Senate and this body. And I'd also like to express my gratitude to Senator Thune, the Majority Leader of this esteemed body. He's been an advisor to me for many years, as well as a friend, and I'm so grateful for the generous support of these two men and their willingness to be here this morning to speak on my behalf, and to introduce me to this committee.

Now, I'm a wife and a mother and a grandmother; a farmer, rancher, businessperson. I've served in our state legislature, in Congress for eight years, and also a governor. I've spent my entire life in rural America. I understand what it means to work hard every single day, and to build a better future for your kids and for

all of our communities. I come before you today with a deep sense of responsibility and a humility, as the nominee, to lead the Department of Homeland Security, and also a commitment to the more than 330 Americans who we will work together to help serve and to keep safe and secure in their homes and in their communities.

Now, before I proceed, I want to introduce to you my husband, Bryon, who's here with me today. He is my constant 24/7 reminder of our dedication to public service, and that it's not a solo effort or done alone. He has been a rock by my side, and I appreciate all of his love over so many years. I'm grateful that he's here with me today.

Now, securing our homeland is a serious, sacred trust that must be relentlessly pursued, and can never be taken for granted. Being safe within our borders here in America is critical, and yet Americans feel less safe than they have felt in decades. For the first time in 30 years, more than 40 percent of Americans are afraid to walk alone at night within a mile of their homes. President-elect Trump is going to change that. I've seen firsthand the challenges

and the opportunities facing our great nation. In the 20 years since the Department of Homeland Security was formed, the nature of the threats to our homeland has grown and they've evolved. This department was created in response to the failures of the government that led to the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks, and that reality is not lost on me, especially in the wake of the recent terrorist attacks over New Year's.

Now, I've led South Dakota for the last six years, with a focus every day on making our state safer, stronger, and freer. I've focused every day on making the best decisions, not just for right now, but for generations to come. I've overseen a state budget of over $7 billion, and a state employee workforce of more than 13,000, including more than 7,000 that report directly to the governor. I've addressed important issues like cyber security, human trafficking, drug interdiction, and also natural disasters, the same challenges that are facing so many of you and the people that you represent back home. I've secured our state and supported the rule of law, and if confirmed as the eighth secretary, that is the same approach that I will take to

leading the Department of Homeland Security.

As we face the evolving threats of the 21st century, the mission and the success of DHS is more critical than ever. We must be vigilant and proactive and innovative to protect the homeland. The challenges in front of us are extremely significant, and we must secure our borders against illegal trafficking and immigration. We must safeguard our critical infrastructure to make sure that we're protected against cyber-attacks, respond to natural disasters, and also terrorism. I firmly believe that we can meet those challenges head on with resolve. Innovation, we can use collaboration with federal and with state partners. And Senators, I want your input. Border security must remain a top priority. As a nation, we have the right and the responsibility to secure our borders against those who would do us harm, and we must create a fair and a lawful immigration system that is efficient, and is effective, and that reflects our values.

President Trump was elected with a clear mandate. He needs to achieve this mission, because two-thirds of Americans support his

immigration and border policies, including the majority of Hispanic Americans. I was the first governor to send National Guard troops to our southern border when Texas asked for help and when they were being overwhelmed by an unprecedented border crisis. If confirmed as secretary, I'll ensure that our exceptional, extraordinary Border Patrol agents have all the tools and resources and support that they need to carry out their mission effectively. The same is true of my commitment to the outstanding men and women of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. They are responsible for apprehending, detaining, and deporting illegal immigrants, and getting criminal aliens off of our streets and out of the country will help American communities be safer again. The bravery and the dedication of the Border Patrol and ICE are unmatched, and I will restore dignity to their work. The rising threat of cyberattacks also demands our utmost attention, and our critical infrastructure, from energy grids to financial institutions, is under constant attack by foreign adversaries and criminal actors. As secretary, I will prioritize a comprehensive,

whole-of-government approach to cybersecurity. In fact, in the coming days, we have to plan bigger and think faster and smarter. I fully acknowledge that people in Washington D.C. do not have all of the answers, and therefore, I will leverage private-public partnerships, I'll advance cutting-edge, state-of-the-art technologies to protect our nation's digital landscape, and I will have a proven track record of doing this in South Dakota to back me up. I've helped make Dakota State University a global leader in cybersecurity education, because we recognize the need to address this emerging threat. And I will take a proactive approach if given the opportunity to serve as secretary. Now, President-elect Trump has been a tremendous friend to law enforcement over the years, and I will do the same in my role as secretary. As governor, I've worked closely with law enforcement to make South Dakota safer. I've overseen hundreds of state troopers in the South Dakota Highway Patrol, and on several occasions, I've convened groups of law enforcement from across our state to address policies that will make our people safer. In fact, while some in

this country were attacking law enforcement and defunding them, we took the opposite approach in South Dakota. We recruited law enforcement officers to move to South Dakota, a state that respects their service and their sacrifice, and we revamped our law enforcement training to provide the first ever state-led tribal-focused law enforcement training academy. I'm very proud of the work that we've done in cooperation with our tribes to help make their communities more safe.

And we must remain vigilant against terrorism and against others who wish to do us harm to our country and to our great people. I'll ensure that our intelligence and our law enforcement agencies are working together hand-in-hand, that they're fully equipped to detect, prevent, and respond to threats from radical ideologies and foreign adversaries. This requires resources, coordination, and collaboration across all levels of government. And once again, I will seek your wisdom, and I will seek your input into the months ahead. For the sake of the people that we both represent, we have to get this right. Now, I recognize that

homeland security isn't just about prevention, but it's also about resilience. When disasters strike, as we know they will, the Department of Homeland Security must be ready to respond swiftly, efficiently, and effectively to protect the lives and the property of Americans. As governor, I've worked with FEMA in response to a dozen natural disasters in South Dakota. These have included historic floods, tornadoes, blizzards, wildfires, a derecho, and even a global pandemic. As secretary, I will enhance our emergency preparedness and strengthen FEMA's capabilities, and we will ensure that no community is left behind, and that life-saving services, like electricity and water, are quickly restored.

As secretary, I will oversee the Secret Service, an agency that is in serious need of reforms. We all saw the threats to President-elect Trump last year and the consequences of failure. Now, that should never happen again, and I've worked closely with my own gubernatorial protective detail, and I'm familiar with what works and what doesn't work, and I'll bring that experience towards strengthening the Secret

Service once again.

I'm committed to working with this committee, with Congress, and with the dedicated men and women of the Department of Homeland Security to fulfill our mission. And together, we can ensure that the United States remains a beacon of freedom, safety, and security for generations to come. So, thank you for the opportunity and the honor to appear before you today. Thank you for the meetings and the time that you took in your office to discuss the department and what we can do in the future to make the American homeland much more secure. I look forward to your questions, and I hope to earn your trust, and hopefully also your vote, as we embark on this critical work together. With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

SENATOR PAUL: Thank you, Governor Noem. We will now proceed to questions. Each member will have seven minutes. We will have a vote that will start at 10:00 a.m., but we're going to continue the hearing and keep people in line; as you come and go to vote, we'll keep the hearing moving. I want to be clear from the outset that we will not tolerate any disruptions.

The Capitol Police have been asked to escort anyone immediately from the room if they disrupt the hearing.

This is a standard question, Governor Noem, that we ask of all nominees. Governor Noem, do you agree without reservation to comply with any request or summons to appear and testify before any duly constituted Committee of Congress if you are confirmed?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Mr. Chairman,

SENATOR PAUL: I'm going to reserve the rest of my time for my questions and go to Senator Peters.

SENATOR PETERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Governor Noem, the DHS Secretary, has many competing priorities, as you well know, and you outlined, certainly, in your opening comments, from our borders to wildfires to cyber-attacks. But as you and I discussed at length, and I appreciate you bringing it up in your opening comments as well, we do have a northern border in addition to a southern border, that's absolutely essential that the DHS has the resources necessary at the northern border to carry out its mission, both between ports of

entry and all along the border. In fact, we've seen an increase in unauthorized crossings in recent years at the northern border.

So, my question for you is, if confirmed, do you commit to ensuring, along with the southern border, that the northern border is sufficiently staffed to maintain its security and robust trade between the U.S. and its neighbors, including at the Gordie Howe International Bridge in my home state of Michigan, have the resources they need to facilitate trade, while keeping Americans safe?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator Peters, you and I talked about this in your office, and also with Senator Slotkin as well, how important it is to continue to remain focused on our northern border, and all borders and ports of entry that the United States has. I think there's been some universal concern from some of the committee members that as we focus on the southern border and what we're seeing, as far as the invasion there and the amount of people crossing, that the northern border would lose focus. But that will not happen, and we will ensure that our borders are secure, and we're

addressing all threats that may come in from any direction. And also, with the bridge as well and staffing up on that, that as well, and I've assured Senator Slotkin as well that our focus is there to make sure that it is staffed appropriately.

SENATOR PETERS: Very good. And as we discussed, the department is diligently working to stand up the Northern Border Mission Center at Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Michigan, following the authorization and funding that I was able to secure in the last Congress. This center is critical to supporting the Department's northern border security missions and addressing evolving threats. So, quick question: if confirmed, do you commit to working with me to fully build out the Northern Border Mission Center?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator, we will look forward, and I look forward, to working with you to ensure that that is a priority, and that it's adequately resourced, and working with Congress and Senators to make sure that we have what we need to make sure that that mission for that base is fully fulfilled.

SENATOR PETERS: Great. Thank you. On New Year's, we witnessed two incidents that reminded us that terrorism and extremism remain serious threats to all Americans. Both DHS and the FBI have consistently said that the most persistent threat to the homeland is from U.S.-based individuals or small groups radicalized by a variety of ideologies, from white supremacy to ISIS to al-Qaeda. We must certainly continue to focus on people who are radicalized here in the United States with the intent of terrorizing our communities. So, my question for you, ma'am, is how do you plan to address this threat of U.S.-based terrorists?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, this is a grave concern for our country, as we all agree that the number one threat to our homeland security is the southern border. In fact, since Joe Biden has been president, we've seen 382 individuals that have come over that border that are on the terrorist watch list. I, behind me, have the governor of Louisiana with me, and he and his state and people in this country went through a horrific event on New Year's Day, and one that we never want to see repeated again.

But this governor behind me is concerned also about an upcoming event, which is the Super Bowl, coming shortly, which we need to do all that we can to work together, that he has the reassurance that the federal government, that the Department of Homeland Security, is prepared to help him protect that event, and to keep people safe while they are there.

Those 382 terrorists are known terrorists that have come over our border. We don't know necessarily where they are because of what has been happening under Joe Biden's policies. Now, President Trump obviously won the last election with a clear mandate, and that mandate is for the American people to secure that border. But also, we need to focus on domestic terrorism and homegrown terrorism, which you just referenced in your question. Homegrown

GOVERNOR NOEM: Homegrown terrorism is on the rise. We see more and more incidents of people that are U.S. citizens that have become radicalized. And knowing when people are leaving the country and coming back and changes to their behaviors and what their actions are is critically important.

So, the resources that the Department of Homeland Security has needs to be utilized as far as identifying those threats and being proactive to prevent them but also protecting civil rights and liberties in that process and making sure that the department is on mission to do what it was called to do, why it was created, and what authorities that Congress and the Senate has given them.

My hope is that Governor Landry and his staff and his people and the people that attend the Super Bowl know that the Department of Homeland Security is their partner, is on watch to protect them and to keep that event safe. I hope all Americans know that leadership has consequences. I hope that we can get through and get your support for this nomination and get confirmed quickly so that we can address the threats that we currently face and make sure we don't have any repeats of the day that we saw just starting this year on New Year's Day.

SENATOR PETERS: In the last two years, we have seen increasingly aggressive and expansive cyber-attacks against our federal agencies. Just last month, Chinese hackers

infiltrated the Department of Treasury and stole potentially thousands of unclassified documents. So, given these concerning trends by the PRC to hold our federal networks' hostage, do you believe that federal agencies should be required to implement cybersecurity upgrades and maintain the highest cybersecurity standards to protect sensitive or classified data and U.S. citizen information as well?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, Senator, the mission of CISA, which is the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, the mission of it is to hunt and harden. It's to find those bad actors and help work with local and state infrastructure, critical infrastructure entities so that they can help them be prepared for such cyber-attacks and that they can make sure that they're hardening their systems to protect them in the future, recognizing the vulnerabilities that they have.

CISA has gotten far off mission. They're using their resources in ways that was never intended. The misinformation and disinformation that they have stuck their toe into and meddled with should be refocused back

onto what their job is, and that is to support critical infrastructure and to help our local and small businesses and critical infrastructure at the state level to have the resources and be prepared for those cyber-attacks that they will face.

Salt Typhoon was a campaign of espionage by the PRC in China against our telecoms where large amount of data was stolen and taken, and people's private information was taken as well. And we've also seen China and the PRC go after our critical infrastructure with the Volt Typhoon hack, and that was extremely dangerous because there was no reason for them to do that, just to steal people's data and information.

The reason for them to go after that was to control our critical infrastructure for the ability to see if they could shut down a water plant, a utility company. And that was to cripple our country. So, these threats are real. CISA needs to be much more effective, smaller, more nimble to really fulfill their mission, which is to hunt and to help harden our nation's critical infrastructure.

SENATOR PETERS: Thank you.
GOVERNOR NOEM: Thank you.
SENATOR JOHNSON: Senator Scott.
SENATOR SCOTT: Governor, congratulations on your nomination.
GOVERNOR NOEM: Thank you.
SENATOR SCOTT: I think you're going to do a great job.
GOVERNOR NOEM: Thank you.
SENATOR SCOTT: I think it's great that you're a governor and you bring that expertise to the table. So, I just went through the campaign to get reelected, and it was after the Butler shooting. I had asked people at all my events. I say, "Raise your hand if you think the acting director of the Secret Service is going to tell us what happened." Not one person. I said, "What about Mayorkas? He's running HHS, what do you think, or Homeland Security. What do you think?" I said, "How about Christopher Wray, head of the FBI?" Not one person. Can you just talk about the importance of transparency and accountability in government and how you're going to bring that to the table?
GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah. Senator, Scott,

thank you for that question because that's what I have found across the country as well, and I know it's certainly true in my home state of South Dakota, is that people don't trust the federal government. They don't trust our leadership and this current administration that's in the White House right now to tell them the truth, to tell them the truth about what the threats really are about our agencies and departments when there are failures, addressing them and fixing it.
The Secret Service is one of those perfect examples. They need leadership that understands why that Secret Service was created and what it needs to do. There's two elements really that the Secret Service is tasked with, and that is protective detail and then also investigations. Yet we see investigators within the Secret Service out there investigating antiquities and other things that are off mission when they should be focused on making sure we're addressing national security events with the protocols that are necessary and protecting the individuals that they're charged with and getting that skill set and training that are necessary. That's been compromised by not having enough

people there and being adequately staffed and resourced.
But frankly, the leadership hasn't been honest about talking about it. We saw this with the drones over New Jersey as well, the federal government not answering the questions from the public. And when they finally got a straight answer out of President Trump, they felt reassured that somebody recognized that this was something they were questioning and that they deserved answers.
My goal and my mission is to build trust. We will undertake a large job and a large duty that we have to fulfill, that the American people expect us to do by securing our border to make sure that our nation is a nation with borders or we're no nation at all, and that we are making sure that those criminal actors that are perpetuating violence in our communities and in our cities and towns and states are removed from this country, that there's consequences for breaking the law in our country again.
There has to be consequences because when Americans break the law, there's consequences. And why would we ever allow

someone to come in from another country and not have consequences or allow them to continue to go forward and to commit rape and murders and other break other laws that endanger our society? So, we've had over 13,000 murders that are loose in this country that have come over that border. We've had almost 16,000 rapists and sexual assault perpetuators that are loose in this country right now. 425,000 plus people have criminal convictions that are here illegally in this country that our current administration's doing nothing to round them up and get them out of our country.
We will be doing that immediately, and that will be the priority, and that is one of the reasons that today the American people have lost their trust. President Trump will build it back and know that their federal government is accountable to them and is working to put America first again.
SENATOR SCOTT: So, Joe Biden completely opened on our southern border and dismantled our entire immigration system. As a former governor, I know that when the federal government policies are broken and failing

Americans, you see the impacts in your state just like I did when I was a governor, and you take the steps necessary to protect the families in your state. I know you've done that.

One thing you did is you talked about before you sent troops, our National Guard, to the southern border. Can you talk more about how Biden's open border policy has affected your state and communities and the role your state resources placed in helping secure the border?

GOVERNOR NOEM: We certainly have seen the effects in South Dakota that many of your states did. And I would say every state has seen the effects of an open border in the policies that have been under the Biden administration. We saw increased crime, but we also saw increased drug activity. We saw cartel in their affiliates moving into our state to proliferate trafficking, and we saw people being victimized and a lack of accountability with the federal government.

So, when Texas was addressing the situation and asked other governors for help, we sent help. I know many of the other governors at the time were sending law enforcement, but I made the decision that at that time that it was more

appropriate to send the National Guard that our National Guard could be activated under Title 32 and sent to assist another state from the invasion that was happening and because the National Guard is trained for just such a mission.

Because of this invasion, that it is a war zone down there with what they are going to see, the threats that they would see and that they are trained specifically to interact with other agencies, the National Guard is used to falling in with other agencies and cooperating with them and could do that seamlessly, and their families and their communities are normalized to them being deployed.

So, we have in South Dakota deployed our National Guard to the southern border eight different times. Two of them were federal deployments that the Biden administration sent them down there. One was to send our Lakota helicopters, which were used for surveillance in the drug interdiction that was going on down there. But six other times, I sent them under state activation to partner with Texas and other states in securing our southern border. They did

security operations. They also did building of the wall and partnered with Texas recognizing the failures of the federal government.

The failures of the federal government are significant, and we've seen our families and communities devastated by those effects, by the drug epidemic, by the trafficking that's going on. They increased crime. And we recognize that just because the federal government wasn't doing their job, we could not fail our state. And I needed to protect the people of South Dakota. And the people of South Dakota were overwhelmingly supportive of these deployments and very proud of our National Guard.

SENATOR SCOTT: When I was governor of Florida, there was a terrorist hack in Paris by Syrian refugees. So, President Obama was president, and I said, "I'd like to know if you're going to send refugees to my state that you give us some background on them." I assume you vetted them and tell us what's going on. You have to tell me, but you ought to tell our state law enforcement and our local law enforcement that they said, "Go jump in the lake." (Indiscernible) meaner than that, but they said,

"You have no rights as a governor," which had made no sense. We had over 70,000 people come here after Afghanistan on planes into this country completely unvetted. They've never given our governors any information. So, would you change that?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes. The communication between states and the federal government has been absolutely broken, and that's what I love about this committee, is you do have governors sitting on this committee that have been in that role as a commander in chief and have the responsibility for being the CEOs of their state.

It's a different perspective than serving. I served in Congress too, and both are extremely important, and they're just different in that responsibility that weighs on your shoulder. I often told folks that that is the thing that most times if something was going to keep me up at night, it was the responsibility that I had being commander in chief, recognizing the decisions that I made. And I'm sure you had this feeling as well, Senator Scott, as governor, that impacted those families, those soldiers. And it impacted their communities when we pulled

them out and the importance of that.
And when they were bringing refugees into the country, I as well communicated that to the federal government. They were bringing refugees, and I asked how they were vetted, how we were working with their home countries to find out who they really were, what their intentions were and why they were coming to the United States and received no information from this administration that that vetting process was being done, that we knew where they're going.
In fact, they kept us in the dark and didn't communicate to us even what states and where those refugees were being placed. So, that is something that we need to change when we have programs that fall under the purview of the Department of Homeland Security. There needs to be communication, especially with the governor, so that we can coordinate to ensure that it's the right thing for that state.
SENATOR SCOTT: Thank you.
SENATOR JOHNSON: Senator Hassan.
SENATOR HASSAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And welcome, Governor Noem. I really appreciate you being here. Welcome to your family as well.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Thank you.
SENATOR HASSAN: And families do share in this kind of public service, and we appreciate them very much. As we discussed at our meeting last month, as a former governor, I appreciate the important responsibilities that governors have to ensure the safety and security of their communities, including by managing public safety and emergency agencies.
And I will say that, in many ways, I agree with some of the things that Senator Scott just said about improving communication between the Department of Homeland Security and governors around who is being sent to states. It's a critical issue and something that I was frustrated by when I was governor. So, I look forward to hearing more today about your priorities if confirmed about how your experience as governor would help you run the Department of Homeland Security.
Let me just start by following up with a question that Senator Peters had also touched on. We have recently, in New Hampshire, seen a dramatic increase in unauthorized border crossings at the northern border. And when I was

at the northern border recently, law enforcement told me about the need for more personnel and resources. We still don't have cell phone coverage in a lot of the stretch of our northern border. I've worked with Senator Kramer on bipartisan legislation to strengthen our northern border strategy because it's clear more support is needed. So, Governor, if you're confirmed, would you deploy additional full-time personnel and upgrade equipment along the northern border?
GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, I enjoyed our meeting that we had and you identifying the northern border issues that are going on, the lack of security and the lack of technologies that you really need to cover, some of the landscapes that are there very different than the southern border, some just as equally challenging but all need to be addressed.
So, I definitely will be working with you to ensure that our northern border is adequately resourced as well, and we do have to have the resources in order to be successful.
SENATOR HASSAN: Right.
GOVERNOR NOEM: That's something I want to work with Congress, with the Senate and the

House on to ensure that the resources are there to meet the challenges that we have. We have not fully utilized the technologies that are available that are necessary to really secure this country and to compete with those bad actors which wish to infiltrate our country and having the ability to utilize them will make us much more safe. So, I'll work with you most definitely ensuring the northern border is protected.
SENATOR HASSAN: Well, I appreciate that, and I just note too that at the same time, there's real concern in New Hampshire and all along the northern border that we strengthen the border and have the resources we need. We also have a really strong economic relationship with our friends to the north and a lot of family relationships.
So, I think it's important that we're smart in the deployment of technology. We don't want to impede that flow of economy and people that's lawful, but we do want to make sure that we have the resources we need. I want to turn to the southern border now.

At the southern border, we need significant technological investments to support law enforcement personnel in their efforts to catch fentanyl smugglers to stop human traffickers and seize the cash and illegal guns that criminals traffic southward to the cartels. And we talked about this a little bit.

There's bipartisan support for these investments, and I've worked with colleagues including Senators Lankford and Cornyn on legislation around these issues. Governor Noem, could you identify specific technological investments that you would make at the southern border and are you willing to work with me on increasing southbound inspections if you're confirmed?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes. Certainly, Senator. You've heard President Trump talk about the need to build a wall. And the wall and infrastructure is critically important. But also, at our 382 legal ports of entry, we need to have technology so that flow can happen north and south, and it can happen in a legal manner to ensure that our commerce can continue to operate, and that we can continue to make sure that we're

also secure.

I think de minimis shipments are a concern and the need to look at those and how traffickers and fentanyl distributors are using that. I think we also need to use scanners surveillance operations. There's new technologies out there to cooperate with satellites in some area where the topography does not necessarily facilitate having actual infrastructure and then also the ability to make sure that we're utilizing that technology that allows us to know what is going south that might be fueling some of the violence that ends up coming back north and ensuring that we're stopping that before it has the chance to supply those cartel and bad actors that would come in.

SENATOR HASSAN: Yeah. I really appreciate that because the southbound flow, particularly of cash and weapons, fuels the cartels and strengthens them.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Absolutely.

SENATOR HASSAN: And it's something that we really have to focus on. I also want to follow up on the issue of cyber security. Recently, criminals launched a successful cyber-

attack on power school, a cloud-based record management system that contains personal information about tens of millions of kindergartners through high school seniors, including many students and teachers in New Hampshire.

This cyber-attack on power school comes as schools and local governments across the country have seen a surge in cyber-attacks on their systems. And when a small of maybe a thousand students or so has to pay $2 million in ransom, I want you to think about what that does to one of our small communities. Right? So, Governor Noem, if you're confirmed, how will you empower the cybersecurity and infrastructure security agency to improve the cybersecurity of state and local governments in the United States?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, thank you, Senator. If I am confirmed and have the opportunity to serve as secretary of this department, I'll be following the constitution and the rule of law and then getting these departments back on mission to why they were created and why they are existing.

What CISA should be doing is helping

those small entities, those schools, those local city governments, the state governments, and the small businesses that are critical infrastructure that don't have the resources to stay on top of the critical protections that they need to enact.

SENATOR HASSAN: Well, let me follow up just quickly on that one point. It's something we discussed when we had our meeting. I worked with Senator Cornyn on a bipartisan bill. It became law that created a cybersecurity grant program for state and local governments. This is an addition to each state getting a cyber coordinator to help on the ground.

We discussed this program, and I know you as governor had some reservations about the structure of the program, but if confirmed, will you commit to working with Congress to adjust it? I'd love your input about what gave you pause as governor. I think there were only two governors who didn't participate in the program. And I hope that as we work on the concerns you have, you'd work with me to adjust and reauthorize the program.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes. All grants within the department will be evaluated when I come in

and be looked at to see what we can do to make sure that they're actually fulfilling the mission to which they were established. What I would say about the cybersecurity grants in South Dakota, when I came in as governor, one of my main priorities was to bring the next industry into the state. And I determined that that would be technology and cybersecurity.

In fact, we have Dakota State University in our state, which is a cybersecurity national leader in training those cyber warriors that we need to protect us and keep us safe. I've since then partnered to grow and double the size of that school. We train a lot of NSA employees in South Dakota. And so, understanding cybersecurity and my experience and that I think is critically important to the department and bringing it to the table to do this.

You talked about why we didn't take that cybersecurity grant in South Dakota, and it's because the requirements of that grant would've caused me to grow my state government. The administration costs of it would've been much more than what it been able to facilitate at the local level. And our state was already

proactively helping these individuals that needed the resources to secure their systems.

SENATOR HASSAN: Well, I appreciate that. I'm way over time. There were very few requirements purposely in that grant program other than to make sure the money was being spent the way we authorized. But let's continue to talk about that.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Thank you.

SENATOR HASSAN: Thank you.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Senator Hawley.

SENATOR HAWLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Governor Noem, welcome. Congratulations on your nomination. I'm delighted to see you here. I do notice the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee is over your shoulder there. I have to question your judgment about who your friends are based on that through the great Chairman from the state of Missouri. It's fantastic to have you here.

The Department of Homeland Security is not particularly old, but you already have the, what I hope, will soon be the distinction of succeeding the worst secretary in the history of the Department of Homeland Security. Alejandro

Mayorkas has been an absolute disgrace to that department and frankly to this country. And I'm delighted to see you willing to step up and serve. Let me just ask you something. I repeatedly asked your predecessor when he sat where you're sitting, whether the southern border was secure. And he repeatedly told me under oath, "It is secure, Senator." And he repeatedly said under oath, "Our policies are working, Senator," meaning the Biden administration policies that, of course, gave us this devastating open border. So, let me just ask you, is the southern border secure as we find it today?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, no. The southern border is not secure today. But in just three days, we will have a new president in this country, President Donald J. Trump. And he will secure our border.

SENATOR HAWLEY: That is refreshing candor. I'm glad to hear it. Let me ask you about a young man from my state. This is Travis Wolfe who's 12 years old when he was killed just over a year ago by an illegal migrant who mowed him down, and I choose my words carefully, mowed

him down in a motor vehicle, hit him head on doing 75 and a 40, killed him. Others were severely injured. Just yesterday, a witness sitting where you are sitting today told this committee that migrant crime is and I quote, "Not an actual concern." Not an actual concern.

In a hearing before this committee advising us to drop the Laken Riley act and not focus on migrant crime. In my state with the death of people like Travis Wolfe and Officer David Lee who was assaulted and killed in St. Louis and officers in Kansas City who have been assaulted by illegal migrants and others who have been carjacked and stabbed, would you agree with me that migrant crime sure as heck is an actual concern and that you intend to do something about it?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator. Absolutely. And I'm so sorry about Travis. My prayers go out to his family. I can't even imagine what that is like, and thank you for telling his story because there's so many families in this country that have that same story, and they don't understand why the federal government is allowing people to come into this

country illegally and then perpetuate crimes against their people, and then give them resources and shelter and food and debit cards to go take care of their families when they go to work every single day to make sure that they're providing for their families and are held accountable to when they break our laws.

SENATOR HAWLEY: Let me ask you this, will you work with President Trump to reinstate the Remain in Mexico program that the President had in place in his first term, which does so much to ensure that those who would seek to abuse our asylum system are not allowed into the country and those who have legitimate asylum claims, their claims are processed in due order and in due course, but they wait in Mexico until those claims are fully processed. Will you work to reinstate that program?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator. The president and I have talked extensively about this, and we'll 100 percent partner with him to reinstate the Remain in Mexico policy and make sure that it's in place.

SENATOR HAWLEY: Fantastic. I think Travis might be alive today if that policy had

been in place. Let me ask you about CBP One, the phone app, that I've called concierge service for illegal Immigrants. I'm sure you're familiar with it. This was the Biden administration's effort to allow asylum seekers to apply ahead of time using their phones but not actually to provide any evidence that they needed asylum. There is a newspaper report, a press report that said the only problem with the app is it never asks users are you seeking asylum? They don't ask for any asylum evidence. They simply release these so-called asylum seekers who use the app into the country on parole.

Sometimes, they're never given a hearing. The Inspector General actually did a report, a full investigation report on CBP One and found that, frequently, users of this app were claiming the same addresses in the United States as their intended destination, even though they didn't know each other, they weren't family connections. In other words, it has been completely abused. And the idea that the federal government would pay for this kind of concierge service for Illegals, I think, is outrageous. Will you end the use of the CBP One app?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator. If confirmed, and I have the opportunity to be secretary on day one, CBP One will be shut down. There's data and information in there that we will preserve so that we can ensure we know who's coming into this country and who's already here that we need to go find. But also, we make sure that there's another program, CHNV, which I'm sure you're very familiar with, where our federal government actually paid to fly people into this country directly from other countries without any vetting or knowing who they are. So, there's several of these programs that need to be eliminated, and we need to ensure that we're following legal immigration laws.

SENATOR HAWLEY: I'm glad you just mentioned CHNV. This is a mass parole program. Of course, as you know, our law allows parole in only very limited circumstances. There are two circumstances, and it requires case by case evaluation. The present administration soon to be gone has granted mass parole in direct defiance of the law, not case by case evaluation. The CHNV program is one of those instances. Will you put a stop to this abuse of our parole law

and our asylum system?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, we will go back to case by case evaluation of these parole cases and ensure that we have more resources, if you will partner with us to make sure that our legal immigration system is fully utilized, that we have more judges, more immigration courts so that we can process people legally and make sure that they are going through that process rather than like Joe Biden has done, use this an excuse to allow people to come into our country with no consequences.

SENATOR HAWLEY: Let me ask you about another low light, not a highlight, but a low light of this last administration and DHS. Your predecessor, the current secretary of DHS, established a disinformation board using taxpayer resources to police speech on the internet and elsewhere to tag American citizens' viewpoints as either legitimate or not legitimate and use the power of the state to censor them, including having them removed and perhaps penalized.

This has got to be the darkest chapter, I think, in DHS's short history. He eventually withdrew the board under intense criticism but

has never fully repudiated it and never promised not to do it again. Will you pledge to us here today that, under your leadership, there will never be a disinformation board or anything like it at DHS, and you will be a champion for the free speech and first amendment rights of all Americans?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, there will not be a board such as that under my leadership at the Department of Homeland Security.

SENATOR HAWLEY: Fantastic. Let me ask you my remaining seconds, just one more thing about the Secret Service. You've mentioned this, and I'm so glad that you did this committee. And it has been bipartisan. This committee has done bipartisan work on the attempted assassinations or the assassination attempts, I should perhaps say, of the former president, the future president, soon to be the president, President Trump. We were stymied at every turn, and I should use the present tense. We are currently being stymied at every turn by the current Secret Service leadership and, frankly, by the leadership of DHS who have refused to turn over documents who refused to make people available

for interviews.

We finally had to pass my own law in this committee, which we unanimously adopted a law statute, mind you, which would require DHS and Secret Service to turn over relevant information to us about the assassination attempts. It's unbelievable. When you come to office to this office, I hope very soon will you pledge to us that you will open the books on all of the facts associated and around these assassination attempts that you will make available to us and to the public, most importantly, all the facts so that we can ensure that this never happens again and that the needed reforms in the Secret Service are put into effect.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah. Senator, if I am the Secretary of Homeland Security, I will certainly work with you to build transparency and make sure the facts are shared with you and your committee. I know that you've been very frustrated by the lack of transparency from the department. And I want to thank those of you that have worked on that report that was put together on these assassination attempts. I know

it was a bipartisan report, an investigation that this committee conducted. And I appreciate you focusing on that, and I'll work with you to get the information so that you have the truth of really what happened there in the failures so they can be fixed.

SENATOR HAWLEY: Thank you. That's a great place to end in a high note as I see my friend, Senator Blumenthal, who did fantastic work on this effort, and it will be an incredible new day and incredibly refreshing day to have a DHA secretary who will tell us the truth, who will be honest with us about the facts, honest with the American people and who will enforce our law. And I know you'll do that. Governor Noem, I look forward to supporting your nomination. Congratulations.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Thank you.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Senator Blumenthal.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Thanks, Senator Johnson. Welcome, Governor Noem. And thank you for being here. Thank you for visiting with me and thank you to your family for their service as well. Let me begin on a high note thanking Senator Hawley for his leadership on the effort

that I led with him to essentially get some basic facts out of the Secret Service when we were investigating Senator Johnson and I as leaders of the permanent subcommittee on investigation, helping you lead it with the Chairman and ranking member here.

And I'm hoping that you've read our report and that you will agree to begin implementing its recommendations, which call for major reforms, in my view, a house cleaning top to bottom in the Secret Service and greater transparency with this committee and with the American public.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, sir. I will certainly work with you to do that and to work to make sure that we have that transparency, and the committee has the information that it needs to do due diligence of its oversight.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Our investigation is continuing, Senator Johnson, and I have discussed it. And we will be making more requests to pursue the fact-finding that is so important. I want to ask you about disaster relief. California is on fire. The fire's raging. There are going to leave destruction and

devastation that is heartbreaking.
I am really disappointed with some of the statements that President-elect Trump has made, for example, saying that quote, "We won't give him," referring to Governor Newsom, "money to put out all his fires. And if we don't give him money to put out fires, he's got.
SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: ... a problem. The specter is there of potential discrimination based on politics, withholding money from California or other states. It's not an unfounded fear. In the last administration, there were public reports about President Trump withholding money from the State of Washington because of his disagreements with Governor Inslee. Connecticut, like the rest of the nation, suffers from these natural disasters. Most recently in August, we were hit by major flooding, and these natural disasters are going to become more frequent, as will be the need for the federal government to meet the requests for declarations of natural disaster. I assume you will agree with me that withholding disaster relief by President Trump or any other chief executive of the United States is a violation of

his duty and of law.
GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, Senator leadership has consequences and looking at the tragedy that's happening in California is --
SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: I want to ask you yes or no, with all due respect, it's an easy --
GOVERNOR NOEM: What's happening in California is the ramification of many decisions over many years. But under my leadership at the Department of Homeland Security, there will be no political bias to how disaster relief is delivered to the American people.
SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: So, if President Trump were to say to you, "We're going to withhold money from Connecticut or Michigan or any of the states, Iowa, because we don't like the governor or we don't like the politics of the state," you would stand up to him and say, "Mr. president, we need to allocate that money."
GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, in three days, President Trump will take an oath to uphold the Constitution and the rule of law in this country, and he will do that, and I'll be glad to have him back.
SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: And I assume

that's a yes.
GOVERNOR NOEM: I don't speak to hypotheticals, which is what you're asking me to do. But what I will tell you is that as secretary, I will do the same. I will deliver the programs as the laws dictate.
SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Well, it's more than a hypothetical, with all due respect, and I apologize for interrupting you, but my time is limited, as you know, as a veteran of these hearings. It's more than a hypothetical. It's based on experience with President Trump withholding money from Washington State and elsewhere. I need to know from you, will you stand up to the President and say, "No, the Constitution and the Impoundment Act requires us, for example, to allocate the 100 billion dollars that we have just appropriated in the last session to states like Connecticut $3 million, Texas, $10 million, almost every one of the states represented here." Will you say no to the President if he withholds that money?
GOVERNOR NOEM: Sir, I don't know about the scenarios that you're referencing with President Trump, but what I will tell you is that

if given the chance to be Secretary of Homeland Security, that I will deliver the programs according to the law and that it will be done with no political bias, and if the programs change or if you decide to change the rule of law, then I will follow that while adhering to the Constitution.
SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: So, you pledge to allocate and distribute that 100 billion dollars?
GOVERNOR NOEM: According to how the program is written with no political bias.
SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Thank you.
GOVERNOR NOEM: Every American deserves to be there and have disaster relief the same as their neighbors.
SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Basically, following the law.
GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes.
SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Let me ask you, Senator Peters asked you about homegrown terrorists. The New Orleans tragedy was the result of a homegrown terrorist born in this country radicalized by ISIS and it reflects the reason why the intelligence community, the FBI, almost all of our law enforcement has said

repeatedly, domestic violent extremism is the most lethal and persistent threat to our security. That terrorist was radicalized by ISIS. The investigation is underway, we don't know all the facts, but we do know that he was a military veteran, and ISIS was responsible for radicalizing him. Shouldn't we focus on ISIS as a threat to this country's security?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, certainly we should be focused on all threats to this nation's security. That's the mission of the Department of Homeland Security and homegrown terrorism is growing. We have more and more incidences. The tragedy we saw and the terrorist attack in New Orleans was --

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: What will you do to combat it? What will you do to stop ISIS and other extremist organization from radicalizing people in this country?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, certainly Senator, I'll continue to work with the administration and our partners and the Department of Defense, the intelligence agencies also within Secretary of State and the other branches and cabinet officials to make sure we're

bringing all resources to bear to identify and to stop these types of terrorist activities. What I would say is the cybersecurity and intelligence elements that we have within the Department of Homeland Security have been incredibly siloed. They have not communicated with other intelligence agencies like they should and partnered. INA has some interaction but not enough and we also need to have CISA have interaction with the FBI, CIA to make sure they're working together to stop these types of threats and identify when they're growing among our citizens and how they become radicalized.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: My time has expired. This area of questioning I think is supremely important. I know there's a lot of focus on the border. We all want more border security. We want to stop migrant crime, but let's not take our eye off the ball. The governor of Louisiana for the Super Bowl ought to be really riveted on the potential for homegrown terrorism as a threat, and I hope that you will help him and other governors to do their duty to protect the people of the United States from that homegrown terrorist threat. Thank you.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah, I look forward to working with you.

SENATOR PAUL: Senator Ernst.

SENATOR ERNST: Thank you, Senator Johnson. Governor Noem, thank you so much for being here today and I want to thank you for your continuing service, the service that you had as a member of Congress, the service that you have displayed as a governor of the great State of South Dakota, our neighbor to the northwest, and for being willing to step up and take on this immense responsibility. So, thank you so very much.

We had such a good discussion when you came to my office in the last several weeks, and we talked about the importance of securing our border and fixing our broken immigration system. And I'd like to start today by sharing a story about one of my constituents from Council Bluffs, Iowa. And what we have seen through this broken border is tragedy that strikes so many families across the United States. So, very similar to the story that was shared by my colleague from Missouri with his constituent Mr. Wolf. I have a young woman by the name of Sarah Root who

encountered tragedy on January 31st, 9 years ago. So, Sarah Root was struck and killed by an illegal immigrant who was drunk driving. He was driving at three times the legal limit of alcohol, and Sarah's killer was bonded out, bonded out before the Roots laid her to rest. He fled the country and has not been seen or heard from since. The Root family has not seen justice. So, Governor, how do you plan to prioritize the detention and deportation of illegal immigrants like Sarah's killer?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, yes, Senator, thank you for telling Sarah's story. I remember when this happened because it was so close to home and so devastating for her and her family and the entire State of Iowa and our country. President Trump is focused on making sure that these types of situations don't happen again, that we don't continue to lose our children and our family members to illegal immigrants that come in and perpetuate crime with no accountability and then are released with no consequences. So, the number one priority of the president is to secure the border and to deport these criminal actors immediately and as soon as

possible. They will be the number one priority to make our communities safer and so that we don't have this kind of situation going forward.

In fact, people, I think when they first heard my name being mentioned and nominated for the Department of Homeland Security, maybe thought it was a little bit of a surprise, like, "Oh, I didn't think about Kristi doing that job." But I tell people the reason that I asked for it is because I knew it was the President's number one priority. I knew that it needed to have someone in the position that would do what the President promised the American people, would be strong enough to do it and follow through to make sure that we're protecting our communities and America. But that also came at it from a perspective of how these families feel, that was a wife and a mom and a grandmother and would be able to stand up and communicate to the American people what we were doing and why we were, because it's what they asked us to do.

I have three grandchildren and one more on the way, and when I look at Little Miss Addie every day, I just think, "What kind of a country is she going to grow up in? What kind of a

country will we leave her and her brother and a sister?" And I don't want them to think that their grandma sat on the sidelines and didn't do all that she could. So, I will enforce the Constitution and the law, and I will make sure that when people enact horrific things like this that happened to Sarah and her family, that there will be consequences for it.

SENATOR ERNST: Yeah, absolutely. And as a fellow grandma, I know that you are perfectly positioned to enforce this.

I do want to move on to another topic that we visited about in my office. So, I'm the founder and the chair of the DOGE Senate Caucus, and so we do need greater government efficiency, and I do believe in order to do that, we need less of our employees teleworking and more of those government workers back in the office working for our constituents. And to that end, it ties together then too. We just found out that the Treasury Department had a cyber-attack on December 8th from China, and no surprise here, they access servers through work from home software. So, it all ties together.

We need more people back in the offices

making sure that any communications are secured, any work is secured. And to that, I know the Biden Administration has put a huge emphasis on the cyber bureaucracy, but they haven't really done anything about it, and they haven't given any authority to those that are enforcing the standards. So, we need to enforce the standards that are set forth to make sure the cyber security is truly there, but what can DHS do one, with telework how do we get the employees back, and then two, how do we make sure that our systems are secure from these cyber-attacks?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, Senator, thank you for focusing on remote work and the need to get people back in their offices and accountable to the work that they do. In fact, I've heard since being nominated for this position that many of the agencies within the department are not showing up. They're not doing their jobs. But even FEMA, who is responsible for disaster response, that they have the alternative, some of these employees do not even respond to a disaster, which might explain the horrific results that we saw in North Carolina when they had such a terrible disaster that impacted

families and communities, and FEMA failed them so miserably. If It's not even responsibility of them to show up when terrible things happen, what other day-to-day activities are not getting done because they're working from home or not doing their job at all?

You talked about cyber security and the need to ensure that our systems are safe and secure. One of the things that disturbs me the most is that we don't necessarily even know how some of these espionage attacks that have infiltrated our systems have happened. We don't know how to stop them yet. We don't have the knowledge and that our departments and intelligence agencies and cybersecurity agencies have become siloed and aren't working together to stay in front of these bad actors. But many times, our most vulnerable area happens at the state and local level. Some of these smaller entities that feeds information into our systems is where they choose to infiltrate and get our data and to really hold for ransom many of these companies and then impact our federal systems as well.

So, one of the first meetings I had

when I was elected governor with the former governor during the transition was, he said, "The number one priority you're going to have as governor is to secure our systems."

SENATOR ERNST: Yes.

GOVERNOR NOEM: He said, "Our systems are so antiquated, and we've had over 16,000 hacking attempts in just the last month. You need to secure our systems to get it done." So, that was a priority for me and to do that, and we fully funded it and got it done in South Dakota and it's being implemented today. I look forward to doing that at the federal level to make sure that people's data and information is safe, but also our country is safe from these bad actors that have a plan to take us out.

SENATOR ERNST: Well, thank you. My time has expired, but I do want to end on a note that another thing that I do truly appreciate about you and your nomination is that as a governor, you have worked with those local constituencies as well and those local governments, and I know that this will be an incredible strength that will ensure continued success for you within the department. So, thank

you, Governor, very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR PAUL: Senator Kim.

SENATOR KIM: Thank you, Chairman. Governor, it's good to see you.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Good to see you again too.

SENATOR KIM: Thanks for coming before our committee. I wanted to just ask you not just about your work, but how it's going to fit into the broader incoming Trump Administration and particular, I guess, I'm uncertain about roles and responsibilities regarding your position and Tom Homan's. I guess, I just want to ask you just point-blank who's going to be in charge of the border?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, the president will be in charge of the border. It's a national security issue, and the president is in charge of this country and has made a promise to the American people, and we will fulfill his agenda.

SENATOR KIM: Well, that was a good answer, it's the answer I would've given as well, but I guess I got confused. When Trump made the announcement about Tom Homan, he said, "I'm pleased to announce that Tom Homan," and said

that he's in charge of our nation's borders. So, I guess, again, I'd just like to go back to you. How are you going to work with Mr. Homan? What is the division there? I'm trying to get a better sense of who's in charge.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah. Tom Homan is an incredible human being who has over 30 years of experience at the border and the insight and wisdom and he --

SENATOR KIM: Incredible experience, I get that. I'm just trying to think through decision-making process when it comes to your work. For instance, will he be giving orders directly to CBP, ICE, USCIS?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Tom Homan has a direct line to the President. He is an advisor to the President, the border Czar. I, obviously, will be if nominated and confirmed and put into the position of being the Department of Homeland Security Secretary and responsible for the authorities that we have and the actions that we take.

SENATOR KIM: I say this because I actually want to make sure that we're empowering the next Secretary of Homeland Security.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes.

SENATOR KIM: In the legislation that was codified by Congress and moved forward that started this after September 11th, said "All functions of all offices, employees and organizational units of the department are vested in the secretary." So, I guess the reason why I mentioned this is I've just seen some quotes from Mr. Homan where he said, "I'll be making decisions on border security and deportation." He was asked in another interview about the stronger role that he'll play, and he said, "Absolutely, I'll be making decisions on how we do the border."

So, I just raise that as a concern of mine because not only is that about the function of our executive branch, but also the capabilities of this committee to be able to properly do our constitutional duties for oversight. The ability for us to be able to have that conversation. We can talk to you, engage with you, that is the direct way, but if he is going to be making decisions, then he should come before this committee as well. And I know that that's something where, as far as I know, his

role will be directly at the White House, is not something that will be under the purview directly of this committee. So, I just wanted to raise those concerns.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah, yeah. Tom and I work very well together and talk and communicate all the time, and we'll be working together on a daily basis when we're in our positions under the new administration. And I would say there's no authorities being planned to be taken away from the department or myself if I'm in the role, and we'll continue to oversee CPP --

SENATOR KIM: But it sends some mixed signals. You can understand how people in my home state, maybe around the country, when they hear Mr. Homan saying, "I'm making the decisions." When they hear President-elect Trump say he's in charge of our border. So, I urge that we're going to try to do our best to try to make sure we're empowering the department, empowering the next secretary because that's where our laws are invested in our decision-making.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah. Well, thank you Senator, and we'll make sure you have all the

information that you need. And Tom working directly with the president and I working directly with the president, hope to help you get all that you need to reassured that the authorities will stay the same as they currently are, but we will continue to work to secure that border and make sure that we're working together in that way.

SENATOR KIM: I want to just switch gears about you raised the concerns about terrorism, especially foreign terrorist groups. I guess I just want to ask you, what are the major foreign terrorist groups that are... Well, first of all, what are the major foreign terrorist groups that are out there that we're tracking, which are the ones that are concerns to us in terms of potentially trying to inspire or coordinate an attack upon us? And if you can, just give me a sense of what their current capabilities are to try to enact that.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, I think we face a lot of threats, Senator, and since I'm not in the role today, I shouldn't get into specifics with you, but I think over years the --

SENATOR KIM: Well, you can at least

get into specifics about what organizations that are out there. So, I just wanted to get a sense of your knowledge of the organizations.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, sir. You have all the traditional terrorist organizations that have always threatened the United States, but I would also say --

SENATOR KIM: Such as?

GOVERNOR NOEM: I would say Hamas, ISIS, continuing down that path of those terrorist organizations. But we'll continue to also focus though not just on those, but also the cartels, their partnership with the Chinese and what they are doing. Listen, I've told people for years, for over 30 years, I've worked on national policy, on food policy, on agriculture policy, and I've seen the Chinese agenda to infiltrate our country, control our food supply chain, but also their manipulation of their currency and stealing our IP. And now I believe that this fentanyl crisis that they have flooded our country with is geared and the purpose of it is to kill our next generation of Americans. It is to control us.

SENATOR KIM: No, I don't discount the

importance of those --

GOVERNOR NOEM: So, when you focus on one or two groups, I think it takes your eye off the ball as to where all the threats could come from. We just spent a significant amount of time talking about homegrown terrorism as well and about --

SENATOR KIM: Correct. And I'm glad we're having that conversation. But the reason why I mentioned it, I was not trying to quiz you or anything of that nature. It's just that when the Department of Homeland Security, when their threat assessment for 2025 lists three organizations, lists Al Qaeda, lists ISIS, in particular ISIS Khorasan, and the IRGC, and the threat from Iran, I just want to make sure that I get it. You're talking about the importance of the border. We all understand that we want to work with the incoming administration to try to have an orderly process with that. But I just want to make sure in particular with DHS, the primary mission, if we look at the founding legislation, the primary mission, the very first mission is prevent terrorist attacks within the United States and do everything we can to

minimize that type of threat.
So, yes, I do think it's important for us to focus in on one, two, or three or just wherever these terrorist groups are at. Yes, yes, I know that part of that effort to try to minimize terrorist attacks is through the work that we try to do to secure our borders, all of them: air, sea, and land. But the primary mission still is about preventing terrorism, not just the border security. That's a tool to be able to accomplish that. So, I just raised that with you. I want to make sure that the next Homeland Security Secretary has a very detailed knowledge and understanding about the terrorist groups, their capabilities, and is tracking that on a absolute daily basis, and that they understand that is their top mission. And with that, I'll yield back to the Chairman.
SENATOR PAUL: Senator Johnson.
SENATOR JOHNSON: Governor Noem, welcome and thank you --
GOVERNOR NOEM: Thank you.
SENATOR JOHNSON: ... for your willingness to serve. You'll be taking over a massive federal government agency, 240,000

employees. It's probably too massive. I think had I been there back then, I don't think I would've assembled these 22 different agencies in this massive department, but that's what we've got. It's a department that the previous administration, I think, has completely misused. Instead of using customs and border protection to do that, to protect our border and secure it, they've utilized those resources to incentivize a massive influx of illegal immigration. Instead of using the Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency to do that, they instead engage in mission creep and utilized it to censor Americans with the misinformation board. I am concerned about disaster relief, just federal disaster relief in general, creating greater and greater and increasing levels of moral hazard resulting in higher costs of these disasters. So, let's cover each one of those kind of in order. How do you gain control over a massive agency whose resources and personnel have been misused? I mean, how do you root out those individuals who instead of securing our border opened it up and facilitated this?
GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, Senator, this has

been a big topic of conversation in most of the meetings that I've had with the members of this committee was how do we fix this agency which the reputation is that it's broken and dysfunctional. I think that was the question I get asked the most is why would you want to head up such a dysfunctional department? And I would say that because the mission of the department is to secure the homeland and our people, it's our biggest vulnerability right now, and we have a president that's not enforcing the law, and I don't believe the law should be unequally applied. Everyone should be subject to our laws, and a nation without laws and without borders is not a nation at all. So, I will work by ensuring one of the things that Senator Ernst talked about, people have to show up for work.
I think there's going to be a majority of people who don't have their primary mission to secure the homeland, that if they don't want to show up for work, then maybe they're just not truly passionate about protecting America. I think they need to do that, and they need to recognize what their job is. The morale in DHS is very low. I'm going to let people do their

jobs. I'm going to remind them what their jobs are. Some of these border patrol agents haven't been able to do their jobs for a very long time. They've been processing paperwork and facilitating an invasion when they should be back securing our border, which is why they were recruited and wanted to serve there to begin with.
We're going to build partnerships with local law enforcement, with ICE and task forces. So, we're communicating again with local sheriffs and mayors and law enforcement to partner together. When you talk about the fact that this is such a broken agency that needs so much improvement, a lot of it goes back to why we're recreated and are we fulfilling that mission and making sure that these individuals are getting back on task.
SENATOR JOHNSON: So, under my Chairmanship and under the Trump Administration, we did rename a part of DHS, so the Cybersecurity Information Security Agency. I in no way, shape or form ever contemplated that the sub-agency within DHS that was really focused on securing us against the cyber threats and other threats to

our infrastructure would ever be used to violate the Constitution the way it was used to violate the Constitution under the Biden Administration. This administration's been completely opaque. We do not have the information to know and the communication in terms of what all happened here. So, my question is relates to how they misused CISA. Will you commit to providing the transparency, providing the information, investigate it yourself, but provide this committee, my subcommittee, the information to expose the truth of the American public, but even more importantly, propose a piece of legislation based on our investigation, based on those results to fix it so that no administration can ever misuse the language of the law to commit that kind of unconstitutional act and violate people's First Amendment rights?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah, Senator, I look forward to working with you on that. And I think what we saw during the COVID pandemic, the actions of CISA, their misinformation and disinformation campaign, the materials they were putting out was shocking. Shocking at what they were doing to decide what was truth, what wasn't,

their lives, the hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of property damage. It's not just California though. I mean, again, that was grotesque mismanagement, that could have been prevented. You can't prevent a hurricane, you can't prevent floods, but you certainly can try and start reducing the moral hazard that we've allowed to explode, quite honestly, by the federal government rushing in immediately, no questions asked, just tell us how big a check you want. What can you do in your new role to try and start reducing over time the moral hazard that we have created in this country with federal disaster relief?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, Senator emergencies and disasters are always locally led. They're led by the local communities and leaders, and that's because they're much more responsive and much better informed on how to bring relief and to get those emergency services there to meet the need. Then it's state supported and federally resourced, which means that when we come in that we're supporting what the mission is, what those emergency operations and plans are, that the local city and county, and then

and how they were trying to manipulate the American people. We saw it in elections and Russia influence as well, and so ensuring that they can't do that in the future under any administration would be a priority, that they stay doing what they're supposed to do and hardening our systems and working with local officials to do that is a priority, and I'd look forward to working with you on legislation should you wish to rein them in.

SENATOR JOHNSON: So, the first step in that process is to expose the truth to find out who these backed actors were, expose who they were, hold them accountable.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes.

SENATOR JOHNSON: I mean, that is crucial that we take that first step. So, again, look forward to working with you on that. The tragedy of the California fires, the more we learn, the more we understand that not only was it predictable, it was predicted, which means it was preventable. Again, you can't prevent the initiation of those fires, but you certainly prevent them from raging into the tragedy that they became, the dozens of people who've lost

also the state has implemented and do what we can to fulfill the mission of our programs.

One of the things that FEMA's not doing today that I think we should be doing is streamlining communications. We saw this in New Orleans, we saw it in other terrorist attacks in the country, and you just referenced it as well about the American people not getting the truth, Senators not getting the truth and the transparency that we need is that I believe FEMA can always put out a blueprint for what a response would be should something terrible happen.

And when we look at the Secret Service, what happened in Butler, we saw that communication was an issue, that the Secret Service wasn't communicating, and balls were getting dropped with local authorities, local law enforcement, and we can put forward a blueprint for how communication can happen and be streamlined between the federal government, the state, and the local entities. So, that should something happen, this is how we talk to each other, to make sure that the public has the facts, they're not getting misinformation, which

happened with the New Orleans terror attack just recently, but also up in Pennsylvania as well.

That blueprint is what we do at the state level that FEMA has failed to do, to proactively educate the public on what everybody's roles are, what we do should something happen, whether it be a natural disaster or a terrorist attack or an emergency response is needed, that we can put out those blueprints ahead of time, educate people, train those local entities, which they currently do to a certain extent today, but not good enough to really know that not only can the resources be pre-deployed in many of these situations so that they're more readily accessible, but also how are we going to communicate and make sure everybody's on the same page so that we can be much more efficient.

I wish that we would've had different leadership and a different governor in California, or we might have a different result there. But in the Department of Homeland Security, we can do all that we can to make sure that the people that live in California know that they're going to get a response from the federal

government that's appropriate, and we did all that we could to make sure that they had the information ahead of time so they could protect themselves when they do have a failure in leadership like we've seen.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Thank you and good luck.

GOVERNOR NOEM: You bet.

SENATOR PAUL: Since Senator Johnson brought up California fires, I have to interject here. We talked about burn policies, these are local policies, how we try to not have so much brush and things like that. They're also next to the largest body of water in the world, the Pacific Ocean. So, I see these homes all burning on the beach in Malibu, and I'm like, "Wow, if they just had a generator and a hose, you start sucking the water out of the Pacific Ocean." But you could do more than that. You could pump it and put it in cisterns up in the hills a mile or two in. It doesn't rain very much there, but why don't they take the ocean water, put it in cisterns and have a bunch of water ready when a wildfire shows up, but it's like once again, bad local government. Senator Gallego.

SENATOR GALLEGO: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Governor, for your attendance and I appreciate us meeting last week and our frank conversation. So, following up to our conversation, in recent years, I've been in very close contact with our Arizona border communities, which are unlike other border communities and about the funding needs to address migrant influxes through the shelter and services program or SSP. Without this funding border communities must bear all the financial burden for national immigration challenges and the broken border in general. So, that means police, fire, hospital systems in general, anything of that. And at the same time, they'll also face the potential challenges of street releases. And again, these are very small towns on the border, so having thousands of people being released becomes both burdensome security issues and just not fair to them. And we get lumped in with places like New York and Chicago about how they do their shelter programs.

Our shelter programs are not the same as New York and Chicago. We do not permanently put people in apartments or anything of that

nature. We are trying to move people away from the border so that way they don't become a burden on these very, very small communities. So, I'm very highly concerned, as I told you in our meeting when the SSP program becomes politicized and to the point where we get lumped in with those programs, I don't think are effective and are actually counterproductive and it ends up depriving our small Arizona borders of these very, very vital funds that they need. So, as DHS Secretary, how would you ensure that border communities are not left to respond to and pay for these immigration influxes, the broken border system on their own? And when you commit to helping really not politicize or just join the SSP program to the point where places that are doing things correctly like Yuma, Arizona, like Pima County, like Cochise County, aren't lumped in with the people that are doing things incorrectly like New York State and Chicago.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, Senator, thank you for the conversation in your office about the program, FEMA, the southern border, and the challenges and then also the difference between your state and how you utilize funds versus other

states. I would say that, my hope is that if given the opportunity to serve as secretary, that the federal government would no longer, and I believe as President Trump has promised the American people facilitate an illegal alien invasion and that your communities in Arizona would no longer have the issue with having people in your small towns and communities that you need to figure out how to take care of and get them to where they want to go in other places of the country.

The President has promised he will secure the border that we will uphold our nation's laws and that he will do that to the benefit and be putting America first again. So, I know we talked extensively about the SSP program and how you've utilized it, but getting these programs back to what they were intended is important to FEMA as a disaster response agency, and some of the facilities that have been utilizing these types of funds and dollars need to be reevaluated and to make sure that it's truly doing the service that is upholding our nation's laws.

SENATOR GALLEGO: And certainly, I

understand reevaluating especially how some of these states have been using it and in an ideal world, we don't have to have a program like that because we don't have this mass of humanity that's coming towards our borders, but even under the first Trump administration, we actually still needed it also. So, this is why my concern is to not get rid of this program because again, these small communities, I'm talking communities of maybe 10,000 people, maybe only six or seven cops are going to end up really bearing the brunt and we are not a big state. We can't really compensate for these types of losses. These small communities are also largely, you come from a rural state, counties that are largely rural and with a lot of federal land so that actually don't even have a tax base.

So, when the broken immigration system sends people to these borders and these communities don't have enough money to pay for cops, firefighters over time for hospital systems, it's that type of program that keeps these small communities afloat. So, just want to make sure that again, this doesn't not become politicized and that we are kept separate from I

think the mistakes that other states have taken on. Moving on, in Arizona, we have large parts of the board, they run through tribal lands. We have 22 federally recognized tribes. We have great relationships with these tribes. They want to be collaborative partners when it comes to border security. And then we have some great programs that have worked in the past. For example, the Shadow Wolves Program with the Tohono O'odham Nation is a really good example, collaborative program of tribal law enforcement that worked with DHS to make sure they stop human smuggling and cartels going through the borders. But as DHS Secretary, what is your plan to consult with our border tribes and work together to balance both national security but also their sovereignty?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah. Well, Senator, I believe that my experience as governor and my relationship with working with our tribes is going to be an incredible powerful tool for me to bring to bear at the Department of Homeland Security to work on how we secure our southern border but still respect their sovereignty and still be able to work with them. This year, when

looking at public safety issues that we had in South Dakota and their lack of ability to hire tribal officers on our reservations in South Dakota, I offered to train federal law enforcement officers, BIA officers, but also their tribal police in South Dakota at no cost to our tribes. And it's been an incredible powerful tool that we've had to build relationships. Those tribal police had the chance to go through academy with the local maybe deputies from the counties and the state highway patrol troopers that were coming on board, and those relationships have built partnerships in our state that we didn't have before.

The Shadow Wolf training opportunity is incredible. That was down in Arizona that you spoke of too, and in looking into that program, I'd like to continue to build on that and perpetuate in the future so that our tribes have an opportunity to have a secure border but also have it reflect their values and their culture and have their own people be a part of the solution and then even when it comes to the infrastructure of the wall that we're respecting that and their landscapes and their land as well.

So, I look forward to working with you as we move into this next administration to be able to protect our country and then work and respect our tribes as we do so.

SENATOR GALLEGO: Thank you. And the President Trump and some of his other potential staff and advisors have been very vocal about implementing a mass deportation strategy, talking to my agricultural community, my dairy community, they have concerns that this approach will lead to workforce shortages that will further drive up the costs of everything and something that we have really been working hard to cross, I think a bipartisan and a bipartisan manner to bring down the costs of everything and unfortunately this would reignite inflation. What is your plan to ensure safe and legal immigration processes for agricultural workers while protecting local agricultural operations, including those both of our home states?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, Senator, the President and President Trump has been very clear that his priority is going to be deporting criminals, those who have broken our laws and perpetuated violence in our communities. That'll

be the priority. And as I spoke earlier with our statistics, having over 425,000 of those with criminal convictions in our country, that will be a focus that we need to tackle right away, and it'll be a big one. Beyond that, his next priority is going to be those with final removal orders and focus on those individuals who have long overstayed and that there is a consequence for ignoring our federal laws. Beyond that, we'll continue conversations. As you know, I'm a farmer and a rancher and come from an agricultural state and we'll work together to make sure that laws are followed. It is the Senate and the house that puts forward the laws. I as secretary uphold the law, so you determine what that is and debate and discussion. I'll be transparent and share as much information and insight as I have with my background and experience and continue to work with you.

SENATOR GALLEGO: (Indiscernible).

SENATOR PAUL: Senator Moreno.

SENATOR MORENO: First of all, thank you, Governor, for being here for testifying before this committee and for your service, not just to your state but to America. Nine years

ago today, we met in probably the coldest day I've ever been in my life in Iowa --

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah, that's true.

SENATOR MORENO: ... as you and I were making phone calls and whipping up votes for Republicans in Iowa, my wife Bridget, who's here, got a chance to meet you and we left Iowa saying, "That person's really going to go far," and here we are nine years later, you've been an amazing governor, amazing Congresswoman, and now you're going to make an even better Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. So, I think sometimes in D.C. we tend to complicate things. There is a current Secretary of Homeland Security, so why don't we take this opportunity to do a little job review and compare and contrast him to you. So, if you don't mind, I'll ask you some questions and you can give me an answer. Secretary Mayorkas allowed about, you said it, just about 400 people on the terror watch list to come into this country legally. If you were confirmed as Secretary of Homeland Security, how many people on the terror watch list would you allow into this country?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, Senator, we would

work every single day until that number was zero. And if you look at the previous Trump administration over his entire four years in comparison to Joe Biden's number President Trump, it was 11 that were then removed from the country and faced consequences. When you look at the 382 that Joe Biden has let in and the policies continue, is shocking and needs to be changed immediately.

SENATOR MORENO: Mayorkas let in about 12,000 murderers, how many would you target to let into this country?

GOVERNOR NOEM: My goal every day would be to have no murderers allowed into this country and our communities.

SENATOR MORENO: Mayorkas allowed 16,000 rapists, how many would you target to let in?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Every day I'd work to make sure that there was none let into this country.

SENATOR MORENO: He let 600,000 -- Mayorkas, 600,000, people with criminal convictions, how many would you allow in?

GOVERNOR NOEM: We would work every day

to make sure people are safe and that those with criminal convictions are immediately removed.
SENATOR MORENO: How many private jets would you have the United States taxpayers have fly into foreign countries to pick up people to bring them here.
GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah. Senator, we will no longer be undertaking that mission at the Department of Homeland Security.
SENATOR MORENO: So, not 700,000 individuals on private jets over the last four years, you would not have any?
GOVERNOR NOEM: No. I'll be working with President Trump to put in place his agenda and adherence to our federal laws.
SENATOR MORENO: And how many illegals will you plan to house in luxury hotel rooms in Manhattan at a cost of $6, 000 per month?
GOVERNOR NOEM: Sir, clearly, Senator, during this election, the American people said they did not support that and that that would not be a part of this new administration.
SENATOR MORENO: How about sex change operations for illegals, how many of those would you suspect you would fund?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, I believe that the Department of Homeland Security will be reevaluating its mission in this country to not allow that going forward under President Trump's goals.
SENATOR MORENO: And if you had any legal migrant that was in this country and they committed a crime, would you offer them airfare from one state to another to evade law enforcement?
GOVERNOR NOEM: Sir, I will be following this nation's laws and the Constitution and make sure that all laws are adhered to.
SENATOR MORENO: And if you had been the head of the Department of Homeland Security a year or so ago, would you have closed a detention center in Georgia that would've allowed the release of somebody charged with a crime?
GOVERNOR NOEM: Sir, I don't have the specifics to that situation, but certainly that would not be something that I would want to have under my watch.
SENATOR MORENO: So, just to be clear, Laken Riley would be alive today if you had been the Secretary of Homeland Security?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Oh, Senator, my hope is that that would be true. Yes.
SENATOR MORENO: Let's switch to another part of the disgraceful immigration laws that Biden and Mayorkas, who objectively, by the way, objectively, has been the worst cabinet member ever in the history of the United States of America. Let's talk about temporary protective status. Temporary being the operative word. Mayorkas and Biden just extended temporary protective status again through 2027. Will you continue to corrupt TPS to allow some sort of open borders agenda and will you use hot weather of 80 degrees and sunny beaches in El Salvador as a reason why people have to stay in America and not safely return?
GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah, Senator, this program has been abused and manipulated by the Biden administration and that will no longer be allowed to allow that and these extensions going forward the way that they are, the program was intended to be temporary and this extension of over 600,000 Venezuelans as well is alarming when you look at what we've seen in different states, including Colorado with gangs doing damage and

harming the individuals and the people that live there.
SENATOR MORENO: And in terms of our border, like the physical border, I've been there many times. You've been there many times. Who should be in charge? Who should have operational control of our border? The United States government or the Mexican drug cartels?
GOVERNOR NOEM: Oh, Senator, the United States needs to control our borders and secure them.
SENATOR MORENO: So, if this were a job interview in the private sector and you had somebody like Alejandro Mayorkas in charge and we had the opportunity to upgrade to you, this would be the greatest upgrade in history of the United States of America. But I'm going to end my time with a startling statistic and actually a challenge to the Democrat party. When Mayorkas was confirmed, every single Democrat voted to confirm him, and six Republicans joined all 50 Democrats in that confirmation. If we get to the vote, and hopefully Chairman, we could do that Monday, because we cannot wait one single day without you being in charge of that department.

We should have 100 percent; 100 Senators vote for your confirmation.

This will be the litmus test in my mind as to whether we have a Democrat party that's actually serious about doing bipartisan things like securing this country and protecting our citizens. Any Democrat that voted for Mayorkas that does not vote for you should be in front of their voters and removed from office. Thank you for serving, Brian. Thank you for being here, for putting up with the nonsense that you guys have had to put up with over the years. You are going to make an amazing Secretary of Homeland Security. Thank you for being here.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR PAUL: Senator Slotkin.

SENATOR SLOTKIN: Thanks for being here and thanks for our time in my office, Governor. I'm a former CIA officer, joined right after 9/11 and served three tours in Iraq alongside the military. I'm actually the first CIA officer in the Senate and to me the most important thing again as a Democrat from a state that Trump won, right, on the same ballot we both won. I understand we're going to have different policy

very elite military unit. I mean, it's horrible. It's one of the hardest things to catch the sort of lone wolf, radicalized American citizen, but I want to protect ourselves. Our most recent examples of domestic terrorism we're not what we've spent the majority talking about today, crime from a migrant, and I don't dispute there is crime, but I just want to know and I want to hear from you as an intelligence officer that you're going to speak about real threats and not blow something up, politicize something, make something more exciting because that's maybe what the President wants to hear, but your mission to protect and defend the Constitution means calling honestly what the threats are to the country. Can you just give me a yes or no, please?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator. I will be as transparent and factual every day with you and the American people as possible based on the information that I have. I don't know if the investigations are closed in New Orleans and in Nevada, but what we know so far and needs to be relayed to the American people, needs to be the truth and facts.

SENATOR SLOTKIN: Yeah, I'd ask that.

opinions. I certainly understand that the President or incoming President has the right to nominate whoever he wants. Those are not the issues for me that I'm going to spend my time on. The ones that I care about the most relate to the mission of the organization when it was founded, protecting the homeland, and I think to me, it's one thing when there's campaign rhetoric or political politicization of things, everyone does that on both sides of the aisle in this committee and in our line of work, but when it comes to actually protecting the country, you do have to be clear and honest about facts and not conflate things.

So, it's just important to me that I know, particularly since you do have one of the intelligence agencies within the Department of Homeland Security, that you're going to call a spade a spade, right? The most recent acts of domestic terrorism in New Orleans, horrible incident in Nevada had nothing to do with migrants. Correct?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Correct.

SENATOR SLOTKIN: They were homegrown American citizens. One of them was actually in a

We've talked a lot about border security. As a CIA officer, I think one of the only people on this committee who's actually worked on protecting the homeland. I'm a Middle East terrorism and militia expert by training, so I believe deeply in it and every country of the world gets to decide who comes inside its borders. That's not a radical concept, but I think I've been open with this committee that it is also on us to fix the deeply broken legal immigration system. I'm glad to hear that you're going to carry out the laws on the immigration system. Democrats and Republicans are to blame that we haven't fixed this system, but I also believe you can't fully control the border unless you give people that we need for our companies, for our economy a legal vetted way to come here. So, do you believe in legal vetted immigration and that we need more of it in the United States?

GOVERNOR NOEM: I do believe we need to follow our legal immigration laws and that it needs to be vetted. We need more resources, I believe in some of the elements of this to ensure that we're --

SENATOR SLOTKIN: Do you believe that

our economy depends and needs some level, just like your family came from Norway and on economic drive and wanted a better life --

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, immigration's always been a part of our history and will be a part of our future. We just need to make sure that we're adhering to our nation's laws, which this body has the ability to --

SENATOR SLOTKIN: I'm with you, I'm with you.

GOVERNOR NOEM: ... continue to change and to put in place.

SENATOR SLOTKIN: Again, going back to the fact that you will pledge an oath to the Constitution, not to President Trump. Just like every other nominee, President Trump said in November that he's willing to use law enforcement, National Guard, or even active-duty military to go after the threat from within the United States. I don't know exactly what he was talking about, but we have recent examples from your predecessors at DHS where federal law enforcement were sent into a state, in this case Oregon without coordination with the governor. Those federal law enforcement officers at the

time were putting down threats to federal buildings and they were legitimate threats. I don't dispute, there was destruction of property going on during a bunch of protests and riots, so I don't dispute that. But they weren't wearing insignia. We talked about this. They weren't wearing any markings, so people were arrested by folks in fatigues with no names, no idea who they were, like right out of a bad Hollywood movie. Okay. If the President asks you to send in federal law enforcement to a state without coordination of that, Governor, would you support that action?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, my job, if nominated, and sworn in as Secretary of Homeland Security, is to uphold the Constitution and to uphold --

SENATOR SLOTKIN: So, you will push back --

GOVERNOR NOEM: ... the rules of this country. Yes, that will be the oath and the pledge that I will be making. And my goal also is to work with you to ensure that we have situations that are always appropriate, that we are well-defined on who we are --

SENATOR SLOTKIN: I just to know you're a former governor, you can imagine that if Joe Biden sent in 700 federal law enforcement under Secretary Mayorkas without coordinating with you, I think we can agree you'd be a little upset. So, I just ask that you give the same respect for coordination and that we are very sensitive. People are worried about politicizing of law enforcement and the uniformed military. That's a bad thing. I hope we can agree. Lastly, I will just say, look forward to looking at the northern border, the Gordie Howe Bridge, your help staffing that. We know you are right now across many administrations, we haven't met our staffing goals at DHS and that's a problem, so we really want to make sure that opens on time.

But I also want your assurances. You received FEMA assistance from Joe Biden's administration, right? You had historic floods. You asked and requested of the administration, and you were given millions of dollars to help with that. I understand you don't like Gavin Newsom, but can you say in front of the American people that you will open the books to this committee who does have oversight over FEMA, that

you will open the books in a bipartisan way to ensure whether it's North Carolina or California or anywhere in between, that the American people can know that you are not playing politics with disaster assistance?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes. Senator, I'll work with you in this committee to make sure I'm following the federal law and ensuring that you have information and transparency from us and from DHS and FEMA.

SENATOR SLOTKIN: Thank you. Appreciate it. Yield back.

SENATOR PAUL: Senator Lankford.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Governor Noem, great to see you.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Great to see you too.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Thanks for being here. Thanks for accepting this nod that the President has given you. For, Brian, thanks. Both of you, you've walked through a lot. I have had the privilege of knowing you for a very long time since we served together in the House of Representatives, so I have the benefit of knowing your qualifications and how strong you are in all these background issues and how hard you work on

these things because I've seen it firsthand. So, I appreciate you stepping into this because a lot of attention across the country will be focused on this. You know that full well and you've stepped into it. For Governor Landry, my state and many folks in my state are praying for you and for your state. You've done a great job in leadership at this moment in a very, very tough time for Louisiana, and we don't want to see acts of terrorism anywhere in our country and it's incredibly difficult days for a governor, so thanks for your leadership on that as well. I also have to tell you, Kristi, I've whined to my wife occasionally about the temperature that's coming on Monday. I'm very excited about Trump's inaugural, but we're all going to be sitting outside in about 12 degrees. And I thought just for fun, I would check South Dakota on Monday, it's one, for a high, for a high.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah, for a high.

SENATOR LANKFORD: And so, I'm going to stop whining about the temperature Monday here in Washington, D.C. on it. Look, I'm going to run through a couple of things here because I know you, not everybody in Oklahoma knows you. The

questions that I get from people though in Oklahoma, I want to be able to run past you because they want to be able to know the answer to these things, so I'm just going to blitz through a whole bunch of them. Will you use the legal authority that DHS already has to be able to close our border?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator. I will work with President Trump to ensure that we're securing our border.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Thank you. There's a lot of things that this Congress needs to do, has already been mentioned by Senator Slotkin as well, that we need you to be able to close loopholes to be able to give you additional authority, but there's a tremendous amount of authority currently not being used in Oklahoma, as you're saying, is that about to be used? And they'll be grateful to be able to hear that. No other President has ever created a phone app to be able to facilitate a faster processing of aliens in, called the CBP One app. It's been mentioned several times here. Will you use your authority to stop facilitating faster processing of illegal aliens into our country with the CBP

One app?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator. We will eliminate the CBP One app, maintain some of the data that's in it that's critical to knowing who's in our country, but that app will no longer be in use.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Thank you. No other President has ever used the parole authority, just in general, humanitarian parole to facilitate faster processing of aliens into our country, which leads to the catch and release we've all heard about. So, the Oklahomans that I talked to say, "Are we about to end the abuse of parole and end catch and release? Is that about to stop?"

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, President Trump's been very clear that he will end catch and release.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Terrific. Folks want to know, will you use your authority with the funds that are given to you by Congress to actually build more wall rather than use the funding that's given to you as the Biden administration did to do environmental remediation around the border rather than actual

border wall and border structure?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah. Senator, President Trump has been clear that he wants to build the wall.

SENATOR LANKFORD: So, do we. So, will you use your authority to be able to scan more vehicles and obviously we've got to get you the funding to be able to do this, to be able to scan more vehicles and individuals that are carrying Fentanyl into our country through our ports of entry.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator. We will continue to use technologies but hopefully be able to use more with the resources that were granted to scan those vehicles and know what's coming in and out of this country.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Last year, FEMA employees during disaster relief were instructed by one of their supervisors that if they see a Trump sign or a Trump flag flying to skip that house, to not stop by there and tell them what their federal government can do for them. Will you allow FEMA employees or any within DHS to politicize their role and to pick and choose who gets help and who doesn't as an American?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, under President Trump's administration, disaster and emergency relief will not be handed out with political bias. Every American will be responded to and treated equally.

SENATOR LANKFORD: That's what folks want to know. Will you review the Secret Service responsibilities to be able to go back through it and to say, are they focused on their primary mission or is there something you could distract? Secret Service still chases down financial crimes, they're still chasing down child exploitation. Those are serious things for Treasury or for FBI to do, but there's a question is if that's the first priority for Secret Service?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, the Secret Service is in need of dramatic reforms. They do have a protective detail element that is their priority and also an investigation side. My understanding is that that investigation side is often used to train the protective detailed officers, but clearly, they are not focusing on what their true duty is, and it needs to get back onto what they were created for and that was the

protective detail, mission, and emergency situations that they need to help plan and prepare for and defend.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Thank you. This committee made a request to the Secretary of Homeland Security last year, and by the way, also the head of the FBI to be able to come before this committee and to do what every Secretary of Homeland Security has done for the last 20 years, every single year, unbroken until last year. And then the secretary refused to come before this committee in an open session and talk about national threats. Now, the former Chairman protested strongly to the Biden administration and DHS, they weren't coming, but they still refused to be able to come. Will you come before this committee and talk about the threats openly so the American people can hear them in a public forum?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes. Senator, Senator Peters, and I discussed this quite a bit in our meeting as well, and I have committed to come and give that briefing to this committee and to the American people.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Thank you. We need

that. Let me tell you another challenge we've had with Homeland Security in the past four years. When we ask for data and for information, we get, "I'll get back to you on that." When we ask again and again and again and again, we get the same statement, "I'll get back to you on that." Now, I can go down the street to the command center, where they actually get the data in live, and they have it up on big screens and they're tracking exactly what's happening on the southern border to the minute, but if I ask for what happened last month, they'll say, "We're still gathering that data." We're not asking for anything other than what Congress is supposed to get. That's the ability to be able to see data and to have real oversight over DHS and that has been a failure of this DHS along with multiple other issues on that. When we request the data for basic things like, how many special interest aliens were allowed across the border.

If it was last year, we had to find out on our own. It was 70,000 people that were targeted by this administration as a potential national security risk that were not just found at the border that were released when they were

found at the border. 70,000 people just from last year in the country right now that this administration declared at the border, they're a potential national security risk. Now, I know you're not going to do that, but when we ask for the data and for the information, when we say, "How's the National Vetting Center working?" Do you have the connection to be able to screen individuals there? We're just doing our oversight responsibility. You've served in Congress before and did a great job on that and did oversight. We want to still be able to do the same thing. Will you provide data to this committee so that we can cooperate with you to help?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, I will follow the law and be transparent with you and allow you to do the due diligence towards oversight that you're tasked with.

SENATOR LANKFORD: I have absolutely no doubt about that, Governor. I have absolutely no doubt, looking forward to you serving in that role.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Thank you.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Thank you.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Thank you.
SENATOR PAUL: Well, congratulations, Governor Noem. You are almost done.
GOVERNOR NOEM: Okay.
SENATOR PAUL: We've been through a lot of questions. I think you've handled the questions very well and I'm ask a couple of questions, and I think the ranking member has a few and I think we'll be done very shortly. I think a lot of Americans, including some conservatives misunderstand the First Amendment. They think the First Amendment says that "Facebook has to publish my opinion," or, "The Wall Street Journal has to publish my opinion," or "We need to force them to be fair." That's not what the First Amendment's about at all.
The First Amendment really doesn't apply to telling private companies what we can or cannot say. YouTube censored me and I despise their policy. They actually took down speeches I made on the floor, but really, I don't have a legal recourse other than I can complain about YouTube being unfair and not hosting both sides of an issue. However, with the government though, there is a rule. The First Amendment

specifically says, "Congress shall pass no law banning or abridging speech," and this is what really got us worried about what, not only the FBI was doing, but the Department of Homeland Security actually meeting with these companies.
SENATOR PAUL: ... on a weekly basis.
And imagine the chilling effect of this, imagine that there are cameras here, that they're going to end their filming of this interview and then decide, "Well, what she said or what he said really was misinformation, and we should edit that out." Can you imagine? It's just hard for me to imagine that the media has not, which once defended the First Amendment, hasn't been in more of an uproar over the government meeting with the media to decide things. Some of this we didn't know, and then Elon Musk bought Twitter. People asked him, they said, "Well, you've paid $44 billion for Twitter. Isn't that too much?" And he said, "I paid $44 billion to defend free speech."
And it's been an amazing service, not only to open up the forum to more viewpoints, but to point out what the government was doing. In this last week, we heard from Mark Zuckerberg,

who said that the pushiness, the coerciveness of government meeting with them was unprecedented and that they pushed back. But he also said worse than them just sort of telling him he should restrict speech; they also threatened him. They threatened to come after him through antitrust law, they threatened to remove parts of Section 230 of the liability protection.
Just to imagine this bully nature of government, and I know you're opposed to that, but if you're confirmed and you're in a position of saying, "We're just no longer sending people to meet with media," and the way I describe it is to talk about constitutionally protected speech. Because some will say, "Oh, well, what about pornography or what about child trafficking?" Those are illegal. Those are not constitutionally protected speech. You have every ability to meet with that. But for constitutionally protected speech, will you tell us in America that you will no longer be sending government agents to meet with the media?
GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator. I'll work with you to ensure that civil rights and liberties are protected and that we are not in

the misinformation and disinformation space like the current DHS is.
SENATOR PAUL: The only other thing I would ask on this basis is we will send requests, we sent requests previously, sometimes, and often bipartisan requests, for information. The Twitter files, Michael Schellenberger, Matt Taibbi, Bari Weiss did a great job of showing what was happening in Twitter and how they were cooperating with government. I think the other investigation that needs to occur is who are the people in government they were talking to? Do they still work at DHS, and can we make sure that they're not in a position of authority?
And this is not something I'm going to tell you to do. It's just a request that you have your own investigation, that you have people who work for DHS to say, "We are going to look for people who are bringing their political bias to work and trying to influence speech and restrict speech based on their bias and help us in rooting that out and making sure that these people never again have that responsibility." Because I don't think there's ever been anything like this as far as the restriction of speech,

and I think the election is largely going to stop and tilt things the other way. But will you help us by looking internally for those who are trying to restrict speech?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, I look forward to working with you on that mission.

SENATOR PAUL: I don't have any other questions now, but I think Senator Peters and Senator Blumenthal, and we'll see how it goes. We're going to start with Senator Peters with one more five-minute round.

SENATOR PETERS: Yeah, I'll be fairly brief. We've had opportunity to talk at length about many issues, and again, I appreciate that, Governor. I just want to stress going forward, and we've heard a lot of comments here, I think there's been a fair amount of political theater. Not as much as I know exist in other committees, and I've always strived, and I know ranking member or now Chairman Paul share the notion that we want to be a fact-based committee and try to find tangible solutions to the tough problems that we face, and data is important. We've heard a lot of numbers being thrown around here, and I don't have time to go through and challenge those

numbers. Some of them we don't even know where they came from. I don't think that's helpful to the very important mission of confirm that you're going to be dealing with. So, I hope in the future, that we're actually dealing with facts.

You've mentioned many times that you do want to deal with facts and real data. And again, we heard a lot here that's not real data, and we should not operate that way. And if confirmed when we move forward, I'm going to look forward to working with you based on the facts and understand where the real threats are, how we need to appropriate resources to make sure we're meeting those threats.

And let's take this hyper-partisanship out of such an important issue of homeland security. We have way too much partisanship in this country, and it's resulted in a polarization of people here. We've got to come together as this country, we've got to lock arms and understand that we're all proud Americans, we all want to do what's best for the American people and solve the issues that are before us.

So, in that spirit, and certainly you've communicated that spirit to me, but in

that spirit, I hope if confirmed that is exactly what you will be bringing to this office, and let's move away from this toxic political environment that we have in the country and celebrate what's great about our country in the spirit of bringing the American people together.

So, I have one question before we turn it over to other members. As a member of this committee, as well as the Armed Services Committee, I've focused a great deal on the safe integration of drones in our airspace while addressing the growing threats that drones possess. We certainly see what drones are doing in changing the face of warfare, whether it's in Ukraine and other battlefields around the world. We are very concerned about the weaponization of those drones and what it could mean to the security here in the United States. I've proposed comprehensive legislation to extend authorities beyond just the FBI and DOJ and Homeland Security to local law enforcement.

You mentioned in your comments about security for the Super Bowl, which is incredibly important, but we have to remember that that threat exists for all games. In fact, one of the

biggest supporters of my legislation is the NFL. In fact, we just had a recent playoff game that was delayed because of drones that flew into that playoff game. We are very concerned that you could have a drone with a grenade or an explosive device, which would be absolutely catastrophic. It's absolutely essential that we address this threat. What we're seeing around the world and what we're seeing in daily activities should be a concern. I think this is just a matter of time. It's not if, it's when, and we need to be on the front end of that.

And with that in mind, I want to remind folks that Congress just recently extended critical counter-UAS authority, counter-drone authority only for a short-time basis for the 12th time. We only do these little, tiny short-term extensions, and we aren't dealing with the problem comprehensively as we should, and those are going to expire on March 14th, a very short time from now. And so, my question for you, Governor, is if confirmed as DHS Secretary, will you commit to working with me and my colleagues to pass durable, long-term authorities that will protect this country from what is a real threat,

and it's just a matter of time? And I don't want to have a horrible incident occur, and people wonder why we didn't take action beforehand. So, please address that.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, I look forward to working with you and this committee to address the threats we may face and the usage of drones in this country in relation to our national security interests and our homeland security interests. So, thank you for bringing up the conversation today, because it is one of the areas within DHS that we have a responsibility to address in cooperation with Congress.

SENATOR PETERS: And my first comments on bringing people together, please comment on that.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Oh, well, thank you, sir. Yes, no.

SENATOR PETERS: I didn't ask that question, but in my 24 seconds left.

GOVERNOR NOEM: I'm looking forward to working with everyone, Republicans and Democrats and everyone else in between, that in this country that is focused on keeping America safe and secure for our future. I would just point,

Senator, to my background and my history. When I came to Congress, I worked with Republicans and Democrats on both sides of the aisle on many pieces of legislation and was very happy to do so and focus on priorities on where we could agreement, knowing we may disagree on some issues, but there was areas where we could keep the federal government accountable and do due diligence by the people that pay their taxes and get up and go to work every single day. As governor, as well. I was governor for every single person in the state of South Dakota, and they were my number one priority, and everyone knew there that it didn't matter if you were Republican or Democrat, that my focus was on them and keeping our state thriving and free.

So, I look forward to continuing the work that I always have to be coming up with solutions and in a bipartisan manner, and hopefully, my visits to your office and conversations reflected that and my intention on how I would conduct the role as the Department of Homeland Security Secretary.

SENATOR PETERS: Got a brief follow up to that.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Sure.

SENATOR PETERS: So, it's data and facts that we can all agree on that drive our policy and not political theater. Would you agree?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, certainly, sir. We need to be addressing facts and information rather than political theater. We also need to speak truth to facts. So, I think it's important that we're willing to confront our challenges head on and have those conversations. And you'll see me back at your office door very soon to continue our work together.

SENATOR PETERS: Very good. Thank you.

SENATOR PAUL: And I want to second basically what Senator Peters has said. On records requests, I've told him, and I plan on it, it's going to be administration of my party, that if he wants records and there are legitimate records, we're going to sign requests together, and we'd like to get the records. It also helps, though, and I think Senator Lankford mentioned this, is you ask a question, not you, but to the administration or any administration, they're like, "Oh, yeah. We'll get back to you on it."

Many times, I've even asked in advance, and I would suggest that we ask you in advance together, we ask in advance, "If you're coming in a month, we say we want this data. Be prepared to talk about it." And if you are, you'll have many more friends on both sides because what usually happens, and that's why I don't like springing the question. If it's a technical question that needs data, we're going to tell you in advance, at least I will, and we want you to come prepared with that.

And that goes a long way, because really what happens is we get stiff-armed. They say, "We'll get back to you," and we have no way to force you, really, other than we could cut the money off, and nobody ever does that. But you'll have 200,000 people working for you. By goodness, send your experts out, scour the records. And it is true, facts are difficult, and sometimes, there's different spins on the same set of facts, but I think that will help.

On the drones, I think we need more facts. So, I'm more than willing to work with the ranking member on doing something on drones, but I don't want every sheriff out there shooting

up in the sky at stuff. We got to figure out and we got to get the truth about do we really have drones everywhere flying all the time? How many of them are planes? How many of them are drones? And let's go through this, and then let's figure out, and then let's talk about how we bring drones down. If we interrupt and collect a lot of cellular signal through that, are we doing it with a warrant? What are we going to do with all the Americans' data that we've collected to take down drones? If we have to take a whole cell towers worth of data, there's a lot of innocent people's data is going to be collected in that. Is that being gotten rid of? So, I think there are ways we can get to the right place. Everybody, obviously nobody wants drones coming down.

The only other thing I'd add on drones before I turn it over to Senator Lankford is look, I'm all for the NFL being protected and the Super Bowl being protected. They need to pay. They are a very rich organization. They want drones flying over in New Orleans. I'm all for it. The NFL ought to pay the government if the government's doing it, or we ought to have

private contractors doing it, but they shouldn't just get it for free. Senator Lankford.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Thank you. Thanks, again. As Senator Paul will remember on this, there used to be a public facing website that all Americans could actually get the data, what's happening on the border, what's actually moving, and then when the numbers got bad, that seemed to disappear, and then we couldn't even get the data anymore. So, I look forward to actually finding ways to be able to have everybody has the ability to be able to see some of this data as well on it.

There's a reason that the DHS Secretary is the very first week of nominations. This is a really important role, and it is a non-partisan role. It is a national security role, and we're grateful that you've stepped into this, but it is important that we actually get you on the task to be able to make sure that it's out there.

You mentioned earlier in your testimony that we do have a morale problem at DHS right now, and I think a lot of that is because people that signed up to be federal law enforcement to be able to protect the United States of America

have felt like they've been sidelined, and they've not been able to do their job that they really signed up for. And what I'm hearing from you is you're going to allow them to do their job again, what has been historically true for a long time, that federal law enforcement is there to actually help protect the country and the citizens and those communities, that you're going to allow them to do that, and that's helpful.

So, I have two quick things that I want to be able to mention on this. One is right now, just in the structure of this, and we can talk about this a different time, but CBP facilities that are along the border are really run by a different entity called GSA, and they're not allowed to be able to do updates on their facilities or to design their facilities. Somebody who lives 3,000 miles away and who doesn't actually do border patrol work, they actually design and oversee their facilities. That's a problem that we've got to be able to fix.

So, we've worked to be able to give more flexibility to CBP that when they have difficulty and challenges there, they have the

ability to be able to make those changes. But I'm not going to ask you to make a commitment to this, because this is just one of those detail areas, but will you commit in the future to working with us, that this committee and you can work together to be able to figure out how the folks that are on the field can actually make decisions about the facilities they work in?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah. Senator, I commit to working with you on that issue.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Terrific. And then I had a constituent in Oklahoma that is a hunter, like you are, like I am. He had a bag that he had some additional rounds that were in his bag that were left over from a hunting trip months before. He packed his bag, went on a vacation trip overseas, went through security with his bag. When he got overseas and then left and came back, they scanned his bag and said, "You have bullets, you have rounds in your bag," and he had I think five that were in his bag, that he didn't even remember were left over in an outside pocket from a hunting trip before.

Well, they promptly put him in jail and held him there and detained him there. Now, we

worked through all the process to be able to get him back. My question is that same bag went through TSA security in my state before it went through security overseas. And so, one of the questions that I've asked is why were those rounds picked up there and not here?

Now, we don't have the full answer to that yet, but that's just one of those TSA questions that we need to have. Americans right now are on planes all over the country, and they count on a certain level of security when they go through that process. So, in the days ahead, will you work with me to be able to identify what are the challenges that we still face with the screening process and to be able to correct those for the security of all Americans?

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator, I will work with you on that.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Thank you.

GOVERNOR NOEM: I was surprised TSA didn't come up more today, but that is an area in need of reform as well, and I look forward to working with you there.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Look forward to that. Thank you. I yield back.

SENATOR PAUL: Government needs a healthy dose of common sense. Bullets in your bag. I had a guy with bullets in the back of his pickup truck coming back from Mexico. We arrested him and took his truck, and only because the Institute of Justice fought for him for three years that he get his truck back. That's crazy, the things we do. Let's have some common sense, and hopefully, someone overseeing it will allow that. Senator Blumenthal, you're going to finish us up.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Thank you, Chairman Paul. I'm the last of your questioners, so that means I get unlimited amounts of time.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Okay.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Not really. Not even close. I want to sort of continue the emphasis on bipartisanship and most especially on immigration reform. What this nation needs is comprehensive immigration reform. We know about the need for more H-1B visas and other kinds of extensions of the visa program that enable the United States to have more workers that are desperately needed in certain areas of our country. We know that there has to be better

border security, generally. We know we need to provide some kind of path to earn citizenship for a lot of the undocumented people in this country, and we know it's possible, because we did it in 2013.

The United States Senate, as you will recall, passed a comprehensive immigration reform measure. Overwhelmingly, it was bipartisan. I was proud to be a part of it, going through the Judiciary Committee, but obviously it will involve Homeland Security, and I hope that we can continue, as Senator Lankford was a part of the effort in the last session to expand on those efforts and move forward on a bipartisan basis toward bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform.

I want to talk to you a little bit about domestic terrorism, which we discussed during my previous round, and I know you've discussed it afterward, including not just migrant crime and radicalization by ISIS, which are real and present problems, I also want to ask you about domestic terrorism events unrelated to groups outside our borders. We've seen a rise in antisemitism in this country. It has spiked

beyond any prediction, and I want to know of your concern with antisemitist, racist events, Charlottesville, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, there's a shorthand for these violent terrorist acts against people in the United States.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, Senator, I'm very concerned about what we've seen in this country as far as antisemitic violence that has happened. In fact, last year during our legislative session, I brought legislation to more clearly define it so that we could fight it in our home state. And I'm hopeful I can work with you to continue to do what we can to make sure that we are addressing this rising threat and not facilitating it in this country.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: And I just want to make sure that when you say we're protecting Americans against terrorism, that we're protecting all Americans, including people in mosques, in churches, in synagogues, people regardless of their worship, their race, their background. We need to protect all Americans from antisemitism, racism, Islamophobia. I hope you'll commit to that effort.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yes, correct. Thank

you, Senator, and I look forward to working with you to do that.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: In my closing minute-and-a-half, I just want to call your attention to an effort that I've led to help reunite children with their parents, children who were separated as a result of the so-called family separation policy. In the last administration, I have introduced a measure called Keep Families Together, not only to limit separation of families at or near ports of entry, but also the Families Belong Together Act for several Congresses to help bring the children, the kids who were victims of this policy and who still are not back with their parents. I hope that you will support that kind of effort.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, the Trump administration never had a family separation policy. They had a zero-tolerance policy, which said that our laws would be followed. What I'm alarmed by is the over 300,000 children that went missing during the Biden administration. And when we talk about children and what they're potentially facing as far as victimization in this country and the trafficking that's going on,

this administration's lack of desire to find out where those children are or what they may be going through is alarming to me. So, I want to stop that.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Well, because my time is expiring, I'm just going to interrupt again with apologies to say let's put aside ...

GOVERNOR NOEM: Well, I can't put aside 340,000 children.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Let's put aside the labels, let's put aside what happened in the past. There are still a thousand children who are separated and waiting to be reunited. I'd like your commitment that you're going to continue the effort to reunite them with their parents.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Senator, keeping families together is critically important to me and to this country. I'm concerned about Laken Riley's family, that they no longer have her. I'm concerned about the fact that we have people in this country that don't know where their children are or people in other countries who sent their children here and they've been lost by this administration. So, yes, my focus will be

to keep families together. We will uphold our law, and we'll make sure that we're doing everything we can to keep our children safe from the trafficking and the drug epidemic that's hit this country.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: I'm going to end on an optimistic note and say I take that as a yes.

GOVERNOR NOEM: Yeah.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR PAUL: Thank you for your testimony. The nominee has filed responses to biographical and financial questionnaires, answered prehearing questions submitted by the committee, and had their financial statements reviewed by the Office of Government Ethics. Without objection, this information will be part of the hearing record with the exception of the financial data, which are on file and available for public inspection in the committee offices. The hearing will remain open until 5:00 p.m. today, Friday, January 17th for the submission of statements and questions.

For the record, this hearing is

adjourned.

CERTIFICATION

I, Sonya Ledanski Hyde, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

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Date: February 17, 2025

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Exhibit 4

Vance Vows an End to Programs for Legal Immigrants

Hundreds of thousands of immigrants live and work in the United States through programs that give them temporary legal status. In the border state of Arizona, JD Vance vowed they would stop.

Listen to this article · 3:28 min Learn more

By Chris Cameron
Reporting from Peoria, Ariz.

Oct. 22, 2024

Senator JD Vance of Ohio, former President Donald J. Trump's running mate, escalated Mr. Trump's attacks against legal immigration on Tuesday, vowing to end programs that authorize hundreds of thousands of immigrants to live and work in the United States.

"What Donald Trump has proposed doing is we're going to stop doing mass parole. We're going to stop doing mass grants of Temporary Protected Status," Mr. Vance said at a campaign event in Peoria, Ariz. "Of course, you're going to have people fleeing from tyranny, but that happens on a case-by-case basis, not by waving the magic government wand."

Later in Tucson, Mr. Vance deflected questions from local reporters about deporting DACA recipients and restarting family separations at the border. Without specifically addressing DACA, which stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Mr. Vance said "we also have to deport people, not just the bad people who came into our country, but people who violated the law coming into this country. We've got to be willing to deport them."

About 864,000 immigrants have legal residency through a program known as Temporary Protected Status, which Congress created in 1990 for people fleeing war and other crises in their home countries. The program currently grants legal protection to immigrants from 16 countries, with most coming from Venezuela, El Salvador and Haiti.

This month, Mr. Trump had vowed to revoke that legal status for Haitian immigrants, who have been the target of accusations by the former president and Mr. Vance — most prominently in Springfield, Ohio. Mr. Vance's remarks on Tuesday appeared to widen that pledge, suggesting that all immigrants granted Temporary Protected Status would have to find other methods to stay in the country or face deportation. Immigrants from many of those countries would not have a clear alternative path to temporary protection.

A representative for Mr. Vance declined to comment when asked about specifics of the plan to end Temporary Protected Status.

Mr. Vance also appeared to propose the end of other parole programs that allow hundreds of thousands of immigrants to live in the United States for a short period without a visa or green card. This month, the Biden administration said it would allow one of those programs — for people from Cuba, Venezuela, Haiti and Nicaragua — to lapse, reflecting the political pressure President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris face on immigration, and the desire to blunt attacks from Republicans on the issue in the final days before the election.

A reporter from Telemundo had asked Mr. Vance in Peoria about Mr. Trump's vow to deport Haitians living in the United States under Temporary Protected Status, and if that effort would extend to immigrants from other countries and in other migration programs. Mr. Vance again described immigrants in those programs as "illegal immigrants," even though they are in the country legally, and blamed them for rising costs and other issues.

"What Kamala Harris has done," Mr. Vance said at a factory for military equipment in Peoria, "is she has used programs that are meant to help people who are escaping tyranny, and she's used it to grant amnesty to millions upon millions of

people who have no legal right to be in the country, and that has to stop."

Chris Cameron covers politics for The Times, focusing on breaking news and the 2024 campaign.

Exhibit 5

If he regains power, Donald Trump wants not only to revive some of the immigration policies criticized as draconian during his presidency, but expand and toughen them.

Listen to this article · 18:02 min Learn more

By Charlie Savage, Maggie Haberman and Jonathan Swan

Nov. 11, 2023

Former President Donald J. Trump is planning an extreme expansion of his first-term crackdown on immigration if he returns to power in 2025 — including preparing to round up undocumented people already in the United States on a vast scale and detain them in sprawling camps while they wait to be expelled.

The plans would sharply restrict both legal and illegal immigration in a multitude of ways.

Mr. Trump wants to revive his first-term border policies, including banning entry by people from certain Muslim-majority nations and reimposing a Covid 19-era policy of refusing asylum claims — though this time he would base that refusal on assertions that migrants carry other infectious diseases like tuberculosis.

He plans to scour the country for unauthorized immigrants and deport people by the millions per year.

To help speed mass deportations, Mr. Trump is preparing an enormous expansion of a form of removal that does not require due process hearings. To help Immigration and Customs Enforcement carry out sweeping raids, he plans to reassign other federal agents and deputize local police officers and National Guard soldiers voluntarily contributed by Republican-run states.

To ease the strain on ICE detention facilities, Mr. Trump wants to build huge camps to detain people while their cases are processed and they await deportation flights. And to get around any refusal by Congress to appropriate the necessary funds, Mr.

Trump would redirect money in the military budget, as he did in his first term to spend more on a border wall than Congress had authorized.

"Trump will unleash the vast arsenal of federal powers to implement the most spectacular migration crackdown," said Stephen Miller, Mr. Trump's former White House aide who was the chief architect of his border control efforts. Cooper Neill for The New York Times

In a public reference to his plans, Mr. Trump told a crowd in Iowa in September: "Following the Eisenhower model, we will carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history." The reference was to a 1954 campaign to round up and expel Mexican immigrants that was named for an ethnic slur — "Operation Wetback."

The constellation of Mr. Trump's 2025 plans amounts to an assault on immigration on a scale unseen in modern American history. Millions of undocumented immigrants would be barred from the country or uprooted from it years or even decades after settling here.

Such a scale of planned removals would raise logistical, financial and diplomatic challenges and would be vigorously challenged in court. But there is no mistaking the breadth and ambition of the shift Mr. Trump is eyeing.

In a second Trump presidency, the visas of foreign students who participated in anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian protests would be canceled. U.S. consular officials abroad will be directed to expand ideological screening of visa applicants to block people the Trump administration considers to have undesirable attitudes. People who were granted temporary protected status because they are from certain countries deemed unsafe, allowing them to lawfully live and work in the United States, would have that status revoked.

Similarly, numerous people who have been allowed to live in the country temporarily for humanitarian reasons would also lose that status and be kicked out, including tens of thousands of the Afghans who were evacuated amid the 2021 Taliban takeover and allowed to enter the United States. Afghans holding special visas granted to people who helped U.S. forces would be revetted to see if they really did.

And Mr. Trump would try to end birthright citizenship for babies born in the United States to undocumented parents — by proclaiming that policy to be the new position of the government and by ordering agencies to cease issuing citizenship-affirming documents like Social Security cards and passports to them. That policy's legal legitimacy, like nearly all of Mr. Trump's plans, would be virtually certain to end up before the Supreme Court.

In interviews with The New York Times, several Trump advisers gave the most expansive and detailed description yet of Mr. Trump's immigration agenda in a potential second term. In particular, Mr. Trump's campaign referred questions for this article to Stephen Miller, an architect of Mr. Trump's first-term immigration policies who remains close to him and is expected to serve in a senior role in a second administration.

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All of the steps Trump advisers are preparing, Mr. Miller contended in a wide-ranging interview, rely on existing statutes; while the Trump team would likely seek a revamp of immigration laws, the plan was crafted to need no new substantive legislation. And while acknowledging that lawsuits would arise to challenge nearly every one of them, he portrayed the Trump team's daunting array of tactics as a "blitz" designed to overwhelm immigrant-rights lawyers.

"Any activists who doubt President Trump's resolve in the slightest are making a drastic error: Trump will unleash the vast arsenal of federal powers to implement the most spectacular migration crackdown," Mr. Miller said, adding, "The immigration legal activists won't know what's happening."

Todd Schulte, the president of FWD.us, an immigration and criminal justice advocacy group that repeatedly fought the Trump administration, said the Trump team's plans relied on "xenophobic demagoguery" that appeals to his hardest-core political base.

"Americans should understand these policy proposals are an authoritarian, often illegal, agenda that would rip apart nearly every aspect of American life — tanking the economy, violating the basic civil rights of millions of immigrants and native-born Americans alike," Mr. Schulte said.

‘Poisoning the Blood’

Migrants gather outside the Roosevelt Hotel in Midtown Manhattan in August, waiting to be processed. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

Since Mr. Trump left office, the political environment on immigration has moved in his direction. He is also more capable now of exploiting that environment if he is re-elected than he was when he first won election as an outsider.

The ebbing of the Covid-19 pandemic and resumption of travel flows have helped stir a global migrant crisis, with millions of Venezuelans and Central Americans fleeing turmoil and Africans arriving in Latin American countries before continuing their journey north. Amid the record numbers of migrants at the southern border and beyond it in cities like New York and Chicago, voters are frustrated and even some Democrats are calling for tougher action against immigrants and pressuring the White House to better manage the crisis.

Mr. Trump and his advisers see the opening, and now know better how to seize it. The aides Mr. Trump relied upon in the chaotic early days of his first term were sometimes at odds and lacked experience in how to manipulate the levers of federal power. By the end of his first term, cabinet officials and lawyers who sought to restrain some of his actions — like his Homeland Security secretary and chief of staff, John F. Kelly — had been fired, and those who stuck with him had learned much.

In a second term, Mr. Trump plans to install a team that will not restrain him.

Since much of Mr. Trump's first-term immigration crackdown was tied up in the courts, the legal environment has tilted in his favor: His four years of judicial appointments left behind federal appellate courts and a Supreme Court that are far more conservative than the courts that heard challenges to his first-term policies.

The fight over Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals provides an illustration.

DACA is an Obama-era program that shields from deportation and grants work permits to people who were brought unlawfully to the United States as children. Mr. Trump tried to end it, but the Supreme Court blocked him on procedural grounds in June 2020.

Mr. Miller said Mr. Trump would try again to end DACA. And the 5-4 majority of the Supreme Court that blocked the last attempt no longer exists: A few months after the DACA ruling, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died and Mr. Trump replaced her with a sixth conservative, Justice Amy Coney Barrett.

Mr. Trump's rhetoric has more than kept up with his increasingly extreme agenda on immigration.

His stoking of fear and anger toward immigrants — pushing for a border wall and calling Mexicans rapists — fueled his 2016 takeover of the Republican Party. As president, he privately mused about developing a militarized border like Israel's, asked whether migrants crossing the border could be shot in the legs and wanted a proposed border wall topped with flesh-piercing spikes and painted black to burn migrants' skin.

As he has campaigned for the party's third straight presidential nomination, his anti-immigrant tone has only grown harsher. In a recent interview with a right-wing website, Mr. Trump claimed without evidence that foreign leaders were deliberately emptying their "insane asylums" to send the patients across America's southern border as migrants. He said migrants were "poisoning the blood of our country." And at a rally on Wednesday in Florida, he compared them to the fictional serial killer and cannibal Hannibal Lecter, saying, "That's what's coming into our country right now."

Mr. Trump had similarly vowed to carry out mass deportations when running for office in 2016, but the government only managed several hundred thousand removals per year under his presidency, on par with other recent administrations. If they get another opportunity, Mr. Trump and his team are determined to achieve annual numbers in the millions.

Keeping People Out

Migrants wait to be escorted by Border Patrol agents to a processing area in September. Mr. Trump's stoking of fear and anger toward immigrants fueled his 2016 takeover of the Republican Party. Mark Abramson for The New York Times

Mr. Trump's immigration plan is to pick up where he left off and then go much farther. He would not only revive some of the policies that were criticized as draconian during his presidency, many of which the Biden White House ended, but also expand and toughen them.

One example centers on expanding first-term policies aimed at keeping people out of the country. Mr. Trump plans to suspend the nation's refugee program and once again categorically bar visitors from troubled countries, reinstating a version of his ban on travel from several mostly Muslim-majority countries, which President Biden called discriminatory and ended on his first day in office.

Mr. Trump would also use coercive diplomacy to induce other nations to help, including by making cooperation a condition of any other bilateral engagement, Mr. Miller said. For example, a second Trump administration would seek to re-establish an agreement with Mexico that asylum seekers remain there while their claims are processed. (It is not clear that Mexico would agree; a Mexican court has said that deal violated human rights.)

Mr. Trump would also push to revive "safe third country" agreements with several nations in Central America, and try to expand them to Africa, Asia and South America. Under such deals, countries agree to take would-be asylum seekers from specific other nations and let them apply for asylum there instead.

While such arrangements have traditionally only covered migrants who had previously passed through a third country, federal law does not require that limit and a second Trump administration would seek to make those deals without it, in part as a deterrent to migrants making what the Trump team views as illegitimate asylum claims.

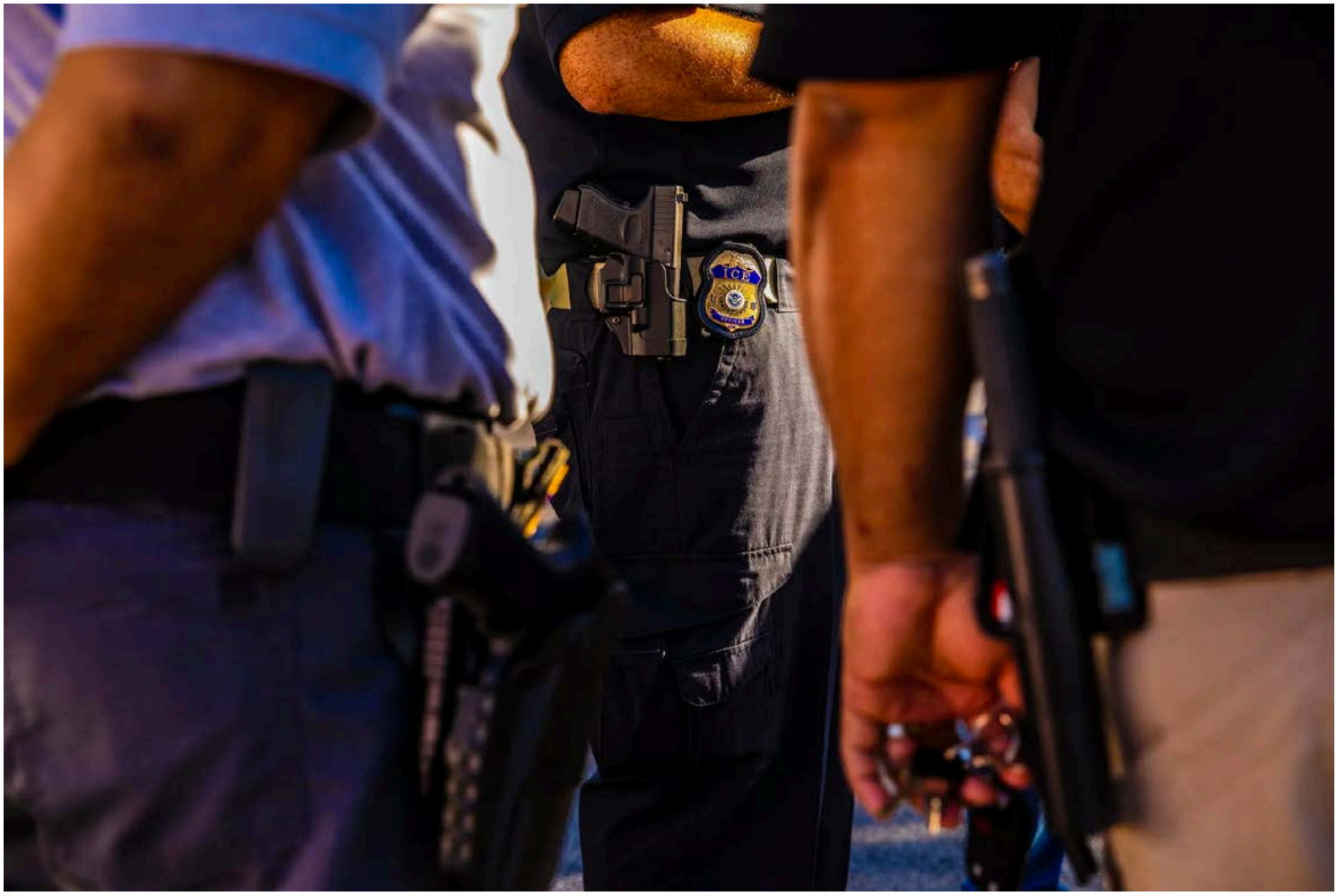
At the same time, Mr. Miller said, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would invoke the public health emergency powers law known as Title 42 to again refuse to hear any asylum claims by people arriving at the southern border. The Trump administration had internally discussed that idea early in Mr. Trump's term, but some cabinet secretaries pushed back, arguing that there was no public health emergency that would legally justify it. The administration ultimately implemented it during the coronavirus pandemic.

Saying the idea has since gained acceptance in practice — Mr. Biden initially kept the policy — Mr. Miller said Mr. Trump would invoke Title 42, citing "severe strains of the flu, tuberculosis, scabies, other respiratory illnesses like R.S.V. and so on, or just a general issue of mass migration being a public health threat and conveying a variety of communicable diseases."

Mr. Trump and his aides have not yet said whether they would re-enact one of the most contentious deterrents to unauthorized immigration that he pursued as president: separating children from their parents, which led to trauma among

migrants and difficulties in reuniting families. When pressed, Mr. Trump has repeatedly declined to rule out reviving the policy. After an outcry over the practice, Mr. Trump ended it in 2018 and a judge later blocked the government from putting it back into effect.

Mass Deportations



Federal immigration-enforcement officers gathered for an arrest operation in May in Pompano Beach, Fla. Saul Martinez for The New York Times

Soon after Mr. Trump announced his 2024 campaign for president last November, he met with Tom Homan, who ran ICE for the first year and a half of the Trump administration and was an early proponent of separating families to deter migrants.

In an interview, Mr. Homan recalled that in that meeting, he "agreed to come back" in a second term and would "help to organize and run the largest deportation operation this country's ever seen."

Trump advisers' vision of abrupt mass deportations would be a recipe for social and economic turmoil, disrupting the housing market and major industries including agriculture and the service sector.

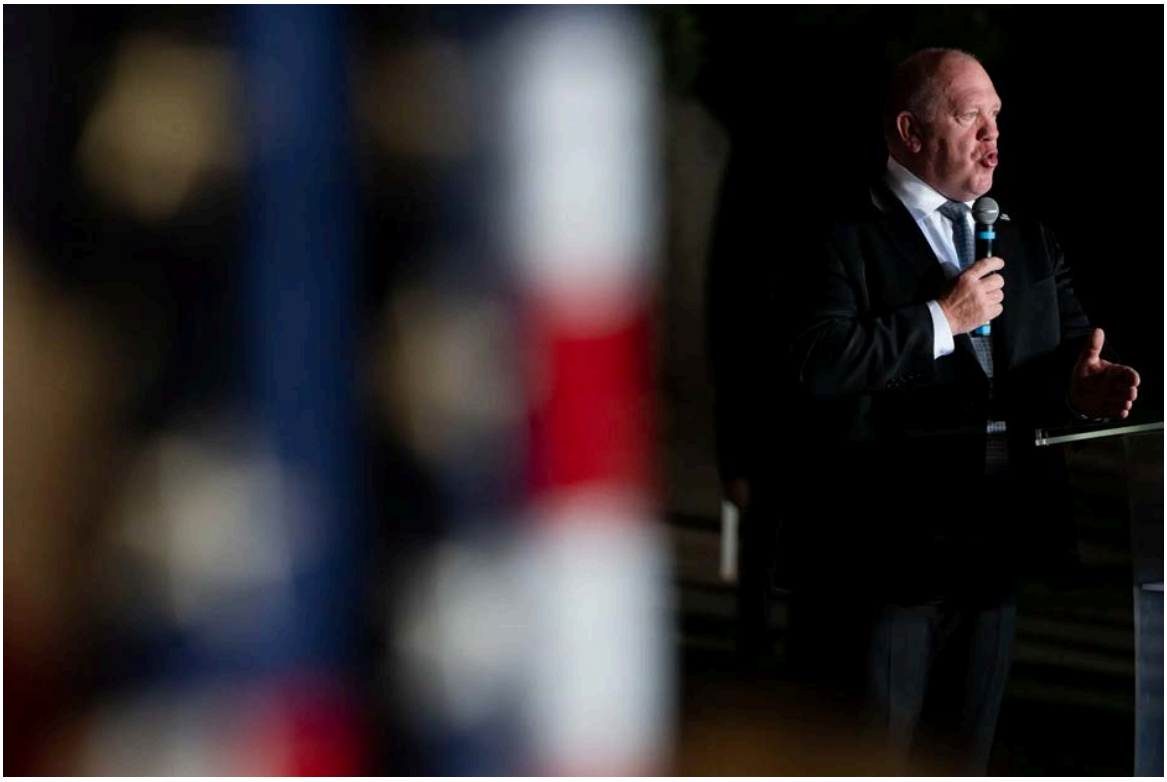
Mr. Miller cast such disruption in a favorable light.

"Mass deportation will be a labor-market disruption celebrated by American workers, who will now be offered higher wages with better benefits to fill these jobs," he said. "Americans will also celebrate the fact that our nation's laws are now being applied equally, and that one select group is no longer magically exempt."

One planned step to overcome the legal and logistical hurdles would be to significantly expand a form of fast-track deportations known as "expedited removal." It denies undocumented immigrants the usual hearings and opportunity to file appeals, which can take months or years — especially when people are not in custody — and has led to a large backlog. A 1996 law says people can be subject to expedited removal for up to two years after arriving, but to date the executive branch has used it more cautiously, swiftly expelling people picked up near the border soon after crossing.

The Trump administration tried to expand the use of expedited removal, but a court blocked it and then the Biden team canceled the expansion. It remains unclear whether the Supreme Court will rule that it is constitutional to use the law against people who have been living for a significant period in the United States and express fear of persecution if sent home.

Mr. Trump has also said he would invoke an archaic law, the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, to expel suspected members of drug cartels and criminal gangs without due process. That law allows for summary deportation of people from countries with which the United States is at war, that have invaded the United States or that have engaged in "predatory incursions."



Tom Homan, who ran ICE for the first year and a half of the Trump administration, said he told Mr. Trump he would "help to organize and run the largest deportation operation this country's ever seen." Rebecca Noble for The New York Times

The Supreme Court has upheld past uses of that law in wartime. But its text seems to require a link to the actions of a foreign government, so it is not clear whether the justices will allow a president to stretch it to encompass drug cartel activity.

More broadly, Mr. Miller said a new Trump administration would shift from the ICE practice of arresting specific people to carrying out workplace raids and other sweeps in public places aimed at arresting scores of unauthorized immigrants at once.

To make the process of finding and deporting undocumented immigrants already living inside the country "radically more quick and efficient," he said, the Trump team would bring in "the right kinds of attorneys and the right kinds of policy thinkers" willing to carry out such ideas.

And because of the magnitude of arrests and deportations being contemplated, they plan to build "vast holding facilities that would function as staging centers" for immigrants as their cases progress and they wait to be flown to other countries.

Mr. Miller said the new camps would likely be built "on open land in Texas near the border."

He said the military would construct them under the authority and control of the Department of Homeland Security. While he cautioned that there were no specific blueprints yet, he said the camps would look professional and similar to other facilities for migrants that have been built near the border.

Such camps could also enable the government to speed up the pace and volume of deportations of undocumented people who have lived in the United States for years and so are not subject to fast-track removal. If pursuing a long-shot effort to win permission to remain in the country would mean staying locked up in the interim, some may give up and voluntarily accept removal without going through the full process.

The use of these camps, Mr. Miller said, would likely be focused more on single adults because the government cannot indefinitely hold children under a longstanding court order known as the Flores settlement. So any families brought to the facilities would have to be moved in and out more quickly, he said.

The Trump administration tried to overturn the Flores settlement, but the Supreme Court did not resolve the matter before Mr. Trump's term ended. Mr. Miller said the Trump team would try again.

To increase the number of agents available for ICE sweeps, Mr. Miller said, officials from other federal law enforcement agencies would be temporarily reassigned, and state National Guard troops and local police officers, at least from willing Republican-led states, would be deputized for immigration control efforts.

While a law known as the Posse Comitatus Act generally forbids the use of the armed forces for law enforcement purposes, another law called the Insurrection Act creates an exception. Mr. Trump would invoke the Insurrection Act at the border, enabling the use of federal troops to apprehend migrants, Mr. Miller said.

"Bottom line," he said, "President Trump will do whatever it takes."

Zolan Kanno-Youngs and Eileen Sullivan contributed reporting. Kitty Bennett contributed research.

Charlie Savage writes about national security and legal policy.

Maggie Haberman is a senior political correspondent reporting on the 2024 presidential campaign, down ballot races across the country and the investigations into former President Donald J. Trump.

Jonathan Swan is a political reporter covering the 2024 presidential election and Donald Trump's campaign.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: Trump's '25 Immigration Plan: Giant Camps, Mass Deportation

Exhibit 6

Trump says he would revoke Temporary Protected Status for Haitian migrants in Springfield if elected

By Rashard Rose and Kate Sullivan, CNN

3 min read · Published 1:06 AM EDT, Thu October 3, 2024

A man walks through downtown Springfield, Ohio, on September 16. Jessie Wardarski/AP

(CNN) — Former President Donald Trump on Wednesday said that he would revoke Temporary

Protected Status for the Haitian migrants in Sp gfield, Ohio, and deport them if he is reelected in November.

“You have to remove the people, and you have to bring them back to their own country. They are, in my opinion, it’s not legal,” Trump said in an interview with NewsNation.

Trump, asked if he would revoke the migrants’ Temporary Protected Status, said, “Absolutely. I’d revoke it, and I’d bring them back to their country.”

The former president and his allies have continued to spread misinformation about Haitian migrants in the city of Springfield.

Many Haitians came into the country under a Biden-Harris administration parole program that gives permission to enter to vetted participants with US sponsors. And many have “Temporary Protected Status,” as CNN has previously reported, which shields them from deportation and allows them to live and work in the country for a limited period of time.

Some received that protection after the Biden-Harris administration expanded the number of Haitians eligible in June. Others have been living in the US with Temporary Protected Status since before the Biden-Harris administration.

RELATED ARTICLE
Haitians fled their country for peace. Now, many are having it disrupted in Springfield

Trump, pressed in the Wednesday interview on what would happen if Haiti refused to receive them, said: “They will,” without providing additional details.

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“Well, they’re going to receive them, they’ll receive them. If I bring them back, they’re going to

receive them," Trump said.

During the Trump administration, the Department of Homeland Security was aggressive in ending a number of temporary protected status designations that had been on the books, in some cases, for decades.

Trump in recent weeks has spread debunked conspiracy theories about Haitian migrants eating pets in Springfield, including at last month's presidential debate, as part of his efforts to stoke fears about immigrants and push his hardline immigration policy proposals, including mass deportations.

From the September 10 debate through September 20, Springfield received more than 35 threats of violence, including bomb threats, according to Springfield Mayor Rob Rue. The threats prompted evacuations of elementary schools and supermarkets, lockdowns of hospitals and a transition to remote learning at several local colleges.

Rue, Ohio Republican Gov. Mike DeWine and other local officials have decried the rumors as false and destructive to the community. A staffer for Sen. JD Vance, Trump's running mate who helped to propel the misinformation, was told early last month by Springfield City Manager Bryan Heck that "there was no verifiable evidence or reports to show" that the rumors are true, CNN reported.

The city of Springfield notes on its website that approximately 12,000 to 15,000 immigrants live in Clark County — which has a population of roughly 136,000 — and that Haitian immigrants are there legally.

Haitian workers play a significant role in Springfield's economy, filling much-needed jobs, the city has said. DeWine has acknowledged the city was having some issues adjusting to the influx of mostly Haitian immigrants, but he said in an interview last month they were working to deal with the issues and called the Haitian immigrants "positive influences" on the community.

CNN's Jack Forrest, Daniel Dale, Danya Gainor, Catherine E. Shoichet, Elizabeth Wolfe, Melissa Alonso, Jeff Winter and Chelsea Bailey contributed to this report.

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Exhibit 7

DECLARATION OF AARON REICHLIN-MELNICK

1. I, Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, make the following declaration based on my personal knowledge and declare under the penalty of perjury pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746 that the following is true and correct.

2. I am a Senior Fellow at the American Immigration Council ("Immigration Council"), a nonprofit and non-partisan organization whose mission includes the use of facts to educate the public on the important and enduring contributions that immigrants make to America.

3. As a Senior Fellow at the Immigration Council, I have since 2018 tracked and analyzed trends in Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") policies and data. I have testified before Congress seven times between 2021 and 2025 on topics which rely on my knowledge of DHS immigration data and publications.[1] I have also previously submitted expert declarations analyzing government-produced immigration statistics.[2]

4. Since 2018, I have been tasked with maintaining and updating the American Immigration Council's fact sheet on Temporary Protected Status ("TPS"),[3] which has required me to read and analyze every TPS designation and redesignation, extension, or termination in the past seven years. As part of my policy work, I have also analyzed and tracked the size of the TPS population through regular analysis of the relevant U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Data.[4] In

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[1] *See, e.g.*, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement, Testimony of Aaron Reichlin-Melnick for hearing on Presidential Power to Secure the Border (Mar. 24, 2024), *available at* https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU01/20240307/116925/HMTG-118-JU01-Wstate-Reichlin-MelnickA-20240307.pdf.

[2] *See, e.g.*, *Innovation Law Lab v. Wolf*, 3:19-cv-00807-RS (N.D. Cal. filed Feb. 14, 2019), *Padilla v. ICE*, No. 2:18-cv-00928-MJP (W.D. Wash. filed June 25, 2018), *East Bay Sanctuary Coalition II v. Wolf*, 3:19-cv-04073-JST (N.D. Cal filed July 16, 2019); *Miot v. Trump*, 1:25-cv-02471, ECF No. 26-7 (D.D.C. filed July 30, 2025).

[3] American Immigration Council, "Temporary Protected Status: An Overview," https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Temporary-Protected-Status-An-Overview-0925.pdf, *last updated* Sept. 25, 2025.

[4] *See, e.g.*, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Form I-821, Application for Temporary Protected Status Receipts, Approvals, Denials, and Pending by Country of Designation (Fiscal Year 2025, Q3)," Oct. 8, 2025, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/i821_radp_fy2025_q3.xlsx.

preparation for this declaration I have reviewed every prior TPS designation and re-designation, extension, and termination, from 1990 through present.

5. My review of the 35-year history of TPS finds that before 2025, the sole rationale cited to justify termination of TPS has been an end to the temporary country conditions which authorized the initial designation. In 22 Federal Register Termination Notices from 1992 through 2018 that I reviewed, no Secretary or Attorney General has ever listed national interest as a ground for termination.

6. In each of the 22 terminations of TPS from 1992 through 2018 that I reviewed, the Secretary or Attorney General has explained that the termination was an informed decision resulting from the interagency review process of the country conditions underlying the initial designation. This review determined whether there remained an armed conflict, environmental disaster (or other prerequisite under INA § 244(b)(1)(B)), or other "extraordinary and temporary conditions" in the foreign state.

7. References to "public interest" in Termination Notices prior to 2025 are rare and cursory. In total, the phrase is referenced in just three Termination Notices out of 22.

8. The first Termination Notice which references "national interest" is the June 1997 termination of TPS for Rwanda, and comes within a single sentence of boilerplate declaring compliance with the consultation requirement of INA § 244(b)(3).

9. The second reference is contained in a March 1998 Termination Notice for TPS for Liberia, which contains substantively identical boilerplate.[5] Following a renewed outbreak of hostilities

[5] *Compare* Termination of Designation of Rwanda Under Temporary Protected Status Program After Final 6-Month Extension, 62 Fed. Reg. 33443 (June 19, 1997) ("pursuant to section 244(b)(3) of the Act, I have had consultations with the appropriate agencies of the U.S. Government concerning (a) the conditions in Rwanda; and (b) whether permitting nationals of Rwanda (and aliens having no nationality who last habitually resided in Rwanda) to remain temporarily in the United States is contrary to the national interest of the United States") *with* Termination of Designation of Liberia Under the Temporary Protected Status Program, 64 Fed. Reg. 41463 (July 30, 1999) (same, substituting Liberia).

in Liberia, that termination was mooted by September 1998 redesignation which does not reference national interest.[6] This was followed by a second Termination Notice in July 1999 which also did not reference national interest.[7]

10. The third reference occurs in a 2004 Termination and Redesignation Notice for Liberia. The Termination ends a 2002 designation of TPS under INA § 244(b)(3)(A) for the existence of an "ongoing armed conflict." Secretary Ridge first determined that the peace process following the Second Liberian Civil War had brought an end to the "armed conflict," which required termination of the 2002 designation. He then simultaneously re-designated TPS under INA § 244(b)(3)(C), and in so doing recited the statutory factors for a initial grant of TPS, including that the new grant was not contrary to national interest.

11. Similar references to the phrase "national interest" in designations, redesignations, and extensions are equally cursory. Until 2025, no Attorney General or Secretary has explained their conclusion that it is not "contrary to the national interest" to permit TPS beneficiaries to remain temporarily in the United States," or ever justified a termination on national interest grounds.

12. By contrast, Termination Notices, as well as extensions and designations, routinely provide a detailed explanation as to the existence (or lack thereof) of the country conditions which justify TPS. A comprehensive list of each TPS termination prior to 2025, as well as the dispositive rationale provided for termination in each case, is below.

a. **Kuwait (1991-1992)**: "I find after consultation with the appropriate agencies of the United States Government, that the extraordinary and temporary conditions found to exist in Kuwait on March 27, 1991, are not presently in existence, in that

[6] Redesignation of Liberia Under Temporary Protected Status Program, 63 Fed. Reg. 51958 (Sept. 29, 1998).
[7] Termination of Designation of Liberia Under the Temporary Protected Status Program, 64 Fed. Reg. 41463 (July 30, 1999).

substantial progress has been made toward the rebuilding of Kuwait society so that the temporary impediments to safe return posed on March 27, 1991, by the immediate aftermath of the Iraqi occupation and the subsequent military conflict no longer remain."[8]

b. **Lebanon (1991-1993)**: "I find, after consultation with the appropriate agencies of the United States Government, that the extraordinary and temporary conditions found to exist in Lebanon on March 21, 1991, and on January 20, 1992, are not presently in existence."[9]

c. Rwanda (1994-1997): "As a result of these consultations, I have determined that Rwanda no longer continues to meet the conditions for designation of TPS under section 244(b)(1) of the Act. … While other avenues of immigration relief, including asylum, remain available to Rwandans in the United States who believe that their particular circumstances make return to Rwanda unsafe, we have determined that TPS is no longer appropriate for Rwandans in general."[10]

d. Liberia (1991-1999):

i. 1998 initial termination: "As a result of these consultations, I have determined that Liberia no longer continues to meet the conditions for designation of TPS under section 244(b)(1) of the Act. … In view of the Department of State's recommendation for termination, I have determined

[8] Termination of Designation of Kuwait under Temporary Protected Status Program, 57 Fed. Reg. 2930 (Jan. 24, 1992).
[9] Termination of Designation of Lebanon Under Temporary Protected Status Program, 58 Fed. Reg. 7477 (Feb. 8, 1993).
[10] Termination of Designation of Rwanda Under Temporary Protected Status Program After Final 6-Month Extension, 62 Fed. Reg. 33443 (June 19, 1997).

that TPS is no longer appropriate for Liberia in general."[11] Following a renewed outbreak of civil unrest, this termination did not take effect.

ii. 1999 final termination: "the Attorney General has determined that conditions in Liberia no longer support a TPS designation."[12]

e. Guinea-Bissau (1999-2000): "Based upon a more recent review of conditions within Guinea-Bissau by the Departments of Justice and State, the Attorney General finds that conditions no longer support a TPS designation. … I have consulted with the appropriate agencies of Government concerning conflict and security conditions in Guinea- Bissau. 8 U.S.C. 1254a(b)(3). Based on these consultations, I have determined that Guinea-Bissau no longer meets the conditions for designation of TPS under section 244(b)(1) of the Act."[13]

f. Kosovo (1998-2000): "Based upon a more recent review of conditions within the Kosovo Province by the Departments of Justice and State, the Attorney General finds that conditions in the Kosovo Province no longer support a TPS designation. … I have consulted with the appropriate agencies of Government concerning conflict and security conditions in the Kosovo Province. 8 U.S.C. 1254a(b)(3). Based on these consultations, I have determined that the Kosovo Province no longer meets the conditions for designation of TPS under section 244(b)(1) of the Act."[14]

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[11] Termination of Designation of Liberia Under Temporary Protected Status Program After Final 6-Month Extension, 63 Fed. Reg. 15437 (Mar. 31, 1998).
[12] Termination of Designation of Liberia Under the Temporary Protected Status Program, 64 Fed. Reg. 41463 (July 30, 1999).
[13] Six-Month Extension and Termination of Designation of Guinea-Bissau Under the Temporary Protected Status Program, 65 Fed. Reg. 15016 (Mar. 20, 2000).
[14] Termination of the Province of Kosovo in the Republic of Serbia in the State of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro) Under the Temporary Protected Status Program, 65 Fed. Reg. 33356 (May 23, 2000).

g. **Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-2001)**: "I have consulted with the appropriate agencies of Government concerning conflict and security conditions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. 8 U.S.C. 1254a(b)(3). Based on these consultations, I have determined that Bosnia-Herzegovina no longer meets the conditions for designation of TPS under section 233(b)(1) of the Act"[15]

h. **Angola (2000-2003)**: "Based upon a recent review of conditions within Angola by the Departments of Justice and State, the Attorney General finds that conditions in Angola no longer support a TPS designation. … For the foregoing reasons, the Attorney General determines that Angolan TPS beneficiaries may return safely to Angola at this time and, therefore, terminates the TPS designation for Angola."[16]

i. **Liberia (2002-2004)**: "Based upon this review, the Secretary of DHS, after consultation with appropriate government agencies, finds that the conditions that prompted designation of Liberia for TPS are no longer met. 8 U.S.C. 1254a(b)(3)(A) and (B). The armed conflict has ceased."[17]

j. **Montserrat (1997-2005)**: "Based upon this review, the Secretary of DHS, after consultation with appropriate government agencies, finds that Montserrat no longer continues to meet the conditions for designation under the TPS program. 8 U.S.C. 1254a(b)(3)(A). Because the volcanic eruptions are unlikely to cease in the

[15] Termination of Bosnia-Herzegovina Under the Temporary Protected Status Program, 65 Fed. Reg. 52789 (Aug. 30, 2000).
[16] Termination of Designation of Angola Under the Temporary Protected Status Program, 68 Fed. Reg. 3896 (Jan. 27, 2003).
[17] Termination and Re-Designation of Liberia for Temporary Protected Status, 69 Fed. Reg. 52297 (Aug. 25, 2004).

foreseeable future, they can no longer be considered 'temporary' as required by Congress when it enacted the TPS statute."[18]

k. **Liberia (2004-2007)**: "Based upon this review, the Secretary, after consultation with appropriate Government agencies, determined that the extraordinary and temporary conditions that prompted the re-designation of Liberia for TPS no longer prevent Liberians (or aliens having no nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia) from returning to their home country in safety, and that the designation of Liberia for TPS should be terminated."[19]

l. **Burundi (1997-2007)**: "Based upon this review, the Secretary finds, after consultation with the appropriate Government agencies, that the armed conflict is no longer ongoing, that the extraordinary and temporary conditions that prompted the designation and re-designation of Burundi for TPS no longer prevent Burundians (or aliens having no nationality who last habitually resided in Burundi) from returning in safety, and that the designation of Burundi for TPS should be terminated."[20]

m. **Guinea (2014-2017)**: "Based on the reviews and after consulting with DOS, the Secretary has determined that the termination of the TPS designation of Guinea, after a 6-month extension of TPS benefits for orderly transition, is required because the extraordinary and temporary conditions that prompted Guinea's

[18] Termination of the Designation of Montserrat Under the Temporary Protected Status Program; Extension of Employment Authorization Documentation, 69 Fed. Reg. 40642 (July 6, 2004).
[19] Termination of the Designation of Liberia for Temporary Protected Status; Automatic Extension of Employment Authorization Documentation for Liberia TPS Beneficiaries, 71 Fed. Reg. 55000 (Sept. 20, 2006).
[20] Termination of the Designation of Burundi for Temporary Protected Status; Automatic Extension of Employment Authorization Documentation for Burundi TPS Beneficiaries, 72 Fed. Reg. 61172 (Oct. 29, 2007).

designation for TPS have substantially resolved and no longer prevent nationals of Guinea from returning in safety."[21]

n. **Sierra Leone (2014-2017)**: "Based on the reviews and after consulting with DOS, the Secretary has determined that the termination of the TPS designation of Sierra Leone, after a 6-month extension of TPS benefits for orderly transition, is required because the extraordinary and temporary conditions that prompted Sierra Leone's designation for TPS have substantially resolved and no longer prevent nationals of Sierra Leone from returning in safety."[22]

o. **Liberia (2014-2017)**: "Based on the reviews and after consulting with DOS, the Secretary has determined that the termination of the TPS designation of Liberia, after a 6-month extension of TPS benefits for orderly transition, is required because the extraordinary and temporary conditions that prompted Liberia's designation for TPS have substantially resolved and no longer prevent nationals of Liberia from returning in safety."[23]

p. **Sudan (1997-2018, termination blocked in court):** "Based on this review and consultation, the Secretary has determined that conditions in Sudan have sufficiently improved for TPS purposes. Termination of the TPS designation of Sudan is required because it no longer meets the statutory conditions for designation. The ongoing armed conflict no longer prevents the return of nationals of Sudan to all regions of Sudan without posing a serious threat to their personal

[21] Six-Month Extension of Temporary Protected Status Benefits for Orderly Transition Before Termination of Guinea's Designation for Temporary Protected Status, 81 Fed. Reg. 66064 (Sept. 26, 2016).
[22] Six-Month Extension of Temporary Protected Status Benefits for Orderly Transition Before Termination of Liberia's Designation for Temporary Protected Status, 81 Fed. Reg. 66059 (Sept. 26, 2016).
[23] Six-Month Extension of Temporary Protected Status Benefits for Orderly Transition Before Termination of Sierra Leone's Designation for Temporary Protected Status, 81 Fed. Reg. 66054 (Sept. 26, 2016).

safety. Further, extraordinary and temporary conditions within Sudan no longer prevent nationals from returning in safety to all regions of Sudan."[24]

q. **Nicaragua (1998-2018, termination blocked in court):** "Based on the review, including input received from other relevant U.S. Government agencies, the Secretary has determined that conditions for Nicaragua's 1999 designation for TPS on the basis of environmental disaster due to the damage caused by Hurricane Mitch are no longer met."[25]

r. **El Salvador (2001-2019, termination blocked in court)**: "Based on the review, including input received from other appropriate U.S. Government agencies, including the Department of State, the Secretary of Homeland Security has determined that the conditions supporting El Salvador's 2001 designation for TPS on the basis of environmental disaster due to the damage caused by the 2001 earthquakes are no longer met."[26]

s. **Haiti (2010-2019, termination blocked in court)**: "Based on the review, including input received from other appropriate U.S. Government agencies, the Acting Secretary of Homeland Security determined on November 20, 2017 that the conditions for Haiti's designation for TPS—on the basis of 'extraordinary and temporary conditions' relating to the 2010 earthquake that prevented Haitian nationals from returning in safety—are no longer met."[27]

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[24] Termination of the Designation of Sudan for Temporary Protected Status, 82 Fed. Reg. 47228 (Oct. 11, 2017).
[25] Termination of the Designation of Nicaragua for Temporary Protected Status, 82 Fed. Reg. 59636 (Dec. 15, 2017).
[26] Termination of the Designation of El Salvador for Temporary Protected Status, 83 Fed. Reg. 2654 (Jan. 18, 2018).
[27] Termination of the Designation of Haiti for Temporary Protected Status, 83 Fed. Reg. 2648 (Jan. 18, 2018).

t. **Nepal (2015-2019, termination blocked in court)**: "Based on the review—which considered input received from other appropriate U.S. Government agencies, including the Department of State—the Secretary of Homeland Security has determined that the conditions supporting Nepal's 2015 designation for TPS on the basis of environmental disaster due to the April 25, 2015 earthquake are no longer met."[28]

u. **Honduras (1998-2020, termination blocked in court)**: "Based on the review, which considered input received from other appropriate U.S. Government agencies, including the Department of State, the Secretary of Homeland Security has determined that the conditions supporting Honduras's 1999 designation for TPS on the basis of environmental disaster due to the damage caused by Hurricane Mitch in October 1998 are no longer met."[29]

10/16/2025

DATE:

AARON REICHLIN-MELNICK

[28] Termination of the Designation of Nepal for Temporary Protected Status, 83 Fed. Reg. 23705 (May 22, 2018).
[29] Termination of the Designation of Honduras for Temporary Protected Status, 83 Fed. Reg. 26074 (June 5, 2018).

Exhibit 8

← **Post**

Secretary Kristi Noem
@Sec_Noem

Today, I am revoking Joe Biden's extension of Venezuelan Temporary Protected Status that Secretary Mayorkas forced through at the very end of the administration.

This program was abused, exploited, and politicized. No more immigration schemes that make Americans less safe.

6:57 PM · Jan 29, 2025 · **2.4M** Views

1.7K 18K 102K 1.1K

Exhibit 9

NOTICE

Due to the lapse in federal funding, this website will not be actively managed. Click here for more information.

Secretary Noem Rescinds Previous Administration's Extension of Haiti's Temporary Protected Status

Release Date: February 20, 2025

"President Trump and I are returning TPS to its original status: temporary." - Secretary Noem

WASHINGTON – Today, Secretary Noem vacated a decision by the previous administration to extend Haiti's Temporary Protect Status (TPS) by 18 months. As part of this move, Haiti's TPS will end on August 3, 2025, unless extended. This is part of President Trump's promise to rescind policies that were magnets for illegal immigration and inconsistent with the law.

TPS is a type of immigration status available to nationals of certain designated countries that allows aliens, **even if they entered the country illegally**, the ability to reside **temporarily** in the U.S. The Secretary of Homeland Security is authorized to designate a foreign country for TPS if there is an ongoing armed conflict, an environmental disaster, or extraordinary and temporary conditions.

For decades the TPS system has been exploited and abused. For example, Haiti has been designated for TPS since 2010. The data shows each extension of the country's TPS designation allowed more Haitian nationals, even those who entered the U.S. illegally, to qualify for legal protected status.

In May of 2011, DHS estimated that **57,000** Haitians were eligible to register for TPS. In August 2021, DHS estimated that **155,000** Haitians were eligible under the new designation. And by July 2024, the estimate skyrocketed to **520,694**.

A statement from a DHS spokeswoman:

"Biden and Mayorkas attempted to tie the hands of the Trump administration by extending Haiti's Temporary Protected Status by 18 months—far longer than justified or necessary.

"We are returning integrity to the TPS system, which has been abused and exploited by illegal aliens for decades. President Trump and Secretary Noem are returning TPS to its original status: temporary."

Last month, Secretary Noem similarly rescinded the previous administration's Venezuela TPS extension.

Topics

BORDER SECURITY (/TOPICS/BORDER-SECURITY) SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY (/TOPICS/SECRETARY-HOMELAND-SECURITY)
IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (/TOPICS/IMMIGRATION-AND-CUSTOMS-ENFORCEMENT)

Keywords

BORDER SECURITY (/KEYWORDS/BORDER-SECURITY) IMMIGRATION (/KEYWORDS/IMMIGRATION) SECRETARY KRISTI NOEM (/KEYWORDS/SECRETARY-KRISTI-NOEM)

Last Updated: 03/21/2025

Exhibit 10

Afghanistan Travel Advisory

Travel Advisory January 13, 2025

Afghanistan - Level 4: Do Not Travel

U H K D C T

Reissued after periodic review with updates to reflect the security environment, immigration information, and availability of medical care.

Do not travel to Afghanistan due to **civil unrest, crime, terrorism, risk of wrongful detention, kidnapping, and limited health facilities.**

Country Summary: The U.S. Embassy in Kabul suspended operations in 2021. The U.S. government is not able to provide routine or emergency consular services to U.S. citizens in Afghanistan.

Multiple terrorist groups are active in Afghanistan and U.S. citizens are targets of kidnapping and hostage-taking. The Taliban have harassed and detained aid and humanitarian workers. The activities of foreigners may be viewed with suspicion, and reasons for detention may be unclear. Even if you are registered with the appropriate authorities to conduct business, the risk of detention is high.

The Department has determined there is a risk of wrongful detention of U.S. nationals in Afghanistan. Additionally, Afghan-U.S. citizens and U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) who previously supported the United States (for example, as an interpreter) in Afghanistan may be targeted for detention.

The Taliban do not regularly permit the United States to conduct welfare checks on U.S. citizens in detention, including by phone. Detention can be lengthy. While in detention, U.S. citizens have limited or no access to medical attention and may be subject to physical abuse.

U.S. citizens should not travel to Afghanistan for any reason, including to accompany eligible family members for relocation. U.S. citizens or LPRs do not have to be physically present in Afghanistan for their

qualifying family members to receive such assistance. For further information on how to assist your family members with the immigrant visa application process or to request relocation assistance for family, please refer to our website.

U.S. citizens in Afghanistan are urged to depart immediately via commercial means if possible. U.S. citizens who are seeking U.S. government assistance to depart should email complete biographic details and contact information (email and phone number), as well as U.S. passport number, to AfghanistanACS@state.gov.

Basic medical care is available in major Afghan cities such as Kabul but is limited in rural areas.

Read the country information page for additional information on travel to Afghanistan.

If you choose to disregard the Travel Advisory and travel to Afghanistan:

- Review your personal security plans.
- Be aware of your surroundings and local security developments at all times.
- Keep a low profile.
- Monitor local media for breaking events and be prepared to adjust your plans.
- Keep travel documents up to date and easily accessible.
- Notify a trusted person of your travel and movement plans.
- Make contingency plans to leave when it is safe to do so that do not rely on U.S. government assistance.
- Draft a will and designate appropriate insurance beneficiaries and/or power of attorney.
- Discuss a plan with loved ones regarding care/custody of children, pets, property, belongings, non-liquid assets (collections, artwork, etc.), funeral wishes, etc.

- Leave DNA samples with your medical provider in case it is necessary for your family to access them.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive security updates and ensure you can be located in an emergency.
- Follow the Department of State on Facebook and Twitter/X.
- Consider the risks involved in traveling while possessing dual U.S. - Afghan nationality.
- Visit our website for Travel to High-Risk Areas.
- Read the Country Security Report For Afghanistan.
- Prepare a contingency plan for emergency situations. Review the Traveler's Checklist.
- Visit the CDC page for the latest Travel Health Information related to your travel.

Exhibit 11

Cameroon Travel Advisory

Travel Advisory | Cameroon - Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution | UHKO CT

Updated to reflect the addition of health and civil unrest indicators.

Exercise increased caution in Cameroon due to **armed violence**, **civil unrest**, **crime**, **health**, **kidnapping**, and **terrorism**. Some areas have increased risk. Read the entire Travel Advisory.

Do Not Travel to:

- Northwest and Southwest Regions due to **armed violence**, **crime**, and **kidnapping**.
- North Region and parts of East and Adamawa Regions due to **crime** and **kidnapping.**
- Far North Region due to **crime**, **kidnapping**, and **terrorism.**

Country Summary: Violent crime, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, and carjacking, is common throughout Cameroon, especially in the regions listed above. Local police lack the resources to respond effectively to serious criminal incidents.

Civil unrest is common, with the potential for political violence.

Access to health care is limited.

The U.S. government has limited ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens in North, Far North, Northwest, Southwest, and parts of Adamawa and East Regions of Cameroon due to current official travel restrictions..

Read the Country Information Page for additional information on travel to Cameroon.

If you decide to travel to Cameroon:

- Do not display signs of wealth, such as expensive watches, handbags, or jewelry.
- Monitor local media for breaking events and be prepared to adjust your plans.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country, help the Embassy contact you in an emergency, and help family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency.
- Follow the Department of State on Facebook and X/Twitter.
- Review the Country Security Report for Cameroon.
- Prepare a contingency plan for emergency situations. Review the Traveler's Checklist.
- Visit the CDC page for the latest Travel Health Information related to your travel.

North, Far North, Northwest, and Southwest Regions, and parts of East and Adamawa Regions – Level 4: Do Not Travel

Violent crime, including kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, assault, and carjacking is a serious concern in Cameroon, especially in these areas.

In the Adamawa Region north of the capital, Ngaoundere, and East Region, there is a heightened criminal threat within 20 kilometers of the border with the Central African Republic.

Visit our website for Travel to High-Risk Areas.

Far North Region– Level 4: Do Not Travel

In the Far North Region, terrorists may attack with no warning, targeting local facilities and places frequented by Westerners.

Visit our website for Travel to High-Risk Areas.

Northwest and Southwest Regions – Level 4: Do Not Travel

Travel

In Northwest and Southwest Regions, armed clashes between separatists and government forces, and other acts of violence, including violent criminality, kidnapping for ransom, sexual assault, arson, roadside ambushes and robberies, use of improvised explosive devices, illegitimate detentions, and murder have occurred. Security force operations, curfews and movement restrictions, and attacks by armed militants can take place at any time throughout these regions, including in urban areas. Ongoing violence has led to a breakdown in order and a significant decline in public services, including medical resources in large areas of both regions.

Visit our website for Travel to High-Risk Areas.

Exhibit 12

Nepal Travel Advisory

Travel Advisory
September 11, 2025

Nepal - Level 3: Reconsider Travel

Reconsider travel to Nepal due to **civil unrest.**

Advisory summary

Large protests and significant demonstrations in Nepal on September 8-9, 2025, turned violent.

- These events caused deaths and injuries. Local authorities have declared curfews in major cities like Kathmandu and Pokhara.
- Additional protests and curfews could happen with little warning.
- Follow local authorities' instructions. Stay away from areas with protests, unrest, or large gatherings.

Emergency services

Emergency services in Nepal have limited ability to respond to personal emergencies. Their response may be delayed. Some hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara were set on fire during the unrest.

- Check with your hotel, airline, or tour operator for the latest updates before traveling.
- Make sure to confirm your travel plans with your airline before departing for the airport.

U.S. citizens with emergencies:

- Dial 888-407-4747 from the United States.
- Dial 202-501-4444 from Nepal or abroad.
- Email: KathmanduACS@state.gov

The U.S. government has limited ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens in Nepal.

- **If you decide to travel to Nepal:** Have a plan

to leave in an emergency that does not depend on U.S. government help. Review our information on Crisis and Evacuations.

- Check local media for breaking news. Be prepared to adjust your plans.
- Prepare to evacuate hotels at a moment's notice.
- Follow the instructions of local authorities.
- Avoid demonstrations and crowds.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to get important updates and alerts from the U.S. embassy or consulate. Enrolling helps the U.S. embassy or consulate contact you or your emergency contact in an emergency.
- Review the Country Security Report for Nepal.
- Whether you're a first time or frequent traveler, use the International Travel Checklist.
- We highly recommend that you buy travel insurance before you travel. Check with your travel insurance provider about evacuation assistance, medical insurance, and trip cancelation coverage.
- Review our information on Travel to High-Risk Areas.

Exhibit 13

Haiti Travel Advisory

Travel Advisory
July 15, 2025

Haiti - Level 4: Do Not Travel

T U H K C

Reissued after addition of terrorism indicator.

Do not travel to Haiti due to **kidnapping**, **crime**, **terrorist activity, civil unrest**, and **limited health care**. Read the entire Travel Advisory.

Country Summary: In July 2023, the Department of State ordered nonemergency U.S. government employees and their family members to leave the country due to security risks.

Haiti has been under a State of Emergency since March 2024. Crimes involving firearms are common in Haiti. They include robbery, carjackings, sexual assault, and kidnappings for ransom. Do not travel to Haiti for any reason.

Kidnapping

Kidnapping is widespread. U.S. citizens have been victims and have been hurt or killed. Kidnappers may:

- Plan with precision or target victims during unexpected times.
- Target and attack convoys.
- Demand ransoms. U.S. victims' families have paid tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars to rescue their family members.

Demonstrations

Protests, demonstrations, and roadblocks are common and unpredictable. They often damage or destroy infrastructure and can become violent. Mob killings and public assaults are on the rise. People are targeting those they think have committed crimes.

Toussaint Louverture International Airport

Exchanges of gunfire with criminal gangs, organized

crime, and terrorists have occurred in the neighborhood just outside the Port-au-Prince International Airport (PAP). Travelers are sometimes followed and violently attacked and robbed shortly after leaving the airport, or while entering or leaving hotels in Port-au-Prince. U.S. commercial flights do not currently operate to and from Port-au-Prince. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) prohibiting U.S. air carrier flights to Port-au-Prince due to the ongoing instability. Please check FAA's website for more information.

Crime and Terrorism

There is widespread violent crime and organized crime in the country, and local law enforcement has limited ability to respond to serious crimes. Violent crime is rampant in Haiti, especially in Port-au-Prince, where the expansion of gang, organized crime, and terrorist activity has led to widespread violence, kidnappings, and sexual assault. The escalation of clashes between armed groups has led to a rise in sporadic gunfire incidents. There is a substantial risk of being struck by stray bullets, even for individuals not directly involved in the violence.

There is risk of terrorist violence, including attacks and other violent gang activity in Haiti. There are gangs that are designated as terrorist organizations present in Haiti.

Transportation and Travel

Do not cross the border by land between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. There is a risk of kidnapping and violence. These dangers are present on roads from major Haitian cities to the border. The U.S. Embassy cannot help you enter the Dominican Republic by air, land, or sea. U.S. citizens who cross into the Dominican Republic at an unofficial crossing may face high immigration fines when they try to leave.

The U.S. Coast Guard has concerns about security in the ports of Haiti. Until those are addressed, the Coast Guard advises mariners and passengers traveling through the ports of Haiti to exercise caution.

Limited Emergency Response

The U.S. government is very limited in its ability to help U.S. citizens in Haiti. Local police and first responders often do not have enough resources. This limits their ability to respond to emergencies or serious crimes. Shortages of gasoline, electricity, medicine, and medical supplies are common throughout the country. Public and private clinics, as well as hospitals, have untrained staff and lack basic resources. Medical providers almost always require upfront payment in cash.

U.S. government employees must follow a nightly curfew. Families of Embassy personnel are not allowed to accompany them on their assignment. Embassy personnel cannot travel by foot in Port-au-Prince. U.S. government employees working in Haiti must obtain special permission to travel outside the embassy compound due to security risks. They are also prohibited from:

- Using any kind of public transportation or taxis.
- Visiting banks and using ATMs.
- Driving at night.
- Traveling anywhere after dark.

Read the country information page for additional information on travel to Haiti.

If you decide to travel to Haiti:

- Avoid demonstrations and crowds.
- Check local media for breaking events. Be prepared to adjust your plans.
- Arrange airport transfers and hotels in advance, or have your host meet you upon arrival.
- Keep travel documents up to date and easily accessible.
- Have evacuation plans that do not rely on U.S. government assistance.

U.S. government assistance.

- Bring enough supply of over the counter and prescription medicines.
- If you are being followed as you leave the airport, drive to the nearest police station immediately.
- Develop a communication plan with family or your employer or host organization (if you are traveling on business). This is so they can monitor your safety and location as you travel through high-risk areas. Specify how you will confirm you are safe (text, calls, etc.), how often, and who you will contact first to share the information.
- Choose one family member to serve as the point of contact. They will communicate with kidnappers or hostage-takers, media, U.S. and host country government agencies, and members of Congress if you are kidnapped or taken hostage.
- Establish a proof of life protocol with your loved ones. This is so that if you are taken hostage, your loved ones can know specific questions (and answers) to ask the hostage-takers to be sure that you are alive (and to rule out a hoax).
- Draft a will and designate appropriate insurance beneficiaries and/or power of attorney, put your financial affairs in order.
- Discuss a plan with loved ones regarding care/custody of children, pets, property, belongings, non-liquid assets (collections, artwork, etc.), funeral wishes, etc.
- Leave DNA samples with your medical provider in case it is necessary for your family to access them.
- Travel by vehicle to reduce walking in public.
- Travel in groups or at least do not travel alone.
- Always keep vehicle doors locked, and windows closed when driving. Roadblocks

may be operated by gangs, members of organized crime, or terrorists seeking money and may turn violent.

- Be cautious and alert. This is especially important when driving through markets and other crowded areas.
- Do not physically resist any robbery attempt.
- Visit our website for Travel to High-Risk Areas.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive messages and alerts from the U.S. Embassy and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Review the Country Security Report on Haiti.
- Prepare a plan for emergency situations. Review the Traveler's Checklist.
- Visit the CDC's page for the latest Travel Health Information related to your travel and return to the United States.
- We highly recommend that you buy insurance before you travel. Check with your travel insurance provider about evacuation assistance, medical insurance, and trip cancellation coverage.
- Follow the Department of State on Facebook and X.
- Review the Country Security Report on Haiti.
- Visit our website for Travel to High-Risk Areas.

Exhibit 14

Honduras Travel Advisory

Travel Advisory
December 10, 2024

Honduras - Level 3: Reconsider Travel

*Reconsider travel to Honduras due to **crime**. Read the entire Travel Advisory.*

Do not travel to:

- Gracias a Dios Department, most eastern department, due to **crime**.

Country Summary: Violent crime, such as homicide, armed robbery, and kidnapping, remains common. Violent gang activity, such as extortion, violent street crime, rape, narcotics, and human trafficking, is widespread. Local authorities may lack sufficient resources to respond effectively to serious crime incidents. Around resort areas in the Bay Islands, which include Roatan, Utila, and Guanaja, there is a concentration of resources, and these areas are better policed.

Demonstrations occur regularly throughout the country and can be about a variety of political or economic issues. Protests, demonstrations, tire burnings, and roadblocks are frequent, unpredictable, and can turn violent. They can shutdown roads and highways, often without prior notice or estimated reopening timelines.

In December 2022, the Government of Honduras declared a “State of Exception” in response to high levels of extortion and other crimes. The declaration remains in effect and has been modified to include more cities. It allows the police to suspend constitutional rights in 226 of the country’s 298 municipalities.

The Honduran Ministry of Health declared in June 2024 a national emergency in Honduras due to an increase in dengue cases. The Ministry of Health has carried out dengue prevention, control, and surveillance activities, along with the promotion of preventive measures

through the media and educational campaigns. It also carried out clean-up operations and campaigns, including the use of chemical and biological agents for vector control.

Please review the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website and CDC Global Dengue for further information.

Read the country information page for additional information on travel to Honduras.

If you decide to travel to Honduras:

- Avoid demonstrations.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Avoid walking or driving at night.
- Do not physically resist any robbery attempt.
- Be extra vigilant when visiting banks or ATMs.
- Do not display signs of wealth, such as wearing expensive watches or jewelry.
- Do not take public transportation, including white car taxis. U.S. government personnel and their family members are prohibited from using these forms of transportation.
- Monitor local media for breaking events and be prepared to adjust your plans.
- Visit our website for Travel to High-Risk Areas.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Follow the Department of State on Facebook and X/Twitter.
- Review the Country Security Report for Honduras.
- Prepare a contingency plan for emergency situations. Review the Traveler's Checklist.
- Visit the CDC page for the latest Travel Health Information related to your travel.

Gracias a Dios Department – Level 4: Do Not Travel

U.S. government personnel and family members are restricted from traveling to Gracias a Dios, the most eastern department. The department is an isolated region with high levels of criminal activity. Narcotics trafficking is widespread, and large portions of the department are particularly vulnerable to drug trafficking organizations. Infrastructure is weak, government services are limited, and police and military presence is scarce.

Visit our website for Travel to High-Risk Areas

Exhibit 15

Nicaragua Travel Advisory

Travel Advisory December 13, 2024

Nicaragua - Level 3: Reconsider Travel

C H D O

Reissued with updates to information on arbitrary enforcement of laws.

Reconsider travel to Nicaragua due to **arbitrary enforcement of laws**, **the risk of wrongful detention**, **and limited healthcare availability**. Exercise increased caution in Nicaragua due to **crime**.

Country Summary: The Government of Nicaragua targets individuals and organizations for political purposes. These include:

- NGO workers,
- Academics and students,
- Business representatives,
- Civil society leaders,
- Religious and charity workers (including foreign missionaries),
- Journalists,
- And many others.

In the past year, the Government of Nicaragua has subjected U.S. citizens to arbitrary entry and exit bans, expulsions, arrests, revocations of Nicaraguan citizenship, and other actions.

The Government of Nicaragua may:

- Arbitrarily deny entry or re-entry to Nicaragua or departure from Nicaragua to U.S. citizens and Nicaraguan citizens. This includes entry by air or land. Travel refunds are NOT provided in these cases. Denials and exit bans can occur for political reasons. This includes perceived support for or association with those the government disfavors. **The government is not required to provide a basis**

for its denial.

- Search personal phones, computers, social media accounts, and documents for anti-government content.
- Limit photography.
- Seize personal devices.
- Target individuals for political reasons, regardless of nationality. These can include former allies, political activists, business representatives, religious and charity groups, clergy, missionaries, human rights advocates, civil society leaders, academics, and journalists.
- Target pro-democracy advocates and their family members.
- Confiscate privately-owned land, residences, financial assets, or personal property. They may do this without warning or due process.
- Arbitrarily detain, accuse, and charge individuals with terrorism, money laundering, or organized crime offenses. They may do this without fair or transparent processes.

The Department has determined there is a risk of wrongful detention of U.S. nationals by the Government of Nicaragua. U.S. citizens should reconsider travel to Nicaragua, including to work for or volunteer with non-profits or religious organizations. Since 2018, the Government of Nicaragua has closed more than 5,300 civil society organizations, including religious organizations. Nicaraguan security services have arrested U.S. citizens on false charges. This includes dual U.S.-Nicaraguan citizens. Those arrested can be denied fair and transparent treatment. Convictions routinely occur in non-public trials without adequate defense or credible evidence. Nicaraguan authorities also arbitrarily enforce laws against U.S. citizen religious workers. Nicaraguan authorities have conducted questionable criminal investigations against U.S. citizens engaged in religious activity. U.S. citizens arrested in Nicaragua may be detained for long periods without charges. Judicial processes often lack

transparency. This is especially true in politically motivated arrests and property disputes. Political objectives and pressure may affect the willingness of a local attorney to assist and impact the outcomes of legal processes. Prison conditions can be harsh and life-threatening.

Managua has a sole private hospital that is JCAHO (Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations) accredited and certified, with labs and radiology services available, though it has a very limited number of specialists for acute emergencies. Medical services outside Managua are limited, including for victims of crime. Government hospitals are understaffed and some hospitals throughout the country may not be able to assist in emergencies. Tap water is not reliably potable. Drink only purified bottled water.

Travelers should exercise increased caution and remain alert to the risks of crime. These include violent crimes such as sexual assault and armed robbery.

Poor infrastructure can limit the Embassy's emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Travel by U.S. government personnel may be restricted at any time.

Read the country information page for additional information on travel to Nicaragua.

If you decide to travel to Nicaragua:

- Consider arrangements to depart the country quickly.
- Ensure your U.S. passport is valid for your entire stay.
- Avoid demonstrations and restrict unnecessary travel.
- Do not attempt to drive through crowds, barricades, or roadblocks.
- Maintain adequate supplies of food, cash, potable water, and fuel in case you need to shelter in place.
- Use caution when walking or driving at night.

- Keep a low profile.
- Do not display signs of wealth such as expensive watches or jewelry.
- Remain aware of your surroundings.
- Develop a communication plan with family and/or your employer or host organization.
- Be prepared for the high risk of indefinite arbitrary detention on false charges without consular access.
- Visit our website for Travel to High-Risk Areas.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Follow the Department of State on Facebook and X (formerly known as "Twitter").
- Review the Country Security Report for Nicaragua.
- Prepare a contingency plan for emergency situations. Review the Traveler's Checklist.
- Visit the CDC page for the latest Travel Health Information related to your travel.

Exhibit 16

Please be advised that we are experiencing technical difficulties that impact live calls and chats to the USCIS Contact Center and USCIS online accounts. We are working to resolve the problem.

Secretary Noem Announces the Termination of Temporary Protected Status for Syria

Release Date : 09/19/2025

After careful consideration and deliberation of country conditions, the Secretary issues a termination of TPS status for Syria

WASHINGTON – Today, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem announced her decision to cancel the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for Syria.

"This is what restoring sanity to America's immigration system looks like," said **DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin**. *"Conditions in Syria no longer prevent their nationals from returning home. Syria has been a hotbed of terrorism and extremism for nearly two decades, and it is contrary to our national interest to allow Syrians to remain in our country. TPS is meant to be temporary."*

Syrian nationals have 60 days to voluntarily depart the United States and return home. Aliens leaving the United States are encouraged to use the U.S. Customs and Border Protection CBP Home app to report their departure from the United States and take advantage of a safe, secure way to self-deport that includes a complimentary plane ticket, a $1,000 exit bonus, and potential future opportunities for legal immigration.

After the 60 days have expired, any Syrian nationals admitted under TPS who have not begun their voluntary removal proceedings will be subject to arrest and deportation. Any alien who forces DHS to arrest and remove them will never be allowed to return to the United States.

Last Reviewed/Updated: 09/19/2025

Exhibit 17

Congressional Research Service
Informing the legislative debate since 1914

Syria: Transition and U.S. Policy

Updated September 5, 2025

Congressional Research Service
https://crsreports.congress.gov
RL33487

CRS REPORT
Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

Congressional Research Service
Informing the legislative debate since 1914

Syria: Transition and U.S. Policy

SUMMARY

RL33487

September 5, 2025

Christopher M. Blanchard
Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs

Since the December 2024 collapse of the government of Bashar Al Asad, Syrians have pursued political and economic opportunities created by the end of the country's twelve-year civil war. Internal tensions and external pressures pose obstacles to the country's transition. Interim president Ahmed Al Sharaa led a group long designated by the U.S. government as a terrorist organization. Interim authorities have outlined a five-year transitional constitutional framework after limited consultation with Syrian citizens. Elections are planned in September 2025 for a partially and indirectly elected legislative assembly. The government does not exercise control over all of Syria, with areas of the northeast under the control of ethnic Kurdish-led forces and areas south of the capital, Damascus, controlled by members of the Druze religious minority. Authorities plan to delay elections in these areas. Turkish forces remain in parts of the north, while Israeli forces have moved into formerly demilitarized areas between Syria and Israel and into some Syrian territory near the frontier. Sectarian violence involving government forces, their backers, and members of minority communities has marred the transition in 2025, highlighting the interim government's limited capacity to ensure security and impose discipline. In this context, some observers have expressed skepticism about the interim government's commitments to inclusivity and the protection of all members of Syria's diverse religious and ethnic fabric. Others have warned that opponents of the interim government may be exploiting communal tensions to advance their own agendas.

The Trump Administration has outlined a policy of conditional support for the interim government, pairing endorsement of its leaders' calls for the maintenance of Syria's unity and territorial integrity with insistence that they adopt a protective and inclusive approach toward all Syrian communities. The United States is supporting dialogue between the interim government and authorities in areas of northeast Syria under the protection of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-led coalition that has received U.S. security support since 2015. The SDF remains the principal U.S. partner in the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria. U.S. military forces are deployed in eastern and southern Syria, and are implementing Trump Administration directives to consolidate and streamline the U.S. military presence in the country. The United States and European Union have extended broad sanctions relief to the interim government in a bid to encourage investment and prevent economic collapse and humanitarian pressures from derailing the transition. Economic conditions across Syria have deteriorated since Asad's fall, with energy shortages and financial pressures limiting recovery efforts. Announced changes to U.S. and international sanctions on Syria since May 2025 have create possibilities for more robust investment, trade, and economic growth, but Syrians are grappling with the negative effects of decades of misrule and sanctions amid the strife and destructive consequences of a decade-plus-long civil war.

Governance and security arrangements between Syria's national government and de facto authorities in northeast and southern Syria remain a central dilemma for transitional leaders and the minority communities in these areas. Neighboring countries, including Turkey and Israel, are acting inside Syria in pursuit of their preferred outcomes. Turkey opposes Syrian Kurds' aspirations for autonomy or decentralization, citing links between Kurdish elements of the SDF and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. The PKK announced in early 2025 that it would dissolve and disarm. In March 2025, the SDF agreed in principle to integrate under the interim government's authority, but SDF figures and others have criticized what they perceive as unilateralism by interim government leaders. Israel has used military force to destroy military equipment and weaponry across Syria since December and to enforce its desire to see Syria's three southern provinces remain a demilitarized zone. Israel also has struck targets in southern Syria and in Damascus in what it describes as a bid to protect the Syrian Druze minority community. Israel-Turkey tensions over Syria also raise risks of confrontation.

In Congress, many Members welcomed the fall of the Asad government and the setbacks it has created for Iran and Russia. Members have debated U.S. policy toward the interim government, with some advocating for the elimination of remaining U.S. sanctions on Syria and others expressing concern about the intentions and actions of Syria's interim leaders and calling for a more gradual and conditional approach. President Donald Trump has acted to remove many Asad-era sanctions on Syria using authorities delegated to the President by Congress; President Trump also has revised other Syria-related sanctions mechanisms to preserve his ability to impose new sanctions based on future developments in Syria. Bills introduced in the 119th Congress would variously rescind (e.g., H.R. 3941 and S. 2133) or amend (H.R. 4427) some laws providing for Syria-related sanctions and would appropriate funds for the conditional provision of foreign assistance in Syria (H.R. 4779) or authorize (H.R. 3838/S. 2296) or appropriate (H.R. 4016/S. 2572) military assistance to U.S. partners in Syria. Legislative questions for Congress include whether and on what terms to authorize and appropriate funds for U.S. assistance and security operations in Syria; whether and to what extent to revise or rescind laws providing for U.S. sanctions on Syria; and how best to influence executive branch policies and shape the decisions of Syrian authorities, and U.S. partners and adversaries.

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Overview and Key Developments

The fall of the government led by Bashar Al Asad in December 2024 marked a dramatic end to a twelve year-long conflict in Syria and the conclusion of decades of tension between the United States and the Baath Party-dominated government of Syria, led by the Asad family.[1] The Asad government's hostility to Israel, attempts to dominate neighboring Lebanon, alignment with Russia, partnership with Iran, support for terrorist groups, and development and use of weapons of mass destruction had fueled tensions with the United States for decades. Forces and leaders associated with Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS, aka the Organization for the Liberation of Syria, see **Appendix**) toppled Asad and have exerted security control over most of western Syria (**Figure 1**). They also lead the country's transition. HTS had severed its former ties to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, but remained a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization until July 2025.

In January 2025, attendees at a "Victory Conference" of some anti-Asad armed groups appointed HTS leader Ahmed Hussein Al Sharaa (aka Abu Mohammed al Jawlani/Jolani/Golani), a U.S. Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT), as Syria's interim president. Many individuals appointed to interim national leadership positions were HTS members or previously served in the HTS-backed Syrian Salvation Government. In conjunction with Sharaa's selection as president, interim authorities rescinded Syria's 2012 constitution and dissolved the former ruling Baath Party, the Asad-era legislature, and the former regime's military and security forces. A brief and partial national dialogue preceded the issuance of a five-year transitional constitutional framework. In March 2025, a new cabinet (**Table 1**) expanded the interim leadership to include members of some minority groups. Indirect elections for a partially elected parliament are planned for September.

The authorities have declared the dissolution of all military factions, political, and civil revolutionary bodies and called for their integration into state institutions. Progress toward this goal has been uneven. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—a Kurdish-led coalition that has served as the principal U.S. partner against the Islamic State—controls the northeast in partnership with an Autonomous Administration for North and East Syria (AANES). In March 2025, the SDF signed an agreement on integrating with national security forces by the end of 2025. The SDF and AANES seek guarantees of constitutional rights amid threats from the Islamic State and concerns about sectarian violence. Talks have yet to yield further agreement. Turkey and Syria's interim leaders oppose autonomy for SDF-held areas, and Turkish concerns focus on SDF-links to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated terrorist group that is implementing plans to disband. Some southern areas home to the Druze religious minority remain outside national control. Druze groups have debated their relationship with the state, with sectarian clashes and Israeli military intervention in July 2025 driving wider calls for autonomy.

---

[1] The area that now comprises Syria was long ruled as part of the Ottoman Empire and was administered by France under a mandate of the League of Nations following the First World War. Syria achieved independence from France through the 1930s and 1940s; its early history as an independent state was marked by a series of Cold War-influenced coups and regional instability. The Baath (Renaissance) Party seized power in Syria in 1963. Former president Bashar al Asad's father—Hafiz al Asad—ruled the country from 1970 until his death in 2000. The Asad family are members of the minority Alawite sect (estimated 15% of the population), which has its roots in Shiite Islam, and they cultivated Alawites as a base of support. The government violently suppressed an armed uprising led by the Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1980s, killing thousands from the majority Sunni Muslim community. After taking office in 2000, Bashar Al Asad offered and retracted the prospect of limited political reform, while privileging family members and other Alawite supporters and aligning his government with Iran and non-state actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah in a complex rivalry with the United States and its Arab and non-Arab allies (including Israel). Violence in northeast Syria in 2004 highlighted unresolved tensions involving Syria's ethic Kurdish minority. In 2011, Asad met local unrest with military force, sparking an insurgency and more than a decade of conflict and foreign intervention.

Syria's unresolved internal tensions, the interests of regional and international actors, and the interim authorities' limitations are presenting serious challenges to the transition. According to UN officials, clashes since March 2025 involving state forces, state-aligned armed groups, and some minority communities reportedly killed nearly 3,000 civilians and fighters and displaced more than 200,000 people. The violence has increased global scrutiny of the interim authorities' capabilities and intentions.

- Violence in Syria's western coastal provinces in March and April followed attacks there on government forces by pro-Asad groups and featured retaliatory attacks on Alawite communities by government-aligned groups.[2] In the wake of that violence, the interim government said it was redoubling its efforts to assert unified security command over armed groups and launched a fact-finding investigation that has delivered its report to the interim authorities.
- Sectarian violence also erupted in southern Syria between members of Druze and Sunni Arab Bedouin communities in April, May, and July.[3] The July conflagration in and around the predominantly Druze city of Suweida killed nearly 1,400 combatants and civilians, displaced an estimated more than 185,000 people, and prompted military intervention by Israel.[4] A ceasefire has held, but is fragile.

The Trump Administration has outlined a policy of conditional support for the interim government, endorsing calls for the maintenance of Syria's unity and territorial integrity while insisting on inclusion and protection for Syrian minority communities. President Trump met Ahmed Al Sharaa in Saudi Arabia in May. U.S. officials have strongly condemned sectarian violence, supported de-escalation, and called for transparent investigations and accountability. U.S. officials have supported two dialogue tracks: one between the interim government and authorities in northeast Syria and one between the interim government and Israel. U.S. forces are deployed in eastern and southern Syria, and are consolidating their presence. The United States and European Union have extended sanctions relief to Syria's government to encourage investment, prevent economic collapse, and ease humanitarian pressures.

In Congress, many Members have welcomed the fall of the Asad government and the setbacks it has created for Iran and Russia. Members have debated U.S. policy toward the interim government, with some advocating for the elimination of remaining U.S. sanctions on Syria and others expressing concern about the intentions and actions of Syria's interim leaders and calling for a more gradual and conditional approach.[5] President Donald Trump has acted to remove many Asad-era sanctions on Syria using authorities delegated to the President by Congress; President Trump also has revised other Syria-related sanctions mechanisms to preserve his ability to impose new sanctions based on future developments. Bills introduced in the 119th Congress would variously rescind (e.g., H.R. 3941 and S. 2133) or amend (H.R. 4427) some laws providing for Syria-related sanctions, direct the withdrawal of U.S. forces (S.J.Res. 6), appropriate funds for the conditional provision of foreign assistance in Syria (H.R. 4779), or authorize (H.R. 3838/S. 2296) or appropriate (H.R. 4016/S. 4921) funds for military assistance to U.S. partners in Syria.

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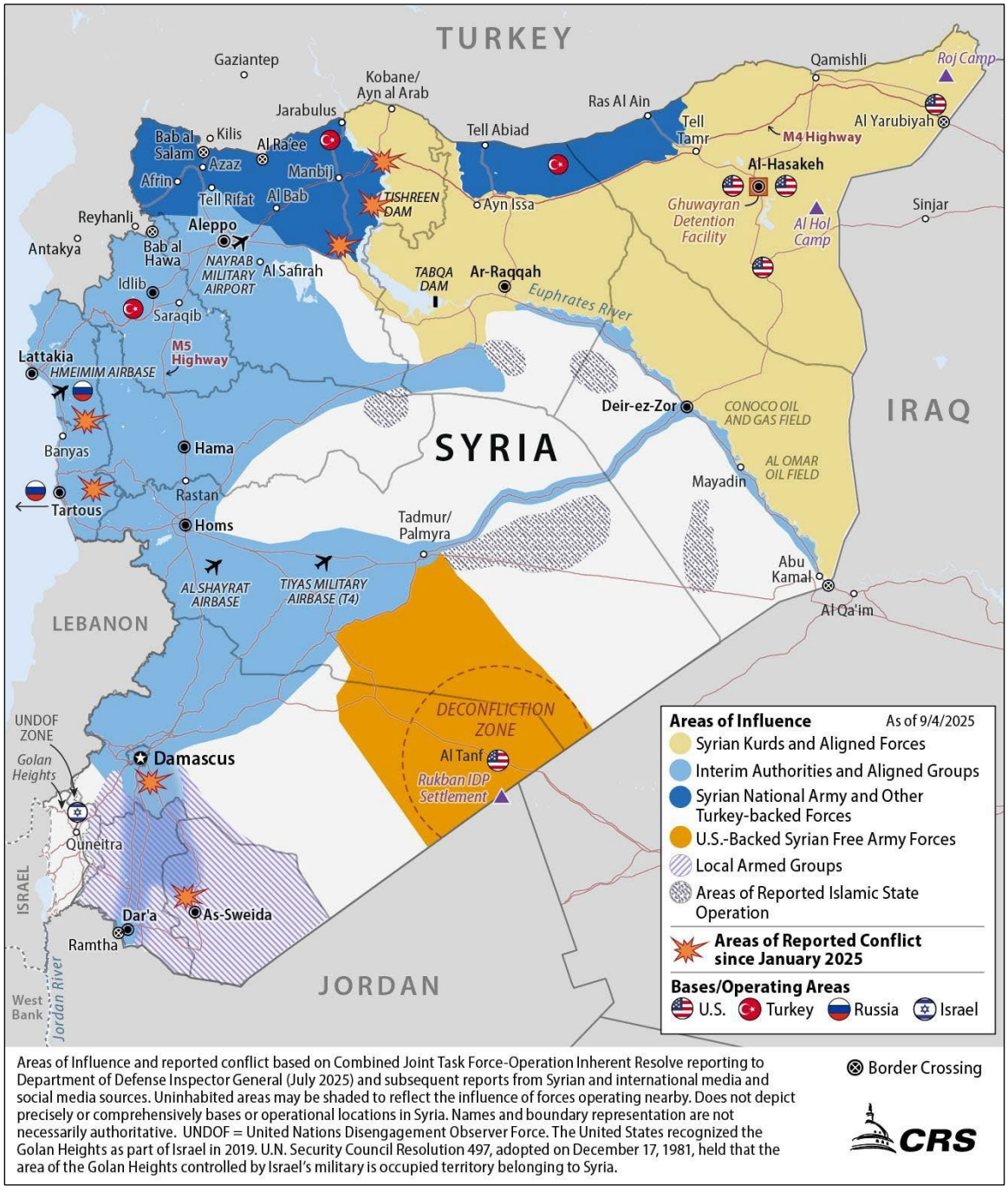
[2] Alawites are a religious minority group, of which the Asad family are members. Some predominantly Alawite areas of western Syria were strongholds of the Asad family and leading regime figures.

[3] The Druze are a religious minority group with members concentrated in southern Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. The province of Suweida has been controlled by Druze armed groups since Asad's ouster and previously enjoyed informal autonomy stemming from leading Druze armed groups' neutral position in the Syrian civil war.

[4] Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), "Al-Suwayda bloodshed in seven days," July 23, 2025; and, United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen, Briefing to the UN Security Council, August 10, 2025.

[5] For examples of these views, see the House Financial Services Committee markup of H.R. 4427, July 22, 2025.

Figure 1. Syria: Areas of Influence



Source: CRS using Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) reporting to Lead Inspector General, media and social media reporting and Esri and U.S. State Department data. All areas of influence approximate and subject to change.

Table 1. Syria: Selected Interim Authorities

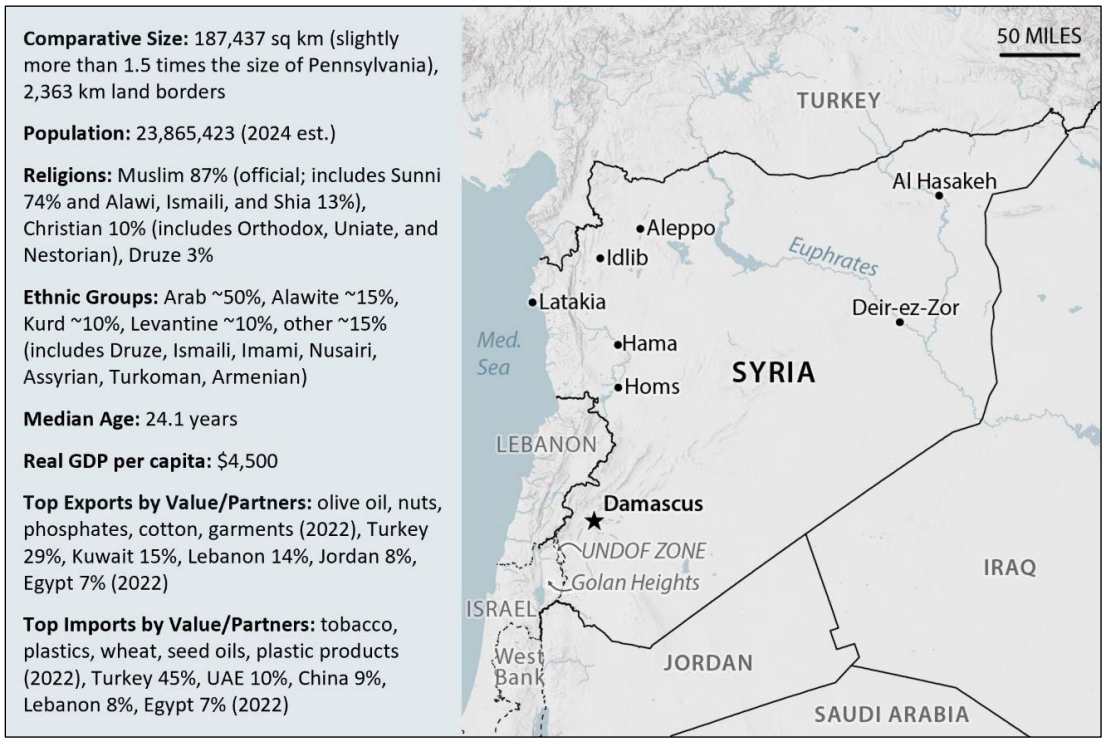
As of September 4, 2025

President of the Syrian Arab Republic/Commander-in-Chief Ahmed Al Sharaa			
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Asaad Al Shaibani	**Minister of Defense**	Maj. Gen. Marhaf Abu Qasra
Minister of Interior	Anas Al Khattab	**Minister of Finance**	Mohammad Yusr Barniya
Minister of Economy	Mohammad Nidal Al Shaar	**Minister of Justice**	Mazhar Al Weiss
Minister of Energy	Mohammed Al Bashir	**Minister of Public Works and Housing**	Mustafa Abdulrazak
Minister of Transport	Yarob Badr	**Minister of Agriculture**	Amjad Badr
Minister of Health	Musaab Nazal Al Ali	**Minister of Social Affairs and Labor**	Hind Qabawat
Chief of the General Staff of the Army and Armed Forces	Ali Noureddine Al Nasan	**Governor of the Central Bank of Syria**	Abdulqader Husrieh

Source: CRS, compiled from Syrian and international media reports. Subject to change.

Note: According to a July 2025 UN report, "At least 9 out of 23 ministers are directly or indirectly linked to HTS, 4 of whom held military roles within the group." See UN Document S/2025/482, July 24, 2025.

Figure 2. Syria:At a Glance Map and Data



Source: CRS. Using Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook data, February 2025.

Notes: The United States recognized the Golan Heights as part of Israel in 2019. UN Security Council Resolution 497, adopted on December 17, 1981, held that the area of the Golan Heights controlled by Israel's military is occupied territory belonging to Syria.

Syria: Conflict Synopsis and U.S. Policy, 2011-2024

In March **2011**, antigovernment protests broke out in Syria, in the midst of a wider trend of regional upheaval and challenges to decades of authoritarian rule. Violence escalated, and, in August 2011, President Barack Obama called on Syrian President Bashar al Asad to step down. Over time, the rising death toll from the conflict and the use of chemical weapons by the Asad government intensified pressure for the United States to assist the opposition. In 2013, Congress debated lethal and nonlethal assistance to vetted Syrian opposition groups, and authorized the latter. Congress also debated, but did not authorize, the use of force in response to an August **2013** chemical weapons attack.

In **2014**, the Obama Administration requested authority and funding from Congress to provide lethal support to vetted Syrians for select purposes. The original request sought authority to support vetted Syrians in "defending the Syrian people from attacks by the Syrian regime," but the subsequent advance of the Islamic State organization from Syria across Iraq refocused executive and legislative deliberations onto counterterrorism. Congress ultimately authorized a Department of Defense-led train and equip program for select Syrian forces to combat terrorist groups active in Syria, defend the United States and its partners from Syria-based terrorist threats, and "promote the conditions for a negotiated settlement to end the conflict in Syria."[6]

In September 2014, the United States began air strikes in Syria, with the stated goal of preventing the Islamic State from using Syria as a base for its operations in neighboring Iraq. In October 2014, the Defense Department established Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) to serve as the military component of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, a multilateral civil and military coalition of dozens of countries.

In **2015**, the United States deployed military forces to Syria to counter the Islamic State and train local partner forces. Coalition and U.S. gains in Syria against the Islamic State after 2015 came largely through the assistance of Syrian Kurdish-led partner forces, but neighboring Turkey's concerns about Kurdish forces in Syria emerged as a persistent challenge for U.S. policymakers.

In **2017**, the United States began providing arms to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and the SDF, backed by U.S. forces, advanced on IS-held areas, seizing the IS stronghold of Raqqah in October 2017 and asserting control over the last IS-held areas of Syria's eastern Euphrates River valley in March 2019.

In **2018**, the U.S. intelligence community assessed that the conflict had "decisively shifted in the Syrian regime's favor."[7] Remaining armed opposition forces (including groups linked to Al Qaeda) and civilians actively opposed to Asad were pushed into a shrinking geographic space in and around Idlib province in northwestern Syria. Turkish military forces remained present in Idlib and other areas of northern Syria, limiting advances by pro-Asad forces and preventing further displacement of Syrians to Turkey.

In October **2019**, after President Trump signaled that U.S. forces would withdraw from Syria, Turkey launched a cross-border military operation attempting to expel Syrian Kurdish U.S. partner forces from areas adjacent to the Turkish border. President Trump briefly imposed sanctions on Turkish officials and negotiated a ceasefire that was later complemented by a separate agreement reached between Turkey and Russia to establish patrolled security zones. While U.S.-led coalition and partner forces focused on defeating the Islamic State in northern and eastern Syria, support from Russian, Iranian, and Hezbollah forces enabled the Syrian government to retake many areas of the country formerly held by the opposition.

The United Nations (UN) sponsored peace talks in Geneva beginning in 2012, but the talks bore little fruit. Over time, military pressure on the Syrian government to make concessions to the opposition was reduced. By **2022**, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen described the conflict as a "stalemate" with relatively fixed lines.[8] In Idlib, Haya't Tahrir al Sham distanced itself from Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, establishing and controlling a Syrian Salvation Government, retraining fighters into more formidable and capable units, and periodically clashing with Turkey-backed groups in control of other areas of northern Syria.

In November **2024**, HTS-led forces launched an offensive in response to escalating pro-Asad attacks, leading to the unexpected HTS capture of Aleppo and the cascading collapse of pro-Asad forces across western Syria. Some southern anti-Asad groups—demobilized under military pressure earlier in the conflict—remobilized as the regime collapsed. Asad fled to Russia on December 8, 2024, as HTS and southern armed groups entered Damascus.

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[6] For additional background, see CRS Report R46796, *Congress and the Middle East, 2011-2020: Selected Case Studies*, coordinated by Christopher M. Blanchard.

[7] Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community: 2018*.

[8] UN Security Council, "Amid Stalemate, Acute Suffering in Syria, Special Envoy Tells Security Council Political Solution 'Only Way Out,'" Meetings Coverage, SC/14807, February 25, 2022.

Political and Security Dynamics

On August 21, 2025, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen told the UN Security Council that Syria "remains deeply fragile and the transition remains on a knife-edge."[9] The following political and security issues present the principal challenges to stability.

Transition Framework Emerges, Questions Persist on Inclusion

After a series of governorate-level consultations and a National Dialogue conference in Damascus, the interim authorities appointed members of a committee that drafted a five-year transitional constitution. In March, President Ahmed Al Sharaa signed the interim constitutional declaration and named a new transitional cabinet. The interim constitution recognizes individual rights, including freedom of belief and expression, and states a commitment to preserving the country's territorial integrity, diversity, and social peace. The declaration vests most powers with the interim presidency and states that Arabic is the official language of the state and that Islamic law is the principal source of legislation.[10] The Kurdish-led administration of northeastern Syria did not participate in the national dialogue and interim constitutional declaration drafting process.

On July 28, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen told the UN Security Council that "the political transition is not yet fully inclusive. And many Syrians express concern about centralized power, limited transparency, weak checks and balances, and insufficient means for genuine public consultations, participation, and scrutiny."[11] Interim authorities have announced their intention to hold indirect elections in September for 140 of 210 seats in a People's Assembly to serve as a legislative body during the transition period. President Al Sharaa is to appoint members to the other 70 seats. The constitutional declaration may be amended by presidential proposal approved by two-thirds of the Assembly.

Arrangements for the holding of indirect elections, including participation standards for electors and administration in areas outside the interim government's security control, have not been finalized. On August 23, a representative of the election committee said that the elections would be delayed indefinitely and seats held open for representatives from Suweida, Raqqa, and Hasakah governorates. The spokesperson said "elections are a sovereign matter that can only be conducted in areas fully under government control."[12] Pedersen told the Security Council on August 21 that any mishandling of the indirect elections or exclusionary implementation "would entrench skepticism, aggravate the forces pulling Syria apart, and impede reconciliation."[13]

U.S. Military Presence Evolves

In December 2024, the Department of Defense reported that approximately 2,000 U.S. military personnel were then deployed in Syria. In April 2025, a Pentagon spokesperson announced the consolidation of U.S. forces in Syria and said "a deliberate and conditions-based process will bring the U.S. footprint in Syria down to less than a thousand U.S. forces in the coming

[9] UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen Briefing to the UN Security Council, August 21, 2025.

[10] Text of Syrian Interim Constitution as translated by SyriaReport.com; and, Evan Ward, "Syria Has a New Temporary Constitution. Here Are the Highlights," *New York Times*, March 14, 2025.

[11] UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen Briefing to the UN Security Council, July 28, 2025.

[12] Reuters, "Syria delays parliamentary vote in Sweida after sectarian violence," August 24, 2025.

[13] UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen Briefing to the UN Security Council, August 21, 2025.

months."[14] He reiterated U.S. support for efforts to combat the Islamic State (IS, aka ISIS/ISIL) in Syria, and a media report citing unnamed senior U.S. officials said that U.S. personnel would continue to assist the Kurdish-led SDF and aid SDF detention and camp management efforts. The SDF hold 9,000 IS prisoners and secure camps holding more than 30,000 people.

As of July 2025, some U.S. troops had relocated from areas with Arab-majority populations in the Euphrates River valley (see **Figure 1**), having closed three bases and "either dismantled and removed or handed over infrastructure to the SDF."[15] The withdrawal of U.S. forces and protection could limit the SDF's effective control over these regions, and the U.S. military expects SDF-local tribe tensions to rise in the area.[16] According to U.S. Special Envoy for Syria Ambassador Tom Barrack, the U.S. military will "eventually go to one" base in Syria.[17] Turkey has sought to partner with Syria's interim government, as well as Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon, to establish a multilateral counter-IS mechanism that Turkey hopes could replace the U.S.-led coalition (and the U.S.-SDF partnership).[18] U.S. raids in northern Syria in July and August reportedly killed individuals playing senior roles in IS operations in Syria.[19]

Figure 3. Syria: Northeastern Governorates

Source: CRS, using State Department and Esri data.
Note: SDF – Syrian Democratic Forces.

The withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria or the removal of U.S. assurances of force protection to partner forces could affect various parties' actions, with possible implications for Syrian domestic and regional stability, counterterrorism concerns, and humanitarian needs. Sensitive considerations surround the degree of U.S. protection that might be afforded to SDF forces, who remain in discussions with Damascus over security arrangements and possible integration. Should Syrian government forces attempt to assert control over SDF-held areas by force, the United States may face calls from the SDF and other leaders in northeast Syria to intervene. Tensions between Kurds and Arabs in rural areas of northern and eastern Syria could become a flashpoint, and Turkish and interim government opposition to continued SDF control complicates matters further. U.S. Special Envoy Barrack visited Damascus on July 9 to support SDF talks with the interim government, but no progress was reported.

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[14] Department of Defense, "Statement from Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell Announcing the Consolidation of Forces in Syria Under Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve," April 18, 2025; Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Starts Withdrawing Hundreds of Troops from Northeastern Syria," *New York Times*, April 18, 2025.

[15] Amberin Zaman, "PKK ends 40-year war against Turkey, vows to pursue Kurdish rights," Al-Monitor, May 12, 2025; and Lead Inspector General for Operation Inherent Resolve (LIG-OIR), Report to the U.S. Congress, April 1 – June 30, 2025, p. 21.

[16] LIG-OIR, Report to the U.S. Congress, April 1 – June 30, 2025, pp. 22-23.

[17] Ambassador Barrack interview with NTV Turkey, in Raya Jalabi, "US cuts troop presence in Syria," *Financial Times*, June 3, 2025.

[18] Ezgi Akin, "U.S. Starts Withdrawing Hundreds of Troops from Northeastern Syria," Al-Monitor, May 12, 2025; "Türkiye, Jordan, Syria, Iraq to Discuss Security Cooperation in Amman," Asharq Al Awsat, March 8, 2025.

[19] Reuters, "US forces conduct raid in northern Syria against ISIS targets, in second since Assad's overthrow," August 20, 2025.

The United States and the Future of Northeast Syria

Since 2015, the U.S. military has operated in northeast Syria and provided support to local partner forces opposed to the Islamic State group. The main U.S. partner in this effort has been the Syrian Democratic Forces, a coalition of armed groups whose leaders and strongest components are members of the People's Protection Units (YPG), a Syrian Kurdish nationalist militia with links to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization.[20] In 2017, the United States began overtly arming the YPG and other SDF elements, and by early 2019, YPG-led SDF forces backed by U.S. forces had succeeded in ending the Islamic State's control of territory north of the Euphrates River in Syria. SDF forces took control of captured IS fighters and established security perimeters around camps for persons displaced from IS-held areas. As of July 2025, U.S. partner forces detained approximately 9,000 IS fighters and controlled camps housing approximately 31,200 individuals across northeast Syria. The SDF partners with the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES).

The government of Turkey consistently has objected to U.S. partnership with the YPG, characterizing the group and the wider SDF coalition as terrorists.[21] In response to the YPG's consolidation of contiguous control over much of northern Syria's border areas by 2016, Turkey and allied Syrian militias conducted three significant military operations (in 2016, 2018, and 2019) that replaced YPG rule in some areas adjacent to Turkey with Turkish-backed Syrian forces. Turkey-Russia arrangements reached in 2019 and 2020 provided for an end to Turkish advances and joint patrols aimed at limiting the presence of the YPG and SDF in areas near the Turkish border.

As the Asad government collapsed in late 2024, Russian forces implementing Turkey-Russia agreements withdrew. SDF forces moved into areas of the lower Euphrates River valley that had been under pro-Asad forces' control, including the city of Deir-ez-Zor. HTS forces and their local partners subsequently moved to assert authority in these areas, and SDF forces withdrew north of the Euphrates River. To the west, Turkey-backed Arab militia groups operating as part of the Syrian National Army (SNA) coalition expelled YPG and SDF forces from areas north and east of Aleppo and attempted to claim control over the Tishreen Dam and Qara Qozak bridge over the Euphrates River. Fighting continued in this region into early March 2025 before a ceasefire was reached. Periodic Turkish strikes have targeted SDF personnel east of the Euphrates, including in and around the city of Kobane.

A March 2025 agreement between the SDF and the interim government created a framework for the possible future integration of security forces and administrative entities in the northeast with the national government. The withdrawal of U.S. forces from the northeast or the removal of U.S. force protection assurances could lead the YPG and SDF, Turkey and Turkey-backed militias, and the Syrian government to change their policies and posture. Regardless of U.S. posture and preferences and the course of intra-Syrian negotiations, broader conflict could erupt and may exacerbate terrorism risks and humanitarian needs. In July 2025, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called for SDF integration and for the YPG to "lay down its arms."[22] PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan has reportedly agreed with "top PKK operatives" that the YPG should only disarm "when an acceptable agreement is struck with the central government."[23] In August 2025, some sources indicated that SDF delays would not likely lead to direct Turkish intervention, but Turkey might indirectly support "a limited operation by the Syrian army."[24]

Ahmed Al Sharaa has publicly rejected any future territorial division of Syria or the use of Syrian territory by any entity to threaten Syria's neighbors, insisting on the exclusive control of weapons by state security forces while stating his intent to resolve issues with the SDF through dialogue.[25] Sharaa claimed that non-Syrian PKK militants hostile to Turkey were present in northeast Syria and objects to a possible federalist solution to questions of Kurdish autonomy. SDF Commander and YPG leader Mazloum Abdi has said the SDF is "not pursuing separatism" and "envisions itself as an integral part of a unified Syrian army, as part of a broader political solution."[26] Abdi has said that the SDF accepts state sovereignty and supports a decentralized, secular governance model. He also has said, "We hope that the coalition does not withdraw. We ask them to stay."[27]

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[20] In a July 2025 briefing, U.S. Ambassador to Turkey and Special Envoy for Syria Thomas Barrack said, "SDF is YPG …. And YPG was a spinoff of PKK that we allied with to fight ISIS." State Department, "Strengthening U.S.-Türkiye Relations and Advancing Relations with Syria," July 11, 2025.

[21] See CRS Insight IN12473, *Turkey (Türkiye) in Syria: Key U.S. Policy Issues*, by Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas.

[22] "Turkey calls on SDF to expedite integration with Damascus," *Rudaw*, July 26, 2025.

[23] "Turkey-France rivalry disrupts US-led mediation between Damascus, Syrian Kurds," *Al-Monitor*, August 7, 2025.

[24] Ragip Soylu, "Turkey-Syria defence deal covers training and weapons supply," *Middle East Eye*, August 14, 2025.

[25] MEMRI Translation #11695, reviewed by CRS, Source - Al-Arabiya Network, December 29, 2024.

[26] "'We want change to be the basis for a new phase in Syria' Mazloum Abdi," *Kurdistan24* (Iraq), January 28, 2025.

[27] Bassem Mroue, "US-Backed Commander Says His Kurdish-Led Group Wants a Secular and Civil State in Post-Assad Syria," AP, February 3, 2025.

Sectarian Violence Threatens Transition, Draws Intervention

Several instances of sectarian violence involving members of minority communities, Syrian security forces, nonstate armed groups, and armed vigilantes have threatened Syria's stability since March. Aggravating factors have included the interim government's imperfect command and control mechanisms, extremists' presence in some security force units and other armed groups, the proliferation of arms among the population, and volatile, conflict-fueled communal tensions. Social media dynamics, misinformation, and foreign intervention have exacerbated conditions further. Interim leaders' rhetoric and some government actions have prioritized de-escalation and civilian protection, and leaders have promised fact-finding and accountability. Nevertheless, the government has failed to prevent widespread violations against civilians, including some undertaken by government units or government-aligned actors. Attacks on government forces and civilians perpetrated by some minority community armed groups have contributed to ongoing cycles of violence. Some Druze have called for foreign intervention, including by Israel, to ensure their protection. Others have rejected outside involvement and separatist rhetoric, while condemning government violations and failures.

Violence in Coastal Governorates

In March and April, attacks by pro-Asad groups prompted a response by security forces that devolved into attacks on some Alawite communities by some state units, government-aligned groups, and vigilantes. A UN report issued in August 2025 details eyewitness accounts of house-to-house killings, beatings, and lootings targeting Alawites, including the abuse and summary execution of Alawite men by individuals wearing military clothing without insignia.[28] The report concluded that parallel hostilities were occurring between the interim government and pro-Asad armed groups at the time, and found that

Figure 4. Syria: Coastal Governorates

Source: CRS, using State Department and Esri data.

> there are reasonable grounds to believe that individual members of certain factions of the security forces of the interim government ... as well as private individuals participating in hostilities engaged in acts that amounted to violations and international humanitarian law, including acts that may amount to war crimes, as well as serious violations of international human rights law.

The report acknowledges measures by the interim government during and since the violence to prevent further violations and "found no evidence of a governmental policy or plan to carry out such attacks." President Sharaa personally condemned the violence and vowed to hold those responsible accountable. In the wake of the violence in western coastal areas, the interim government said it would redouble its efforts to assert unified security command over armed groups and launched a fact-finding investigation that has delivered its report to the authorities.[29] That report remained unpublished in August. The UN report states that, when interviewed,

[28] Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January - March 2025*, UN Document A/HRC/59/CRP.4, August 11, 2025.

[29] The body responsible is the National Inquiry and High-Level Committee to Maintain Civil Peace.

residents of the coastal provinces were not aware of any actions by interim authorities to criminally investigate any individual incidents that took place during the violence.

Violence in Southern Governorates

The extent of national authorities' control over armed groups and their commitment to civilian protection came under renewed scrutiny as sectarian violence involving members of Druze and Sunni Arab communities erupted in southern Syria in April, May, and July. Strained relationships between Druze communities and their Sunni Arab neighbors flared south of Damascus in April and May after criminal incidents and false social media reports about religiously antagonistic statements led armed groups to mobilize. In July, latent tensions between Bedouin and Druze communities in and around the predominantly Druze city of Suweida spilled over into clashes that drew in tribal fighters, security forces, and Druze militia. The violence killed nearly 1,400 combatants and civilians, displaced an estimated more than 185,000 people, and prompted military intervention by Israel, including Israeli strikes on the Ministry of Defense headquarters in Damascus.[30]

The UN Human Rights Office cited credible reports of "widespread violations and abuses" attributed to "members of the security forces and individuals affiliated with the interim authorities, as well as other armed elements from the area, including Druze and Bedouins."[31] Secretary of State Marco Rubio called on the interim authorities to "hold accountable and bring to justice anyone guilty of atrocities including those in their own ranks."[32] The interim government formed a committee to investigate the violence, and in September, a committee spokesman said an unspecified number of defense and interior security personnel "were detained by the interior and defense ministries to be transferred to the judiciary when the investigations are concluded to be publicly tried for the crimes they committed against Syrians."[33]

Figure 5. Syria: Southern Governorates

Source: CRS, using State Department and Esri data.

As of September, a ceasefire has provided for the entry of Ministry of Interior forces into some areas of Suweida province in coordination with local Druze militia groups. Humanitarian access to Suweida remains limited, and Syrian and Israeli officials met in Paris to discuss related concerns. On August 10, the UN Security Council released a presidential statement calling on all parties to ensure humanitarian access and on the government to "to ensure credible, swift, transparent, impartial, and comprehensive investigations, in line with international standards" and to "ensure accountability and bring all perpetrators of violence to justice regardless of their affiliation."[34]

[30] Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), "Al-Suwayda bloodshed in seven days," July 23, 2025; UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen, Briefings to the UN Security Council, July 28, 2025 and August 21, 2025; and UN Security Council, Statement by the President of the Security Council, UN Document S/PRST/2025/6, August 10, 2025.

[31] UN Human Rights Council, "Türk calls for immediate steps to ensure protection of people in Suweida and across Syria," July 18, 2025.

[32] X post, Marco Rubio (@marcorubio), July 19, 2025, https://x.com/marcorubio/status/1946736912854835380.

[33] Reuters, "Syria detains defense, interior ministry members suspected of Sweida violence," September 3, 2025.

[34] UN Document S/PRST/2025/6, Statement by the President of the Security Council, August 10, 2025.

Druze militias and community leaders have at times appeared to hold differing views on relations with national authorities and with Israel, with some advocating for de-escalation and cooperation and others expressing skepticism about the interim authorities' intentions and welcoming foreign protection.[35] In August 2025, leading Druze religious figures for the first time released consistent statements condemning sectarian attacks against the Druze, criticizing the interim authorities, and calling for humanitarian relief for Druze areas.[36] Following pro-independence protests by some in Suweida city, Druze leader Sheikh Hikmat Al Hijri announced the alignment of several Druze militia forces under a National Guard, and has called for Suweida to be treated as a separate region.[37] On August 21, UN Special Envoy Pedersen said that while violence near Suweida "has largely subsided following a ceasefire, the threat of renewed conflict is ever-present – as are the political centrifugal forces that threaten Syria's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity."[38] The UN Security Council has called on "all states to refrain from any action or interference that may further destabilize the country."[39]

Islamic State (IS) Attacks Demonstrate Enduring Threat

U.S. officials and UN experts report that IS fighters, Al Qaeda linked groups, and other extremists are seeking to exploit fragile security conditions in Syria to reinvigorate their ranks. The July 2025 monitoring report by the UN panel on Al Qaeda and the Islamic State confirms that IS fighters have seized stockpiles of heavy weapons from Asad regime stockpiles and have undertaken prison breaks freeing some of their imprisoned members and other extremists.[40] The report estimates that "more than 5,000" foreign terrorist fighters remain at large in Syria.

Independent observers have catalogued more than 100 attacks attributed to the Islamic State group in eastern and central Syria in 2025, including attacks on interim government forces and SDF forces.[41] Most of these attacks occurred in Deir-ez-Zor governorate in eastern Syria, but some occurred near Palmyra in central Syria and in remote areas patrolled by U.S.-backed Syrian Free Army forces based at Al Tanf in south-central Syria. A May 2025 IS statement condemned President Al Sharaa as an apostate and called on foreign fighters and others disillusioned by the interim government's policies to reconcile and integrate with IS forces in rural areas.[42]

The SDF continues to detain approximately 9,000 IS prisoners, which the Department of Defense describes as "the largest concentration of ISIS fighters globally."[43] According to U.S. officials in a March 2025 report, the SDF is "fully capable of maintaining security at detention facilities while

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[35] Druze leader Sheikh Hikmat Al Hijri (alt. Hajari) has been outspoken in his criticism of interim authorities and has endorsed protective foreign intervention. Other leaders, such as Sheikhs Yusuf Jarbou and Hammoud Al Hannawi, had advocated for engagement with interim authorities and refrained from endorsing intervention. See Syrian Arab News Agency, "Sheikh Yusuf Jarbou', the spiritual leader of the Druze community: We stand by our state, refuse any foreign orientation," July 15, 2025; Reuters, "Explainer: Who are the Druze and why does Israel say it is hitting Syria for their sake?" July 17, 2025; Cathrin Schaer, "What part did Druze leader al-Hijri play in Syria violence?" July 22, 2025.

[36] "Druze Sheikhs in Suwayda Unite in Opposition to Damascus," *Enab Baladi*, August 9, 2025.

[37] "Suwayda, Southern Syria: Protests Demand Independence, Raise Israeli Flags," *Enab Baladi*, August 17, 2025; What Is the "National Guard" Formed by Sheikh al-Hijri in Suwayda, Southern Syria?" *Enab Baladi*, August 24, 2025; and, Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Druze leader issues call for separation from Syria," *The National*, August 26, 2025.

[38] UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen, Briefing to the UN Security Council, August 21, 2025.

[39] UN Document S/PRST/2025/6, Statement by the President of the Security Council, August 10, 2025.

[40] UN Document S/2025/482, *Thirty-sixth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024)*, July 24, 2025.

[41] SOHR, "114 attacks since early 2025," July 27, 2025.

[42] "ISIS and Rebel Offshoots Challenge the Al-Sharaa Administration's Security Grip," *Syria Report*, May 28, 2025.

[43] DOD, Justification for Fiscal Year 2026, Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund, June 2025.

addressing external threats" but "the SDF guard force is frequently pulled away to address security demands caused by instability in the region."[44] After President Trump met President Al Sharaa in Saudi Arabia in May 2025, a U.S. official said President Trump had urged Sharaa to (among other things) "assume responsibility for ISIS detention centers in Northeast Syria."[45]

SDF-secured camps at Al Hol and Roj house IS family members and other individuals displaced from the final areas retaken from IS forces in March 2019 (**Figure 6**). U.S. officials continue to encourage countries to repatriate their nationals from the camps. Under SDF-interim authority arrangements, some formerly IS-associated Syrian non-combatants have returned to Syrian communities. Repatriations to Iraq from Syria also have increased in 2025. SDF and UN authorities have set a goal of completing repatriations and returns by the end of 2025.

Syria and the United Nations Security Council

In 2025, the UN Security Council has called for "an inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process facilitated by the United Nations and based on key principles" in Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015).[46] These include "commitments to Syria's unity, independence, territorial integrity, and non-sectarian character," "credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance," and, eventually, "free and fair elections" under a new constitution.[47]

Permanent members of the Security Council differed sharply over developments in Syria from 2011 through 2024. Differences in emphasis have persisted following Asad's departure, though the permanent members continue to make common reference to Resolution 2254 and call for civilian protection, territorial unity, and inclusive governance.[48] The United States, United Kingdom, and France have engaged with interim authorities to support the transition and have supported conditional sanctions relief for Syrian state entities. Russia seeks to preserve its military basing access in Syria and has expressed concern about attacks on minorities, the presence and actions of foreign terrorist fighters, and Israeli military operations. The People's Republic of China has echoed these latter concerns, while highlighting the presence in Syria of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, an armed Islamist extremist group composed of ethnic Uighur and Central Asian fighters. Counterterrorism continues to provide some basis for Council consensus, but to date the Council has not revised its positions in the form of a new comprehensive resolution.

Russia and China blocked efforts in the Council to impose UN sanctions on the Syrian government and Syrian officials related to conduct during the 2011-2024 conflict, but the Council did impose targeted counterterrorism sanctions on some Syria-based groups and individuals, including HTS and Ahmed Al Sharaa.[49] In a December 2024 interview, Sharaa expressed his hope that Syrians would not be unduly constrained by Asad-era UN resolutions and international sanctions, and he asserted Syrians' collective responsibility for solving their issues internally,

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[44] LIG-OIR, Reports to the U.S. Congress, January 1 – March 31, 2025, p. 25, and April 1 – June 30, 2025, p. 23.

[45] X post, Karoline Leavitt (@PressSec), May 14, 2025 – 4:21 AM, https://x.com/PressSec/status/1922567846317392240.

[46] UN Document S/PRST/2025/6, Statement by the President of the Security Council, August 10, 2025.

[47] UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015).

[48] See UN Security Council, 9960th meeting, July 17, 2025, UN Document S/PV.9960.

[49] HTS and Sharaa are designated by the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. Sharaa is listed under his nom de guerre Abu Mohammed Al-Jawlani and an alias, with biographical information that does not correspond to his personal stated accounts and other expert accounts of his background.

while also welcoming international support.[50] Sharaa has argued that Asad's departure obviates international calls for negotiation with Asad-era entities and that the interim authorities are empowered to establish conditions allowing for the return of Syrian refugees and to define and implement a transition in line with the spirit of Resolution 2254.

The UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen of Norway, has acknowledged that Resolution 2254's specific calls for UN-facilitated negotiations "are no longer relevant," while reiterating Security Council statements emphasizing the importance of Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity, and calling for an inclusive and Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process.[51] Pedersen has highlighted the risks of renewed conflict posed by the unresolved status of northeast Syria and by tensions in southern Syria, and he has called for negotiated solutions and an end to military intervention by outside actors.[52] In April, Pedersen criticized what he described as Israel's "repeated and intensifying military escalations" in Syria, saying, "such actions undermine efforts to build a new Syria at peace with itself and the region, and destabilize Syria at a sensitive time."[53]

Pedersen has cited Syrian and international concerns about "the inclusion of foreign fighters in the senior ranks of the new armed forces, as well as individuals associated with violations."[54] In August 2025 he expressed "grave concern over the acute threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters at large in Syria."[55]

Pedersen has identified the inclusivity of a planned committee to draft a permanent constitution, the definition of mechanisms for achieving popular endorsement of such a constitution, the holding of inclusive indirect elections for an interim legislative body, and the ultimate holding of free and fair elections as critical to Syria's transition and the principles of Resolution 2254.

Humanitarian Crises and Appeals for Assistance

UN agencies estimate that nearly 7.1 million Syrians are internally displaced (of whom 1.4 million were in organized displacement sites as of August 2025).[56] According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of August 21, 4.19 million Syrians were registered as refugees in regional countries. UNHCR reports that more than 821,000 Syrians have returned to Syria through neighboring countries since December 2024, and more than 1.73 million internally displaced Syrians have returned to their homes in the same period.[57] UN agencies estimate that 16.5 million Syrians are in need of some form of humanitarian or protection assistance, nearly half of whom are children.[58]

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[50] MEMRI Translation #11695, reviewed by CRS, Source - Al-Arabiya Network, December 29, 2024.

[51] Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria (UN OSES), "Near Verbatim Transcript of Press Conference by United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Mr. Geir O. Pedersen," January 22, 2025; and UN Document SC/15943, "Security Council Press Statement on Situation in Syria," December 17, 2024.

[52] UN OSES, "Near Verbatim Transcript of Press Conference," January 22, 2025.

[53] UN OSES, Statement Attributable to United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Mr. Geir O. Pedersen, April 3, 2025.

[54] UN Document S/PV.9857, Remarks of UN SES Pederson to the UN Security Council, February 12, 2025; and, UN OSES, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen Briefing to the Security Council, March 25, 2025.

[55] UN OSES, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen Briefing to the Security Council, August 10, 2025.

[56] UNHCR, Syria Governorates IDPs and IDP Returnees Overview, August 21, 2025.

[57] UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Syria Refugee Response, at https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria; and, Regional Flash Update #41, August 22, 2025.

[58] UNOCHA, Humanitarian Response Priorities, Syrian Arab Republic, January – December 2025.

In March, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher said humanitarian providers were being forced to make "brutal choices," citing a trend of unmet appeals that caused reductions in the humanitarian response during 2024 "by more than half."[59] The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) has reported that health, education, protection, and food services have been disrupted across Syria due to limited funding of 2025 appeals and additional funding cuts, including the termination of some U.S. aid programs.[60] UNOCHA officials have described the negative effects of a what they describe as a "catastrophic drop in funding" to the UN Security Council and report that global donors have funded 14% of the 2025 UN appeal for $3.2 billion through December 2025.[61] The UN system has identified response priorities through December 2025 and intends to conduct a Multi-Sector Needs Assessment to support planning for 2026.[62]

The Asad government's collapse obviated the obstacles and bureaucratic restrictions the former government had imposed on the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Syria. Syria's interim security authorities have taken control of most border crossings, though large areas of northeast Syria adjacent to Turkey and Iraq are outside of their de facto control. Cross-border UN relief operations from Turkey have been extended, and goods may enter the country from functioning crossings with Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. UN agencies report that Syrian authorities are allowing Syrian refugees to enter and exit the country. According to UN surveys, among the obstacles and challenges facing returnees are security concerns, inadequate infrastructure, and limited economic opportunity and financial liquidity in Syria, along with damage to personal property, lack of civil or legal documentation, family relocation, transportation costs, and debts incurred abroad.

U.S. Interests and Initiatives

For decades, U.S.-Syrian ties were strained and, since 1979, the United States has designated Syria as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. The former Syrian government's hostility to Israel, its attempts to dominate neighboring Lebanon, its alignment with Russia, its partnership with Iran, its support for terrorist groups, and its development and use of weapons of mass destruction all fueled tension between the United States and Syria until the fall of Asad's regime in late 2024. In post-Asad Syria, counterterrorism, nonproliferation, civilian protection, and regional security concerns endure and may inform future U.S. policy choices.

Congress and successive U.S. Administrations imposed and maintained a range of bilateral sanctions on Syria and targeted sanctions on entities and individuals (see "U.S. Sanctions and Syria" below). After the onset of the anti-Asad uprising in 2011 and the outbreak of conflict, the United States and European countries imposed additional, more punishing sanctions on the Syrian government and individuals and entities supporting it. The Trump Administration has pursued a

[59] UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher, Briefing to the UN Security Council, March 25, 2025. The annual UN funding appeal for Syria in 2024 totaled $4.07 billion, and donors provided $1.91 billion, not all of which was provided under the UN appeal. The United States provided $1.179 billion in humanitarian assistance in Syria and the region during U.S. fiscal year (FY) 2024, including more than 27% of the funds directed through the 2024 UN-coordinated plan. See https://fts.unocha.org/plans/1175/summary.

[60] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Situation Report No. 6 (as of 27 May 2025), June 2, 2025; and, UNOCHA Geneva Head Ramesh Rajasingham, Briefing to the UN Security Council, May 21, 2025.

[61] Rajasingham, May 21, 2025; UNOCHA Director of Operations and Advocacy Edem Wosornu, Briefing to the UN Security Council, July 28, 2025; and UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher, Briefing to the UN Security Council, August 21, 2025.

[62] UNOCHA, Humanitarian Response Priorities, Syrian Arab Republic, January – December 2025.

policy of engagement and conditional support toward the interim government, removing many U.S. sanctions (and stating an intent to rescind Syria's state sponsor of terrorism designation).

The duration, severity, and effects of conflict in Syria have created some actual and potential threats for U.S., European, and regional security related to terrorism, weapons proliferation, the use of chemical weapons, military intervention, drug trafficking, and mass migration. In this context, successive Administrations and Congress have prioritized the following issues:

Counterterrorism. The former Syrian government's support for terrorism and the exploitation of Syrian territory by transnational terrorist groups to recruit, train, equip, raise funds, and plan attacks have been focal points for U.S. policymakers since before 2011. U.S. government reporting has described how Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, Hezbollah and other Iran-backed U.S.-designated terrorist groups, and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) have used Syria to further their aims, some with the active support of the Asad government.[63] Syria-based members of terrorist organizations, including the Islamic State, have used Syria "to plot or inspire external terrorist operations."[64] U.S. and partner force operations ended the Islamic State's control of populated territories in Syria in March 2019, but remnants of the group have continued to operate from remote areas in central Syria. IS fighters have attempted to break prisoners and family members out of U.S. partner-secured prisons and camps and have attacked Syrian communities and U.S. partners. In 2024, IS attacks increased in Syria relative to previous years, and, according to U.S. officials, as the Asad regime fell IS fighters "exploited the chaos to acquire some quantities of weapons and supplies from supply depots abandoned by regime forces."[65]

Syria's interim authorities, with reported intelligence support from the United States, have disrupted attempted IS attacks that could have exacerbated sectarian tensions in post-Asad Syria.[66] U.S., UN, and other international officials have expressed concern about the presence in Syria of foreign terrorist fighters and the integration into Syrian security forces of foreign individuals and fighters. The interim government has appointed foreign nationals to leadership roles in its security structures, and, according to UN reporting, "many tactical-level individuals hold more extreme views" than interim government leaders.[67] Interim authorities reportedly have argued that integrating anti-Asad fighters, including some foreign fighters, into national forces is preferable to dangers that might arise from their exclusion. U.S. Special Envoy for Syria Ambassador Tom Barrack reportedly said in June that the United States and Syria have reached "an understanding, with transparency" on the issue, after previous reports suggested U.S. urging of interim authorities to exclude foreign fighters.[68] Some Syrian leaders and other individuals and entities active in Syria remain subject to U.S. and UN terrorism sanctions (see "U.S. Sanctions and Syria" below).

Foreign Military Access and Basing. Since 2011, the presence and operations in Syria of foreign military forces from Russia, Iran, Turkey, Israel, and the United States and its partners have reflected the differing priorities and goals of outside actors in the country. U.S. policymakers may

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[63] See, for example, U.S. State Department, Country Reports on Terrorism 2023: Syria, November 2024; and, annual threat assessments of the Director of National Intelligence, 2014-2024.

[64] U.S. State Department, Country Reports on Terrorism 2023: Syria, November 2024.

[65] Lead Inspector General for Operation Inherent Resolve (LIG-OIR), Report to the U.S. Congress, October 1, 2024–December 31, 2024, p. 11.

[66] Warren P. Strobel, Ellen Nakashima, and Missy Ryan, "U.S. shared secret intelligence with Syria's new leaders," *Washington Post*, January 24, 2025.

[67] UN Document S/2025/482, *Thirty-sixth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024)*, July 24, 2025.

[68] "Exclusive - US gives nod to Syria to bring foreign jihadist ex-rebels into army," Reuters, June 2, 2025.

consider whether or how the continued operations in Syria of U.S. and coalition forces, Turkish forces, and Israeli forces affect U.S. interests. U.S. officials also may monitor and seek to shape the policies of Syrian interim authorities toward foreign military forces, including U.S. forces, Russian forces invited to Syria by the Asad government, and Israeli forces operating in and beyond the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force zone in the Golan Heights established in the 1974 Israel-Syria Disengagement Agreement. Syria's interim authorities say they seek to establish normal diplomatic and security relationships with foreign countries—including their former Russian and Iranian adversaries—on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty and noninterference. Syrian and Israeli officials met in Paris in August 2025 to discuss deconfliction and de-escalation following Israeli airstrikes on Syrian forces in July, including in Damascus, and Israeli operations in the Golan region and near the Lebanon-Israel-Syria tri-border. In a February 2025 interview, Ahmed Al Sharaa said "any military presence should be with the agreement of the host state."[69]

Weapons of Mass Destruction. The Asad government's domestic use of chemical weapons against its armed opponents and civilians drew international condemnation and motivated U.S. military strikes in 2017 and 2018. In December 2024, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) said "significant concerns persist regarding the accuracy and completeness" of the former government's declarations to the agency, "as well as the fate of substantial quantities of unaccounted-for chemical weapons."[70] Outstanding issues of concern reported to the OPCW Secretariat prior to Asad's ouster "involved large quantities of potentially undeclared or unverified chemical warfare agents and chemical munitions."[71]

In March 2025, interim Foreign Minister Asaad Al Shaibani participated in an OPCW meeting and stated the interim government's commitment "to destroy any remains of the chemical weapons programme developed under the Assad regime, to put an end to this painful legacy, to bring justice to victims, and to ensure that the compliance with international law is a solid one."[72] The OPCW since has deployed Declaration Assessment Team and Office of Special Missions personnel to Syria with the support of the interim government. The personnel have visited declared and suspected chemical weapons program locations and have reported their findings to the OPCW and the interim government.

The interim authorities have informed the OPCW that they lack the information and expertise to definitively identify and declare all chemical weapons related locations and materials, and the OPCW has estimated that experts will "need to visit and assess more than 100 additional locations across the Syrian Arab Republic, including military facilities, airfields, and research centres, all of which may be in varied, and hazardous, states of disarray, damage, or destruction."[73] The OPCW estimates that additional donor country contributions of 33.1 million euros will be required for Syria-related activities through 2027.

Conventional Weapons and Regional Security. The influx of weapons to Syria and their wide distribution in-country since 2011 present enduring threats to Syria's internal security and to the security of Syria's neighbors. Criminal groups, extremist organizations, and non-state armed groups, including some aligned with Iran and Turkey, have benefitted from the proliferation of small arms and military weapons during the conflict. In addition, unexploded ordnance, mines,

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[69] Reuters, "Syria's Sharaa aims to restore US ties, no contacts yet with Trump administration," February 4, 2025.

[70] OPCW, "OPCW urges Syria to fulfil Chemical Weapons Convention obligations," December 12, 2024.

[71] OPCW, "Syria's caretaker Foreign Minister addresses OPCW's Executive Council," March 5, 2025.

[72] OPCW Executive Council, Report by the Director-General Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme, EC-110/DG.2, July 24, 2025.

[73] OPCW Executive Council, EC-110/DG.2, July 24, 2025.

and other explosive remnants of war pose risks to Syrian civilians and international actors across Syria. Interim authorities' ability and willingness to assert control over weapons stockpiles associated with the former government may be limited or vary in different areas. Israel has acted to destroy advanced conventional weapons and military air defense and air domain awareness systems across Syria since December 2024, citing potential risks to Israel's security.[74]

Drug Trafficking. The Asad government enabled and profited from the production and smuggling of drugs across the Middle East, especially the drug captagon.[75] Congress sought to limit the Asad government's ability to profit from the captagon trade. In the 117th Congress, the Countering Assad's Proliferation Trafficking and Garnering of Narcotics Act (H.R. 6265, also known as the CAPTAGON Act) was introduced by Representative French Hill in December 2021, passed by the House in September 2022, and incorporated into the FY2023 NDAA (Section 1238 of P.L. 117-263). It has required the development and submission to Congress of an interagency plan to disrupt captagon trafficking and build regional counterdrug capacity. Interim authorities have pledged to dismantle captagon production and smuggling networks and cooperate with regional countries to halt the flow of the drug across Syria's borders. Arrests of criminals, including drug traffickers, are being publicized by interim authorities. Criminal networks' loss of captagon trade revenues may add to economic pressures in some areas of Syria.

Human Rights and Syrian Minorities. The Asad government's use of military force to repress demonstrations led many Syrians, the United States, and other countries in 2011 to call for Asad's departure. The Asad government's subsequent use of torture and its mass execution of prisoners continue to drive Syrian and international calls for accountability. Interim authorities have made statements calling for inclusive governance and respect for religious tolerance, and U.S. and other international officials have called on interim Syrian leaders to fulfill these commitments. U.S. officials have condemned attacks on minority communities, including by members of or forces associated with the interim government (see "Political and Security Dynamics" above). Some members of minority communities in northeast and southern Syria have expressed support for decentralized governance and appear to remain skeptical of interim authorities' intentions.

The State Department in 2023 designated HTS as an entity of particular concern pursuant to the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act (P.L. 114-281), and reported in 2025 that "armed terrorist groups, including Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, reportedly carried out arbitrary detentions and subjected some detainees to torture" during 2024.[76] The State Department's annual human rights report on conditions in Syria during 2024 cites UN Commission of Inquiry for Syria reporting and other human rights organizations' reporting alleging the involvement of SDF, HTS, and Turkey-backed SNA forces in a range of human rights abuses and violations. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended in its 2025 annual report that HTS be redesignated.

U.S. Diplomacy

President Donald Trump's May 2025 meeting in Saudi Arabia with Ahmed Al Sharaa and President Trump's announcement of his intent to rescind U.S. sanctions on Syria signaled a new approach in U.S. policy toward Syria. High level U.S. engagement and substantial sanctions relief

[74] Emanuel Fabian, "In historic campaign across Syria, IDF says it destroyed 80% of Assad regime's military," *Times of Israel*, December 10, 2024.

[75] For more information, see, U.S. State Department Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 2024; and, Caroline Rose and Matthew Zweig, "What Will Happen to Assad's Secret Drug Empire?" Foreign Policy, January 16, 2025.

[76] U.S. State Department, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 2024.

have been presented as a conditional opportunity for Syrians and transitional leaders to rebuild and reorganize while interim authorities demonstrating their intentions toward ethnic and religious minority groups, terrorist threats, and Syria's neighbors. The Trump Administration's engagement builds on initial contacts made and steps taken by the previous Administration in the wake of Asad's departure.[77] In 2025, U.S. Special Envoy for Syria Ambassador Tom Barrack and some Members of Congress have visited Syria.

In May, the Trump Administration took steps to waive and relieve some U.S. sanctions on Syria and in June and July the Administration rescinded and revised executive orders providing for many U.S. sanctions on Syria and revoked the designation of HTS as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. As of September, the group, Sharaa, and Interior Minister Anas Khattab remain listed as terrorist entities pursuant to Executive Order 13224, and remain subject to UN sanctions.

The United States suspended operations at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus in 2012; the Czech Republic serves as the U.S. protecting power in Syria. On May 29, Ambassador Barrack and other officials raised the U.S. flag at the U.S. diplomatic residence in Damascus for the first time since 2012.[78] The Trump Administration has not announced any plan to return U.S. personnel to Syria on an enduring basis. In March 2014, the State Department suspended the operations of the Syrian embassy in Washington, DC, and those of Syrian consulates in Michigan and Texas, and expelled Syrian staff.

U.S. Military Operations in Syria and U.S. Partner Forces

U.S. forces have operated in Syria since 2014 pursuant to the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMF). U.S. operations in Syria as part of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) seek the enduring defeat of the Islamic State. As of December 2024, an estimated 2,000 U.S. military personnel reportedly were present in eastern and southern Syria, conducting counterterrorism missions against IS remnants and supporting Syrian partner forces. U.S. forces have conducted dozens of airstrikes and multiple operations against IS targets in Syria since Asad's ouster, and have targeted Al Qaeda affiliates in northwest Syria in 2025.

Most U.S. forces in Syria have been deployed in the northeast in support of the SDF. U.S. troops also have supported the Syrian Free Army (SFA) near Al Tanf in a former deconfliction zone in southern Syria, along a transit route between Iraq and Syria once used by both IS fighters and by Iran and Iran-backed militias. In 2025, U.S. forces have continued to provide support to the SFA following that group's integration with the Syrian interim government under its 70th Division.

In April 2025, a Pentagon spokesperson announced the consolidation of U.S. forces and said "a deliberate and conditions-based process will bring the U.S. footprint in Syria down to less than a thousand U.S. forces in the coming months."[79] By July 2025, some U.S. troops had relocated from areas with Arab-majority populations in the Euphrates River valley (see **Figure 1**), having closed three bases and "either dismantled and removed or handed over infrastructure to the SDF."[80] Ambassador Barrack has said the U.S. military will "eventually go to one" base in Syria.[81]

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[77] "US removes $10M bounty on leader of rebel group now in charge of Syria," Voice of America, December 20, 2024.

[78] Timour Azhari, "US flag raised in Damascus, envoy says Syria-Israel peace is possible," Reuters, May 29, 2025.

[79] Department of Defense, "Statement from Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell Announcing the Consolidation of Forces in Syria Under Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve," April 18, 2025.

[80] "PKK ends 40-year war against Turkey, vows to pursue Kurdish rights," *Al-Monitor*, May 12, 2025; and LIG-OIR, Report to the U.S. Congress, April 1 – June 30, 2025, p. 21.

[81] Interview with NTV Turkey, in Raya Jalabi, "US cuts troop presence in Syria," *Financial Times*, June 3, 2025.

Since 2015, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) has conducted periodic military strikes in Syria outside the framework of OIR, including on targets linked to Al Qaeda, Syrian government chemical weapons-related targets, and Iran-backed militias—some of which used Syria-based facilities to monitor and target U.S. forces. From October 2023 to November 2024, the U.S. military conducted strikes on facilities in eastern Syria associated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and affiliated militias in response to attacks by Iran-backed militias on U.S. forces in Syria and Iraq. In 2024, U.S. officials reported force protection concerns linked to terrorist groups, Russia and Syrian government forces, and Iran-backed groups.

Syria Train and Equip Program FY2025 Funding and FY2026 Legislation

The Syria Train and Equip program, authorized by Congress since 2014 and funded via the Defense Department Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF), seeks to sustain the defeat of the Islamic State in Syria by enabling Syrian partner forces in the SDF and the SFA. President Joe Biden requested and Congress appropriated $147.9 million in FY2025 CTEF funds for Syria programs available through September 2026. The FY2025 National Defense Authorization Act extended authorities for U.S. train and equip programs in Syria through December 2025.

The Trump Administration's FY2026 defense appropriations request seeks nearly $130 million for CTEF programs in Syria, with funds remaining available through September 2027. Program costs include training and equipping, logistical support, stipends, repair, and sustainment investments to support paramilitary, internal security, and detention personnel.

The House and Senate reported versions of the FY2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA, H.R. 3838/S. 2296/S.Amdt. 3748) would reauthorize train and equip programs in Syria at the requested funding level through December 2026. The Senate-reported version and amendment in the nature of a substitute (ANS, S.Amdt. 3748) include a provision that would prohibit the obligation or expenditure of funds authorized to be appropriated by the act "to reduce the number of, or consolidate, bases of the United States Armed Forces located in Syria" until 15 days after a certification is submitted providing assessments and information on U.S. posture and plans to continue to achieve counterterrorism objectives. The Senate-reported version and ANS also include a provision directing the Secretary of Defense in consultation with the Secretary of State to take measures to support the defenses and internal security of the Al Hol and Roj camps and to provide annual reporting to Congress on related matters. The report accompanying the House version (H.Rept. 119-231) would require a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services "not later than February 15, 2026, on the progress, challenges, and outlook for potential U.S. defense partnership with the new Syrian government."

The House-passed and Senate-reported defense appropriations bills for FY2026 (H.R. 4016/S. 2572) would appropriate funds for Syria at the requested level. The Senate-reported bill would rescind $5 million in FY2025 appropriations from the CTEF account. The report accompanying the House version (H.Rept. 119-162) would direct the Secretary of Defense to provide a briefing within 60 days of enactment to "assess the integration of the Syrian Democratic Forces into the new Syrian government security force and evaluate progress made under the Al Hol Action Plan." (see below)

U.S. Support for IS Prisoner Detention and Camp Management

Successive Administrations have used Department of Defense and State Department programs to address challenges posed by the continued detention in Syria by U.S. partner forces of thousands of IS fighters and the presence of tens of thousands of formerly IS-associated individuals in U.S. partner-secured camps. Since 2019, transferring prisoners and returning camp residents to their home countries and communities has been slowed by other governments' fears about radicalization and by the uncertain security conditions prevailing in Syria. Ensuring the continued

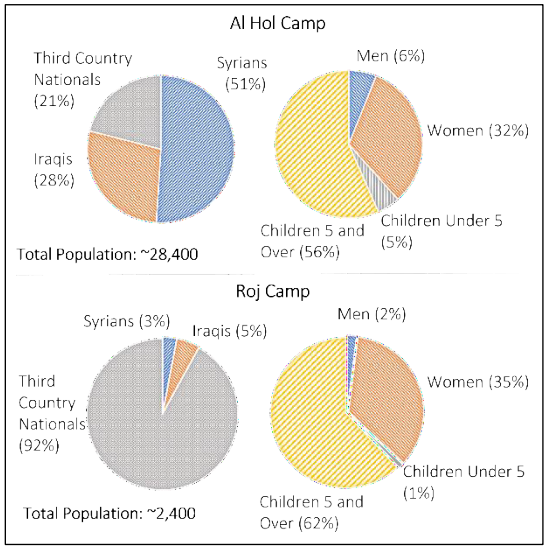
detention of IS fighters has been a high priority for successive Administrations, and Congress has directed specific resources and outlined requirements for U.S.-funded efforts related to humane detention and security practices. U.S. officials and partner forces considered and chose not to pursue plans to construct new purpose-built facilities to detain IS prisoners.[82] Instead, upgrades to existing facilities have been undertaken with U.S. support, starting with those assessed to have the highest risk. U.S. officials reported in July 2025 that all SDF-run prisons have received basic upgrades, though longer-term upgrades "have not yet resulted in a marked increase in security."[83]

The Departments of Defense and State have funded various training programs for U.S. partner force personnel focused on securing prisons and camps in northeast Syria. Some partner force personnel have received training in compliance with international humanitarian law and detainee treatment. In July, CJTF-OIR reported that because of competing demands SDF forces are "not consistently available to receive training."[84] CJTF-OIR further reported that "the lack of a formal training program for the SDF guard force... limits Coalition visibility into any deeper problems that might exist."

The FY2024 Further Consolidated Appropriations Act directed that not less than $25 million in ESF monies be made available to implement the "U.S. Government Al-Hol Action Plan," which has sought to improve conditions in the camp and support reintegration. As of June 2025, lead inspector general reporting to Congress stated that all USAID programming supporting the plan had been terminated, but that State Department programs for camp management, coordination, and child education and protection were ongoing.[85]

Figure 6. Demography of U.S. Partner-Secured Camps in Eastern Syria

As of July 15, 2025



Source: CRS, using data reported to Lead Inspector General by U.S. State Department, July 2025.

Speaking to the UN Security Council in February, a U.S. official said the United States supports a ceasefire in northern Syria that will "enable our local partners to focus on combatting ISIS and maintain security of detention facilities and displaced persons camps."[86] The official also said that ongoing U.S. assistance for the operations of the prisons and camps in northeastern Syria "cannot last forever" and "cannot remain a direct U.S. financial responsibility," urging "countries to expeditiously repatriate their displaced and detained nationals who remain in the region."[87]

Of the funds appropriated for CTEF programs in FY2025, $15 million was directed to infrastructure repair and renovation. The Administration's FY2026 request seeks $1.6 million for

[82] LIG-OIR, Report to Congress, October 1 – December 31, 2023, February 2024.

[83] LIG-OIR, Report to the U.S. Congress, April 1, 2025–June 30, 2025, p. 24.

[84] LIG-OIR, Report to the U.S. Congress, April 1, 2025–June 30, 2025, p. 23.

[85] LIG-OIR, Report to the U.S. Congress, April 1, 2025–June 30, 2025, p. 30-31.

[86] U.S. Mission to the United Nations, "Remarks by Ambassador Shea," February 12, 2025.

[87] U.S. Mission to the United Nations, "Remarks by Ambassador Shea," February 12, 2025.

these purposes. The Senate Appropriations Committee report S.Rept. 119-52 accompanying its version of the FY2026 defense appropriations bill (S. 2572) would direct the Department of Defense to report to the committee 30 days prior to obligating funds for construction activities, states that the committee "prioritizes detention facilities repair and construction ahead of any other construction activity," and would direct the Secretary of Defense "to engage with the SDF on ensuring that detainees are afforded all protections due under the Geneva Conventions." The Senate-reported version of the FY2026 NDAA (S. 2296) and ANS (S.Amdt. 3748) include a provision directing the Secretary of Defense in consultation with the Secretary of State to take measures to support the defenses and internal security of the Al Hol and Roj camps and to provide annual reporting to Congress on related matters.

U.S. Stabilization and Foreign Assistance

The future of U.S. stabilization and foreign assistance programs in Syria is uncertain in light of developments in Syria and changes following the Trump Administration's review of U.S. foreign assistance activities and implementation of agency reorganization plans and staff relocations. Through 2024, U.S. assistance supported stabilization programs in northeast Syria, funded engagement with civil society and training for local governance and security entities in areas outside of the Asad government's control, and helped meet housing, services, reintegration, and repatriation needs at the Al Hol and Roj camps.

According to lead inspector general reporting to Congress, as of June 30, all USAID stabilization programming in Syria has been terminated. Some State Department stabilization programs have been continued. Others have been terminated.[88] USAID humanitarian assistance activities were paused in early 2025. Some were restarted and others were terminated. Lead inspector general reporting to Congress cites USAID officials as reporting that, "as a result, many partners paused operations and the delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance, and in some cases terminated staff and closed offices."[89] USAID officials further reported that as of June 2025, "all USAID implementers were partially operational due to lack of payment," and termination of third-party monitoring contracts was "increasing the risk of waste, fraud, and abuse—especially in conflict-affected areas, where there is a heightened potential for diversion of funds."[90]

The Trump Administration has provided congressional committees of jurisdiction with updated lists of foreign assistance programs in Syria that it has terminated and preserved following its global review of U.S. foreign assistance. Changing conditions, opportunities, and risks in Syria may prompt further changes to U.S. assistance plans.

The Trump Administration's FY2026 budget request for foreign assistance does not include a specific amount for Syria programs, but, consistent with the prior Administration's requests, does seek authority notwithstanding other provisions of law to provide "non-lethal stabilization assistance for Syria, including for emergency medical and rescue response and chemical weapons

[88]LIG-OIR, Report to the U.S. Congress, April 1 – June 30, 2025, pp. 31-33.

[89] LIG-OIR, Report to the U.S. Congress, April 1 – June 30, 2025, pp. 31-33. According to USAID responses to LIG-OIR, "At the start of 2025, USAID BHA Syria managed 29 programs valued at $631,172,513. By the end of the quarter, 16 programs—worth $218,174,924—were terminated, while 14 remained active, totaling $412,998,589." Additionally, USAID reported that "the rapid and chaotic termination of awards disrupted implementers' internal controls, making it difficult to carry out proper closeout procedures. Staffing cuts limited their capacity for documentation, oversight, audits, and monitoring. The accelerated closure of sub-awards created pressure to spend remaining funds quickly, raising the risk of financial mismanagement."

[90] LIG-OIR, Report to the U.S. Congress, April 1 – June 30, 2025, pp. 35-36.

investigations."[91] The House Appropriations Committee-reported version of the National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2026 (H.R. 4779) includes this language, and would make funds available for assistance for ethnic and religious minorities in Syria.

U.S. Sanctions and Syria

From 1979 to 2024, the United States placed a broad array of sanctions on the government of Syria, Syrian entities and individuals, and third parties supporting certain Syrian government activities. The United States also imposed targeted sanctions on terrorist groups active in Syria and associated individuals. Successive Administrations and Congresses imposed and maintained these sanctions as a means of raising the costs to Syrian leaders of a number of policies they deemed hostile to U.S. national security, foreign policy, and economic interests. Specific sanctions actions were taken by different Administrations to address the Syrian government's support for terrorism, its trade in weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile technologies, its interference in neighboring Lebanon, and its conduct during the country's 2011-2024 conflict.

Sanctions Relief and Remaining Authorities

In January 2025, the Biden Administration issued a general license to allow for certain transactions in Syria through July 6, 2025, to include transactions with the government of Syria, transactions related to noncommercial personal remittances, and transactions in support of the sale, supply, storage, or donation of energy, including petroleum, petroleum products, natural gas, and electricity. President Biden also issued Executive Order 14142, amending Executive Order 13894 (2019)[92] to remove specific references to the government of Turkey and preserving provisions allowing the potential imposition of financial and travel sanctions on individuals determined by the President to "threaten the peace, security, stability, or territorial integrity of Syria"; or be involved in "the commission of serious human rights abuse" related to Syria.

On May 13, 2025, President Trump said during a visit to Saudi Arabia that his Administration is "currently exploring normalizing relations with Syria's new government," and said he would "be ordering the cessation of sanctions against Syria in order to give them a chance at greatness."[93] The Administration subsequently provided exemptive relief for sanctions on the Commercial Bank of Syria, issued a 180-day waiver of sanctions in the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 ("Caesar Act," 22 U.S.C. §8791 note),[94] and issued a general license (GL 25) that authorized

[91] U.S. Department of State, FY2026 Congressional Budget Justification, accessed June 2, 2025.

[92] President Trump in 2019 issued Executive Order 13894, which declared a national emergency based on U.S. concerns about the actions of the Turkish military in Syria. In October 2024, President Biden renewed that national emergency declaration for one year. See 84 *Federal Register* 55851 and 89 *Federal Register* 82929.

[93] Ben Hubbard, Jonathan Swan, and Erika Solomon, "Trump Says U.S. Will Lift Sanctions on Syria Under New Government," *New York Times*, May 14, 2025.

[94] In 2019, Congress enacted the Caesar Act, requiring the President to impose sanctions on persons the President determines to have knowingly provided significant support or knowingly engaged in significant transactions with the government of Syria, entities it owns or controls, and its senior officials; certain military or mercenary forces; or to be subject to sanctions with respect to Syria under U.S. law; and those who knowingly sell or provide significant goods, services, technology or other support related to a number of economic sectors, including natural gas, petroleum, and "significant construction or engineering services" for the government of Syria. Congress extended the sunset of the Caesar Act through December 2029 in the FY2025 National Defense Authorization Act.

certain transactions with Syria and designated individuals that would otherwise be prohibited under sanctions regulations.[95]

On June 30, President Trump issued Executive Order 14312, eliminating or waiving many Asad-era sanctions on the government of Syria, while amending Executive Order 13894 (2019) again to maintain sanctions on Asad-associated entities and refine mechanisms for possibly imposing future sanctions on entities determined to be disrupting Syria's transition, violating human rights, or threatening Syria's stability or territorial integrity. The order directs the Secretary of State to "take all appropriate action" with respect to Syria's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism[96] and the designation of Jabhat Al Nusra/Hay'at Tahrir al Sham as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity. It also directs the Secretary of State to review President Sharaa's individual designation. On July 8, Secretary Rubio's determination revoking the FTO designation of HTS was published.[97]

On August 26, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) published a final rule removing the Syrian Sanctions Regulations (31 C.F.R. Part 542) from the Code of Federal Regulations, consistent with Executive Order 14312. According to the final rule, "OFAC intends, in a separate rulemaking, to amend 31 CFR part 569 to rename it the Promoting Accountability for Assad and Regional Stabilization Sanctions Regulations and to incorporate E.O. 13894, as further amended, and other relevant authorities." The Administration's July 2025 amendment of E.O. 13894 (2019) preserves a framework for the potential imposition of sanctions on actors in Syria for "(1) actions or policies that further threaten the peace, security, stability, or territorial integrity of Syria; or (2) the commission of serious human rights abuse."[98]

Legislation providing for some specific U.S. sanctions on the Syrian government and entities in Syria has not been amended or rescinded since December 2024, although there is debate in Congress over several related legislative proposals (see "Legislation and Hearings in the 119th Congress" below).[99] Some other terrorism, chemical and biological weapons and missile

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[95] FINCEN, "Exception to Prohibition Imposed by Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act against the Commercial Bank of Syria," May 23, 2025; U.S. State Department, "Providing Sanctions Relief for the Syrian People," May 23, 2025; OFAC, "General License No. 25, Authorizing Transactions Prohibited by the Syrian Sanctions Regulations or Involving Certain Blocked Persons," May 23, 2025.

[96] Designation as a state sponsor of acts of international terrorism under Section 6(j)(1)(A) of the Export Administration Act of 1979 or Section 1754(c) of the Export Control Reform Act of 2019 restricts export licensing for controlled goods and services; Section 620A(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 prohibits most U.S. foreign aid, Peace Corps programs, nonemergency agricultural aid, and Export-Import Bank funding; and Section 40(d) of the Arms Export Control Act prohibits sales and transfers of arms and related goods and services. See 50 U.S.C. §4813(c), 22 U.S.C. §2371(a), and 22 U.S.C. §2780(d), respectively. Section 1768 of the Export Control Reform Act of 2019 continues designations made under Section 6(j) of the Export Administration Act of 1979, which Section 1766 of the Export Control Reform Act of 2019 repealed nearly entirely. This designation also deprives targeted governments of sovereign immunity under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act from lawsuits based on certain acts of terrorism. See 28 U.S.C. §1605a. Designation as a state sponsor of international terrorism has implications elsewhere in law, see CRS Report R43835, *State Sponsors of Acts of International Terrorism—Legislative Parameters: In Brief*.

[97] *Federal Register*, Public Notice 12762, July 8, 2025.

[98] *Federal Register*, 90 FR 41505, August 26, 2025.

[99] For example, provisions of the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act (P.L. 106-178; 50 U.S.C. §§1701 note), Chemical and Biological Weapons Control and Warfare Elimination Act of 1991 (title III, P.L. 102-182; 22 U.S.C. §§5601 et seq.), Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 (title IV, P.L. 110-457; 22 U.S.C. §§2370c et seq.), and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (div. A, P.L. 106-386; 22 U.S.C. §§7101 et seq.) have been applied to impose sanctions on Syria. Other statutes such as the Illicit Captagon Trafficking Suppression Act (div. P, P.L. 118-50; 50 U.S.C. §§1701 note), the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019, as amended (Sections 7401-7402, 7411-7413, 7421-7426, 7431-7438, title LXXIV, div. F of P.L. 116-92; 22 U.S.C. §8791 note), the Syria Human Rights Accountability Act of 2012 (Title VII, P.L. 112-158 (Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012; 22 (continued...)

proliferation sanctions, human rights-related sanctions (addressing trafficking in persons and child soldiers), and drug trafficking (captagon) statutory sanctions apply. If the President or his designees act to further waive or permanently rescind the application of sanctions on Syria, such as Syria's State Sponsors of Terrorism designation, then specific notification and certification requirements to Congress under law may apply.

In the interim, the continuing application of the Caesar Act and Executive Order 13894, as amended, provide a basis for the U.S. government to reimpose some sanctions on Syrian actors if the President and his Administration determine that doing so is in U.S. interests. In May 2025, Secretary Rubio said "the President has made clear his expectation that relief will be followed by prompt action by the Syrian government on important policy priorities."[100] That month, the Department of the Treasury said, "U.S. sanctions relief has been extended to the new Syrian government with the understanding that the country will not offer a safe haven for terrorist organizations and will ensure the security of its religious and ethnic minorities. The U.S. will continue monitoring Syria's progress and developments on the ground."[101]

Earlier in May, the State Department had announced that Secretary of State Rubio recertified Syria as a "'not fully cooperating country' (NFCC) under section 40A of the Arms Export Control Act." The Government of Syria is consequently denied trade with the United States in defense articles and defense services under Section 40A of the Arms Export Control Act.[102]

U.S. Targeted Terrorism Sanctions

In May 2018, the executive branch added Hayat Tahrir al Sham as an alias of the Nusrah Front, which until July 2025 was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. As of September, HTS remains a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) entity under Executive Order 13224. The executive branch designated Sharaa as an SDGT pursuant to Executive Order 13224 in 2013; as of September, he remains so designated, as does interim Interior Minister Anas Khattab. Sharaa has described U.S. terrorism related sanctions on him, HTS, and other former HTS figures as no longer warranted in light of subsequent counterterrorism actions and commitments and their post-Asad decision to disband armed groups, including HTS. The executive branch retains authority to amend or rescind SDGT designations under current law.

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U.S.C. §§8791-8795), and the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-175; 22 U.S.C. §2151 note) provide authority for sanctions that may be applied to entities in Syria.

[100] Secretary of State Marco Rubio, "Providing Sanctions Relief for the Syrian People," May 23, 2025.

[101] U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Issues Immediate Sanctions Relief for Syria," May 23, 2025.

[102] 22 U.S.C. §2781. The Secretary of State makes this determination annually by May 15; Syria has been designated each year since the provision was first enacted in 1996. U.S. State Department, Tammy Bruce, Department Spokesperson, "Certification of Cuba as a Not Fully Cooperating Country," May 13, 2025.

armed groups, including HTS. The executive branch retains authority to amend or rescind SDGT designations under current law.

European Union (EU) Sanctions

On May 28, the EU announced that it was lifting all non-security-based economic restrictive measures on Syria and removing 24 entities from its asset blocking list, including the Central Bank of Syria. The EU amended its remaining Syria sanctions measures to focus on Asad regime individuals and their international backers and extended them to 2026. The EU also placed human rights-based sanctions on those reportedly involved in the March 2025 sectarian violence in western Syria.[103]

U.S. Tariffs

President Trump has increased tariffs on U.S. imports from all global trading partners.[104] On July 31, the President issued an executive order adjusting country-specific tariffs that set the tariff on Syria to 41%.[105] CRS has not observed any Administration comment on Syria's specific tariff rate. In 2024, U.S. exports to Syria were valued at $2 million and U.S. imports were valued at $11 million.[106]

Admission of U.S. Syrian Partners and Status of Syrian Nationals

Since 2014, U.S. operations against the Islamic State in Syria have relied on partnership with local forces. Members of Congress have debated the eligibility of these local partners for admission into the United States in the case of attack by Turkish and/or Syrian forces. Several bills in the 116th Congress would have extended the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program to foreign nationals employed by the U.S. military in Syria, as well as their immediate families. The Syrian SIV programs proposed by these bills generally were modeled on the temporary SIV programs for Iraqis and Afghans who worked for or on behalf of the U.S. government. During the 117th Congress, Representatives Jason Crow and Michael Waltz reintroduced one such bill, the Syrian Partner Protection Act (H.R. 2838), which would have provided SIV status to a national of Syria or a stateless person who has habitually resided in Syria that had "partnered with, was employed by, or worked for or directly with the United States Government in Syria as an interpreter, translator, intelligence analyst, or in another sensitive and trusted capacity, on or after January 1, 2014, for an aggregate period of not less than 1 year."

The Biden Administration in January 2024 redesignated Syria as a country whose nationals are eligible for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) in the United States through September 30,

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[103] The EU measures target the Sultan Sulaiman Shah Brigade, the Hamza Division, and the Sultan Murad Division. Official Journal of the European Union, Council Decision (CFSP) 2025/1110 of 28 May 2025.

[104] See, Presidential 2025 Tariff Actions: Timeline and Status, by Keigh E. Hammond and William F. Burkhart.

[105] The White House, Further Modifying the Reciprocal Tariff Rates, July 31, 2025.

[106] U.S. International Trade Administration, TradeStats Express data accessed August 1, 2025.

2025.[107] Nearly 40,000 Syrian nationals had been admitted to the United States as refugees from FY2014 through FY2023.[108]

Regional and International Initiatives and Interests

The nature, duration, and effects of the Syria crisis and the intervention of external actors have made the outcome of Syria's transition and the country's stability a matter of national security concern for some countries across the Middle East region and beyond. As of September 2025, notable statements and developments involving selected third parties include

Israel. The fall of the Asad regime brought an end to fifty years of rule by antagonists of Israel that facilitated the transfer of support from Iran to Israel's enemies in Lebanon and beyond. During Israel's wars against Hamas and Hezbollah following the attacks of October 7, 2023, Israel continued air strikes on Syrian territory; in September 2024, it conducted a special forces raid against Syrian missile factories.[109] Israel has conducted military strikes across Syria since Asad's ouster, targeting sites associated with Syrian weapons of mass destruction and defense research programs, conventional weapons, and air defense systems. Israel also has demanded that the interim Syrian government demilitarize three southern provinces, a demand that some Syrians have publicly protested.

As the Asad regime collapsed, Israeli military forces entered the UN Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF) buffer zone established by the 1974 Israel-Syria Disengagement Agreement. From 1974 until Asad's ouster, most international controversy regarding control over Israel-Syria border areas focused on Israel's 1981 annexation of areas of the Golan Heights it had captured in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Syria's interim authorities report that they have communicated with UNDOF officials and expressed their willingness to return Syrian state forces to areas adjacent to the UNDOF zone provided that Israel removes its force from areas within and beyond the zone.

In a letter to the United Nations, Israel stated that it had taken "limited and temporary measures to counter any further threat to its citizens," and that the (Israel Defense Forces) IDF have deployed temporarily in a few points and in a limited capacity east of Line A."[110] In December 2024, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the press that Israel's seizure of control over the UNDOF zone was a "temporary defensive position until a suitable arrangement is found."[111] Subsequent media reports suggest that the IDF has been constructing more long-term infrastructure in the UNDOF zone and beyond.[112] In January 2025, Israeli Defense Minister Israel

[107] The redesignation became effective April 1, 2024 and is slated to last through September 30, 2025. According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services data provided to CRS, as of March 31, 2025, 3,860 nationals of Syria were covered by TPS. In conjunction with the redesignation, certain Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) for Syrian beneficiaries of TPS were extended through March 31, 2025. See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Extension and Redesignation of Syria for Temporary Protected Status," 89 *Federal Register* 5562, January 29, 2024; and, CRS Report RS20844, *Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure*, by Jill H. Wilson.

[108] Approximately 250 or fewer Syrian nationals were affirmatively granted asylum in the United States in each of the fiscal years from 2021 to 2023. See U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Homeland Security Statistics, *Refugees: 2023*, November 8, 2024; and, *Asylees: 2023*, October 2, 2024.

[109] "Israeli military says commandos raided missile plant in Syria in September," Reuters, January 2, 2025.

[110] UN Document S/2024/887, December 9, 2024.

[111] Israeli Prime Minister's Office, "PM Netanyahu's Statement from the Golan Heights," December 8, 2024.

[112] Loveday Morris, Zakaria Zakaria, and Meg Kelly, "Israel is building outposts in Syria, raising local fears of occupation," *Washington Post*, February 2, 2025.

Katz said that Israeli forces intend to remain "at the top of Mount Hermon and in the security zone indefinitely to protect Golan communities, the north and all Israeli citizens."[113]

As mentioned above, Israel has demanded that the new Syrian government demilitarize its three southern provinces.[114] After a reported Israeli strike south of Damascus on February 25, Defense Minister Katz said Israel "will not allow southern Syria to become southern Lebanon. We will not endanger the security of our citizens. Any attempt by Syrian regime forces and the country's terrorist organizations to establish themselves in the security zone in southern Syria—will be met with fire."[115]

Syrian authorities reportedly have said in a letter to the U.S. government "we will not allow Syria to become a source of threat to any party, including Israel."[116] In a February interview, Ahmed Al Sharaa, whose family reportedly was displaced from the Golan region in 1967, said, "The Israelis need to retreat because their advancement will cause a lot of trouble in the future There is near-unanimous international agreement that [Israel's] advancement is not right."[117]

Further Israeli strikes followed sectarian violence in May and July, including strikes in Damascus on the Syrian Ministry of Defense headquarters and near facilities associated with the Syrian presidency. Israel has expressed a willingness to defend Druze communities—an offer Syrian Druze have differed over.[118] In late August, Israeli strikes and a raid by troops killed Syrian soldiers new Kiswah.[119]

Since May, Israel and Syria have engaged in talks to ease tensions and exchange security information, including in U.S.-supported meetings following the July violence in southern Syria and Israel's military intervention.[120] Israel has proposed the establishment of a humanitarian corridor between Israel and Suweida, an idea that the Syrian government thus far has rejected.[121] Both governments have publicly acknowledged the discussions. Sharaa has not precluded future Israel-Syria ties, but current discussions reportedly focus on security arrangements in southern Syria.[122]

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[113] "Syria urges IDF withdrawal from buffer zone in talks with UN observers," AFP/Times of Israel, January 29, 2025.

[114] "Netanyahu says Israel won't allow Syrian forces 'south of Damascus,'" AP, February 23, 2025; and, Sudarsan Raghavan, "Israel's Demilitarization Demand Tests Syria's Shaky Government," *Wall Street Journal*, February 26, 2025.

[115] Times of Israel, "Katz confirms Israeli strikes in southern Syria: 'We will not allow it to become southern Lebanon,'" February 25, 2025.

[116] "Exclusive: Syria and Israel in direct talks focused on security, sources say," Reuters, May 27, 2025.

[117] "An interview with Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria's president," *The Economist*, February 4, 2025.

[118] More than 100,000 Druze live in the Golan Heights. Israeli Druze serve in the Israel Defense Forces and many have ties to the Druze community in Syria. During the July fighting, Israeli and Syrian Druze both crossed their respective borders to defend coreligionists. "Israeli military strikes near Syria's presidential palace after warning over sectarian attacks," Associated Press, May 2, 2025; and, "Syrians in predominantly Druze city reject Israeli statements, affirm national unity," *Arab News*, February 25, 2025.

[119] Dov Lieber, Summer Said, and Jared Malsin, "Israeli Troops Raid Site Deep Inside Syria, Damascus Says," *Wall Street Journal*, August 29, 2025.

[120] "Syria has had indirect talks with Israel to calm situation, Syrian leader says," Reuters, May 7, 2025; and, Euan Ward and Gabby Sobelman, "After Deadly Clashes, Syria and Israel Hold Direct Talks," *New York Times*, August 20, 2025.

[121] Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Syrian authorities ease roadblocks near Sweida ahead of possible reopening of Damascus road," *The National*, August 21, 2025.

[122] "An interview with Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria's president," *The Economist*, February 4, 2025; *France 24*, "Syria, Israel hold US-mediated talks in Paris on regional de-escalation," August 20, 2025; Agence France Press, "Israel says in talks 'right now' on south Syria demilitarization, August 28, 2025.

The prospect of Turkish-Syrian military cooperation and the possible stationing in Syria of additional Turkish military forces—including air and air defense forces in central Syria—has emerged as a matter of concern for Israel's government.[123] Turkish and Israeli officials have taken deconfliction steps to reduce the continuing potential for military confrontation.

Turkey. Turkey has emerged as perhaps the most influential international actor in Syria and offered security and economic assistance to the interim government; Turkish and Syrian officials have exchanged high level visits and Turkish military forces remain present in areas of northern Syria. Turkey's stated principal concerns in Syria appear to relate to the presence and activities of PKK members in areas controlled by the U.S.-backed SDF. Turkey may also harbor a basic opposition to the SDF and enduring concerns about potential Syrian Kurdish autonomy.

Turkey has offered military training and support to Syria's interim authorities, and Sharaa and other interim leaders have adopted positions on the future of the SDF, its integration with national forces, and the political future of northeast Syria that appear to align with Turkish preferences. In August 2025, Turkey and Syria signed a "joint training consultancy memorandum of understanding [MOU]" as an apparent step toward a substantive military cooperation deal.[124] Turkish officials reportedly anticipate strengthening Syria's regular army with arms and other forms of support in hopes of helping it establish long-term stability.[125] While Turkish and Syrian officials apparently are discussing the potential deployment of Turkish troops to some Syrian bases, the MOU reportedly does not address that point.[126] Additionally, Turkey reportedly plans to avoid providing any weapons that could provoke Israel given existing tensions.[127]

Closer Syrian-Turkish official ties and an expanded Turkish military presence in Syria may provide Turkey with greater regional influence, and could affect the perceptions and security calculations of Israel, Jordan, Iraq, and other Arab states.

UN agencies report that there were more than 2.52 million registered Syrian refugees in Turkey as of August 21, 2025.[128]

Arab States. Syria's interim authorities are actively pursuing engagement with Arab states, whose interests and motives may differ. For instance, Qatar may share Turkey's comfort with Sharaa's Islamist orientation, while Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates may harbor reservations. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud facilitated Sharaa's meeting in Saudi Arabia with President Trump and, via phone, with President Erdogan of Turkey, and the kingdom and the UAE have announced plans for large investments in Syria. Saudi Arabia and Qatar jointly paid Syria's outstanding debt to the World Bank, enabling new lending, and they announced three months of joint support for Syrian public sector salaries beginning in June. Iraq's government invited Sharaa to attend the May Arab Summit in Baghdad, but he declined amid some Iraqi groups' vocal opposition because of his past associations with Al Qaeda and the Islamic State group. Jordan and Syria have continued to exchange official visits and Jordan joined

[123] "Israel, Turkey said to agree to prevent clashes in Syria, establish hotline," *Times of Israel*, May 21, 2025.

[124] Soylu, "Turkey-Syria defence deal covers training and weapons supply."

[125] Ezgi Akin, "After inking military pact, Turkey to provide Syria with weapons, training," *Al-Monitor*, August 14, 2025.

[126] Soylu, "Turkey-Syria defence deal covers training and weapons supply."

[127] Akin, "After inking military pact, Turkey to provide Syria with weapons, training."

[128] UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Syria Refugee Response, at https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria.

other Arab states and Turkey in rejecting Israel's July 2025 military strikes inside Syria in the context of intercommunal violence in the southern province of Suweida.[129]

Iran. Syria's interim authorities control areas formerly used by Iran and Iran-backed armed groups to move weapons and personnel into and beyond Syria; Asad's ouster severed long-established and important links in the networks Iran has used to project regional power. Syria's interim authorities have reported interdicting some small arms shipments to Lebanon, but have not accused Iran or Iran-backed groups of violating Syrian sovereignty on a broad or recurring basis. This may not prove that Iran is not attempting to do so. In December, Ahmed Al Sharaa expressed his hope that Iran and Syria could have normal relations, based on mutual respect for sovereignty and noninterference.[130]

Interim authorities in Syria have reportedly disrupted attempted Islamic State attacks against the Sayyida Zeinab shrine in Damascus, the protection of which Iran and pro-Iran armed groups used as a predicate and recruiting tool for their presence in Syria. A group known as Syrian Islamic Resistance Front claims to have conducted attacks since December 2024 on Israeli forces in the Golan Heights region from Syria: its statements feature a logo similar to Iran-backed armed groups in Lebanon and Iraq.[131]

Syria's transitional government, did not join other Arab states in condemning Israeli and U.S. military operations against Iran in June 2025. Press and social media reports suggest that Israeli aircraft transited Syrian airspace en route to and from Iran, with Israeli strikes against military equipment in Syria during December and January 2025 having eliminated Syria's already limited ability to control its airspace.

Russia. Russia was Asad's most important military supporter. The presence in Syria of Russian air, ground, and naval forces both bolstered Russia's regional power projection abilities and served as a bulwark for the Asad government. Russia's decision in late 2024 to limit its military intervention on Asad's behalf, and its rapid decision to engage with Syria's transitional authorities, illustrate the enduring nature of Russia's interests in Syria, with continued military access as a key Russian priority. Russian personnel and equipment remain at the Hmeimim air base and the Tartous Naval Facility.[132] An August press report also suggests that Russian forces have strengthened their presence at the Qamishli airport in northeast Syria.[133]

In a December interview, Sharaa described Syria's relationship with Russia as long established and strategic and said the interim government would work to establish a new strategic relationship with Russia based on respect for the sovereignty of the Syrian state. In April, Sharaa confirmed he had requested the return by Russia of former Syrian president Asad, who has been granted asylum in Moscow.[134] In July, the Syrian Foreign Minister visited Moscow "to start a necessary discussion ... based on the lessons of the past, to formulate the future."[135] Russia has invited Sharaa to attend a Russia-Arab League summit in October 2025.

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[129] Saudi Press Agency, "Saudi Arabia, Jordan, UAE, Bahrain, Turkiye, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon and Egypt Support Syrian Sovereignty," July 18, 2025.

[130] MEMRI Translation #11695, reviewed by CRS, Source - Al-Arabiya Network, December 29, 2024.

[131] Jerusalem Post, "IDF opens fire on armed group in Syrian Golan, pro-Assad group claims responsibility," February 1, 2025.

[132] LIG-OIR, Report to the U.S. Congress, April 1, 2025–June 30, 2025, p. 26.

[133] Paul Iddon, "What Russia's Military Is Doing In This Strategic Syria Airport," *Forbes*, August 15, 2025.

[134] Christina Goldbaum, "Syria's Jihadist-Turned-President Seeks New Allies," *New York Times*, April 23, 2025.

[135] Reuters, "Russia's Putin meets Syrian FM in Moscow, Sharaa invited to Russia-Arab summit," July 31, 2025.

Russia's role in arming and training Syrian military personnel for decades may suggest that Syrian interim authorities could look to Russia as one source of military equipment and support as they rebuild and rearm Syrian security forces. Russia's seat on the UN Security Council also gives it influence over international decisions related to Syria.

Legislation and Hearings in the 119th Congress

In the 119th Congress

- H.R. 1327 would direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to conduct a threat assessment of terrorist threats to the United States posed by individuals in Syria with an affiliation with a Foreign Terrorist Organization or a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity.
- S.J.Res. 6 would direct the President to remove U.S. armed forces from hostilities in or affecting Syria within 30 days of adoption and unless and until a declaration of war or specific authorization is enacted.
- H.R. 3941 and S. 2133 would repeal the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act (22 U.S.C. §8791 note). H.R. 4241 would repeal the Caesar Act and the Syria Human Rights Accountability Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. §§8791 et seq.).
- H.R. 4427, the Syria Sanctions Accountability Act of 2025, would amend the Caesar Act and establish other reviews and conditions related to sanctions relief for Syria.
- H.R. 4779, the National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2026, would appropriate funds for the conditional provision of foreign assistance in Syria.
- In the House and Senate, versions of a FY2026 NDAA and (H.R. 3838/S. 2296) and defense appropriations acts (H.R. 4016/S. 2572) would authorize and appropriate funds for continued military assistance to U.S. partners in Syria.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a full committee hearing (S. Hrg. 119-37) on February 13, 2025 entitled "After Assad: Navigating Syria Policy."

The House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa held a hearing on June 5, 2025 entitled "After Assad: The Future of Syria."

The House Financial Services Committee held a full committee markup on H.R. 4427, the Syria Sanctions Accountability Act of 2025, on July 22, 2025.

Outlook and Issues Before Congress

Syria's interim authorities are asserting domestic and international legitimacy based on their leadership of the late 2024 military campaign that dislodged Bashar Al Asad and the acceptance to date by Syrians of the interim Constitutional Declaration and decisions they have taken. They are attempting to project an image of calm inevitability for their continuing leadership of the transition, amid sectarian violence, incomplete territorial control, and calls from Syrians and international observers for a more inclusive process and greater protection for minorities. As procedural steps in the transition continue, Syrian leaders face daunting challenges as they seek to reconstruct a functioning state apparatus that can protect Syrian sovereignty and citizens, rebuild national infrastructure, and establish a self-sustaining, productive economy.

Interim leaders' willingness to share power and the durability of the peace that has broadly prevailed in Syria since mid-December 2024 may continue to be tested. Stressors may include decisions made regarding the political and security future of northeast Syria; the relative integration and participation in the transition of Druze communities in southern Syria; the protection of the rights of Syrian minorities and women; the possibility of renewed or expanded foreign military intervention; and the willingness of Syrians to uphold order in the face of severe humanitarian crises, economic deprivation, sectarian violence, and vigilantism.

Outside actors continue to approach Syria in pursuit of their discrete interests. Many regional countries have pledged support for the transition in Syria, but the compatibility of their goals and Syrians' willingness to embrace them are uncertain. Israeli military operations in Syria and the Golan Heights region, Israeli actions to protect Syrian minority groups, and Israeli government demands that Syria's new government accept limits on Syrian government security and military operations in southern Syria may lead to confrontation. The possibility of Turkish military intervention in the context of disputes over the future of the northeast remains present. Outside actors, including the United States, may weigh concerns about the resumption of conflict in Syria and the reemergence of transnational terrorist threats alongside goals of supporting and shaping the political transition, stabilization, and reconstruction efforts.

In this context, Congress and the Trump Administration may continue to reassess U.S. interests in Syria and debate approaches toward securing them relative to U.S. priorities elsewhere. U.S. policy toward Syria since 2011 has pursued parallel and at times competing interests and has featured a mix of evolving diplomatic, military, assistance, and sanctions efforts. Views in Congress and successive Administrations regarding how the United States should approach Syria policy have at times been divergent and have changed over time and in response to developments at home and abroad. Looking ahead, the 119th Congress may use its national security tools and authorities to examine and shape U.S. policies toward Syria's interim government, various Syrian groups, and regional and international parties active in Syria. As it does so, Members may consider and debate three key policy questions:

Should the United States continue its military and counterterrorism operations in Syria?

Eliminating threats to the United States and U.S. national security interests posed by terrorist groups active in Syria has been a consistent goal of U.S. policy toward Syria since the Obama Administration. Through August 2025, the United States has maintained a military presence in Syria tasked with conducting operations against terrorist groups and supporting local partner forces in ensuring the enduring defeat of the Islamic State organization. This has included the provision of support to partner forces that detain thousands of IS fighters and secure camps housing tens of thousands of individuals from formerly IS-controlled areas. Congress has provided authority and funding to the Department of Defense on an annual basis for these operations, in addition to operational funds for U.S. Central Command and other military components to conduct related activities.

As President Trump considers and makes decisions about the future of U.S. military operations in Syria, Congress is considering whether or not to continue to provide related funding and authorities and, if so, on what terms. The FY2025 National Defense Authorization Act extends through December 2025 authorities for U.S. train and equip programs in Syria.[136] While Congress could act independently of the Administration's requests, to date, congressional consideration of

[136] The act did not include a Senate-reported provision that would have required the Administration to certify the independent capabilities of U.S.-backed Syrian forces before reducing the number of U.S. troops in northeast Syria below 400.

defense appropriations and authorizations for FY2026 has not featured proposals for substantial revisions of U.S. policies and programs.

The fluid political and security situation inside Syria raises continuing questions about the relationships between U.S. partner forces and Syria's interim government. Congress may consider whether U.S. assistance should continue, change, or end in light of developments and factors in Syria such as the posture and policies of Syria's interim authorities, the participation of U.S. partner forces in Syria's transition, or any emergent hostility or conflict involving interim authorities, other countries such as Turkey or Israel, and U.S. partner forces. Partner force protection concerns, including questions related to evacuation and immigration, have emerged in other contexts such as Afghanistan and Iraq where the United States has ended military and counterterrorism efforts conducted with partner forces.

Syria's interim president Ahmed Al Sharaa has emphasized that he seeks relationships with other countries, including the United States, based on respect for Syria's sovereignty. In a February interview, Sharaa said, "In light of the new Syrian state, I believe any illegal military presence should not continue. Any military presence in a sovereign state should take place under a certain agreement, and there has been no such agreement between us and the United States of America."[137] With the SDF agreeing in March 2025 to begin a process of integrating with the Syrian state, U.S. security relations with both the SDF and interim authorities may face pressures to change.

Possible questions Members may consider for oversight and legislative purposes include

- What is the current nature of Syria-based terrorist threats? To what extent do groups active in Syria threaten the United States directly or indirectly? To what extent are U.S. interests and partners threatened?
- How capable are U.S. partner forces and the interim Syrian government of independently combatting terrorist threats in Syria? On what timeline and with what assistance might these entities be capable of providing security for Syria independently? What role are foreign terrorist fighters or other extremists playing in Syria's new security forces? What are the prospects for demobilization and disarmament of armed groups in Syria? What would such efforts entail?
- Should the United States continue to operate militarily in Syria? Should Congress act to support or limit Administration actions to change the U.S. military presence or operations in Syria? What viable alternatives to U.S. leadership and resources exist, if any? How long and at what cost should the United States be prepared to combat terrorist threats in Syria?
- Should the United States continue to operate militarily without the consent of Syria's interim government? On what basis and legal justifications should any ongoing U.S. military operations in Syria take place?
- How might the integration of U.S. partner forces in Syria with national forces affect U.S. programs and interests? What changes, if any, should result in U.S. operations or engagement? Should the United States seek a status of forces agreement or counterterrorism and defense cooperation agreement with interim authorities?
- What consideration or protection, if any, does the United States owe Syrian partner forces that have supported U.S. counterterrorism objectives to date? What

[137] Reuters, "Syria's Sharaa aims to restore US ties, no contacts yet with Trump administration," February 4, 2025.

posture should the United States adopt with regard to the relationships between its Syrian partners and Syria's emergent new government? How might any such obligations best be reconciled with the security concerns of U.S. allies and any broader U.S. reputational interests?

What type of relationship should the United States have with Syria's interim government and other entities in post-Asad Syria?

On May 13, 2025, President Donald Trump said during a visit to Saudi Arabia that his Administration is "currently exploring normalizing relations with Syria's new government."[138] The United States suspended diplomatic operations in Syria during the 2011-2024 conflict, but did not sever diplomatic relations or durably transfer recognition to any other Syrian entity. In December 2024, then-Secretary of State Antony Blinken said "The United States will recognize and fully support a future Syria government that results from ... an inclusive and transparent process."[139] President Trump's engagement with President Al Sharaa and ongoing engagement with interim government leaders by Special Envoy for Syria Barrack reflect a de facto U.S. recognition of the transitional authorities, but, to date, the United States has not formally recognized the interim government or invited it to send diplomatic representatives to the United States on a lasting basis.

The Administration has begun the process of rescinding U.S. sanctions on the Syrian government and Syrian state entities that were imposed under the previous Syrian government, while maintaining targeted sanctions on Asad regime officials and maintaining a framework that would provide for the imposition of new sanctions on Syrian actors if necessary. Uncertainty persists over the inclusivity of the transition and the interim government's approach to minority communities and areas controlled by U.S. partner forces.

Possible questions Members may consider for oversight and legislative purposes include

- When and on what terms, if any, should the U.S. government reestablish regular diplomatic relations with Syria's interim government? What diplomatic presence should the United States and Syria have in each other's country, and what costs and opportunities might accompany the return of U.S. diplomatic personnel to Syria on a permanent basis?
- When, how, and on what terms should the United States alter prevailing sanctions on Syria, Syrian state entities, or individuals and groups in Syria, including U.S.-designated terrorist entities and individuals? What specific executive or legislative sanctions measures, if any, ought to be altered and how? Under what circumstances might sanctions be reimposed and for what purposes? When and under what circumstances should the United States release any Syrian state funds blocked in the United States? What measures can Congress directly affect and what measures are within the President's discretion?

Should the United States provide Syria-related foreign assistance and humanitarian assistance?

Through January 2025, the U.S. State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development provided a range of foreign assistance and security assistance in Syria, focused on

[138] Ben Hubbard, Jonathan Swan, and Erika Solomon, "Trump Says U.S. Will Lift Sanctions on Syria Under New Government," *New York Times*, May 14, 2025.

[139] Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, "The Syrian People Will Decide the Future of Syria," December 10, 2024.

areas outside the control of the Syrian government.[140] This included stabilization programs focused on essential services and local governance, civil society, support for democratic governance, education, demining, agriculture, support to independent media, community security, livelihoods, and economic growth. U.S. humanitarian assistance supported relief efforts for internally displaced persons in Syria, select Syrian communities, and Syrian refugees in regional countries. The Trump Administration's review of U.S. foreign assistance, the reorganization of executive branch entities responsible for implementing foreign assistance, and changes to the U.S. military presence in Syria altered U.S. capabilities and programs. Some assistance programs have ended, some have changed, and some continue on previous terms.

Congress may inquire about the extent to which changes to U.S. foreign assistance programs and implementation in Syria instituted by the Trump Administration reflect lasting changes to U.S. policy and priorities there. Congress may consult Administration officials, implementing partners, and other observers to determine whether prevailing efforts are aligned with U.S. priorities and interests in Syria and whether alternative approaches are advisable.

Past congressional and executive branch concerns have focused on obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Syria, the potential diversion of U.S. humanitarian and security assistance by entities in Syria, and the extent to which U.S.-funded assistance programs may benefit Syrian entities with whom the United States has policy differences. While many of these concerns were directly linked to the antagonistic relationship between the Asad government and the U.S. government, and Asad's exploitation of international aid and recovery efforts, Congress may also consider these issues when examining proposals for assistance programs in post-Asad Syria, and in considering Administration requests for authorities or funds.

Possible questions Members may consider for oversight and legislative purposes include

- How have the Trump Administration's 2025 foreign assistance policy changes affected U.S. assistance programs and policies in Syria and regional countries? What specific programs and contracts have changed and how have implementing partners and program beneficiaries been affected? How have other countries or entities responded? Have any acted to replace U.S. funding and/or implementation of programs supported by the United States through 2024?
- What are Syria's post-Asad security, economic, reconstruction, and humanitarian needs? To what extent, and how, are such needs being assessed and met? What resources and partners are engaging to provide support? What support, if any, should the United States provide? Using what authorities, resources, and mechanisms? For how long, on what terms, and at what cost?

[140] For a review of these programs see LIG-OIR, Report to the U.S. Congress, October 1, 2024–December 31, 2024, pp. 84-99.

Appendix. Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS): Leadership, Insurgency, Terrorism, and Governance

Ahmed Hussein Al Sharaa was born in 1982 to a Syrian family from Damascus.[141] According to Sharaa, his family lived in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and returned to Syria when he was seven. Sharaa has said his grandfather was displaced from the Golan Heights amid Israel-Syria fighting during the June 1967 Six-Day War: Sharaa apparently adopted the nom de guerre Abu Mohammed al Jolani/Jawlani/Golani in reference to his family's roots in that area.

Figure A-1. Interim President of the Syrian Arab Republic Ahmed Al Sharaa

Source: Above – Associated Press, 2016. Below - Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA), February 25, 2025.

Sharaa has said he travelled to Iraq in 2003, arriving just prior to the U.S. invasion, and that, after a brief return to Syria, he again travelled to Iraq in 2005 and joined the organization that would become Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Sharaa claims he differed with the group's anti-Shia Muslim sectarian ideology and targeting of civilians, but Sharaa remained an AQI member and, according to a former U.S. intelligence official, he led an AQI cell.[142] U.S. forces arrested Sharaa around 2005 or 2006, and imprisoned him in Camp Bucca in southern Iraq until late 2010 or early 2011, when he was released.[143] Sharaa reportedly used a false identity while in Iraq. Sharaa says he used his time in prison to develop plans for toppling the Syrian government. Upon Sharaa's release, he sought out former associates, who were then organized and operating as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).

Sharaa has said that after the start of the anti-Asad uprising in Syria in 2011, he shared his plans for waging an insurgency in Syria with AQI/ISI leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. Sharaa said Baghdadi agreed to provide limited support, and Sharaa departed Iraq for Syria with funding and

[141] Biographical and historical information drawn from: *Frontline*, "The Frontline Interviews: The Jihadist," June 1, 2021; Raya Jalabi, "The secret history of Syria's new leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa," *FT Magazine*, March 7, 2025; Aaron Zelin, interview with John Haltiwanger, "What to Know About the Man Who Toppled Assad, *Foreign Policy*, December 11, 2024; Zelin, "Jihadi 'Counterterrorism:' Hayat Tahrir al-Sham Versus the Islamic State," U.S. Military Academy Combatting Terrorism Center (CTC), *CTC Sentinel*, February 2023; Hassan Hassan, "Two Houses Divided: How Conflict in Syria Shaped the Future of Jihadism," *CTC Sentinel*, October 2018; and Charles Lister, "How al-Qa`ida Lost Control of its Syrian Affiliate: The Inside Story," *CTC Sentinel*, February 2018.

[142] PBS Frontline Interview with Nada Bakos, *Frontline*, "The Frontline Interviews: The Jihadist," June 1, 2021.

[143] Sharaa reportedly was detained while using a false identity.

a small number of AQI/ISI cadres. In late 2011, *Jabhat al Nusra Li-Ahl al Sham* (the Support Front for the People of Syria, or Nusra Front) began targeting the Asad government. According to the U.S. government, from November 2011 to December 2012, the Nusra Front claimed "nearly 600 attacks – ranging from more than 40 suicide attacks to small arms and improvised explosive device operations – in major city centers." The State Department described the Nusra Front in 2012 as "an attempt by AQI to hijack the struggles of the Syrian people for its own malign purposes."[144]

Under Sharaa's leadership, the Nusra Front became a leading actor in the insurgency against Asad, drawing greater support from some other Syrian factions. In April 2013, Baghdadi attempted to reassert direct control over the Nusra Front and announced that Sharaa's group would be dissolved into the newly announced Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIL/ISIS). Sharaa said he and his group were not consulted on the change, and they pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri and said the Nusra Front would continue its operations.[145] While Islamic State and Al Qaeda leaders disputed global leadership of the jihadist movement in 2014 and 2015, IS and Nusra Front fighters clashed in Syria, with IS forces expelling the Nusra Front and other armed anti-Asad groups from large areas of northern and central Syria.

Sharaa announced the dissolution of the Nusra Front in July 2016 and rebranded the group as *Jabhat Fatah al Sham* (the Syrian Victory Front). In January 2017, Sharaa merged his group with some other armed Islamist opponents of Asad and established *Hayat Tahrir al Sham* (the Organization for the Liberation of Syria). Al Qaeda rejected Sharaa's decisions and accused Sharaa of betrayal. Several Al Qaeda ideologues and operatives left the new coalition. Sharaa later directed HTS security operations against Al Qaeda-linked figures.

By 2018, HTS had become the de facto authority in Idlib province in northwest Syria, coopting some rivals and suppressing some groups' opposition to its leadership through force. Some Al Qaeda-linked elements of HTS opposed reported HTS security cooperation with Turkey and HTS leaders' emphasis on local security and administration. These elements split from HTS, forming *Hurras Al Din* (Guardians of Religion). As of 2025, U.S. military strikes continue to target Hurras Al Din members.

HTS established the Syrian Salvation Government in Idlib to administer limited services and provide governance. HTS at times clashed with groups operating under the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army coalition, but coordinated with them and other Islamist armed groups under a security mechanism known as the *Fatah al Mubin* (Clear Victory) Operations Room. This network, in coordination with Turkey's armed forces, resisted pro-Asad forces' efforts to retake Idlib province. The arrangements were the precursor to the Military Operations Department that launched the "Deterring Aggression" operation from Idlib in November 2024 that seized Aleppo, Homs, and Hama, and ultimately toppled the Asad regime.

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[144] U.S. State Department, "Terrorist Designations of the al-Nusrah Front as an Alias for al-Qa'ida in Iraq," December 11, 2012.

[145] *France24*/Agence France Presse (AFP), "Syria's al Nusra militants vow allegiance to al Qaeda," April 10, 2013.

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Exhibit 18

Syria

Security situation

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Syria – Security situation

This report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

The report at hand does not include any policy recommendations. The information does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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Executive summary

Since the fall of the Assad government in December 2024, the security situation remains volatile and highly fragmented across different regions in Syria. While Damascus and some government-controlled urban areas have seen relative stability, various forms of violence persist nationwide.

Throughout the early months of 2025, the new security forces conducted extensive operations against remnants of the former government. Heavy clashes between the security forces and Assad loyalists in March 2025, particularly in the coastal governorates of Latakia and Tartous, resulted in significant casualties among security forces, Assad loyalists, as well as civilians and caused displacement of civilians. The March violence marked the most severe outbreak of violence since Assad's fall.

Alawites, Shia Muslims, and to a lesser extent Druze communities have faced targeted attacks, especially during the March 2025 violence. Vigilante killings, revenge attacks, and sectarian clashes have been reported, particularly in Homs, Hama, Latakia, Tartous, and Rural Damascus. There are also reports of Sunni extremist groups perpetrating attacks against Alawites and other minorities.

A general absence of accountability has fueled rampant criminal activity, including kidnappings, extrajudicial killings, and armed robberies across various governorates. Armed groups, some affiliated with the new authorities, have committed human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, torture, and executions, with limited government oversight.

Since Assad's fall, Israel has escalated its military activity in Syria, targeting military infrastructure and conducting cross-border incursions into Quneitra, Daraa, and Suweida. Israeli operations have resulted in both civilian and military casualties and displacement.

Islamic State (IS) remains an active threat, particularly in Deir ez-Zor, where multiple attacks have targeted both civilians and military personnel. The group continues to exploit local vulnerabilities, engaging in extortion and armed violence. However, the extent of the group's activity has decreased since the fall of the former government.

Freedom of movement has improved following the fall of the former government. Many checkpoints have been removed, scrutiny has eased, and incidents of extortion and arbitrary arrest are now rare. Whilst movement on major roads flows smoothly without major issues and the new authorities appear to actively ensure unobstructed movement on these roads, extremist groups continue to pose risks on secondary roads. Checkpoints still cause frustration among civilians, and transport options are limited and costly. In north-eastern Syria, increased security due to a reduction in Turkish bombardments has eased freedom of movement. Women's freedom of movement in Syria varies by area and checkpoint, with occasional ad hoc gender segregation in public transport.

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Introduction

The thematic Country of Origin Information (COI) report at hand examines the security situation in Syria in the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 May 2025, following the fall of the Assad government in December 2024. The report provides an overview of the general security situation in the country and identifies a number of security trends, relevant for understanding the current situation, followed by an overview of security incidents, based on data provided by ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project). Finally, the report examines freedom of movement in Syria.

The purpose of the report is to provide updated information on issues relevant for the processing of asylum cases.

The report is primarily based on written sources, supplemented with information gathered via online interviews with two sources with in-depth knowledge of the situation in Syria: the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) and a Syrian journalist.

The consulted sources were briefed about the purpose of the interviews and that their statements would be included in a public report. Minutes were written for each interview. These were forwarded to the sources for approval, giving them the opportunity to amend, comment or correct their statements. Both sources approved their statements, which can be found in Annex 1. The sources were referenced in this report according to their own request.

For the sake of transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the interview minutes have been given consecutive numbers, which are used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes. The Terms of Reference (ToR), which were drafted in consultation with the Asylum Division of the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) and the Danish Refugee Appeals Board, are included in Annex 2.

The report is a synthesis of the information obtained from written and interviewed sources and does not include all details and nuances provided by the sources. In the report, care has been taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible. The individual sources should not be held accountable for the content of the report.

Attention should be called to the changeable security situation in Syria and the fact that the information provided in this report may become outdated. Therefore, the issues addressed in this report should be monitored periodically and brought up to date accordingly.

The report is written in accordance with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) COI Report Methodology.[1] The research and editing of this report were finalised on 19 June 2025.

The report is available on the website of DIS, us.dk, and is thus available to all stakeholders in the refugee status determination process as well as to the public.

[1] EUAA, *EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology*, 22 February 2023, url

Abbreviations

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
COI	Country of Origin Information
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
FSA	Free Syrian Army – or Syrian Free Army (SFA)
HTS	Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
IED	Improvised explosive device
IS	Islamic State
SAA	Syrian Arab Army
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SFA	Syrian Free Army – or Free Syrian Army (FSA)
SNA	Syrian National Army
SOHR	Syrian Observatory for Human Rights
ToR	Terms of Reference

1. Background

1.1. Political development

On 8 December 2024, a coalition of opposition forces led by the Islamist armed group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), whose control had previously been limited to parts of the governorate of Aleppo and Idlib, overthrew the government of Bashar al-Assad after a 12-day military offensive.[2] The government fell after more than 13 years of civil war during which more than 500 000 people were killed; with the fall of the Assad government, more than 50 years of Baath Party rule in Syria ended.[3]

On 12 December 2024, the new Syrian government declared that it would suspend the constitution for a three months interim period, during which a new legal and human rights committee would review and amend it.[4]

On 29 January 2025, Ahmed al-Sharaa, previously known as Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, leader of HTS, was appointed President of Syria for a transitional period by the General Command in Syria. At the same time, the Military Operations Administration announced several important decisions, including that:

- al-Sharaa was authorised to form a temporary legislative council for this transitional period;
- the People's Assembly (i.e. the former Syrian parliament) would be dissolved;
- the 2012 constitution would be abolished and all emergency laws suspended;
- the army, all security services and militias of the Assad government would be dissolved;
- the ruling Baath Party and affiliated parties and organisations would be dissolved and prohibited from being reestablished; and
- all military and civil bodies would be dissolved and integrated into state institutions.[5]

On 25 February 2025, a National Dialogue conference was held in Damascus, which resulted in a 'temporary constitutional declaration' and a 'temporary legal council' to support determining Syria's future. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which control large parts of north-eastern Syria, were not invited to the conference.[6]

[2] UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, url, para. 2; HRW, *World Report 2025 - Syria*, 16 January 2025, url; Austria, ACCORD, *Information collection on developments regarding the fall of president Assad*, 11 March 2025, url
[3] HRW, *World Report 2025 - Syria*, 16 January 2025, url; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, url, para. 3-4; New Humanitarian (The), *The Alawites caught between revenge and a new Syria*, 26 March 2025, url
[4] New Arab (The), *Syria suspends constitution, celebrates fall of Assad as Israel continues attacks*, 13 December 2024, url
[5] Enab Baladi, *General Command appoints Ahmed al-Sharaa as President of Syria*, 29 January 2025, url
[6] Al Jazeera, *Key takeaways from Syria's National Dialogue conference*, 26 February 2025, url; SCR, *March 2025 Monthly Forecast: Syria*, 1 March 2025, url; AP, *Syria's national dialogue conference held as the battered country seeks to rebuild*, 25 February 2025, url

On 13 March 2025, President al-Sharaa signed a temporary constitution, effective for a five-year transitional period. The constitution establishes a presidential system in which the president holds executive power and appoints ministers. Moreover, it recognises Islamic law as primary source of jurisprudence, while promising to protect the rights of all ethnic and religious groups in Syria. The temporary constitution introduces a People's Committee as transitional parliament; two thirds of its members are appointed by a committee selected by President al-Sharaa and one third appointed by the president himself.[7]

On 29 March 2025, al-Sharaa announced the formation of a new transitional government, consisting of 23 ministers, including representatives of different religious groups; e.g. an Alawite as Minister of Transportation, a Druze as Minister of Agriculture, and a Christian woman with a background in the opposition as Minister of Social Affairs and Labour.[8]

1.2. Socio-economic situation

On the economic level, 13 years of conflict have devastated Syria's infrastructure. Entire towns have become uninhabitable while schools, hospitals, roads, water systems, and electrical grids lie in disrepair. Public services are barely operational, and the economy is in a state of collapse.[9]

The Syrian news outlet Enab Baladi reported on 26 March 2025, however, that the annual inflation rate – according to a report by the Central Bank of Syria – had decreased significantly. During the period from March 2024 to February 2025, the overall inflation rate decreased, reaching 36.8 % compared to 120.6 % in the same period the year before. The report attributes this decline in e.g. food prices to an increase in the value of the Syrian pound and in the supply of goods after the fall of the Assad government. In spite of this positive development, Syrians' purchasing power remains low due to a decrease in real income.[10]

As regards international sanctions, several sanctions against Syria have been suspended. For example, on 30 December 2024, the US suspended selected sanctions against Syria for six months to ease the flow of humanitarian aid.[11] On 27 January 2025, the EU decided on a step-by-step approach to suspend far-reaching sanctions against Syria, contingent on conditions being met on the ground in Syria such as the protection of all religious and ethnic minorities and the respect for human rights and women's rights.[12] On 24 February 2025, the EU suspended selected sanctions against Syria with immediate effect, including sanctions on oil, gas, and electricity, as well as restrictions on the transport sector, e.g. aviation.[13] In March 2025, Canada announced its intention to ease sanctions against Syria.[14] In April 2025, the UK

[7] AP, *Syrian leader signs constitution that puts the country under an Islamist group's rule for 5 years*, 13 March 2025, url
[8] Reuters, *Syria's president al-Sharaa forms new transitional government*, 30 March 2025, url
[9] HRW, *Syria: US Lifting Sanctions Will Bolster Rights, Recovery*, 15 May 2025, url
[10] Enab Baladi, *Annual inflation rate decreases in Syria*, 26 March 2025, url
[11] Reuters, *US allows transactions with governing institutions in Syria despite sanctions*, 6 January, url
[12] Euro News, *EU agrees on 'step-by-step' roadmap to start easing sanctions on Syria*, 27 January 2025, url
[13] Reuters, *EU suspends sanctions against Syria including on energy, banking*, 24 February 2025, url; Al Jazeera, *EU suspends select Syria sanctions to encourage democratic development*, 24 February 2025, url
[14] Al Jazeera, *Canada announces plan to ease Syria sanctions, appoints ambassador*, 13 March 2025, url

lifted selected sanctions against Syria, including restrictions on Syria's Ministry of Defence.[15] And on 28 May 2025, the EU officially removed all economic sanctions on Syria, with the exception of those related to security concerns.[16] Finally, a number of international donors have promised to provide economic support to Syria, including the EU and Canada.[17]

According to the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, the humanitarian needs in Syria are at an unprecedented level, with seven out of every ten Syrians – approximately 16.5 million people – still requiring assistance. Half of the population remains displaced, either within the country or abroad.[18] Over 90 % of the Syrian population live below the poverty line, with at least nine million not able to access enough quality food.[19]

1.3. Rebuilding security forces

According to the Syrian Ministry of Defence, as of February 2025, between 70 and 100 armed groups had agreed to participate in the new administration and to be incorporated under the armed forces of the Syrian Defence Ministry.[20] In order to simplify this process, the Supreme Committee for the Regulation of Armed Forces Data has been formed to oversee the tracking of military capacities and personnel. At the same time, a group of officers is working on designing the structure of the new Syrian army. The government has emphasised that all military factions will be disbanded and incorporated into state institutions.[21]

Several media outlets announced in April 2025 that representatives from the Syrian Ministry of Defence began meeting with officers who defected from the Syrian army during the rule of President al-Assad. This was described as part of the efforts to restructure the Syrian army and reintegrate the defected officers into the Syrian armed forces.[22]

On 26 March 2025, the Arabic news site Al-Modon reported on the new criteria for (voluntary) recruitment to security and military institutions in the Syrian transitional government.[23]

The Syrian government is facing several difficulties in rebuilding the Syrian armed forces. Rebuilding its weapons arsenal and infrastructure is a major challenge.[24]

[15] BBC News, *UK lifts sanctions on Syrian defence ministry*, 24 April 2025, url
[16] UNHCR, *Regional Flash Update #28; Syria situation crisis*, 22 May 2025, url
[17] France 24, *In Syria, EU official announces 235 mn euro aid package,* 17 January 2025, url; AP, *Syria donors pledge $6.5 billion in aid hoping to encourage its new leaders down the path to peace*, 17 March 2025, url; Al Jazeera, *Canada announces plan to ease Syria sanctions, appoints ambassador*, 13 March 2025, url
[18] DG ECHO, *Syria*, 22 May 2025, url
[19] HRW, *Syria: US Lifting Sanctions Will Bolster Rights, Recovery*, 15 May 2025, url
[20] Washington Post (The), *Syria could allow Russia to keep its bases, new defense minister says*, 6 February 2025, url
[21] New Arab (The), *Forging a united front: The challenges of building Syria's new army,* 3 February 2025, url
[22] Syria TV, *"الدفاع السورية" تجري مقابلات مع الضباط المنشقين عن النظام المخلوع [The Syrian Defence Ministry conducts interviews with officers who defected from the ousted regime]*, 8 April 2025, url
[23] Al-Modon, *شروط التجنيد الجديدة بسوريا.. الجيش الوطني يخشى إقصاءه [New recruitment requirements in Syria: The National Army fears exclusion]*, 26 March 2025, url
[24] New Arab (The), *Forging a united front: The challenges of building Syria's new army*, 3 February 2025, url

1.4. Other developments

As of 22 May 2025, an estimated 507 672 Syrians had returned to Syria via neighbouring countries since the fall of the Assad government, which brings the total of Syrians that have returned since early 2024 up to 868 512, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Moreover, 1 200 486 internally displaced persons had returned to their homes in the period from early December 2024 to 22 May 2025.[25]

Syria resumed international flights on 7 January 2025, starting with Qatar Airways.[26] Turkish Airlines,[27] Royal Jordanian,[28] and the Turkish low-cost carrier AJet followed, launching regular flights to Damascus between January and April 2025.[29] Direct flights to the United Arab Emirates also resumed in April 2025.[30]

[25] UNHCR, *Regional Flash Update #28; Syria situation crisis*, 22 May 2025, url
[26] Al Jazeera, *Syria to resume international flights from Damascus airport next week*, 5 January 2025, url; Enab Baladi, *الخطوط التركية.. ما شروط السفر إلى دمشق [Turkish Airlines: What are the travel requirements to Damascus?]*, 16 January 2025, url
[27] Enab Baladi, *الخطوط التركية.. ما شروط السفر إلى دمشق [Turkish Airlines: What are the travel requirements to Damascus?]*, 16 January 2025, url
[28] Enab Baladi, *أربع رحلات أسبوعيًا.. "الأردنية" تستأنف رحلاتها إلى دمشق [Four flights per week: "Jordanian" resumes flights to Damascus]*, 16 January 2025, url; New Arab (The), *Which international airlines have resumed flights to Syria*?, 23 January 2025, url
[29] Anadolu Ajansı, *Turkish low-cost air carrier to begin flights to Damascus,* 29 March 2025, url
[30] New Arab (The), *First Syrian passenger flight to UAE departs from Damascus*, 20 April 2025, url

1.5. Territorial control

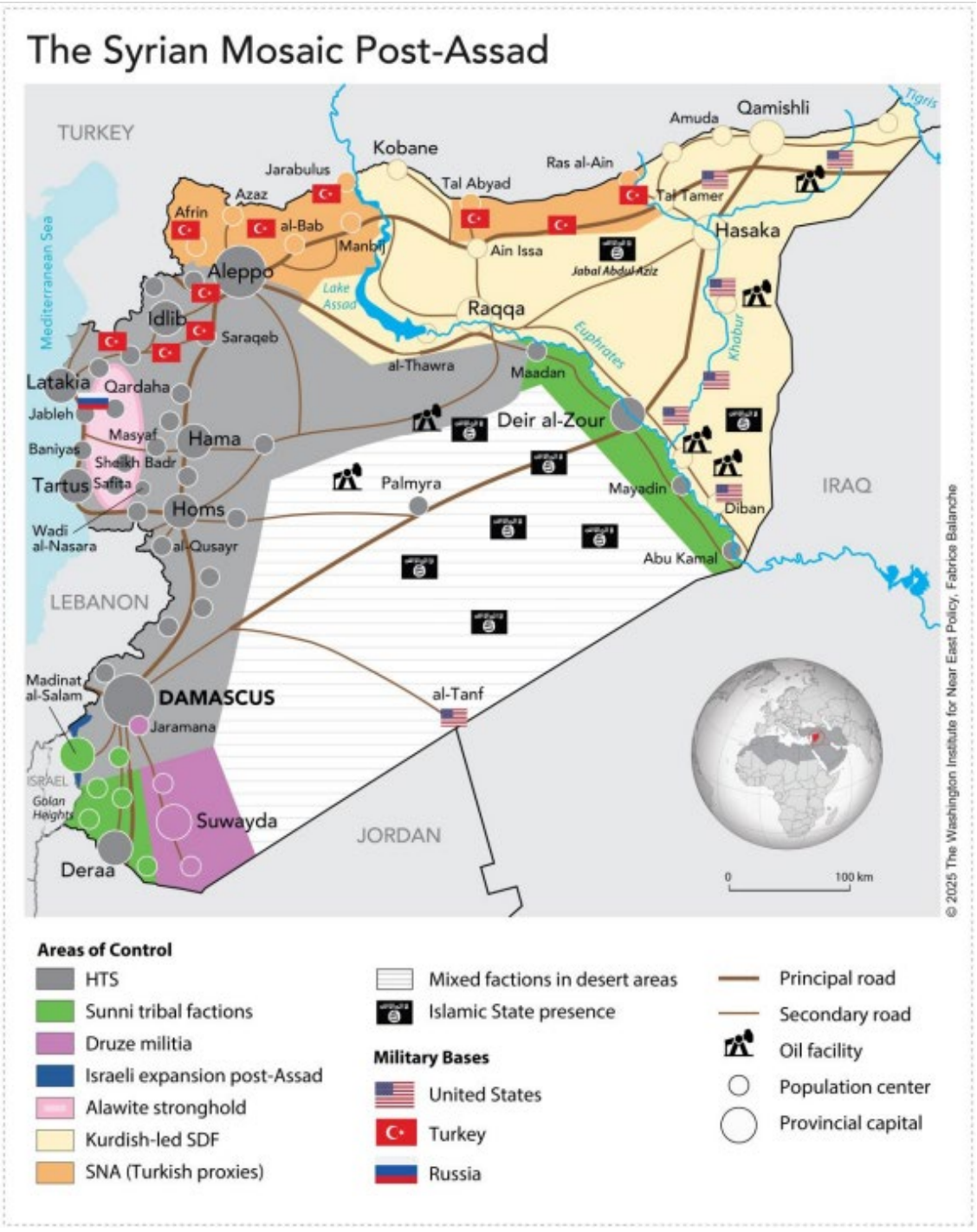

Figure 1: Map of territorial control by Fabrice Balanche, Washington Institute for Near East Policy[31]

[31] Washington Institute for Near East Policy (The), *Rebuilding Syria May Require Federalism*, 28 February 2025, url

2. Security situation

2.1. General security situation

According to the interviewed sources, it is very difficult to generalise about the security situation or the current violations in Syria, as security conditions vary significantly – even within the same city or region.[32]

Different factors impact the security situation in different areas of Syria, including: whether the area in question was previously a stronghold of the Syrian opposition or is perceived as having supported the former government; people's political, religious, and sectarian affiliations; and local conditions and dynamics.[33]

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the overall security situation in Syria is nevertheless relatively stable, with fewer security incidents reported in the past two months (April and May 2025).[34] However, hostilities continue in some regions, including Israeli operations in southern Syria and incidents in Latakia and Tartous,[35] and the security situation remains fragile.[36] In various regions outside the capital, the situation remains volatile due to the presence of extremist Islamist groups, particularly in Hama, Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, Rural Damascus, and Deir ez-Zor. These groups contribute to ongoing insecurity through assassinations, kidnappings, and robberies.[37]

2.1.1. Damascus

Since the fall of the former government, the new authorities have focused on securing key cities such as Damascus and Aleppo. As a result, violations in these areas are limited compared to other parts of the country.[38] In Damascus, which remains the most stable area, the situation is mostly secure, with signs of improvement reflected in fewer checkpoint arrests and an overall decline in security incidents.[39] Isolated violent events still occur, however, for instance, alcohol venders being targeted by Islamist groups allegedly affiliated with the new government or a case of shooting in a casino in May 2025.[40]

2.1.2. The coastal region

In the coastal region, widespread violations were committed against the local population in the immediate aftermath of the former government's fall. These violations have since decreased in urban centres, but they continue in the countryside, including in the coastal areas as well as in

[32] SOHR: 2; Syrian journalist: 1, 6
[33] Syrian journalist: 1
[34] SOHR: 1
[35] UNHCR, *Regional Flash Update #28; Syria situation crisis*, 22 May 2025, url
[36] Etana, *Syria Update #25*, 26 May 2025, url
[37] SOHR: 1; EUAA, *Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, url, p. 16
[38] Syrian journalist: 2
[39] Syrian journalist: 2; SOHR: 3; EUAA, *Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, url, p. 16
[40] SOHR: 3

Hama and Homs governorates. The nature of violations in the coastal areas differs from those in other parts of Syria, as these areas were once the heartland of the former government's military and security apparatus, and the current security personnel – many of whom are former opposition fighters – often display a hostile attitude towards the local population. This hostility stems from grievances over abuses committed by the former authorities in opposition-held areas, according to the interviewed Syrian journalist.[41]

2.1.3. Hama Governorate

In Hama Governorate, there is generally no harassment at checkpoints in the city of Hama, as the city has been historically opposed to the former government. By contrast, residents of Alawite villages in Sahl al-Ghab (Hama Governorate) are reportedly subjected to ongoing violations. Recently, a military group forcibly displaced an entire village population in this area, allowing the group's relatives to resettle there after their original homes were destroyed.[42] In areas like eastern Hama, security dynamics are influenced by the fact that areas formerly controlled by the opposition have not been disarmed, unlike areas previously held by the former government. For instance, armed tribal groups from a formerly opposition-held area, which retained their weapons, attacked and stole livestock from disarmed shepherds in a previously pro-government village without facing repercussions. Residents in disarmed areas typically remain indoors after 20:00, whereas in areas where weapons have been retained, life continues outside into the evening.[43]

2.1.4. Homs Governorate

In Homs Governorate, violations do occur but are less frequent than in northern rural Hama. In western Homs, near the Lebanese border, civilians face different threats. This area, once controlled by Hezbollah, was a hub for arms and drug smuggling. Some armed groups formerly opposed to the former government have now returned as gangs rather than formal military units, posing an ongoing challenge for the new authorities.[44]

2.1.5. Aleppo Governorate

In Aleppo Governorate, the situation is more complex. Although the region is nominally under the control of the new authorities, divisions between territories that used to be controlled by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Syrian National Army (SNA) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) still do persist. In eastern Aleppo, previously controlled by SDF, areas witnessed kidnappings and robberies carried out by SNA within the reporting period. These violations against civilians were significant enough to prompt interventions by security forces in towns such as Manbij, Afrin, and Jarablus. In northern Aleppo, Kurdish civilians continue to face harassment and abuse. Similar patterns are observed in SDF-held areas such as Hasakah,

[41] Syrian journalist: 3-4
[42] Syrian journalist: 5
[43] Syrian journalist: 14-15
[44] Syrian journalist: 7

Raqqa, and eastern Deir ez-Zor, where violations primarily are committed against the Arab population.[45]

2.1.6. Southern governorates

In southern governorates – Quneitra, Daraa, Suweida – the situation is volatile and unstable.[46] Central government control is limited in these governorates due to Israeli incursions. The Syrian journalist reported on violations – i.e. arrests, shootings, and killings of civilians – and he personally knows of two incidents in Quneitra and one in Daraa involving Israeli attacks on civilians.[47]

In Suweida, the security landscape is shaped by the presence of local armed factions operating independently of central government authority. The majority Druze population coexist with a Sunni Bedouin minority, the latter often accused of supporting the new government, while the Druze are conversely alleged to be aligned with Israel. This mutual suspicion has led to recurring clashes between the two groups. In addition, eastern Suweida regularly experiences mortar attacks, for which no group has claimed responsibility – likely reflecting broader sectarian tensions within the governorate.[48]

2.1.7. Deir ez-Zor Governorate

In Deir ez-Zor Governorate, the threat from pro-Iranian militias has decreased, but the threat posed by the Islamic State (IS) remains and is growing. Some of the residents of Deir ez-Zor City are sometimes accused of joining pro-Iranian militias during the previous government. Notably, Deir ez-Zor is the only governorate where the security situation in the city is largely similar to that of the countryside.[49]

The border area of al-Bukamal near the Iraqi border remains unstable; a couple of days before DIS conducted the interview with the Syrian journalist in May 2025, the authorities carried out search operations on villages in this area, which previously formed part of a key arms smuggling corridor between Iraq and Lebanon. The long-term impact of these raids on civilians is still unclear.[50]

In areas controlled by SDF, the security situation is largely stable. The only significant security threat in these areas stems from dormant cells of IS.[51]

2.1.8. Rural Damascus

In Rural Damascus, particularly in al-Tal, acts of revenge continue against individuals suspected of involvement with the former government. These acts are reportedly committed by former

[45] Syrian journalist: 8-9
[46] UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, url, para. 22, 28; EUAA, *Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, url, p. 18
[47] Syrian journalist: 18
[48] Syrian journalist: 19
[49] Syrian journalist: 10-11
[50] Syrian journalist: 12
[51] SOHR: 11

rebels who had been relocated to northern Syria by the Assad government and have since returned. In areas such as Jaramana and Sahnaya, tensions persist. Residents are sometimes accused of supporting Israel, which affects their daily lives and freedom of movement, especially when travelling to districts such as Bab Toma in Damascus.[52]

2.2. Recent security trends

In addition to the more general information on the overall security situation in Syria, a number of security trends can be identified, which are central to understanding the current security situation in Syria and its implications for civilians.

2.2.1. Clashes between the new security forces and Assad loyalists

From 1 January to 31 May 2025, there have been reports of local, bloody clashes in several governorates between the new Syrian security forces and remnants of the former Assad government, sometimes during security operations by the new security forces targeting individuals with perceived affiliation with the former Assad government.[53]

Throughout the reporting period, the new security forces conducted raids across the country to capture Assad government remnants, including in Tartous, Latakia, Homs, Hama, Deir ez-Zor, Rural Damascus, Damascus, Daraa, Idlib, and Aleppo.[54] Both high-ranking figures and low-level affiliates, as well as former members of *shabiha* (loosely organised, paramilitary groups formed by Assad government officials early in the 2010s uprising to violently suppress dissent[55]), were arrested, and large quantities of weapons were seized during these arrest operations.[56]

[52] Syrian journalist: 16-17

[53] Etana, *Syria Update #13*, 10 January 2025, url; Enab Baladi, *How effective are security campaigns against remnants of Assad's regime?*, 22 January 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, url; SOHR, *Daily death toll | 15 people killed on February 27 across Syria*, 27 February 2025, url; Guardian (The), *Thirteen Syrian security officers killed in clashes with Assad loyalists*, 6 March 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria security forces kill two 'Assad loyalists' near capital*, 1 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Syrian outlets highlight arrest of 'prominent' Assad-era intelligence officer*, 23 April 2025, url; GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, url

[54] Etana, *Syria Update #13*, 10 January 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #19*, 22 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #20*, 2 March 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #22*, 24 March 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, url; HRW, *Syria: End Coastal Killing Spree, Protect Civilians*, 10 March 2025, url; SOHR, *Security campaign | 35 individuals arre*sted by members of General Security forces in Deir Ezzor's neighborhoods*, 3 February 2025, url; SOHR,الأمن العام يعتقل مرتكبي انتهاكات ومشاركين بقتل أبناء الشعب السوري وينفذ حملات بحثا عن بعضهم *[General Security arrests the perpetrators who have committed violations and those who have participated in the killing of the Syrian people, and conducts searching campaigns to find them]*, 4 February 2025, url; Enab Baladi, *General Security Service arrests Atef Najib in Latakia,* 31 January 2025, url; SOHR, *Homs | Security Forces use heavy weapons to execute and arrest dozens in Shiite town in countryside*, 21 January 2025, url; Enab Baladi, *How effective are security campaigns against remnants of Assad's regime?,* 22 January 2025, url; SOHR, *Tartous | General Security forces arrest retired office and seize his farm*, 13 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media detail several security operations, seizure of weapons*, 27 April 2025, url; SOHR, *Security campaign | Two former members of military security arrested in eastern Deir Ezzor*, 30 May 2025, url

[55] Al Jazeera, *Syrian government organised feared 'shabbiha' militias*: *Report*, 4 July 2023, url

[56] Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, url

Remnants of the former government have sporadically conducted small-scale, hit-and-run attacks against the new security forces across the country, both in response to arrests and, at times, unprovoked.[57] According to the Syrian NGO Etana, some armed Alawite groups seem to have re-militarised in response to the arrest campaigns led by the new authorities. And former *shabiha* members are likely involved in some of the attacks targeting the new security forces.[58]

In January and February 2025, Assad-loyalists reportedly attacked the interim security forces in 32 cases in the governorates of Latakia, Tartous, Hama, Homs and Rural Damascus.[59]

In early March 2025, heavy clashes erupted in western Syria after Assad-loyal fighters ambushed the new security forces in coordinated attacks on 6 March, targeting military and security sites linked to the interim government's defence and interior ministries, mainly in Latakia, Tartous, and Hama. The new security forces, supported by local factions and foreign Islamist groups nominally affiliated with the Ministry of Defence, launched security operations across the coastal region. In these clashes, an estimated 231 security personnel, 250 Assad-loyal fighters, and 830 civilians were killed,[60] while other sources report up to 1 700 civilian deaths.[61] These events, which took place in the period 6–10 March 2025, reportedly marked Syria's worst outbreak of violence since the ousting of President Assad in December 2024.[62]

[57] Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, url; RFE/RL, *Hundreds Of Civilians Said To Have Been Killed By Syrian Security Forces*, 8 March 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #22*, 24 March 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #21*, 8 March 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #19*, 22 February 2025, url; Sweden, Migrationsverket, *Den fortsatta utvecklingen i Syrien: Stor osäkerhet och enorma utmaningar [The continued development in Syria: Great uncertainty and enormous challenges]*, 10 March 2025, url, p. 5; ISW, *Understanding Syria's Emerging Insurgency*, 10 March 2025, url; ISW, *The West Must Offer Syria's Interim Government Tightly Conditioned Aid against an Emerging Assadist Insurgency*, 7 March 2025, url; Al Majalla, *Jableh ambush risks igniting larger Türkiye-Iran confrontation*, 8 March 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria official survives blast as violence flares in Deraa*, 15 April 2025, url

[58] Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, url

[59] Sweden, Migrationsverket, *Den fortsatta utvecklingen i Syrien: Stor osäkerhet och enorma utmaningar [The continued development in Syria: Great uncertainty and enormous challenges]*, 10 March 2025, url, p. 5

[60] HRW, *Syria: End Coastal Killing Spree, Protect Civilians*, 10 March 2025, url; BBC News, *Syria leader vows to hunt down those responsible for bloodshed*, 9 March 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #21*, 8 March 2025, url; International Crisis Group (The), *A Glimmer of Peace in Syria's North East*, 28 March 2025, url; New Humanitarian (The), *The Alawites caught between revenge and a new Syria*, 26 March 2025, url; RFE/RL, *Hundreds Of Civilians Said To Have Been Killed By Syrian Security Forces*, 8 March 2025, url; BBC News, *Worst violence in Syria since Assad fall as dozens killed in clashes*, 7 March 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: War monitor reports deadly attack in village on Syria's coast*, 31 March 2025, url; International Crisis Group (The), *The New Syria: Halting a Dangerous Drift*, 28 March 2025, url; ISW, *The West Must Offer Syria's Interim Government Tightly Conditioned Aid against an Emerging Assadist Insurgency*, 7 March 2025, url; SNHR, *803 Individuals Extrajudicially Killed Between March 6-10, 2025*, 11 March 2025, url; Etana, *BRIEF: Armed Clashes & Sectarian Violence on Syria's Coast*, 8 April 2025, url

[61] BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria security forces kill two 'Assad loyalists' near capital*, 1 April 2025, url

[62] RFE/RL, *Hundreds Of Civilians Said To Have Been Killed By Syrian Security Forces*, 8 March 2025, url; SNHR, *803 Individuals Extrajudicially Killed Between March 6-10, 2025*, 11 March 2025, url; BBC News, *Worst violence in Syria since Assad fall as dozens killed in clashes*, 7 March 2025, url; ISW, *The West Must Offer Syria's Interim Government Tightly Conditioned Aid against an Emerging Assadist Insurgency*, 7 March 2025, url

2.2.2. Sectarian and retaliatory violence

Since the fall of the Assad government, certain ethno-religious groups have faced elevated risks of violence across Syria. According to SOHR, ordinary civilians generally face a limited risk of physical harm. However, Alawites, Shia Muslims, and, to a lesser extent, Druze face the risk of being targeted, though the level of threat varies across governorates.[63]

During the above-mentioned clashes in March 2025, massacres and extrajudicial killings primarily targeted Alawites – the ethnoreligious group to which the Assad family belongs – especially in the coastal governorates of Latakia and Tartous. Sunni civilians were also targeted but on a smaller scale. Hundreds of civilians from the coastal areas fled their homes, seeking refuge at the Russian Hmeimim airbase, in remote mountain villages, or across the border in Lebanon.[64] Many had reportedly not returned as of 23 May 2025.[65] Although the violations have since decreased in urban centres, they continue in rural parts of the coastal region as well as in Hama and Homs governorates.[66]

Sectarian violence has also occurred outside the coastal region. On 28 April 2025, sectarian clashes erupted between armed Druze and Sunni gunmen in Jaramana, a mixed Sunni-Druze suburb of Damascus, following the circulation of an audio recording allegedly featuring a Druze cleric insulting the Prophet Muhammad. The violence spread to Ashrafiyat Sahnayah, another Druze-majority town south of Damascus. Despite a ceasefire agreement on 30 April ending the clashes, fighting erupted the following night in Suweida after security forces entered the town, resulting in the killing of the mayor of Ashrafiyat Sahnaya and his son. By 1 May 2025, 102 individuals, including members of the Druze minority and security personnel, had reportedly been killed.[67]

In another example, the Sunni militant group named Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah – which also claim to have participated in the sectarian violence of March 2025 in the coastal region – claimed responsibility for multiple killings throughout January–April 2025, many of which targeted Alawites and/or Assad government remnants. The attacks reportedly took place across the governorates of Homs, Latakia, Tartous and Aleppo.[68] Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah, which emerged in January 2025, has continued to call for violence against Alawites to impose demographic change in Alawite areas, especially in Homs, Hama and the coastal areas. The group has also

[63] SOHR: 5, 8
[64] BBC News, *Syria leader vows to hunt down those responsible for bloodshed*, 9 March 2025, url; HRW, *Syria: End Coastal Killing Spree, Protect Civilians*, 10 March 2025, url
[65] SOHR: 6
[66] Syrian journalist: 3-4
[67] BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Pro-government Syria TV airs rare criticism amid sectarian violence*, 30 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria authorities reach agreement amid fresh clashes near capital*, 30 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Former Syrian mayor killed after 'welcoming' government forces following clashes*, 1 May 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Sectarian violence exacerbates divisions among Syrians online*, 1 May 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria Druze leader questions government narrative on violence*, 1 May 2025, url; Al-Monitor, *Israel strikes near Damascus presidential palace over Druze violence*, 1 May 2025, url; Syrian journalist: 17
[68] BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: New Syria jihadist group claims ongoing attacks on Alawites*, 21 April 2025, url

incited violence against Syrian Druze, although on a smaller scale, and Shias, as well as Syrians who support Alawites or fail to excommunicate Druze.[69]

As of 19 May 2025, SOHR had documented that 663 persons, including 20 women and 9 children, had been killed in so-called 'murder crimes and eliminations that come under retaliatory actions' in Syria since the beginning of 2025. The distribution of these deaths per governorate was as follows:

- Homs: 241 deaths, thereof 102 sectarian-based
- Hama: 127 deaths, thereof 48 sectarian-based
- Tartous: 59 deaths, thereof 37 sectarian-based
- Latakia: 59 deaths, thereof 32 sectarian-based
- Rural Damascus: 62 deaths, thereof 8 sectarian-based
- Damascus: 22 deaths, thereof 6 sectarian-based
- Aleppo: 44 deaths
- Idlib: 15 deaths
- Suweida: 3 deaths, thereof 2 sectarian-based
- Daraa: 26 deaths
- Deir ez-Zor: 5 deaths[70]

In parallel to sectarian violence, individuals suspected of affiliation with the former government face a high nationwide risk of being killed or injured, with killings reported on a daily basis.[71] In January 2025, the Syrian NGO Etana reported that 'a wave of vigilante attacks' were increasing across Syria, targeting former government personnel through assassinations and mob violence. Targets included individuals with well-documented involvement in past abuses against civilians since 2011; others, however, included reconciled former government members, low-ranking conscripts and apparently random young Alawite men.[72]

Although the March 2025 events marked the peak of violence since the change of government, revenge attacks against individuals affiliated with the former government have continued throughout the country, particularly in Latakia, Tartous, Hama, Homs, and Rural Damascus.[73]

[69] BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: New Syria jihadist group claims ongoing attacks on Alawites*, 21 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *New Syrian jihadist group incites against Druze*, 30 April 2025, url
[70] SOHR, *Ongoing executions | Civilian killed in his apartment in Homs city*, 19 May 2025, url
[71] SOHR: 4
[72] Etana, *Syria Update #14*, 17 January 2025, url
[73] Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #14*, 17 January 2025, url; BBC News, *Worst violence in Syria since Assad fall as dozens killed in clashes*, 7 March 2025, url; SOHR, *163 murder crimes | Nearly 300 people killed under retaliatory actions since early 2025*, 20 February 2025, url; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, url, para. 25; New Humanitarian (The), *The Alawites caught between revenge and a new Syria*, 26 March 2025, url; International Crisis Group (The), *The New Syria: Halting a Dangerous Drift*, 28 March 2025, url; Sweden, Migrationsverket, *Den fortsatta utvecklingen i Syrien: Stor osäkerhet och enorma utmaningar [The continued development in Syria: Great uncertainty and enormous challenges]*, 10 March 2025, url, p. 5; ISW, *The West Must Offer Syria's Interim Government Tightly Conditioned Aid against an Emerging Assadist Insurgency*, 7 March 2025,

Even Sunni Muslims may be targeted if suspected of ties to the former government. This includes for instance individuals who served as mukhtars or were associated with *shabiha*. In Aleppo, Sunni civilians have reportedly been killed on accusations of affiliation with the former government.[74]

2.2.3. Crime, lawlessness and absence of accountability

In various regions, the security situation is reportedly volatile and insecure due to crime and lawlessness, as the new authorities fail to prevent ongoing extrajudicial killings and assassinations.[75]

In the beginning of 2025, violence and lawlessness were on the rise in northern Syria across an area stretching between Homs, Latakia and Aleppo, with reports of almost daily incidents of killings and militant activity throughout the area.[76]

In February and March 2025, there were continued reports of killings and kidnappings for ransom or revenge in some areas of the country, especially in Homs Governorate which had become a hub for kidnappings[77] – particularly in Homs City, which is home to both Alawites, Sunnis, Shiites and various Christian denominations.[78] Between December 2024 and February 2025, several cases of kidnappings and disappearances were documented, including women, children, and elderly victims; many victims were Alawite, and several were later found dead.[79]

In May 2025, SOHR reported that kidnapping operations and armed attacks were increasing, with no effective measures to maintain security.[80]

From March to May 2025, there were reports of killings of civilians by unknown perpetrators in different areas of Syria, including in the governorates of Tartous, Hama, Homs, Damascus, Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa.[81] On 17 May 2025, SOHR reported on growing assassination operations the

url; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: War monitor reports deadly attack in village on Syria's coast*, 31 March 2025, url; Syrian journalist: 16

[74] SOHR: 5, 8

[75] EUAA, *Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, url, p. 63; SOHR, *Amid absence of accountability | 49 people executed in different areas across Syria in ten days*, 11 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security vacuum | Young man shot dead in northern Latakia countryside*, 13 May 2025, url; SOHR: 8; GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, url

[76] Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, url

[77] International Crisis Group (The), *The New Syria: Halting a Dangerous Drift*, 28 March 2025, url; New Lines Magazine, *Sectarian Violence Simmers in Homs*, 10 March 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #19*, 22 February 2025, url; GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, url

[78] New Lines Magazine, *Sectarian Violence Simmers in Homs*, 10 March 2025, url

[79] New Lines Magazine, *Sectarian Violence Simmers in Homs*, 10 March 2025, url

[80] SOHR, *Security chaos | Man in his forties kidnapped by unidentified gunmen in Jableh*, 14 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security chaos | Child kidnapped by gang in eastern Deir Ezzor*, 7 May 2025, url

[81] BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian human rights monitors report further extrajudicial killings*, 4 April 2025, url; SOHR, *Ongoing executions | Civilian killed in his apartment in Homs city*, 19 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Following dispute over*

previous weeks in eastern Aleppo countryside, with targeted killings becoming increasingly frequent.[82]

As of 18 May 2025, SOHR had documented killings of 167 civilians in 150 so-called 'murder crimes' in areas controlled by the new government since the beginning of 2025, most of which were committed by unknown perpetrators. The murder crimes and civilian fatalities were distributed as follows:

- Damascus: 13 murder crimes; 14 fatalities.
- Rural Damascus: 9 murder crimes; 10 fatalities.
- Aleppo: 14 murder crimes; 15 fatalities.
- Homs: 6 murder crimes; 6 fatalities.
- Hama: 17 murder crimes; 20 fatalities.
- Latakia: 12 murder crimes; 13 fatalities.
- Deir ez-Zor: 18 murder crimes; 17 fatalities.
- Idlib: 18 murder crimes; 20 fatalities.
- Daraa: 25 murder crimes; 28 fatalities.
- Tartous: 3 murder crimes; 6 fatalities.
- Suweida: 13 murder crimes; 15 fatalities.
- Quneitra: 1 murder crime; 1 fatality.
- Raqqa: 2 murder crimes; 2 fatalities.[83]

As regards SDF-controlled areas in Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, Hasakah and Aleppo, SOHR had documented 55 'murder crimes' in the period from early 2025 to 19 May 2025.[84]

SOHR has repeatedly characterised the current situation in Syria as a 'security vacuum'[85] or 'security chaos',[86] with arms proliferation and absence of laws controlling civilians' possession

priority to have medical checkup | Young man killed and another slaughtered in eastern Deir Ezzor, 19 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Following dispute over possession of farmland | Young man killed in Al-Raqqah countryside*, 19 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Ongoing executions | Young man shot dead in Damascus*, 18 May 2025, url

[82] SOHR, *New execution | Man shot de*ad in eastern Aleppo countryside*, 17 May 2025, url

[83] SOHR, *Security chaos | Man shot de*ad by unidentified gunman in Aleppo*, 18 May 2025, url

[84] SOHR, *Following dispute over possession of farmland | Young man killed in Al-Raqqah countryside*, 19 May 2025, url

[85] SOHR, *Security vacuum | Group of gunmen kidnaps four young men in Baniyas countryside*, 18 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security vacuum | Young man shot dead in northern Latakia countryside*, 13 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security vacuum | Young man shot dead in Rif Dimashq*, 12 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security vacuum | Three children and elderly woman injured, following armed attack on their house in Hama countryside*, 9 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security vacuum | Guard of well found dead in southern Al-Suwaidaa*, 6 May 2025, url

[86] SOHR, *Security chaos | Man shot de*ad by unidentified gunman in Aleppo*, 18 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security chaos | Young man shot de*ad by unidentified gunmen and another injured in Hama*, 17 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security chaos | Elderly man and woman injured in shooting by unidentified gunmen in Jarabulus*, 17 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security chaos | Armed groups storm Qatyon Village and spark fear among residents*, 16 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security chaos | Man in his forties kidnapped by unidentified gunmen in Jableh*, 14 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security chaos | Young girl shot de*ad and five people injured with stray bullets in Daraa*, 14 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security chaos | Child kidnapped by gang in eastern Deir Ezzor*, 7 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security chaos | Five people injured in sectarian shooting in Homs*, 7 May 2025, url

of weapons, with security breakdown in an area such as Homs, and an escalating security chaos e.g. throughout the governorates of Hama and Suweida.[87]

In addition to retaliatory killings, SOHR has documented civilian deaths and injuries, including women and children, from indiscriminate and accidental gunfire and collateral damage caused by widespread possession of arms and grenades among civilians.[88]

Although some killings are perpetrated by unknown actors, state-affiliated groups are allegedly behind some of the sectarian and political killings. In some cases, the authorities have failed to intervene, and it remains unclear whether these acts are ordered by senior officials or carried out by rogue elements.[89]

In addition to killings, HTS-led security forces have been implicated in other violations against civilians.[90] Groups affiliated with the ministries of defence and interior have reportedly carried out raids, arrests and acts of intimidation against civilians, without oversight and without being held accountable by the government in Damascus.[91]

Sources have reported on cases where persons arrested by the new security forces or affiliated forces have been subjected to torture, abuse and extrajudicial killings. Some have died in custody of the new General Security.[92] In other cases, recent detainees – mostly former army personnel – have been released after investigations found no evidence of their involvement in past abuses.[93]

At times, perpetrators of violence have reportedly worn military uniforms, making them appear to be official security forces, according to the Syrian NGO Etana. As a result, civilians have had difficulty distinguishing between legitimate and impersonated security personnel. In response, General Security has warned civilians of impersonators carrying out unauthorised arrests.[94]

[87] SOHR, *Gunfire of unknown origin | Civilian killed in Daraa countryside*, 15 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security chaos | Five people injured in sectarian shooting in Homs*, 7 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Armed attack | Civilian shot dead in northern Hama*, 7 May 2025, url; SOHR, *Security vacuum | Guard of well found dead in southern Al-Suwaidaa*, 6 May 2025, url

[88] SOHR, *Appeals for dignitaries to interfere | Three people kil*led in tribal clashes in Al-Suwaydaa*, 18 May 2025, url

[89] SOHR: 8-9

[90] Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, url

[91] SOHR, *Ongoing violations | Gunmen attack houses of civilians in Tartous countryside*, 8 May 2025, url

[92] HRW, *Syria: End Coastal Killing Spree, Protect Civilians*, 10 March 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, url; Guardian (The), *Syrian fighters execute 35 in three days, war monitor says*, 26 January 2025, url; SOHR, *"Shabiha-like" behaviour | Video footage showing members of general security forces humiliating arrested people triggers broad public anger in Homs*, 4 January 2025, url; SOHR, *SOHR condemns these acts | Horrifying scenes of torturing electrifying detainees in Hama*, 15 January 2025, url; SNHR, *SNHR Condemns Torture, Death of Three Detainees at the Hands of the Transitional Government's General Security Directorate*, 3 February 2025, url

[93] Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, url

[94] Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, url

2.2.4. Israeli strikes and incursions

Shortly after the fall of the Assad government in December 2024, Israel started launching intensified air strikes in Syria and seized former Syrian military bases beyond the demilitarised zone between the two countries.[95] Since the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad, Israel has conducted hundreds of strikes across the country to destroy military assets as well as numerous cross-border incursions into the governorates of Quneitra, Daraa and Suweida, with the reported purpose of creating a temporary security zone.[96] Moreover, Israel has demanded a complete demilitarisation of Quneitra, Daraa and Suweida, rejecting the presence of Syrian forces in those governorates.[97]

Israel has occupied the demilitarised buffer zone, which was created after the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, and had by early April 2025 constructed nine bases across the area, including seven inside the buffer zone.[98]

Throughout the reporting period, Israeli strikes – including drone strikes, air strikes, ground shelling, gunfire – continued targeting air bases, air defence systems, jets, tanks, missiles, scientific research centres, weapon factories and ammunition depots as well as Syrian security forces.[99]

For example, on 30 April 2025, Israeli drone strikes targeted the new security forces in Sahnaya, Rural Damascus, reportedly to protect the Druze community following sectarian violence in the area; the drone strikes killed one Ministry of Defence fighter and injured at least two Druze civilians.[100] On 2 May 2025, Israel carried out airstrikes near the presidential palace in Damascus, in addition to launching another series of airstrikes later the same day, stating that

[95] BBC Monitoring, *Israel reportedly constructing new barrier inside Syria*, 25 April 2025, url
[96] BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, url; Enab Baladi, *Israeli forces arrest civilian, injure another in Quneitra*, 24 January 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Israeli forces 'raid homes, school' in Syria's Quneitra province*, 23 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Israel reportedly constructing new barrier inside Syria*, 25 April 2025, url; BBC News, *Syria condemns 'unjustified' Israeli strikes as tensions rise over Turkey*, 3 April 2025, url
[97] BBC News, *Syria condemns 'unjustified' Israeli strikes as tensions rise over Turkey*, 3 April 2025, url; ISW and CT, *Iran Update*, 30 April 2025, url
[98] BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, url; MEMO, *Israel builds nine military bases, infrastructure in Syria*, 12 February 2025, url
[99] Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 3 Apr 25*, 3 April 2025, url; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, url, para. 22; BBC News, *Syria condemns 'unjustified' Israeli strikes as tensions rise over Turkey*, 3 April 2025, url; BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, url; SHRC, *The Israeli occupation launches a new aggression, killing civilians in Daraa Governorate and destroying other areas across the country*, 3 April 2025, url; ISW and CT, *Iran Update*, 30 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Israeli army says it conducted 'warning operation' in Syria*, 30 April 2025, url; BBC News, *Israel says it struck near Syria palace over violence in Druze areas*, 3 May 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Israeli strikes reported in Syria's coastal region*, 31 May 2025, url
[100] ISW and CT, *Iran Update*, 30 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Israeli army says it conducted 'warning operation' in Syria*, 30 April 2025, url

Israel will not allow any threat to the Druze minority or the deployment of Syrian forces south of Damascus.[101]

Israeli forces likewise continued to conduct ground incursions into Syria's south-western governorates, beyond the demilitarisation line of 1974, throughout the reporting period.[102] On 4 April 2025, BBC News reported that Israel had conducted more than 70 ground incursions since February into south-western Syria.[103]

During these ground incursions, Israeli forces raided former army bases as well as Syrian villages and homes to seize weapons; at times, arrests were reported.[104] Moreover, there have been reports of clashes between Israeli forces and armed locals opposing Israel's advance into Syria.[105] In late March 2025, clashes between Israel and local fighters made at least 3 000 civilians flee the area, with most residents returning the following day though.[106] In addition, Israeli incursions has reportedly resulted in dozens of dunams (1 dunam equivalent to approximately 1 000 sq. m.) of forested land being bulldozed.[107]

Finally, Israeli strikes in Quneitra and Daraa has led to the killing and injuring of individuals, among those civilians.[108]

[101] Al-Monitor, *Israel strikes near Damascus presidential palace over Druze violence*, 1 May 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 2 May 25*, 2 May 2025, url; BBC News, *Israel says it struck near Syria palace over violence in Druze areas*, 3 May 2025, url
[102] Etana, *Syria Update #13*, 10 January 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Israeli forces 'raid homes, school' in Syria's Quneitra province*, 23 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 3 Apr 25*, 3 April 2025, url; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, url, para. 22; BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Israel reportedly constructing new barrier inside Syria*, 25 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *War monitor says Israeli incursions causing 'resentment' in Syria border area*, 21 May 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #25*, 26 May 2025, url
[103] BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, url
[104] Enab Baladi, *Israeli forces arrest civilian, injure another in Quneitra*, 24 January 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #13*, 10 January 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Israeli forces 'raid homes, school' in Syria's Quneitra province*, 23 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 3 Apr 25*, 3 April 2025, url; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, url, para. 22; BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Israel reportedly constructing new barrier inside Syria*, 25 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *Israeli forces 'raid homes, school' in Syria's Quneitra province*, 23 April 2025, url
[105] Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, url; BBC News, *Syria condemns 'unjustified' Israeli strikes as tensions rise over Turkey*, 3 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 3 Apr 25*, 3 April 2025, url; BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, url
[106] Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, url
[107] Etana, *Syria Update #13*, 10 January 2025, url
[108] Enab Baladi, *Israeli forces arrest civilian, injure another in Quneitra*, 24 January 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, url; Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, url; BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, url; BBC News, *Syria condemns 'unjustified' Israeli strikes as tensions rise over Turkey*, 3 April 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 3 Apr 25*, 3 April 2025, url; SHRC, *The Israeli*

2.2.5. Clashes between SDF and SNA/Türkiye

Clashes between the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) had already erupted before Assad's fall. In December 2024, SNA launched 'Operation Dawn of Freedom', capturing Tal Rifaat and nearby villages from SDF,[109] and subsequently attacked Manbij, a strategic town west of the Euphrates with 300 000 inhabitants.[110] After negotiations between the US and Türkiye – supporting SDF and SNA respectively – SDF withdrew from Manbij,[111] which allowed SNA to advance and seize the Suleyman Shah Tomb, raising concerns of further conflict near Kobane.[112]

Fighting persisted throughout December 2024, with SDF attempting to retake lost areas,[113] including clashes near the strategic Tishrin Dam.[114] Meanwhile, Syria's new government and Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) took control of Deir ez-Zor city from SDF.[115]

In early 2025, negotiations began between the transitional government, SDF, and SNA, but Türkiye and SNA continued attacks, including heavy strikes on Kobane.[116] The collapse of a ceasefire around Manbij led to renewed clashes between SNA groups and SDF, involving heavy weapons and Turkish air support, causing several hundred deaths, including civilians, by mid-January 2025, according to SOHR.[117] Turkish forces also targeted SDF positions and infrastructure in Hasakah and Raqqa.[118]

Fighting persisted into February 2025, worsening the humanitarian situation and displacing over 100 000 civilians into SDF-controlled areas.[119] By mid-February, over 600 people had

occupation launches a new aggression, killing civilians in Daraa Governorate and destroying other areas across the country, 3 April 2025, url

[109] New Region (The), *Syrian opposition groups seize control of Tal Rifaat from SDF amid intense clashes,* 1 December 2024, url; Medya News, *Clashes intensify in Syria amid multi-front offensive*, 1 December 2024, url

[110] Rojava Information Center, *Explainer: Turkish and SNA offensive on Manbij*, 7 December 2024, url

[111] Reuters, *Rebels take Syrian city from U.S.-backed group after U.S.-Turkey deal, source says*, 9 December 2024, url

[112] Middle East Eye, *US rushes to contain Turkey-backed offensive against SDF in Syria*, 11 December 2024, url

[113] Euro News, *Kurdish forces fight back against Turkish-backed rebels amid clashes in northern Syria*, 24 December 2024, url

[114] New Arab (The), *Clashes erupt near Syria's Tishrin Dam as Turkish-backed SNA and Kurdish-led SDF battle for control*, 26 December 2024, url

[115] Middle East Monitor, *HTS-led Syria government captures Deir ez-Zor city from Kurdish SDF*, 11 December 2024, url

[116] Rudaw, *Damascus in talks with SDF, SNA over 'disputed' areas: Minister*, 6 January 2025, url; SOHR, *Military escalation | Turkish forces fire heavy artillery shells positions in western Ain Al-Arab (Kobani) countryside*, 9 January 2025, url; SOHR, *Renewed airstrikes | Turkish fighter jets attack positions in Ain Al-Arab (Kobani)*, 17 January 2025, url; North Press Agency, *Turkish Drone Strike Targets Syria's Kobani Countryside*, Casualties Reported, 9 January 2025, url

[117] SOHR, *Amid ongoing attempts by Turkish forces to take control of Teshreen dam and Qarquzaq bridge | 401 people killed in clashes, airstrikes and bombardment in 36 days*, 17 January 2025, url; SOHR, *Military escalation | 17 civilians kil*led and injured in Turkish airstrikes on Teshreen dam*, 18 January 2025, url

[118] SOHR, *New attack | Turkish drone executes three airstrikes on Khatouniyah silos and power station in Al-Raqqah countryside*, 9 January 2025, url

[119] HRW, *Northeast Syria: Camp Detainees Face Uncertain Future,* 7 February 2025, url; SOHR, *Ongoing escalation | Two Turkish soldiers killed and military site destroyed in SDF attack on Qarra Quzaq frontline*, 13 February 2025, url

reportedly been killed as a result of the clashes between SDF and SNA groups since December 2024.[120]

On 27 February 2025, Abdullah Öcalan, founder and leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which SDF is historically affiliated with, issued a statement from prison, calling on PKK to disband and lay down its arms in its fight against the Turkish state. Mazloum Abdi, the commander-in-chief of the SDF, later stated that Öcalan's call does not apply to the forces he commands.[121]

In spite of Abdi's statement and already on 10 March 2025, an agreement was reached between the Syrian transitional government and SDF, stating that SDF's military and civilian structures will be integrated into the Syrian state. The details about how the agreement will be implemented in practice are still unclear. According to the agreement, the Syrian state will assume control over north-eastern Syria's institutions, including borders, airports, oil resources, and reportedly also camps and prisons holding IS fighters and affiliates, though the latter remains unconfirmed.[122]

In March 2025, heavy clashes intensified in north-eastern Syria with increased Turkish airstrikes on SDF positions in eastern Aleppo and Raqqa, causing high casualties but leaving frontlines unchanged, including around Tishrin Dam and Qarrah Qarquzaq Bridge.[123] In April 2025, Syrian security forces entered the Tishrin Dam area under an agreement with SDF to stabilise the region, following previous SDF-SNA clashes and a Türkiye-US agreement.[124] In early May 2025, the Kurdish-dominated Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) declared the end of its operation to secure the dam; on 19 May 2025, however, a Syrian army post near the dam was reportedly attacked, with SDF accused of being behind the attack but no claim of responsibility was made.[125]

At the Syrian Revolution Victory Conference on 29 January 2025, the majority of armed opposition factions – including SNA – announced their dissolution and integration into the newly established Ministry of Defence.[126] While SNA commanders have nominally agreed to integrate into the new Syrian army, several commanders from smaller factions oppose disarmament.[127] In May 2025, Human Rights Watch accused SNA factions of ongoing serious

[120] SOHR, *Killing and injuring five fighters | Turkish fighter jets attack SDF position in Aleppo countryside*, 20 February 2025, url; SOHR, *Ongoing escalation | Two Turkish soldiers killed and military site destroyed in SDF attack on Qarra Quzaq frontline*, 13 February 2025, url
[121] Al Jazeera, *Will PKK leader Ocalan's call for group to dissolve end Turkiye conflict?*, 27 February 2025, url
[122] ISW, *Iran Update,* 10 March 2025, url
[123] ISW, *Iran Update,* 10 March 2025, url; Etana Syria, *Syria Update #21*, 8 March 2025, url; ISW, *Iran Update*, 25 March 2025, url
[124] Enab Baladi, *Syrian army enters Tishrin Dam in Aleppo countryside*, 12 April 2025, url
[125] Enab Baladi, *"قسد" تهاجم نقطة عسكرية في سد "تشرين" ["SDF" attacks a military point in "Tishrin" Dam],* 19 May 2025, url
[126] MEMRI, *Syrian Leader Ahmed Al-Sharaa Delivers 'Victory Speech,' Outlines Syria's Future Roadmap, Announces Dissolution Of Ba'ath Party, Armed Factions Into New 'Syrian Army'*, 29 January 2025, url
[127] New Lines Magazine, *Syria's New Rulers Are Working To Unify Military Power*, 25 February 2024, url

human rights abuses despite the fall of the Assad government.[128] Several factions within SNA maintain strong ties with Türkiye.[129]

2.2.6. Clashes between government forces and Druze forces in the south

Following the ousting of President Bashar al-Assad in December 2024, Syria has experienced significant political fragmentation in the Druze-majority governorate of Suweida. The Druze community has increasingly mobilised to assert autonomy and safeguard their interests.[130]

This has led to escalating tensions and violent confrontations between Druze militias and Syrian security forces. In February 2025, several Druze factions in Suweida established the Suweida Military Council, an umbrella organisation aimed at protecting the region from external threats and maintaining internal security. The council's formation was a response to the power vacuum left by the Syrian Arab Army's (SAA) withdrawal and the interim government's inability to assert control effectively.[131] The council has emphasised principles of secularism, democracy, and decentralisation, seeking integration into a reformed Syrian army while maintaining a degree of autonomy.[132]

Tensions escalated in April 2025 when pro-government forces clashed with Druze fighters in Jaramana and surrounding areas, resulting in nearly 100 deaths. As previously mentioned, Israel conducted airstrikes targeting Syrian military posts and anti-aircraft units in response, with the stated aim to protect Druze communities and prevent hostile forces from entering Druze villages.[133]

In May 2025, Druze representatives in the Jaramana area, located in the suburbs of Damascus, reached an agreement with Syrian government officials to surrender heavy weapons held by the Druze to the Syrian government and to support the presence of Syrian security forces in the region. Additionally, the governor of Suweida Governorate announced another agreement that allows the entry of official Syrian security forces into the area. This marks the first time that Syrian government forces are present in Suweida since the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government and the subsequent rise of Ahmad al-Sharaa to power.[134]

[128] HRW, Syria: *Türkiye-backed Armed Groups Detain, Extort Civilians*, 14 May 2025, url
[129] Middle East Eye, *The Syrian National Army: Rebels, thugs or Turkish proxies*?, 7 December 2024, url; Guardian (The), *Who are the main actors in the fall of the regime in Syria?*, 9 December 2024, url; Voice of America, *A look at groups that captured Syria's Aleppo*, 2 December 2024, url
[130] Guardian (The), *'We will keep protesting': Druze minority demands a voice in new Syria*, 30 January 2025, url
[131] Turkiye Today, *Druze militias' strategy of patience in Sweida and Damascus*, 26 February 2025, url
[132] AP, *Syria's Druze seek a place in a changing nation, navigating pressures from the government and Israel*, 10 March 2025, url
[133] AP, *UN envoy condemns intense wave of Israeli airstrikes on Syria*, 3 March 2025, url
[134] Times of Israel (The), *After clashes, Syrian Druze leaders sign deal to hand over heavy weapons to regime*, 2 May 2025, url

After the Syrian government and Druze representatives had signed the agreements, clashes broke out between local forces loyal to the central Syrian government and another armed group in Suweida Governorate.[135]

In May 2025, it was announced that a police force composed of residents from Suweida had begun operating in the governorate. Despite this, tensions remained high in the area that same month when armed gunmen assaulted Governor Mustafa al-Bakour at gunpoint, demanding the release of a convicted prisoner who was subsequently set free.[136] The governor resigned a few days after the incident.[137]

2.2.7. Clashes between security forces and Lebanese militias in the border areas

In February 2025, clashes erupted between armed forces under the control of the Syrian interim government and Lebanese militias on the border between Syria and Lebanon. The fighting has been concentrated in a zone that crosses the border between the two nations, close to the town of Qusair, roughly 30 kilometres south-west of Homs.[138]

In March 2025, Syria's interim government claimed that fighters from the Lebanese militia Hezbollah entered Syrian territory, ambushed and kidnapped three Syrian soldiers, brought them back to Lebanese territory, and executed them. Although Hezbollah denied the accusation, Syrian forces began shelling Lebanese territory, resulting in dozens of casualties.[139] After a couple of days of fighting, a ceasefire was agreed upon between the defence ministers of Syria and Lebanon.[140]

Media outlets reported in April 2025 that hostilities had been reignited along the Syrian-Lebanese border, as skirmishes allegedly broke out between unknown combatants from both countries. Syrian authorities blamed Hezbollah for sparking the renewed conflict.[141]

High level meetings between Syrian and Lebanon continued in the end of May in order to improve cooperation between the authorities alongside the border to coordinate efforts to combat smuggling operations.[142]

[135] Syria Direct, *As tensions run high, will Suwayda's security agreement hold?*, 7 May 2025, url
[136] Enab Baladi, *As-Suwayda: Armed group storms Governor's office*, 22 May 2025, url
[137] Enab Baladi, *Governor of As-Suwayda Mustafa Bakour resigns following recent attack*, 24 May 2025, url
[138] Le Monde, *Fighting between Syria's new army and Lebanese militias rages on border*, 10 February 2025, url
[139] Al Jazeera, *Lebanon-Syria border clashes reflect new realities on the ground*, 24 March 2025, url
[140] Reuters, *Lebanon and Syria agree on ceasefire after deadly cross-border clashes*, 17 March 2025, url
[141] This is Beirut, *Renewed Lebanese-Syrian Border Clashes*, 24 April 2025, url
[142] Arab News, *Lebanon takes border measures in coordination with Damascus to curb smuggling*, 29 May 2025, url

2.2.8. Attacks by the Islamic State (IS)

The Islamic State (IS) continues to pose a threat to the security in Syria. In 2024, IS was resurgent in Syria and was conducting on average 59 attacks per month. After the fall of the Assad government in December 2024, the attacks have fallen to an average of 12 per month.[143]

In January 2025, Syrian authorities foiled an attempt by IS fighters to blow up a revered Shia shrine in a Damascus suburb, state news agency SANA reported.[144]

In April 2025, IS killed five Kurdish fighters in an attack in Deir ez-Zor, eastern Syria, marking one of its deadliest assaults in recent times. The attack has caused growing concerns about IS' resurgence. Farhad Shami, spokesperson for the Kurdish-led SDF, confirmed the deaths, emphasising the significance of this assault.[145]

In May 2025, IS reportedly conducted its first attack against Syrian government forces since the fall of Bashar al-Assad; in two separate incidents, IS claimed to have attacked the new security forces with IEDs (improvised explosive device) in Suweida on 22 and 28 May 2025.[146]

According to the Syrian journalist interviewed for this report, the threat posed by IS remains and is growing in the governorate of Deir ez-Zor; between 1 and 21 May 2025, the source reported 11 IS attacks in the area, targeting both military and civilian actors. In the Badiya desert, however, stretching from Deir ez-Zor to Suweida, IS activity has declined, supposedly due to the presence of the US-led coalition's al-Tanf base, which provides support to Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces in the area. In addition to conducting attacks, IS has reportedly extorted civilians on the pretext of collecting alms.[147]

Although IS thus continues to conduct attacks, the number of fatalities has dropped significantly since the fall of the Assad government.

Currently, an estimated 9 000 to 10 000 IS combatants and approximately 40 000 of their family members are detained in north-eastern Syria under the control of SDF.[148]

2.2.9. Explosive hazards

After 14 years of conflict, Syria is heavily contaminated by mines, shells, bombs and other explosive remnants of war. More than 1 million explosive munitions have presumably been used in Syria since 2011, and, according to mine action experts, 10–30 % of explosive munitions

[143] Middle East Institute, *ISIS is on the ropes in Syria. A successful transition in Damascus could deliver a knockout blow*, 14 April 2025, url
[144] Al Jazeera, *Syrian intelligence says it thwarted ISIL attempt to blow up Shia shrine*, 11 January 2025, url
[145] Al Jazeera, *ISIL group kills five Kurdish fighters in attack in eastern Syria*, 28 April 2025, url
[146] BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian outlets assess first IS attacks since fall of Bashar al-Assad*, 30 May 2025, url
[147] Syrian journalist: 10, 13
[148] Middle East Institute, *ISIS is on the ropes in Syria. A successful transition in Damascus could deliver a knockout blow*, 14 April 2025, url

fail to detonate. This explosive ordnance contamination across Syria constitutes a fatal risk for civilians returning home.[149]

Explosive hazards such as unexploded ordnance, IEDs and landmines kill or injure people in Syria on a regular basis. Syrian children reportedly constitute one third of casualties.[150] As more displaced persons are returning home, sometimes to villages that have been abandoned for years, casualties of explosive hazards are reportedly increasing.[151] Since December 2024, more than 600 people have been killed or injured by explosive remnants of war across Syria.[152]

Unexploded ordnance in Syria is found on farmland, roads, in irrigation systems, in water and electricity infrastructure in hospitals, schools, riverbeds, on bridges, commercial properties and in residential areas. Since December 2024, the majority of accidents occurred in agricultural sites, e.g. as people were trying to cultivate land.[153]

Explosive remnants of war constitute particularly a hazard in areas where deminers have had limited access, such as Manbij, Tel Abiad and Ras al-Ain pocket, Kobane, Deir ez-Zor, Rural Damascus, Suweida, Daraa, Hama, rural Aleppo and rural Idlib.[154] Returnees in former frontline areas in north-west Syria face high levels of explosive ordnance contamination.[155]

On top of heavy contamination in some rural areas, military bases are contaminated by unexploded ordnance. Human Rights Watch spoke with parents of children injured by unexploded ordnance at abandoned military bases in Daraa. Many military bases are reportedly not closed or secured, which makes it possible for children to enter the bases to play, with the risk of encountering unexploded ordnance.[156]

Finally, in addition to endangering lives, unexploded ordnance disrupts livelihoods; farmers report that the unexploded ordnance contamination is affecting their livelihoods, as they cannot cultivate their land or have their animals graze on it.[157]

[149] HRW, *Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians*, 8 April 2025, url; GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, url; New Humanitarian (The), *Mines: The deadly legacy of Syria's war*, 10 April 2025, url
[150] GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, url; New Humanitarian (The), *Mines: The deadly legacy of Syria's war*, 10 April 2025, url
[151] New Humanitarian (The), *Mines: The deadly legacy of Syria's war*, 10 April 2025, url; HRW, *Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians*, 8 April 2025, url
[152] HRW, *Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians*, 8 April 2025, url
[153] GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, url
[154] GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, url; New Humanitarian (The), *Mines: The deadly legacy of Syria's war*, 10 April 2025, url
[155] GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, url
[156] HRW, *Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians*, 8 April 2025, url
[157] GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, url; HRW, *Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians*, 8 April 2025, url

2.3. Security incidents

In the reporting period from 1 January to 31 May 2025, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)[158] recorded 3 544 security incidents: 690 of these were coded as battles; 1 527 as explosions/remote violence; and 1 327 as violence against civilians.[159]

Most recorded security incidents took place in January (1 077), with fewer incidents in April (464) and May (470). In March, violence against civilians constituted a larger proportion of the total recorded security events in that month compared to other months, which is likely related to the violence in the coastal areas described above.[160]

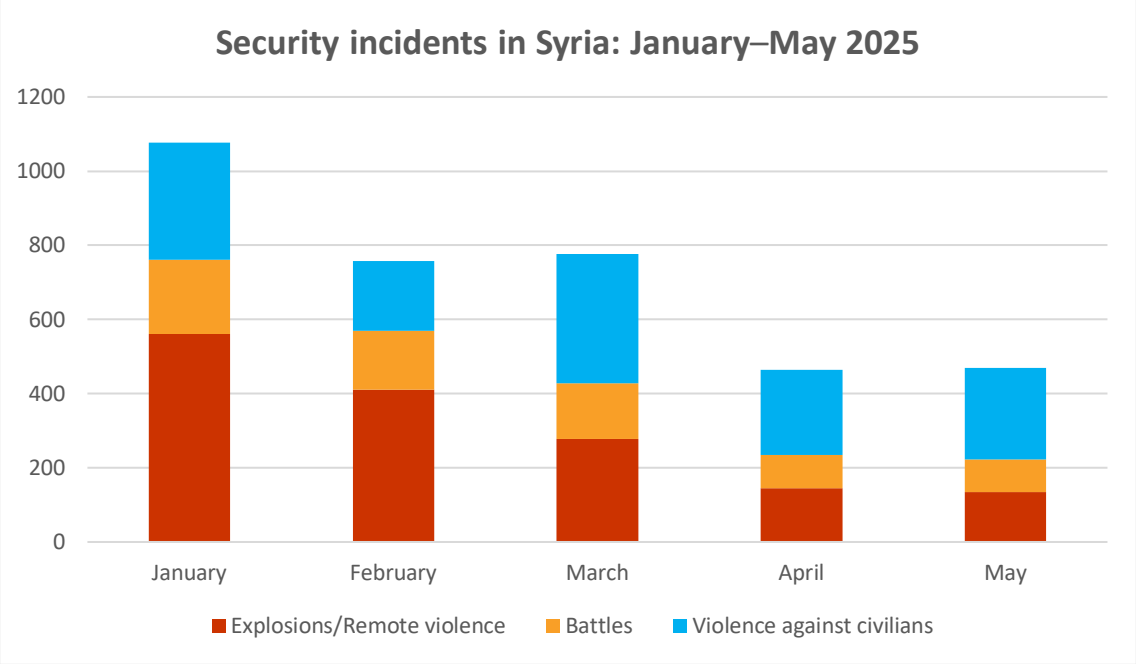

Figure 2: ACLED security events coded as '**Battles**', '**Explosions/Remote violence**', and '**Violence against civilians**'[161] between 1 January and 31 May 2025.[162]

[158] ACLED describes itself as 'a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping initiative. ACLED collects information on the dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events around the world.' ACLED, *About ACLED*, n.d., url

[159] ACLED uses the term 'security event' when registering these security incidents. In accordance with EUAA's use of ACLED data (e.g. see the EUAA report *Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, p. 10), the term 'security incident' is used here and solely includes these three event categories: battles; explosions/remote violence; and violence against civilians

[160] ACLED, *Curated Data Files, Syria* (17 June 2025), url

[161] **'Explosions/Remote violence'** includes attacks using landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and chemical weapons, regardless of whether the target is civilian or military; **'Battles'** involves armed clashes between two organised parties; and **'Violence against civilians'** refers to deliberate attacks on non-combatant individuals. ACLED, *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Codebook*, url

[162] DIS analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, *Curated Data Files, Syria* (17 June 2025), url

Most security incidents recorded by ACLED during the reported period occurred in Aleppo (853) and Deir ez-Zor (547), with fewer incidents recorded in Quneitra (32) and Damascus (42), as illustrated in figure 3 below.[163]

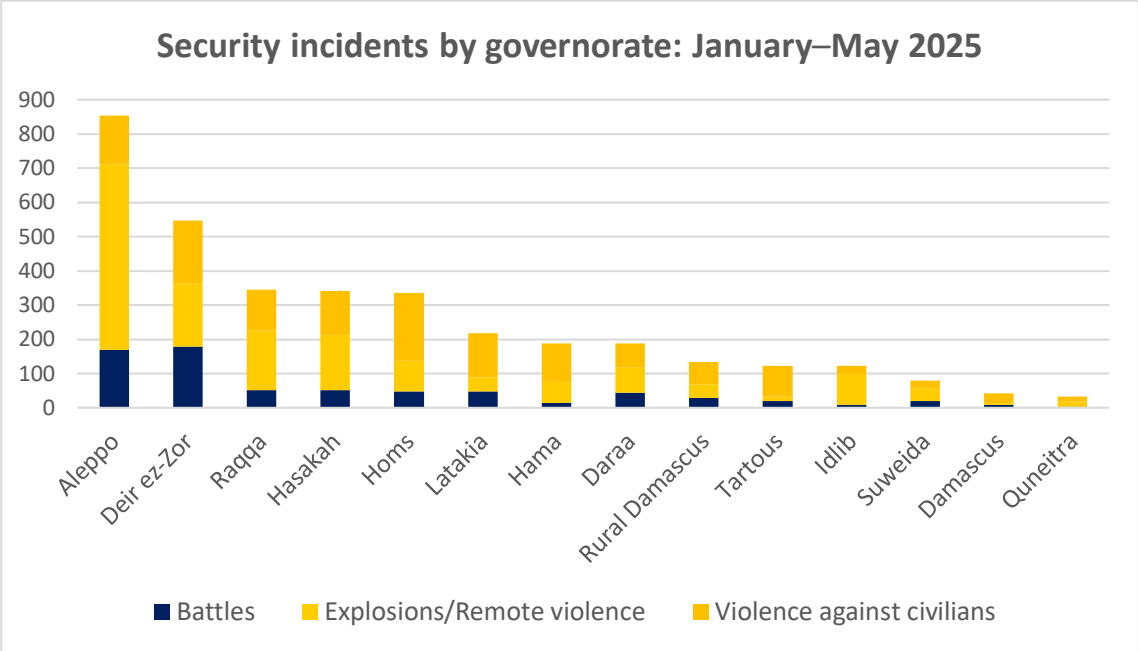

Figure 3: ACLED security events coded as '**Battles**', '**Explosions/Remote violence**', and '**Violence against civilians**'[164] on governorate level between 1 January and 31 May 2025[165]

[163] ACLED, *Curated Data Files, Syria* (17 June 2025), url

[164] **'Explosions/Remote violence'** includes attacks using landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and chemical weapons, regardless of whether the target is civilian or military; **'Battles'** involves armed clashes between two organised parties; and **'Violence against civilians'** refers to deliberate attacks on non-combatant individuals. ACLED, *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Codebook*, url

[165] DIS analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, *Curated Data Files, Syria* (17 June 2025), url

3. Freedom of movement

Freedom of movement in Syria has generally improved since the fall of the former government. Civilians are now able to travel between governorates and within major cities, such as Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo, as well as in the cities in Rural Damascus without facing significant restrictions.[166] Fixed checkpoints that previously impeded travel have largely disappeared from urban areas, with remaining checkpoints mainly situated along intercity highways and in considerably lower numbers than before.[167] The level of scrutiny at these checkpoints has also decreased, and the risk of arbitrary arrests has been significantly reduced.[168]

Reports of extortion at checkpoints, once widespread, are now rare and considered exceptions rather than the norm.[169] Under the former government, extortion at checkpoints was particularly rampant. For instance, on routes between Damascus and SDF-controlled areas, travellers were often stopped, forced to pay bribes, and questioned about their sectarian affiliations. This practice continued for two to three months after the fall of the previous government during which time travellers were also questioned about their sectarian background, including whether they were Alawites.[170]

The new authorities appear to actively ensure unobstructed movement on major roads to avoid negative publicity.[171] Nevertheless, a degree of caution still governs people's travel patterns, particularly after dark. People generally do not have anxieties about travelling during the daytime across most governorates; however, many civilians avoid nighttime travel due to persistent security concerns.[172] In former opposition-controlled areas in north-western Syria, for instance Idlib city and northern Aleppo, residents reportedly feel safe moving around at night,[173] although in rural areas of Idlib, the security environment is different – in these areas, people refrain from moving around after dark.[174] In areas suspected of being supportive of the Assad government, residents are generally reluctant to travel outside their localities, even during the day, due to fear of abuse at checkpoints.[175]

Women's freedom of movement, i.e. travelling from one city to another without being stopped or being subjected to harassment, also varies depending on the area and the checkpoint in question.[176] Ad hoc gender segregation has been observed in public transportation, preventing

[166] SOHR: 12; Syrian journalist: 22
[167] Syrian journalist: 22
[168] SOHR: 14; Syrian journalist: 22
[169] Syrian journalist: 22
[170] SOHR: 13
[171] SOHR: 17
[172] SOHR: 15; Syrian journalist: 23
[173] Syrian journalist: 23; SOHR: 15
[174] SOHR: 15
[175] Syrian journalist: 23
[176] SOHR: 16

unrelated men and women from sitting next to each other. This practice, however, is not formalised or consistent, and it is not clear whether it results from local initiatives or central directives.[177] According to the news outlet Watan (11 January 2025), the Syrian transport company 'Zajal Transport' planned to introduce gender segregation on its buses in Damascus as already implemented in the company's busses in cities like Idlib and Aleppo. Men would sit at the front and use the front door, while women would sit at the back and use the rear door. The measure was planned for all Syrian cities.[178]

The gender segregation in public transport tends to draw more attention in the former government-held areas where residents are not accustomed to such practices. In some rare instances, checkpoint personnel have intervened directly in passenger seating arrangements.[179] SOHR mentioned a recent case of a Christian woman traveling from Hama city to Maharda being questioned for sitting in the front seat without covering her hair.[180]

Despite the reduction in formal obstacles, the continued presence of checkpoints and military personnel manning them remains a source of irritation for many Syrians who perceive them as restrictions on their freedom of movement. Although civilians sometimes lodge complaints about mistreatment, responses from authorities are inconsistent.[181]

Challenges also persist with regard to transportation infrastructure and affordability. While bus connections between Damascus and other governorates are relatively functional, the availability of public transport between certain governorates remains limited; for instance, there are only three to four daily bus departures between rural areas near Hama and Hama city itself.[182] Furthermore, the cost of public transportation remains high relative to ordinary Syrians' purchasing power, even though the Syrian pound has recently appreciated.[183]

In north-eastern Syria, east of the Euphrates River, freedom of movement remains largely unchanged; however, the cessation of Turkish bombardments has alleviated some of the fear associated with traveling in the region, for instance moving between cities such as Hasakah and surrounding rural areas, including towns near the Turkish border like al-Malikiyah, as well as between Hasakah and Deir ez-Zor.[184]

On smaller roads, security risks persist due to the presence of extremist groups who sometimes harass travellers at checkpoints. According to SOHR, although such actors are not authorised to operate independently and require orders from higher authorities, incidents of harassment remain widespread, and the authorities are allegedly aware of their prevalence.[185]

[177] SOHR: 16
[178] Watan News, *Damascus to Enforce Gender Segregation on Public and Private Buses*, 11 January, url
[179] Syrian journalist: 24
[180] SOHR: 16
[181] Syrian journalist: 25
[182] Syrian journalist: 26
[183] Syrian journalist: 27
[184] Syrian journalist: 28
[185] SOHR: 17

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Annex 1: Meeting minutes

Online interview with a Syrian journalist, 22 May 2025

About the source: The source currently works for a Syrian TV channel and has previously worked for the Syrian news outlet, Enab Baladi.

General security situation

1. There are different factors impacting the security situation in different areas in Syria, making it difficult to generalise about the security situation. These factors include among others:
   - whether the area in question was previously a stronghold of the Syrian opposition or perceived as having supported the former government,
   - people's political, religious, and sectarian affiliations,
   - local conditions and dynamics. For example, the source's place of origin – Salamiyah in Hama Governorate – was previously viewed as loyal to the former government, however, the area is today considered one of the calmest and most stable areas in Syria.

2. Since the fall of the former government, the new authorities have focused on securing key cities such as Damascus and Aleppo. As a result, violations in these areas are limited compared to other parts of the country. Damascus remains the most stable area, due to the central authorities' emphasis on maintaining order in the capital.

3. In the coastal region, widespread violations were committed against the local population in the immediate aftermath of the former government's fall. These violations have since decreased in urban centres, but they continue in the countryside, including in the coastal areas as well as in Hama and Homs governorates.

4. The nature of violations in the coastal areas differs from those in other parts of Syria. As these areas were once the heartland of the former government's military and security apparatus, the current security personnel – many of whom are former opposition fighters – often display a hostile attitude towards the local population. This hostility stems from grievances over abuses committed by the former authorities in opposition-held areas. For instance, a civilian from Slanfah – a town formerly supportive of the previous government – may be subjected to hostile treatment by new security personnel at a checkpoint in rural Latakia, despite standing orders not to harass civilians. However, this attitude cannot be generalised to all security personnel.

5. In Hama, the situation is different. The city of Hama, which historically opposed the former government, generally does not witness harassment at checkpoints. By

contrast, residents of Alawite villages in Sahl al-Ghab (Hama Governorate) are reportedly subjected to ongoing violations. Recently, a military group forcibly displaced an entire village population in this area, allowing the group's relatives to resettle there after their original homes were destroyed.

6. It remains difficult to generalise about the current violations in Syria. In one recent incident in Salamiyah (Hama Governorate), a man drinking alcohol at home was attacked and beaten by security personnel, who also ransacked his house. The attackers fled the scene, suggesting the assault was not officially sanctioned. Enab Baladi contacted the General Intelligence Service (GIS) (in Arabic جهاز المخابرات العامة), which subsequently announced that the responsible individuals had been dismissed and arrested.

7. In Homs Governorate, violations do occur but are less frequent than in northern rural Hama. In western Homs, near the Lebanese border, civilians face different threats. This area, once controlled by Hezbollah, was a hub for arms and drug smuggling. Some armed groups formerly opposed to the former government have now returned as gangs rather than formal military units, posing an ongoing challenge for the new authorities.

8. In Aleppo Governorate, the situation is more complex. Although the region is nominally under the control of the new authorities, divisions between formerly held territories persist. In eastern Aleppo, previously controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), areas have witnessed kidnappings and robberies carried out by the Syrian National Army (SNA). These violations against civilians were significant enough to prompt interventions by security forces in towns such as Manbij, Afrin, and Jarablus.

9. In northern Aleppo, Kurdish civilians continue to face harassment and abuse. Similar patterns are observed in SDF-held areas such as Hasakah, Raqqa, and eastern Deir ez-Zor, where violations now primarily are committed against the Arab population.

10. In Deir ez-Zor Governorate, the threat from pro-Iranian militias has decreased, but the threat posed by the so-called Islamic State (IS) remains and is growing. Between 1 and 21 May 2025, the source reported 11 IS attacks in the area, targeting both military and civilian actors. IS has reportedly extorted civilians on the pretext of collecting alms.

11. Some of the residents of Deir ez-Zor City are sometimes accused of joining pro-Iranian militias during the previous government, although these affiliations were often economically rather than ideologically motivated. Notably, Deir ez-Zor is the only governorate where the security situation in the city is largely similar to that of the countryside.

12. In Al-Bukamal, near the Iraqi border, the authorities carried out raids on villages just 48 hours before the interview. This area previously formed part of a key arms smuggling corridor between Iraq and Lebanon. The long-term impact of these raids on civilians is still unclear, but the area remains unstable.

13. In the Badiya desert, stretching from Deir ez-Zor to Suweida, IS activity has declined. This reduction is attributed to the presence of the US-led coalition's al-Tanf base, which provides support to Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces in the area.

14. In areas like eastern Hama, security dynamics are influenced by the fact that areas formerly controlled by the opposition have not been disarmed, unlike areas previously held by the former government. For instance, Tel Jedid—a pro-government village—has been disarmed, while Uqayribat, once under opposition control, retains its weapons. Armed tribal groups from Uqayribat have attacked shepherds in Tel Jedid and stolen livestock without facing repercussions. The situation is the same in the areas of eastern Hama, though it cannot be generalised to all regions.

15. Residents in disarmed areas typically remain indoors after 8 p.m., whereas in areas where weapons have been retained, life continues outside into the evening.

16. In Rural Damascus, particularly in al-Tal, acts of revenge continue against individuals suspected of involvement with the former government. These acts are reportedly committed by former opposition fighters who had been relocated to northern Syria by the Assad government and have since returned.

17. In areas such as Jaramana and Sahnaya, tensions persist. Residents are sometimes accused of supporting Israel, which affects their daily lives and freedom of movement, especially when travelling to districts such as Bab Toma in Damascus.

18. In southern governorates such as Suweida and Quneitra, central government control is limited due to Israeli incursions. The source reported violations – i.e. arrests, shootings, and killings of civilians, including journalists and farmers. The source personally knows of two incidents in Quneitra and one in Daraa involving Israeli attacks on civilians.

19. In Suweida, the security landscape is shaped by the presence of local armed factions operating independently of central government authority. The majority Druze population coexists with a Sunni Bedouin minority, the latter often accused of supporting the new government, while the Druze are conversely alleged to be aligned with Israel. This mutual suspicion has led to recurring clashes between the two groups. In addition, eastern Suweida regularly experiences mortar attacks, for which no group has claimed responsibility – likely reflecting broader sectarian tensions within the governorate.

20. The Druze face multiple threats: Israeli expansion, tribal attacks, mortar fire, and a central government that many Druze distrust. Internal divisions among the Druze community are not necessarily based on support for or opposition to Israel or the central government, but rather on competing priorities – whether to focus on preserving Druze unity or on participating in a unified Syrian state.

21. The largest military groups in Suweida have expressed willingness to integrate into the new security forces and to allow the entry of central government forces into the governorate.

Freedom of movement

22. Civilians now generally experience greater freedom of movement compared to the period under the former government. Fixed checkpoints have largely disappeared from major cities such as Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, and towns in the Rural Damascus region. Checkpoints are mainly found along intercity highways, though they are far fewer in number than before. Reports of civilians being extorted at checkpoints – once widespread – are no longer common, and if such incidents occur, they are considered exceptions. Moreover, checks at these points are not conducted with the same level of scrutiny as in the past.

23. There is a notable difference between daytime and nighttime mobility. In most governorates, civilians move freely during the day but tend to avoid travel after dark. The degree of caution varies by region. For example, in northwestern Syria, including Idlib and northern Aleppo, which were previously controlled by the opposition, people do move around within these areas – even at night – but refrain from travelling outside their area to other governorates at night. In contrast, in areas associated with support for the Assad government, although residents may still move around within their own locality, they are generally reluctant to travel outside it – even during the day – due to fears of abuse at checkpoints.

24. In areas formerly under government control, a new phenomenon has been observed: the occasional gender segregation in public transportation. This entails that unrelated men and women are not permitted to sit next to each other. It is important to note that this segregation is ad hoc and not a formal or consistent practice, even in the areas where it has been observed. It remains unclear whether this stems from a central directive or is the result of actions by private individuals or local actors. Gender segregation has also been noted in areas that were formerly under opposition control but tends to draw more attention in the former government-held areas where residents are not accustomed to such practices. In rare instances, checkpoint personnel have also intervened in the seating arrangements of buses, instructing passengers on how men and women should be seated.

25. Forty years of rule under the Assad family created a strained relationship and deep mistrust between civilians and the military. As a result, many people are irritated by the continued presence of checkpoints and military personnel, regardless of who controls them, seeing them as obstacles to their freedom of movement. Civilians sometimes voice complaints about mistreatment at checkpoints to the relevant authorities. These authorities occasionally intervene but not consistently.

26. An ongoing issue when travelling between governorates is the shortage of transport options. Existing vehicles are insufficient to meet public demand. While bus travel between Damascus and other governorates is relatively straightforward, transportation between or within other governorates remains difficult. For instance, there are only three to four daily bus departures between rural areas near Hama and Hama city itself.

27. Another challenge is the cost of public transportation, which remains relatively high for many Syrians. Although the Syrian pound has recently appreciated – a positive development – this has not translated into improved living conditions or purchasing power for ordinary citizens.

28. In the areas east of the Euphrates River in northeastern Syria, the situation regarding freedom of movement remains largely unchanged. However, Turkish bombardments have ceased, leading to a notable decline in fear among civilians when traveling between cities such as Hasakah and surrounding rural areas, including towns near the Turkish border like al-Malikiyah, or between Hasakah and Deir ez-Zor.

Online interview with the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), 23 May 2025

General security situation

1. The overall security situation in Syria is relatively stable, with fewer security incidents reported in the past two months. However, the situation remains volatile in various regions due to the presence of extremist Islamist groups, particularly in Hama, Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, Rural Damascus, and Deir ez-Zor. These groups contribute to ongoing insecurity through assassinations, kidnappings, and robberies. As long as security responsibilities remain divided between state and non-state actors, stability cannot be entirely ensured.

2. It is not possible to generalise about the security situation at the governorate level, nor can broad distinctions be drawn between urban and rural areas. Security conditions vary significantly, even within the same city or region. For instance, the day before the

interview, an incident occurred in Idlib, a city otherwise considered to have a relatively stable security situation, involving the extrajudicial execution of two individuals suspected of killing a member of the general security service.

3. Another example is Damascus, where the situation has shown signs of improvement, with fewer checkpoint arrests and a reduction in overall security incidents. However, isolated violent events still occur. One recent case involved a shooting inside a casino. Nightclubs are also considered vulnerable to attacks. Islamist groups affiliated with the new government have reportedly targeted alcohol vendors in both Damascus and Homs.

4. The risk of being killed or injured does not differ significantly by region for those suspected of affiliation with the former government. Such individuals are considered to be at high risk nationwide. Killings of perceived affiliates of the former government occur on a daily basis.

5. For ordinary civilians, the risk of physical harm is limited, except for specific groups, including Alawites, Shia Muslims, and, to a lesser extent, Druze. Even Sunni Muslims may be targeted if suspected of ties to the former government – for instance, individuals from areas previously under Assad government control such as Damascus and surrounding areas or those who served as mukhtars or were associated with *shabiha*. It might happen that an armed, extremist person attacks an Alawite even in Damascus.

6. During the events of 7–9 March 2025, massacres and acts of genocide were perpetrated against Alawite communities. If international media had not reported on those incidents, there would have been much more bloodshed. Many Alawite residents of coastal areas and the governorates of Hama and Homs have yet to return to their homes.

7. Individuals perceived as opponents of the current government led by al-Sharaa, along with Alawites and, to a lesser extent, Shia Muslims, remain under threat. A notable example cited is a Saudi cleric who currently leads Friday prayers in Baniyas (Tartous) – a city where many Alawites were killed in March – and who has openly called for the killing of Alawites.

8. The risk of being killed or injured for the above-mentioned groups varies across governorates but is not limited to minority groups. In Aleppo, Sunni civilians have reportedly been killed on accusations of affiliation with the former government. The new authorities have not intervened to prevent these killings; state-affiliated groups are allegedly behind those killings.

9. It remains unclear whether such killings occur on orders of or with consent of senior government officials or whether they are carried out by rogue elements not under central control. Between 1 and 23 May 2025 alone, 82 individuals were reportedly executed on sectarian grounds or due to accusations of affiliation with the former government.

10. From 1 January to 23 May 2025, a total of 670 civilians were reportedly killed for sectarian or political reasons, excluding the March killings along the coast. Victims include Alawites, Shia Muslims, a smaller number of Druze, and Sunnis. The figure does not include armed members of the former government; all 670 were unarmed civilians.

11. In areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the security situation is largely stable. The only significant security threat in these areas stems from dormant cells of the Islamic State (IS).

Freedom of movement

12. Freedom of movement across Syria is generally unrestricted. It is currently possible to travel between governorates and within major cities – such as Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, and in cities in Rural Damascus – without significant issues.

13. Under the former government, travel was hindered by checkpoints where extortion was common. For example, drivers travelling from Damascus to SDF-controlled areas were frequently stopped and forced to pay bribes. This practice continued for two to three months following the fall of the previous government, during which time travellers were also questioned about their sectarian background, including whether they were Alawites.

14. Today, movement has become considerably easier. Although checkpoints still exist, the level of scrutiny has decreased, and people do not risk being arbitrarily arrested as under the previous government. Traffic between Damascus and the coastal region, or between Damascus and Aleppo, flows freely.

15. While daytime travel is common, people generally avoid travelling at night due to security concerns. An exception is Idlib city, which has been under opposition control throughout the conflict. Here residents reportedly do not fear moving around after dark. In contrast, the situation is different in rural areas of Idlib.

16. Women's freedom of movement, i.e. travelling from one city to another without being stopped or being subjected to harassment, also varies depending on the area and the checkpoint in question. For instance, a Christian woman travelling by minibus from Hama city to Maharda (a Christian town in rural Hama) was recently questioned at a checkpoint for sitting in the front seat and not covering her hair.

17. Freedom of movement is widely observed on major roads. The new authorities seek to avoid negative publicity and therefore work to ensure unobstructed travel on main roads. However, travelling on smaller routes remain unsafe due to the presence of extremist groups who may harass travellers at checkpoints. The authorities are allegedly aware of such harassments, which are reportedly widespread, as these actors are not authorised to act independently and require orders from higher-level authorities.

Annex 2: Terms of Reference (ToR)

Syria – Security situation after the fall of the Assad government

1. General security situation in Syria
   - 1.1. Armed actors and territorial control
   - 1.2. Latest developments
   - 1.3. Security incidents across Syria
   - 1.4. Freedom of movement

2. Security situation by governorate
   - 2.1. Damascus
   - 2.2. Rural Damascus
   - 2.3. Latakia
   - 2.4. Tartous
   - 2.5. Aleppo
   - 2.6. Homs
   - 2.7. Daraa
   - 2.8. Quneitra
   - 2.9. Idlib
   - 2.10. Hama
   - 2.11. Suweida
   - 2.12. Raqqa
   - 2.13. Deir ez-Zor
   - 2.14. Hasakah

Exhibit 19

Syria Travel Advisory

Travel Advisory
July 23, 2025

Syria - Level 4: Do Not Travel

Updated to reflect recent developments in Syria.

Do not travel to Syria due to the risk of **terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, hostage taking, and armed conflict**.

Country Summary: The U.S. government suspended operations of the U.S. Embassy in 2012. Czechia serves as the protecting power for the United States in Syria. The U.S. government is unable to provide any routine or emergency consular services to U.S. citizens in Syria. **Do not travel to Syria for any reason.**

Syria has experienced active armed conflict since 2011. **No part of Syria is safe from violence**. Hostage taking by armed groups, terrorism, remnants of war such as unexploded ordnance, and aerial bombardment pose significant risk of death or serious injury. The destruction of infrastructure, housing, medical facilities, schools, and power and water utilities has also increased hardships inside the country.

The U.S. government strongly warns private U.S. citizens against traveling to Syria to engage in armed conflict. The U.S. government does not support this activity. U.S. citizens who undertake such activity face extreme personal risks, including hostage taking by armed groups, injury, or death.

There is risk of terrorist violence, including terrorist attacks and other activity in Syria. Visit the U.S. Department of State's country reports on terrorism to learn more. Parts of Syria have experienced recent increases in incidents of bombings, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and assassinations. Providing material support or resources to designated foreign terrorist organizations, including ISIS and al-Qa'ida (AQ) affiliates, is a **crime under U.S. law** that can result in penalties including prison time and large fines.

lines.

There is an ongoing risk of hostage taking of U.S. citizens and other foreign nationals throughout the country. In the past, U.S. citizens have been targets of abduction and detention in Syria. Those in detention may not have access to fair judicial process or medical attention. Current detention center conditions are unclear but could be harsh and unsanitary. Failure to obtain a legitimate entry visa directly from the Syrian government could result in detention.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has issued a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) and a Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) advising against travel to Syria due to risks to civil aviation operating within or in the vicinity of Syria. For more information, U.S. citizens should consult the Federal Aviation Administration's Prohibitions, Restrictions and Notices. Read the country information page for additional information on Syria, including alerts related to the closure of airspace.

If despite this warning, you decide to travel to Syria:

- Visit our website on Travel to High Risk Areas.
- Draft a will and designate appropriate insurance beneficiaries or power of attorney.
- Familiarize yourself with and respect local laws and customs. Foreign travelers may face increased risk of detention and harassment.
- Establish a proof of life protocol with your loved ones. This is so that if you are taken hostage, your loved ones know specific questions (and answers) to ask the hostage-takers to be sure that you are alive (and to rule out a hoax).
- Leave DNA samples with your medical provider in case it is necessary for your loved ones to access them.
- Share important documents, login information, and points of contact with loved

ones. This is so they can manage your affairs if you are unable to return as planned to the United States. Review thoroughly this list of documents to prepare for your trip.

- Check local media for breaking events. Be prepared to adjust your plans.
- Develop a communication plan with family or your employer or host organization (if you are traveling on business). This is so they can monitor your safety and location as you travel through high-risk areas. Specify how you will confirm you're safe (texts, calls, etc.), how often, and whom you will contact first to share the information.
- Avoid demonstrations and crowds.
- Keep travel documents up to date and easily accessible.
- Have evacuation plans that do not rely on U.S. government assistance.
- Make backup plans to leave the country.
- Enroll in Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive messages and Alerts.
- Prepare a plan for emergency situations. Review the Traveler's Checklist.
- Visit the CDC page for the latest Travel Health Information related to your travel and return to the United States.

We highly recommend that you buy insurance before you travel. Check with your travel insurance provider about evacuation assistance, medical insurance, and trip cancellation coverage.

Exhibit 20

Exhibit 54

From: Miller, Kelley K [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=29099063E0A344A69240A90020DA5808-MILLER, KEL]
Sent: 4/10/2025 5:26:25 PM
To: Cutlip-Mason, Rená E [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=444ed8d5a6e94408aa13181a0c866672-Cutlip-Maso]
CC: Ezeldin, Amany S [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=b8b74085eef745d59c1682d10157316b-Ezeldin, Am]; Rigney, Joshua A (Josh) [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=0cf36ecaf5a04535b84bf9686e60ae3b-Rigney, Jos]; Ridley, Sasha M [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=08164540ac5d4d65807c810fa5226bb1-Ridley, Sas]; El-Hage, Rabia S [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=dafa0d3323bc45a9a7af6cc93dc6ae4a-El-Hage, Ra]; Miller, Kelley K [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=29099063e0a344a69240a90020da5808-Miller, Kel]
Subject: RE: Nicaragua DM

+ Rabia who has graciously agreed to watch Nicaragua for me while I'm on leave. Rabia, we have a State rec for Nicaragua from 2024, not 2025. We also just got the RRU country conditions today. Mark is the project manager for Nicaragua too.

Thank you much,

Kelley K. Miller
(she/her/hers)
Adjudications Officer
HQ Field Operations, Division 1, Adjustment of Status, Team 2
On Detail to the Office of Policy and Strategy, Humanitarian Affairs Division, Provisional Protections Branch
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

[redacted] work cell

[redacted]

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From: Miller, Kelley K
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2025 4:54 PM
To: Cutlip-Mason, Rená E <[redacted]
Cc: Ezeldin, Amany S <[redacted]; Rigney, Joshua A (Josh) <[redacted]; Ridley, Sasha M <[redacted]; Miller, Kelley K <[redacted]
Subject: Nicaragua DM
Importance: High

Hi Rená,

I hope you're well. Did you want to review the Nicaragua DM before we send it to the FO?

04.3.25_Nicaragua_TPS Decision Memo.docx
Attachment A - Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Legal Authority.pdf

Attachment B - USCIS Country Condition Reports, Honduras.pdf

Thanks for letting us know! I'm off tomorrow, Mon, and Tues, but can keep a look out for this.

Sincerely,

Kelley K. Miller
(she/her/hers)
Adjudications Officer
HQ Field Operations, Division 1, Adjustment of Status, Team 2
On Detail to the Office of Policy and Strategy, Humanitarian Affairs Division, Provisional Protections Branch
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

[redacted] - work cell

[redacted]

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Exhibit 21

Exhibit 30

From: Cutlip-Mason, Rená E [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=444ed8d5a6e94408aa13181a0c866672-Cutlip-Maso]
Sent: 4/8/2025 6:38:15 AM
To: Ridley, Sasha M [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=08164540ac5d4d65807c810fa5226bb1-Ridley, Sas]
Subject: Re: Honduras and Nicaragua TPS

Hi Sasha,

I will do the reach out. [redacted]

[redacted] Thanks, Rena

Rena E. Cutlip-Mason
Chief, Humanitarian Affairs Division
Office of Policy & Strategy
US Citizenship and Immigration Services
Phone (cell) [redacted]

From: Ridley, Sasha M <[redacted]
Sent: Monday, April 7, 2025 11:54:45 AM
To: Cutlip-Mason, Rená E <[redacted]
Subject: Honduras and Nicaragua TPS

Hi! These countries are due 5/4 for S1 decision. We have DM's written for termination.

Nic – we have old DOS and PRD – **can you please ping RRU?**
Hond – we have RRU, PRD, but no DOS – **can you/Sam please ping Ihsan?**

Assuming Sam doesn't want to see them without more COI, can you please confirm – thanks!

Sasha Mehra Ridley
Chief, Provisional Protections Branch, Humanitarian Affairs Division
Office of Policy and Strategy (OP&S)
U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) | Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
[redacted]
Call: [redacted] | **Email**: [redacted]

NTPSA2_00002566

Exhibit 22

Exhibit 19

Sent: 4/8/2025 10:53:45 AM
To: GUNDUZ, IHSAN [redacted]; Ridley, Sasha M [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=08164540ac5d4d65807c810fa5226bb1-Ridley, Sas]
CC: Cutlip-Mason, Rená E [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=444ed8d5a6e94408aa13181a0c866672-Cutlip-Maso]
Subject: RE: Honduras and Nicaragua recommendations

I'll respond to Sasha's email as well, but just confirming that we submitted the Honduras TPS COI report to HAD on March 24. For the Nicaragua TPS COI report, we need to complete our review and finalize the report, and we are working to get that to HAD by noon Thursday, 4/10.

Best,
Rebecca

From: GUNDUZ, IHSAN [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, April 08, 2025 10:35 AM
To: Ridley, Sasha M [redacted]; Tanner, Rebecca S [redacted]
Cc: Cutlip-Mason, Rená E [redacted]
Subject: RE: Honduras and Nicaragua recommendations

Hi Sasha,

[redacted]

Ihsan Gunduz
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, Border and Immigration Policy
Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans | Department of Homeland Security
(M): [redacted]
(O): [redacted]

From: Ridley, Sasha M [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, April 8, 2025 10:05 AM
To: GUNDUZ, IHSAN [redacted]; Tanner, Rebecca S [redacted]
Cc: Cutlip-Mason, Rená E [redacted]
Subject: Honduras and Nicaragua recommendations

Hello, S1 needs to make a decision on Honduras and Nicaragua TPS by 5/4. **We have drafted decision memos for both countries** [redacted] Thanks very much, Sasha

Sasha Mehra Ridley
Chief, Provisional Protections Branch, Humanitarian Affairs Division
Office of Policy and Strategy (OP&S)
U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) | Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
[redacted]
Call: [redacted] | **Email**: [redacted]

Exhibit 23

Exhibit 7

From: Kim, Ted H <Redacted PII
Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2025 12:42 PM
To: Edlow, Joseph B <Redacted PII
Subject: Venezuela country conditions
Attach: Relevant quotes from updated Venezuela COI sources (012825)_positive improvements highlighted.docx

I asked the team to focus on any improvements in Venezuela since our last research paper was submitted to OP&S for TPS purposes in August 2024.
I highlighted 7 excerpts that support some improvements in Venezuela during that stretch.

Ted Kim
Associate Director
Refugee, Asylum & International Operations
USCIS/DHS

NTPSA2_000933

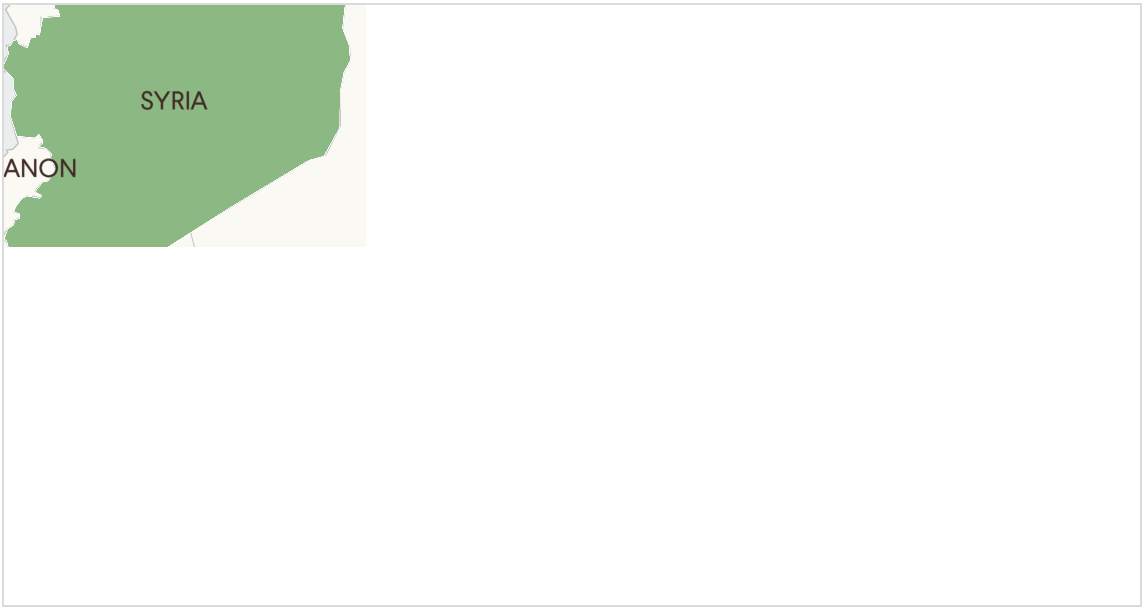
Exhibit 24

cfr | Global Conflict Tracker

Conflict in Syria

By the Center for Preventive Action

Updated October 3, 2025



Latest News

Islamist-led Syrian rebel fighters celebrate in the streets of Homs in the early hours of Decemb Syria's third city overnight. *Abdulaziz Ketaz/AFP via Getty Images*

On December 8, 2024, the Bashar al-Assad regime fell following a ten-day offensive carried out by rebel forces, beginning with the rebels' seizure of Aleppo on November 30. The armed coalition was led by Islamist militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA). The upheaval put an end to over fifty years of the Assad family's rule of Syria and four years of largely frozen dynamics in the Syrian civil war, which has been ongoing since 2011. Amid the fall of the capital city, Damascus, to HTS and aligned forces, deposed President Assad fled to Moscow. Rebels freed Assad regime prisoners throughout the offensive as they seized new territory. Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah—longtime supporters of Assad's government—did not send significant support to his Syrian Arab Army (SA) during the rebel offensive. Concurrently, the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Defense Forces (SDF), which controls parts of northeastern Syria, continue to clash with Arab tribes that accuse the group of discrimination while Turkey and its proxies continue attacks on

Kurdish forces. Factionalized fighting has made space for the self-proclaimed Islamic State to maintain a presence and launch attacks. Additionally, Israel regularly strikes Iranian and Syrian military positions in Syria and has increased attacks, including hitting the Damascus and Aleppo airports, since Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel.

Background

What began as protests against President Assad's regime in 2011 quickly escalated into a full-scale war between the Syrian government—backed by Russia and Iran—and anti-government rebel groups—backed by the United States and a rotating number of U.S. allies, including France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Three campaigns drove the conflict: coalition efforts to defeat the self-proclaimed Islamic State, violence between the Syrian government and opposition forces, and military operations against Syrian Kurds by Turkish forces.

The Islamic State began seizing control of territory in Syria in 2013. After a series of terrorist attacks coordinated by the Islamic State across Europe in 2015, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France—with the support of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab partners—expanded their air campaign in Iraq to include Syria. Together, these nations have conducted over eleven thousand air strikes against Islamic State targets in Syria, while the U.S.-led coalition has continued its support for ground operations by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Turkish troops have been involved in ground operations against the Islamic State since 2016 and have launched attacks against armed Kurdish groups in Syria.

Meanwhile, at the request of the Syrian government in September 2015, Russia began launching air strikes against what it claimed were Islamic State targets, while Syrian government forces achieved several notable victories over the Islamic State, including the reclamation of the city of Palmyra. According to the U.S.-led coalition against the

Islamic State, Iraqi security forces and the SDF have reclaimed 98 percent of the territory formerly held by the group in Iraq and Syria, including the cities of Raqqa and Deir al-Zour.

With Russian and Iranian support, the Syrian government has steadily regained control of territory from opposition forces, including the opposition's stronghold in Aleppo in 2016. The regime has been accused of using chemical weapons numerous times over the course of the conflict, resulting in international condemnation in 2013, 2017, and 2018. Opposition forces have maintained limited control in Idlib, in northwestern Syria, and on the Iraq-Syria border. However, the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquake has made effective governance nearly impossible, as the opposition forces have scrambled to meet the needs of citizens.

Efforts to reach a diplomatic resolution have been unsuccessful. Geneva peace talks on Syria—a UN-backed conference for facilitating a political transition led by UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura—have been unsuccessful in reaching a political resolution, as opposition groups and Syrian regime officials struggle to find mutually acceptable terms for resolving the conflict. A new round of peace talks began in Geneva in May 2017 with an eighteen-person delegation from Syria but has since stalled. Also in 2017, peace talks initiated by Russia in Astana, Kazakhstan, with Iran, Turkey, and members of Syria's government and armed opposition leaders resulted in a cease-fire agreement and the establishment of four de-escalation zones. However, shortly after the cease-fire was announced, attacks by Syrian government forces against rebel-held areas in the de-escalation zones resumed.

Under the President Donald J. Trump administration, the United States largely withdrew from Syria, leaving only about 400 U.S. troops as a contingency force. On January 16, 2019, an attack in Manbij claimed by the self-proclaimed Islamic State killed at least nineteen people, including four Americans. Prior to that attack, only two Americans had been killed in action in Syria since the U.S.-led

campaign began. The U.S.-led international coalition continues to carry out military strikes against the remnants of the Islamic State, as well as a number of Iranian-backed militias.

The departure of most U.S. troops increased uncertainty around the role of other external parties to the conflict—including Iran, Israel, Russia, and Turkey—as well as the future of internal actors. Growing Russian involvement has been instrumental in the Syrian government's success in reclaiming territory. While Russia has publicly stated that it only provides air support to the regime, it has sent the Wagner Group, a private military contractor, to fight in Syria. Ongoing violence and proxy conflicts have also facilitated the resurgence of extremist groups.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire, with 7 out of 10 Syrians requiring humanitarian assistance. According to estimates from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, more than 600,000 people have been killed since the start of the war. In its 2023 Global Appeal, the United Nations reported that more than 6.9 million are currently internally displaced, with more than 5.4 million living as refugees abroad. Many refugees have fled to Jordan and Lebanon, straining already weak infrastructures and limited resources. More than 3.4 million Syrians have fled to Turkey, and many have attempted to seek refuge in Europe.

Recent Developments

On February 6, 2023, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake and 7.5 magnitude aftershock struck southeast Turkey and northwest Syria, representing one of the worst natural disasters of this century. Estimates in May 2023 put the death toll at almost 60,000, with 50,700 casualties in Turkey and 8,400 in Syria. Syria's twelve years of conflict have severely hindered its relief efforts—the head of the World Food Programme described the situation as a "catastrophe on top of catastrophe." In Syria alone, the earthquake is estimated to have caused $5.1 billion in damages.

Earthquake response efforts were complicated by the territorial divisions stemming from Syria's civil war. The northwest corner of Syria most affected by the earthquake is held by rebel forces, and the Syrian government has long restricted access to the region. Consequently, international aid needed to be approved by the Turkish government to transit the sole humanitarian aid corridor between Syria and Turkey, known as the Bab al-Hawa crossing. However, the earthquake badly damaged the roads linking Turkey to Syria, and the Turkish government was absorbed with its own relief efforts. The first United Nations aid convoy reached Bab al-Hawa on Thursday, February 9. On Friday, February 10, the Syrian government announced it would grant permission to international aid groups to access rebel-held areas of Syria, but did not provide a timeline for doing so.

In May 2023, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi met with President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus to strengthen economic cooperation—marking the first visit of an Iranian president to Syria since the war. Later that month, the Arab League agreed to re-admit Syria after a twelve-year suspension, despite the persistence of Western sanctions against President Assad's government that could deter oil-rich Arab countries from investment in Syria. In July 2023, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudan discussed drug trafficking, the return of Syrian refugees, and the removal of the Western sanctions with President Assad in Damascus.

Throughout August 2023, the Syrian army was subject to various Islamic State and Israeli military attacks. Attacks by Islamic State sleeper cells in Syria, especially in the vast desert areas they once controlled, have increased throughout 2023. For example, a bus carrying Syrian soldiers in the eastern desert province of Deir Ezzor was ambushed by the Islamic State, killing twenty-three. Meanwhile, an Israeli missile attack near Damascus in early August killed at least four Syrian soldiers and wounded four others. Although Israel has carried out attacks against what it has described as Iran-linked targets in Syria for years, the number and scope have increased following the

October 7 Hamas attack on Israel. Since December, Israeli strikes in and around Damascus have killed more than half a dozen members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), among them one of Iran's top intelligence officials.

Conversely, Iran-backed militia groups in Syria and Iraq that oppose Israel's campaign in Gaza have attacked U.S. troops in the region at least 165 times since the Israel-Hamas War began. There are currently 900 U.S. troops stationed in Syria to prevent a resurgence of Islamic State activity. Since mid-October 2023, American bases in Iraq and Syria have been subject to attacks from these various groups. On November 23, U.S. and international forces in northeastern Syria and Iraq were attacked with drones and rockets four times in twenty-four hours. In February 2024, the U.S. conducted a series of retaliatory strikes following an attack in Jordan on a U.S. military outpost near the Syrian border that killed three U.S. soldiers. The strikes included more than eighty-five targets throughout Iraq and Syria, though U.S. officials have signaled that these strikes were only the start of their response. In response, Iran-backed militias have begun a series of new strikes on U.S. bases, with a drone strike in the eastern province of Deir el-Zour in Syria killing seven and injuring at least eighteen other Kurdish fighters.

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EXHIBIT 25

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The city of Deir Ezzor straddles the Euphrates River in eastern Syria and still lies in ruins from 14 years of civil war. It is now split along the waterway between the new Damascus government of President Ahmed al-Sharaa, and Kurdish-led forces. REUTERS/Khalil Ashawi

A REUTERS SPECIAL REPORT

Syria risks rupturing as armed camps face off across the Euphrates

When Bashar al-Assad fell, Syria split along the Euphrates River between Islamist-dominated government forces and Kurdish-led fighters. An 1,800-kilometer journey across this divide reveals how competing visions for the country threaten to tear it apart.

By **John Davison**, **Orhan Qereman**, **Khalil Ashawi** and **Feras Dalatey**

September 19, 2025 6:08 AM EDT · Updated September 19, 2025

Aa

RAQQA, Syria - The Euphrates River is a simmering front line in the struggle for the new Syria.

It separates the country's two largest armed camps, marking the physical divide between clashing visions for the future. On one side is the army of the new Damascus government, dominated by Islamist factions who took down a dictatorship. On the other are the forces of a region run by Kurds, ready to guard their hard-won independence with their lives.

With tensions rising, Reuters journalists traveled 1,800 kilometers across this divide in the summer, visited key strategic centers on both sides of the waterway and interviewed dozens of military and civilian officials, activists, and displaced people.

They found a lawless frontier under the control of armed groups with scores to settle, local tensions that confound leaders' hopes for unity, and soldiers prepared to kill each other before they give ground.

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At their closest point, these forces stand 200 meters apart, stationed at either end of a dirt bridge across the Euphrates in the divided eastern city of Deir Ezzor. When the reporting team approached, fighters on both sides had received orders to close it to all traffic, but none of the men would explain why. They agreed to allow a crossing only after repeatedly examining press credentials.

Fighters on the government side of the dirt bridge stood with weapons drawn and cocked, including one aggressive gunman with bloodshot eyes who was trying to stop a crowd of locals pushing to leave the Kurdish side. Cross-river gunfire has wounded several fighters and civilians in the weeks since. Each side accuses the other of starting it.

The two rival forces arrayed along the Euphrates stand about 200 meters apart at their closest point, on either side of this dirt bridge in Deir Ezzor. REUTERS/Khalil Ashawi

Ahmed al-Hayis, a commander in the new Syrian army who oversees Deir Ezzor, is stationed on the western bank of the Euphrates. Kurdish forces control his ancestral land on the other side of the river. He keeps a submachine gun by his side, a pistol and knife holstered to his belt, and surrounds himself with hardened Islamist fighters.

"In Damascus, they talk about liberation," he said, referring to the fall of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. "Here, we're still occupied."

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To the river's east, Sozdar Derik, a commander of the Kurdish women's battalions, was taking her own precautions – she didn't have a mobile phone so she couldn't be tracked and changed location regularly. She said she'll never trust Hayis and his comrades, whom she has battled in the past.

"We won't attack, but we'll defend ourselves," Derik said. "We're ready for war."

The two camps facing off across the river emerged as the most powerful after the toppling of Assad in December.

Journey Across a Divided Syria

Source: Reuters reporting

Islamist former rebel factions control nearly all the areas to the west of the Euphrates – roughly two-thirds of Syria, including its major cities and the Mediterranean coast. They dominate the new government in Damascus led by President Ahmed al-Sharaa, a former Al Qaeda commander. They seek full control of the country and have the backing of the U.S. administration and NATO member Turkey.

Kurdish-led militants hold roughly one-third of the country mostly to the east of the Euphrates, including hydroelectric dams that help power Syria and oil wealth crucial to its future. They run their own regional administration and want to keep it that way. They are U.S.-trained but fear abandonment by American allies.

In meeting rooms, negotiators from both sides are struggling to advance a faltering unity agreement signed in March. The deal, now being negotiated in Damascus, would merge Kurdish-led forces into the Islamist-dominated military of Sharaa's government.

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On the ground, signs point to a long-term partition or to confrontation. Neither outcome would bring the stability or unity so many Syrians desperately hoped would follow Assad's fall.

Aleppo is one of many cities that still bear the scars of years of civil war. REUTERS/Mahmoud Hassano

"If the SDF ceases to exist, then Syria can begin to revive."

Motasem Abbas, brigade commander in the Syrian army, on his rivals, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces

Clashes took place at each point the reporting team visited along the Euphrates frontline, both in the weeks before and after the journalists were there. While the cross-river skirmishes broke out in Deir Ezzor, Kurdish forces upstream killed a relative of an Arab commander Reuters interviewed in a fresh gun battle. The commander sent men and weapons to the front in response. Turkey meanwhile staged its first airstrikes in months on Kurdish positions, and the Kurds dug new defensive tunnels.

The months since Assad's toppling in December have already tempered hopes for a peaceful transition. The new government's security forces crushed a pro-Assad insurgency by killing hundreds of members of the Alawite minority in coastal areas. Bloodshed involving Druze gunmen, Bedouin tribes and Israeli airstrikes recently destabilised the south.

The Euphrates skirmishes threaten to ignite a bigger battle. On either side are tens of thousands of fighters funded, trained and armed at different stages in the Syrian civil war by the U.S. and its allies.

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Syria's government did not respond to requests for comment about the Euphrates divide. In an interview earlier this month with Syrian state television, Sharaa said negotiations had stalled and that international partners were getting involved, including the United States and Turkey.

"Anything that will help avoid a battle or war in this problem, I've done it," he said. "In the end, Syria will not give up a single inch of its land."

Farhad Shami, spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, questioned whether a unified Syrian military was possible.

"We won't attack, but we'll defend ourselves. We're ready for war."

Sozdar Derik, commander of the Kurdish women's battalion

Syrians fear that fresh foreign meddling, local warlords and factional violence could yet tip the country into renewed conflict.

"My family told me things had gotten better," said Tariq, an engineering graduate who returned from Turkey this year to Deir Ezzor, his ruined hometown that is now split by the river between Islamist and Kurdish control.

"I don't feel safe," he said. "I wish I'd not come back."

THE NORTHERN FRONT: FACEOFF AT A DAM

The reporting team began its journey upstream, where Assad's ouster reignited a dormant war within a war that now stands at a shaky stalemate around a leaky dam on the Euphrates.

The river once fed ancient civilizations. Now, it provides water and power to modern-day Turkey, Syria and Iraq, making its control a key lever of regional power.

As rebels led by future president Sharaa stormed Damascus in December, Turkey-backed groups under a separate command fought Kurdish forces in a land grab in northern Syria. They drove the Kurds from territory they'd held west of the river, including near the city of Aleppo, around 100 kilometers back to the Tishreen Dam.

Since December, Kurdish authorities told Reuters, 418 of their fighters and 57 civilians, plus three journalists, have died in clashes, most of them in the first weeks of chaos.

The reporters visited the former Kurdish-held enclaves before heading east towards the Euphrates, following the line of the Kurdish retreat. The first stop was at the base of a Turkey-backed Arab commander who spearheaded the advance.

"They didn't put up much resistance," the commander, Motasem Abbas, said of the Kurdish forces.

Abbas spoke a few weeks before the Syrian defense ministry barred military officials from meeting with the media without prior approval.

Abbas commands around 2,000 fighters in areas that stretch from his hometown of Marea near Aleppo to the Euphrates. He was promoted in the spring to brigade commander in the Syrian army's new 80th Division, a role that puts him formally in control of this northern section of the frontline with the Kurds.

Big and athletic, Abbas is 38 and has fought since he was 24. He names the Assad regime and Islamic State, the extremist group that seized and controlled territory in Syria from 2014 to 2019, as his two most hated enemies. But with them gone, his adversary is the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

Motasem Abbas, a brigade commander in the Syrian army's new 80th Division, inspects the graves of comrades killed during the Syrian civil war. Now, he says, the Kurdish issue looms largest. REUTERS/Mahmoud Hassano

"If the SDF ceases to exist, then Syria can begin to revive," Abbas said.

Despite a tentative truce around the dam, he said, Kurdish forces kept sending drones to spy on or attack his troops. Kurdish authorities said they initiated no attacks and were responding to actions from Syrian government forces.

He also now has a personal grudge: His second cousin was killed in clashes with the Kurds last month, he said. "He was shot through the back," Abbas said. "We're sending more men and weapons to reinforce."

Kurdish authorities denied any involvement in the fighting and blamed the death on an internal dispute among the government factions over influence. Reuters could not confirm the circumstances of the death.

Abbas's compound is a collection of low-rise buildings with armored personnel carriers and gun-mounted pickups parked outside. It is netted by wiring to protect against drone attacks. He travels in armored cars flanked by bodyguards. He now officially reports to the defense ministry in Damascus, but maintains a strong allegiance to his main foreign backer, Turkey, who people on both sides say has long provided his group with arms and ammunition.

A compound of the Syrian army's new 80th Division in northwest Syria is guarded by armored personel carriers and gun-mounted pickups. REUTERS/Mahmoud Hassano

Multiple security officials across both sides of the Euphrates divide said Turkey also pays monthly wages to fighters of about 3,000 Turkish pounds ($80). The Turkish government didn't respond to requests for comment, about the salaries or other details of its efforts in Syria.

In Abbas's office, a plaque perched on a cabinet described President Tayyip Erdogan in broken Turkish as the "Muslim Caliph," for his "heroic stance towards the Syrian people."

The Turkey-backed brigades and their feud with the Kurds are by-products of the Syrian civil war. When the peaceful anti-Assad uprising of 2011 descended into conflict, Western countries, Gulf Arab states and Turkey armed a dizzying array of rebel factions.

That rebel kaleidoscope eventually coalesced into two main Islamist alliances: Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the group led by new President Sharaa; and the Syrian National Army, a collection of factions armed and trained by Turkey, and now a junior partner in the new government.

Ethnic tension inside Turkey has bled into northern Syria for years, with a long-stated Turkish goal to drive Kurdish militants from the border. Syrian Kurdish militants have ties to the PKK, a separatist militant group that Turkey has fought at home for decades and is now engaging in talks.

Abbas said the Kurdish issue loomed largest among the problems facing Syria.

The road between Abbas's forces and the Kurds features vast stretches of countryside with few military checkpoints. Near the town where Abbas's second cousin died, a group of rag-tag militants with no insignia extracted money from motorists for safe passage.

At the Tishreen Dam, Kurdish forces stationed there blamed recent fighting on the Turkey-backed factions and said they had been shelled six times by their rivals.

"The last attack against us was a week ago, artillery fire," said Khalil Qahraman, the commander on site. In the weeks since, there have been further exchanges of fire in the area, including Turkish airstrikes around the dam for the first time in months.

The Tishreen Dam is held by Kurdish-led forces and supplies nearby towns with electricity. The Kurds were forced to retreat to the dam by Turkish-backed forces after the fall of Assad. REUTERS/Orhan Qereman

Syrian Democratic Forces commander Khalil Qahraman, pictured on the right, says his forces are prepared to defend the Tishreen Dam against all enemies. REUTERS/Orhan Qereman

Burned vehicles were abandoned at the Tishreen Dam after clashes between Kurdish-led forces and Turkey-backed Islamist factions. REUTERS/Orhan Qereman

The dam supplies nearby towns under Kurdish control with electricity, engineers on site said, but if fixed – and if the sides came to an agreement – it could nourish war-ravaged Syrian cities to the west and east. For that, it needs a regular flow from Turkey upstream, and foreign parts to fix leaks around its turbines, which have reduced power generation, the engineers said.

Qahraman, a seasoned fighter with graying hair and a weathered face, was still stinging from being forced to retreat by Abbas and other Turkey-backed factions. He was also rattled by U.S. plans to pull American troops from northeast Syria who have been backing the Kurds for over a decade in the fight against Islamic State. Reporters saw two newly emptied U.S. bases during the journey.

The Tel Baydar military base near Hasaka was recently evacuated by American forces. The Kurds are worried about U.S. plans to pull their troops from northeast Syria. REUTERS/Orhan Qereman

Qahraman said his forces are prepared to fight on their own against all enemies to protect the dam.

"We built up experience fighting Islamic State, and now we're gaining more fighting these factions. We've been developing new tactics," he said.

They also have new weapons, namely a fleet of drones Qahraman and two other commanders said were launched for the first time in December and proved crucial to halting the Turkey-backed groups' advance at the dam. Qahraman said the U.S.-led coalition helped develop them.

The U.S. military did not respond to a request for comment about arming the Kurdish forces or other questions about its activities in the region.

Kurdish forces are also resorting to more traditional defenses. The sound of picks and shovels echoes in the hills around the Tishreen Dam, where workers are carving new tunnel networks.

The subterranean pathways are just wide enough for a broad-shouldered fighter and his gear. The tunnels burrow at least 30 meters underground. The tunnel diggers have designs for a network that would branch between hills every 100 meters or so.

EASTERN FRONT: SCORES TO SETTLE

About 300 kilometers downstream in Deir Ezzor, the Turkey-backed Syrian army commander Hayis, better known by his nom de guerre Abu Hatem Shaqra, looks across the Euphrates at his home village and nurses a grudge.

"President Sharaa always had his eye on Damascus. Mine is on my land occupied by the SDF. I'll fight a hundred times harder for this," said Hayis, sitting surrounded by bearded fighters in an officer's mess that once served Assad's army.

Deir Ezzor lies towards the southeastern end of the Euphrates divide, at the farthest reaches of Damascus's control. Nearly 500 kilometers of sparsely populated desert long exploited by Islamic State separate the capital from this neglected city, whose ruined streets are half-empty after years of war, with reconstruction yet to begin.

To reach it, the reporters drove through the desert, which included a makeshift checkpoint that local residents said had only been operating a few days. The residents didn't recognize the militants manning it.

Since Assad fell, Deir Ezzor has been split along the river's natural boundary into zones controlled by Hayis's men and by Kurdish-led forces.

The dirt bridge Reuters reporters crossed during its chaotic closure, and the militants on the other side, are all that separates Hayis from the ancestral prize he seeks.

The Damascus government in May appointed Hayis to lead the 86th Division in the new Syrian military, putting him in control of 150 kilometers of territory along the Euphrates, from just outside Raqqa, Islamic State's former Syrian capital, to Deir Ezzor.

War-ravaged Deir Ezzor was variously controlled by the Assad government, Syrian rebels and Islamic State during the long rebellion against the dictator. REUTERS/Khalil Ashawi

Raqqa and Deir Ezzor's eastern countryside are areas that Hayis, the Damascus government and Turkey believe should never have come under Kurdish control.

Kurdish militants and Assad's forces fought at the start of the civil war, then mostly avoided each other, allowing the Kurds to carve out a form of self-rule. The U.S. later made the Kurdish forces its main proxy against Islamic State.

As Islamic State retreated after 2017, Kurdish-dominated forces grabbed territory the jihadist group had held around the Euphrates, prompting Turkish invasions, in which Hayis participated.

Hayis's appointment angered the Kurds because he integrated former Islamic State members into his ranks and because they accuse him of committing human rights abuses, including against Kurds.

Fighters from the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces display a flag in Deir Ezzor in December 2024. A battle for control raged in the city as the Assad government fell in Damascus. REUTERS/Orhan Qereman

Hayis acknowledged recruiting former Islamic State militants, but said it was revenge for the group co-opting many of his fighters during the civil war. He resents Kurdish forces for getting the lion's share of U.S. support to fight Islamic State when he and his

comrades were also battling the group.

He denied committing human rights abuses and said he didn't worry that Western outrage over abuse allegations might cost him his appointment. "How can Sharaa take it away from me? We gave him his power by agreeing on him as president," said Hayis, who also spoke to Reuters before the defense ministry order about speaking to journalists.

Hayis has been plotting ways to undermine the nearby Kurdish-led forces: he hopes to encourage defections from their Arab contingent – a tactic he says met with success in the past. "I'm watching and listening. I have my people placed in their territory."

Kurdish forces on the opposite bank at this stretch of the front are taking no chances.

On the outskirts of Raqqa, more tunnels were being dug and trucks were carting prefab concrete shelters towards the city. The local administration headquarters is nestled in a compound surrounded by blast walls, with panoramic views of the river – and any advancing forces deployed by Damascus.

Further away, at the Kurdish military headquarters, Derik, the commander of the women's contingent, said the appointment of Hayis and his Turkey-backed comrades to senior military positions was a provocation by the new government.

"There are sanctions on these people. They should be tried in international courts," she said.

Sozdar Derik, a Kurdish commander, says she fears the new government will try to seize Kurdish-held territory. REUTERS/Orhan Qereman

Derik worried that Hayis's appointment was a signal that the new Syrian government intended to seize Deir Ezzor, Raqqa and Hasaka from Kurdish forces. "No military commander should be imposed on a region," she said.

Derik has painful memories of fighting Hayis's men, who seized territory from the Kurds as part of a Turkish invasion in 2019, the last time U.S. President Donald Trump ordered a major withdrawal of troops from Syria.

She said she could never join a Syrian military staffed by Hayis and a large contingent of other Turkey-backed commanders.

Derik pinned new hopes for holding off Hayis and his forces on drones and tunnels. Despite the Kurdish retreat, she said the drones used in December were a good test against the Turkish-backed forces and managed to bypass their radar jamming.

“They were a nightmare for the enemy,” she grinned.

CONFLICTING VISIONS

Away from the front lines, Kurdish politician Foza Yusuf and Damascus government official Masoud Battal are facing off across the negotiating table.

Their task: to bring these commanders together under one military and merge the Kurdish-led administration into the Damascus government.

They are under intense pressure from the United States, which has advocated a unified Syria.

“The United States is interested in a peaceful, prosperous, and stable path forward for Syria. This won’t happen without Syrian unity,” a State Department official said in a statement to Reuters.

In a briefing this week with Reuters and other reporters, Sharaa said there is no alternative for Syria.

"There cannot be room for opportunities to divide us right now, not by factional minorities," he said.

But Yusuf and Battal, and their teams, have clashing visions for their country.

Foza Yusuf leads a Kurdish negotiating team now in talks with the government in Damascus over how to overcome Syria's divisions. REUTERS/Orhan Qereman

Battal runs a district near Aleppo flanked by Turkish military bases, where a large Turkish flag billows right next to the local town hall. A colleague of his said that Turkey as late as June was still paying the salaries of many local officials.

His part of Syria is policed by militants with long, Salafi-style beards who see the Kurdish-run region as a separatist project that refuses to relinquish Syria’s oilfields and uses the threat of an Islamic State resurgence as a bargaining chip to keep U.S. support.

Kurdish forces hold almost all the Islamic State fighters and families captured in Syria when the extremist group folded. Trump wants the new Syrian government to assume that responsibility.

Battal harbors personal hatred for Kurdish forces.

"They imprisoned me in 2013 and tried to force me to become a fighter," said Battal, himself a Kurd from the northeastern city of Qamishli. He fled for northwestern Syria and joined the Islamist rebel factions instead. Reuters couldn't independently confirm his account. The SDF denied Battal was ever arrested.

The district he runs, majority-Kurdish Afrin, has been a flashpoint for ethnic tensions since Turkey-backed forces ejected Kurdish troops in 2018.

Battal, like many new officials in territory under the control of Damascus, holds some conservative Islamist beliefs.

"There's a level of freedom for women that even the West wouldn't want" in Kurdish-controlled areas, he said, referring to equal divorce rights for men and women. He also criticized Kurdish recruitment of young women fighters.

Yusuf, a Kurdish woman, resides in the Kurdish part of Syria and fervently believes in equal rights for women and minorities.

She and her colleagues see the Damascus government as Islamists close to a hostile Turkey and not serious about combating Islamic State. "In Damascus, the revolution is over. Here, it's not finished. We need to secure these rights," Yusuf said.

But her region is also heavily policed, bureaucratic and beset with its own ethnic tensions. At checkpoints near Raqqa, Kurdish security forces questioned Arabs. At one, masked gunmen arrested an elderly man and drove him away in the back of a pickup truck.

In the battered urban centers on each side of the divide, Syrians don't know if they're safer with the Islamists or the Kurds.

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Some Alawites from western Syria fled to Kurdish-controlled areas after the killings in March. Kurdish politicians also offered support to Druze civilians during clashes with tribal and government forces in July.

But others are beginning to resent the rule of the Kurdish-run government.

"Authorities here arrest innocent people in the name of security, and use the threat of Islamic State as an excuse," said Mariam, a Raqqa resident who helps run a local rights group.

She showed Reuters written permissions from the Kurdish-led administration for her group to hold their meetings, which stipulated that they provide a monthly report on their activities, and said authorities often demanded to know what was being discussed. She gave only her first name for fear of reprisals. The SDF said local authorities request to know the time and date of meetings to ensure public safety.

Mariam has lived under the rule of Assad, Islamic State, and now the Kurds. Two of her brothers went missing after being arrested by Islamic State. Another was killed by a U.S. airstrike while queueing for water in Raqqa, she said.

She doesn't like any of the options facing her.

"Syria's headed towards partition. If you visit cities under the control of the new government in Damascus, you're suspected by the Kurds. If you live in this region, you're a Kurdish-affiliated enemy to the other side," she said.

Mariam's city straddles the Euphrates at its midpoint, surrounded by fertile land and controlling roads across the northeast. Whenever there's war in Syria, it is a prize.

"We're stuck in the middle," she said.

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Reporting by John Davison, Orhan Qereman, Khalil Ashawi and Feras Dalatey. Additional reporting by Mahmoud Hassano. Photos by Orhan Qereman, Khalil Ashawi and Mahmoud Hasano. Video by Khalil Ashawi and John Davison. Photo editing by Simon Newman. Video editing by Emma Jehle, Louis Johnson and Mía Womersley. Design by Catherine Tai. Edited by Lori Hinnant.

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Exhibit 27

UNHCR deputy chief calls for support to end displacement for millions of Syrians

BEIRUT UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Kelly T Clements concluded a five day visit to Lebanon and Syria with a call to the international community to support efforts to bring peace and stability to Syria, and end the displacement and suffering of millions of Syrians She also called for continued support to countries hosting Syrian refugees, including Lebanon

During her visit, Clements met with Lebanese and Syrian officials, refugees who have recently returned to Syria as well as newly arrived refugees in Lebanon In the Bekaa Valley, eastern Lebanon, Syrian refugees contemplating return shared with her their wishes to return, hopes and concerns

Around 850,000 Syrians have crossed back to their country from neighbouring countries since the fall of the Assad government in December UNHCR has scaled up support to those choosing to return to ensure it is dignified and sustainable, including via the provision of money and transportation

In Lebanon Clements met Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Mitri, Director General of the General Security Major General Hassan Choucair and Minister of Social Affairs Haneen El Sayed

During these meetings, Clements expressed her appreciation for Lebanon's continued generosity in hosting Syrian refugees and committed to further cooperation in supporting the voluntary return of Syrian refugees

From Lebanon, close to 200,000 Syrian refugees have returned to Syria in 2025, with many more expressing their intention to return in the coming months, especially after Lebanese authorities have temporarily waived exit fees for those who overstayed their residency

Clements also met a group of Syrian refugees who arrived in Lebanon in the past few months after fleeing recent violence in Syria

"It's been a dynamic period where we see both Syrians returning, but also others becoming newly displaced", Clements said "We count on the international community to continue supporting Lebanon and UNHCR's work here Millions of Syrian refugees are still in neighboring countries, and the world must not forget about them Any returns must be voluntary, safe and dignified "

In Syria, Clements met with Syria's Social Affairs and Labor Minister, Hind Kabawat, as well as the governors of Homs and Idleb, and recently returning refugees who spoke of their hopes to rebuild their lives back home, and their country "I saw up close how people have preserved their will to return, stay and rebuild despite the harsh reality of destruction and lack of services following 14 years of war", Clements said

UNHCR and partners in Syria have expanded support to areas seeing high numbers of returns During her visit to rural Damascus, in Zibdeen and Maliha villages, Clements visited returnees who received shelter assistance and support to start small businesses

In Maaret Al Nouman in Idleb Governorate, Clements, together with the Governor inaugurated the newly rehabilitated Civil Registry Office supported by UNHCR to facilitate access to documentation for returnees and residents

At the Joussieh border crossing point, where UNHCR provides registration and infrastructure rehabilitation support, she met Syrian refugees crossing backfor the first time in years

"The international community cannot afford to be mere observers, assessing and judging the developments in Syria They must take an active role supporting stabilization and recovery efforts, helping Syrians rebuild and reshape their country UNHCR and partners are on the ground doing their part, but there is so much more to be done and the international community's commitment to support such efforts is critical "

Since 2024, over 1.2 million Syrians have returned to Syria. Meanwhile, internal returns continue, with 1,763,513 internally displaced people (IDP) returnees since December 2024, including 880,058 individuals who have departed from IDP sites in the north of the country.

For additional information:

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- In Syria Celine Schmitt SCHMITTC@unhcr org

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High Commissioner Filippo Grandi's message on World Refugee Day 2025

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Exhibit 28

Syria(/country/syr)

Syrian Arab Republic: At a glance | Urgently Prioritized Humanitarian Response Priorities 2025

Infographic

Source: OCHA(/organization/ocha)

Posted: 24 Jul 2025

Originally published: 24 Jul 2025

ADDENDUM
JULY 2025

At a glance | Urgently Prioritized Humanitarian Response Priorities 2025
Syrian Arab Republic

Explore more at humanitarianaction.info

Summary

TOTAL PEOPLE IN NEED
16.5M

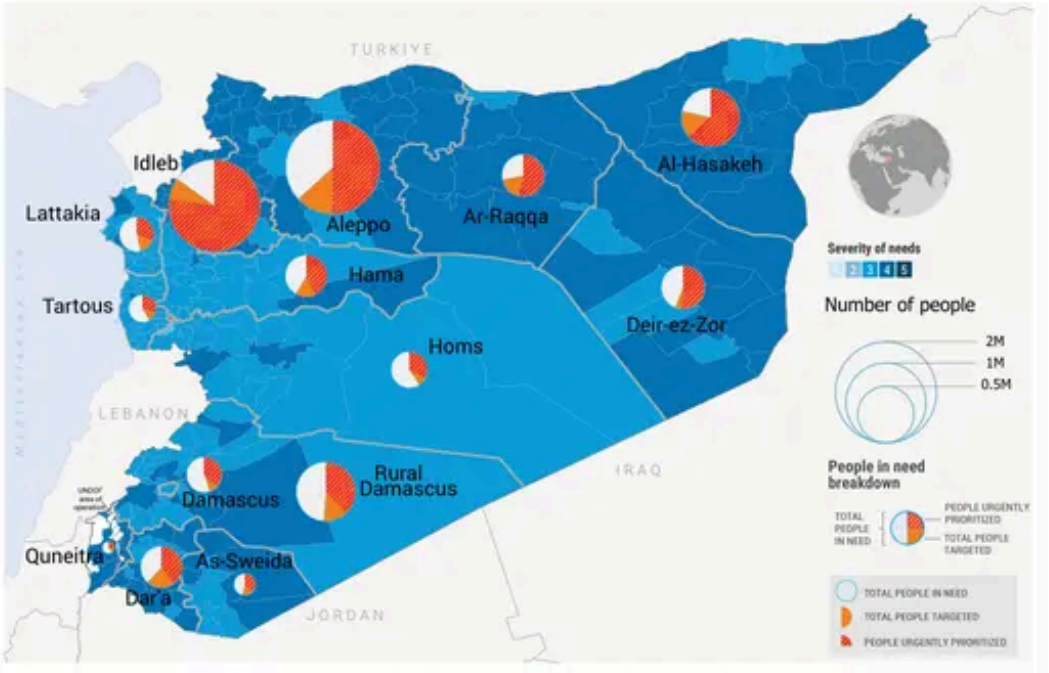
TOTAL PEOPLE TARGETED
10.3M

TOTAL REQUIREMENTS (US$)
$3.19BN

PEOPLE URGENTLY PRIORITIZED
8.2M

URGENTLY PRIORITIZED REQUIREMENTS (US$)
$2.07BN

People in Need, Targeted and Urgently Prioritized by Location



Sector/cluster breakdown

SECTOR / CLUSTER	TOTAL PEOPLE IN NEED	TOTAL PEOPLE TARGETED	PEOPLE URGENTLY PRIORITIZED	TOTAL REQ. (US$)	URGENTLY PRIORITIZED REQ. (US$)
Food Security	14.6M	5.4M	5.4M	$856.4M	$571.6M
Health	15.9M	11.4M	7.7M	$565.5M	$433.3M
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	14.4M	10.9M	6M	$388.4M	$299.1M
Education	7.8M	3.3M	2.6M	$254.2M	$103.6M
Protection	16.3M	6.5M	6.3M	$253.7M	$173.9M
Shelter	7M	0.8M	0.5M	$176.5M	$47.8M
Early Recovery and Livelihoods	14.3M	3.9M	2.6M	$169.9M	$109.1M
Nutrition	6.4M	4.8M	1.3M	$164.8M	$82M
MPCA	NA	1.2M	0.6M	$145.8M	$74.4M
Non-Food Items	6.6M	1.9M	1.9M	$140.1M	$117M
CCCM	2.5M	1.8M	1.8M	$47.7M	$36.7M
Coordination and Common Services				$21.5M	$15.2M
Logistics				$1.4M	$1.4M
Emergency Telecommunications				$0.6M	$0.5M

Download Infographic

(PDF | 738.42 KB)
(/attachments/076cf8de-491c-40d9-b8b0-7ac30d687871/syria_urgently_prioritized_humanitarian_response_priorities_2025_syria.pdf)

Syria entered a new era in 2025 however the humanitarian situation remains dire. The continued decline in humanitarian funding was further exacerbated following funding-cuts by the United States. From 1 January to 30 June 2025, the UN and humanitarian partners appealed for US$ 2 billion to cover prioritized activities to respond to the most immediate needs of 8 million of the most vulnerable people. The Syria Humanitarian Response Priorities for January to June 2025 is severely underfunded, with only 15.9 per cent of the $2 billion total requirements secured. The appeal has been expanded to cover the entire year and now requests for $3.19 billion to respond to the needs of 10.3 million people in need targeted countrywide.

In 2024, the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) was only funded at 36.6 per cent of the requested over $4.074 billion. Historically, the Syria HRP has never been fully funded and in recent years, the allocated funding resources has been on a steady decline. The slow funding that is largely incommensurate to the needs has continued to hinder the ability of humanitarian organizations to respond in a timely and effective manner.

Aligning with the global 'Humanitarian Reset' framework that was launched in early 2025 by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals and the Emergency Relief Coordinator which amongst others calls for re-prioritization of humanitarian efforts to reach people and places facing the most urgent humanitarian needs, and to prioritize life-saving support based on the existing planning for the 2025 humanitarian response.

The Syria 'urgent prioritization of humanitarian response priorities' followed the following approach:

1. Areas with the highest levels of severity of needs (severity levels 4 and 5) as categorized in Joint and Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) 2.0 were prioritized. Severity levels 4 and 5 represent extreme crisis situations with high life-threatening risks.
2. Activities that fall under strategic objective 1 (life-saving). These are activities that contribute to urgent life-saving responses.
3. Other urgent needs that if left unaddressed will contribute to a further aggravation of the humanitarian situation, and/or expose extremely vulnerable people in need to protection threats and risks.

The humanitarian community calls for the hyper prioritization of the Humanitarian Response Priorities to be complemented by strengthened advocacy and resource mobilization efforts for new and additional funding resources in support of the response, particularly at this critical time. Without adequate funding, humanitarian partners will not only be unable to respond to the assessed needs, but there are risks of losing the progress that have been achieved.

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs:

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Primary country:

Syrian Arab Republic(/country/syr)

Source:

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs(/organization/ocha)

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Themes:

Camp Coordination and Camp Management(/updates?list=Camp%20Coordination%20and%20Camp%20Management%20Updates&advanced-search=%28T49458%29) / Coordination(/updates?list=Coordination%20Updates&advanced-search=%28T4590%29) / Education(/updates?list=Education%20Updates&advanced-search=%28T4592%29) / Food and Nutrition(/updates?list=Food%20and%20Nutrition%20Updates&advanced-search=%28T4593%29) / Health(/updates?list=Health%20Updates&advanced-search=%28T4595%29) / Logistics and Telecommunications(/updates?list=Logistics%20and%20Telecommunications%20Updates&advanced-search=%28T4598%29) / Protection and Human Rights(/updates?list=Protection%20and%20Human%20Rights%20Updates&advanced-search=%28T4600%29) / Safety and Security(/updates?list=Safety%20and%20Security%20Updates&advanced-search=%28T4602%29) / Shelter and Non-Food Items(/updates?list=Shelter%20and%20Non-Food%20Items%20Updates&advanced-search=%28T4603%29) / Water Sanitation Hygiene(/updates?list=Water%20Sanitation%20Hygiene%20Updates&advanced-search=%28T4604%29)

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Source: OCHA(/organization/ocha)

Posted: 8 May 2025

Originally published: 8 May 2025

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Situation Report

Source: OCHA(/organization/ocha)

Posted: 27 Mar 2025

Originally published: 27 Mar 2025

Syria(/country/syr) **Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Situation Report No. 3 (As of 10 March 2025)(https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-humanitarian-situation-report-no-3-10-march-2025)**

Situation Report

Source: OCHA(/organization/ocha)

Posted: 12 Mar 2025

Originally published: 12 Mar 2025

Exhibit 29

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"I draw, I play, and I learn things I never knew," said Ghuson, 10, joyfully, while attending a psychosocial support session at the community centre at Deir-ez-Zor, Syria

unicef for every child

Humanitarian Situation Report No. 14

Reporting Period
1-31 August 2025

Syrian Arab Republic

HIGHLIGHTS

- Since December 2024, nearly 1.86 million internally displaced[1] persons and over 1 million Syrian refugees[2] have returned to their areas of origin. Many are facing significant challenges due to damaged infrastructure, limited services, and ongoing insecurity.
- The humanitarian situation in As-Sweida remains critical following the hostilities in July, with at least 187,000 people displaced and access to essential services and protection severely limited.
- During the first eight months of 2025, Syria recorded 642 explosive ordnance incidents, causing 468 civilian deaths and 711 injuries. Nearly one-third of the casualties are children.[3]
- Since January 2025, UNICEF and its partners have delivered essential services to over 7.5 million people across Syria, including in Health, Nutrition, Education, WASH, Child Protection and Social Protection. Children represent 56 per cent of those reached.
- UNICEF Syria's Humanitarian appeal is only 31 per cent funded. Urgent support is needed to sustain life-saving humanitarian operations and protect vulnerable children across Syria.

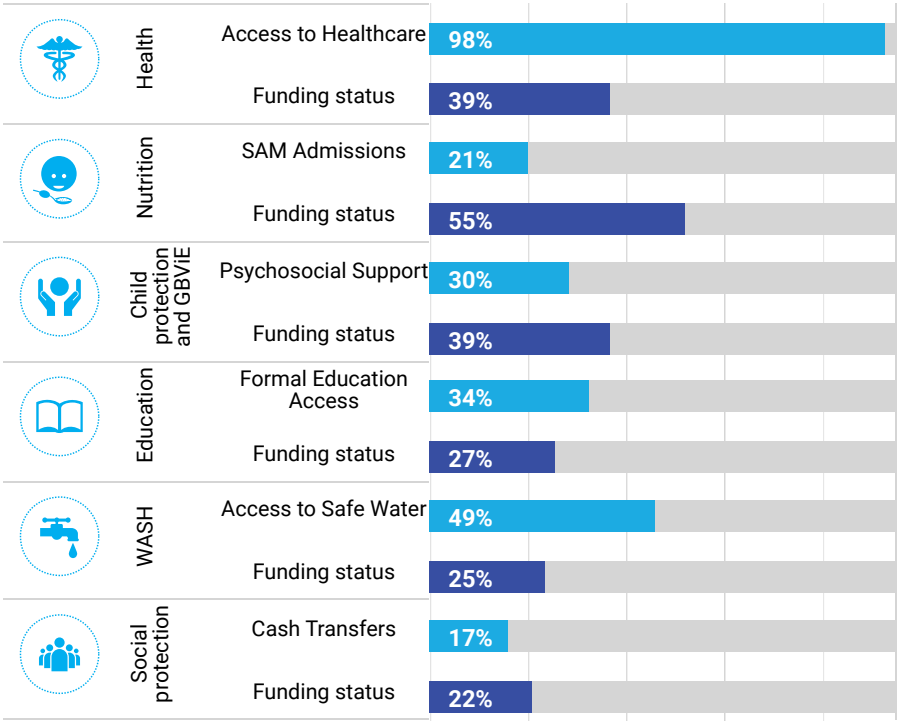
SITUATION IN NUMBERS

7,400,000
Children in need of humanitarian assistance[4]

16,500,000
People in need of humanitarian assistance[5,6]

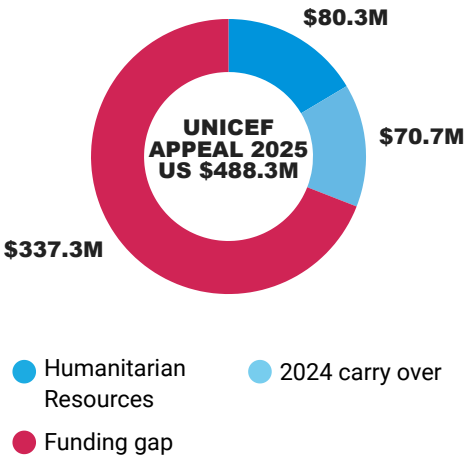
1,860,000
People have returned home since November 27, 2024[7]

UNICEF RESPONSE AND FUNDING STATUS*



* UNICEF response % is only for the indicator, the funding status is for the entire sector.

FUNDING STATUS (IN US$)**



** Funding available includes: funds received in the current year; carry-over from the previous year; and repurposed funds with agreement from donors

FUNDING OVERVIEW AND PARTNERSHIPS

UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal for Syria requires US$ 488 million to meet the urgent needs of children and families across the country.

UNICEF extends its sincere gratitude to all public and private partners for their continued support towards the response. In particular, UNICEF wishes to thank partners for providing flexible humanitarian funding and core resources, which are essential in enabling rapid and effective response to escalating and emerging needs.

UNICEF wishes to acknowledge the timely and critical support from ECHO, the governments of Switzerland and France, as well as partners supporting UNICEF's Thematic Fund such as the governments of Germany and Denmark.

Despite this generous support, UNICEF's HAC Syria appeal is only 31 per cent funded. Available funds are insufficient to meet the growing needs, significantly limiting UNICEF's ability to deliver lifesaving assistance. Without additional resources, children in Syria are vulnerable to increased protection risks and reduced access to critical, multisectoral services.

SITUATION OVERVIEW AND HUMANITARIAN NEEDS[8]

The humanitarian situation in Syria remained deeply concerning throughout August, as communities continued to endure the effects of the escalation of violence that began in July in As-Sweida Governorate. Hostilities have continued to persist despite a ceasefire agreement reached on 16 July. Sporadic clashes, drone strikes, and targeted violence led to renewed displacement, further disrupting the lives of children and families already facing significant hardships. Humanitarian access was severely restricted due to insecurity and roadblocks, limiting the delivery of life-saving assistance and essential services. These conditions have further exacerbated vulnerabilities, particularly among children, highlighting the urgent need for sustained humanitarian support, protection services, and safe access to affected populations. For more information on the developments in As-Sweida and other southern governorates, please refer to UNICEF Humanitarian Flash Update No.4.

Since January 2025, Syria has recorded 642 explosive ordnance-related incidents and accidents, resulting in 1,179 civilian casualties, including 468 deaths (134 children) and 711 injuries (280 children).[9] A significant portion of these incidents—401 in total—occurred in agricultural and grazing lands, where civilians are highly exposed during daily livelihood activities, accounting for 270 deaths and 401 injuries. Deir-ez-Zor, Idleb, and Aleppo governorates continue to bear the brunt of the crisis, accounting for 54 per cent of all reported incidents—making them the most severely affected governorates. The widespread presence of unexploded ordnance remains a significant barrier to safe returns, access to services, and livelihood recovery. These figures underscore the urgent need for sustained mine risk education, clearance operations, and survivor assistance across Syria.

Following the wildfires in the coastal areas, the destruction of over 15,000 hectares[10] of forest and farmland has further impacted livelihood opportunities. Returns to the areas affected by violence earlier this year or by the recent wildfires remain limited.

Meanwhile, central and eastern Syria also faced mounting pressures with growing humanitarian needs driven by returns, insecurity and economic hardships. In Homs and Hama governorates, the growing number of returnees placed an immense strain on basic services, as a severe drought reduced water availability by more than half in major water sources, such as the Tannour Spring and the Orontes River. Wildfires destroyed farmland and disrupted water networks for nearly 70,000 residents.[11]

Across the country, Syria is experiencing its most severe drought in over three decades, devastating agricultural production and driving food insecurity to unprecedented levels. According to WFP, 23.7 million people are food insecure, of whom 3 million are projected to be severely food insecure, with children and women disproportionately affected.[12] Combined with economic collapse, liquidity shortages, and inflation, households increasingly rely on harmful coping strategies, leaving children particularly vulnerable to protection risks such as early marriage, child labour, and exploitation.

Population Movement

Since December 2024, over 1.86 million internally displaced persons, including more than 1 million children, have returned to their areas of origin. This includes 980,899 individuals who have returned from IDP sites since 8 December 2024. Around 40 per cent of these returns were to Aleppo, followed by Hama, Idleb, Homs, and Rural Damascus.[13] The majority of the refugees and internally displaced returnees continue to face challenges accessing basic services, which are already overstretched, and have limited livelihoods, particularly in areas heavily affected by conflict and displacement.

As of 25 September, over 1 million Syrian refugees, including more than 570,000 children[14] , have returned from neighbouring countries since 8 December 2024.[15] Returnees continue to face significant challenges in accessing basic services and livelihood opportunities, particularly in areas most affected by the conflict. Existing services are inadequate to meet the growing needs of the vulnerable population.

At least 187,000 people[16] have been displaced within As-Sweida, Dar'a, and Rural Damascus. It is estimated that only 3,000 people return to As-Sweida City during the same period, despite improved security conditions and increased availability of services.[17]

The ongoing displacement and return trends are placing significant strain on already overstretched humanitarian systems. Strengthened coordination is essential to advance durable solutions, support recovery and reintegration, and restore access to critical services—particularly
in health, education, water, sanitation, and child protection.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF PROGRAMME RESPONSE

Health

UNICEF continued to improve access to essential primary healthcare services for children and women across Syria, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and host communities. With the support of 22 partners, UNICEF operationalised 103 mobile health teams and 124 fixed centres, delivering 301,572 free primary healthcare consultations in August. These services reached some of the most underserved and vulnerable populations, including 253,575 children (129,871 girls) and 47,997 women, supporting both child health and maternal care. Among those served, 13,597 consultations were provided to returnees, 14,803 to IDPs, and the remainder to host communities—helping

to ensure continuity of care and reduce health disparities in areas affected by displacement and conflict.

Community volunteers (CVs) remained central to outreach efforts in more than 150 communities, conducting 1,344 home visits to 379 pregnant women and 379 newborns (119 girls). These visits played a critical role in raising awareness among families about danger signs during pregnancy and the neonatal period, ensuring timely referrals to specialised care and contributing to the reduction of neonatal morbidity and mortality.

As part of the nurturing care approach, UNICEF supported 12,928 children under five (6,556 girls) with an integrated primary healthcare package. Developmental screening identified 106 children (46 girls) with developmental delays, who are now under follow-up, while 12 children (6 girls) were referred to specialised centres for disabilities.

To reinforce the quality of maternal and newborn health services, 227 health workers (including 216 women) were trained on neonatal care, infection control, and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR), enhancing their capacity to deliver improved services and reduce preventable mortality.

Routine immunisation continued across the country, with 32,658 children under one (16,426 girls) vaccinated with the third dose of the Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DPT3) vaccine, and 35,978 children under one (17,968 girls) receiving the first dose of the Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) vaccine. To strengthen cold chain capacity, UNICEF, with support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, delivered three new refrigerated trucks to the Ministry of Health. These vehicles will play a critical role in transporting vaccines safely from central warehouses to health facilities nationwide—reducing wastage, protecting vaccine quality, and improving equitable access to immunisation, particularly for children in remote and hard-to-reach areas.

Nutrition

In August, UNICEF-supported partners continued to deliver life-saving nutrition services across Syria, integrating emergency response with routine programming to reach children under five, pregnant and lactating women (PLWs), and caregivers in displacement-affected areas, returnee communities, and host populations. Services were provided through 124 fixed primary health care facilities and 103 mobile clinics, ensuring continuity of care despite insecurity and logistical constraints. During August, a total of 1,741 children (933 girls) were admitted for treatment of severe wasting.

In Lattakia governorate, five mobile teams reached 36 locations to provide nutrition support to communities affected by wildfires, distributing 20,500 high-energy biscuits (HEB) to 1,464 beneficiaries —584
mothers and 880 children—helping to stabilise nutritional intake. In coordination with social behaviour change (SBC) initiatives, World Breastfeeding Week was commemorated across Lattakia and Tartous, engaging 104 primary health centres and 6 hospitals. The campaign reached 24,657 pregnant and lactating women (PLWs) and 6,626 caregivers, promoting optimal infant and young child feeding practices. Digital platforms, such as the Hi Mama app, were used to disseminate trusted health and nutrition information, with beneficiaries reporting improved breastfeeding practices and increased support from health staff.

Preventive services reached 1,172 children (733 girls), and 334,923 caregivers and PLWs received infant and young child feeding counselling. More than $400,000 worth of essential nutrition supplies were released to partners, including therapeutic foods, preventive supplements, and fortified biscuits—supporting both emergency responses in As-Sweida and coastal areas, as well as ongoing regular programming.

Despite these achievements, service delivery continues to face challenges in As-Sweida due to limited access to conflict-affected areas, delays in inter-agency approvals, high concentrations of IDPs, fuel shortages, and logistical constraints.

Child Protection

UNICEF's child protection response prioritised life-saving support and long-term resilience by providing essential services and reinforcing community-based systems. The response prioritised to tackle protection threats stemming from displacement, return movements, and ongoing violence, with tailored interventions addressing the psychosocial well-being and safety of affected children.

During August, UNICEF and its partners reached 67,436 individuals with child protection services, including 54,623 children (27,649 girls) and 12,813 caregivers (9,441 women). Case management services were provided to 1,428 children (723 boys), while 1,363 children (693 girls) were referred to specialised services. Structured psychosocial support was provided to 15,816 children (9,089 girls), and psychological first aid (PFA) was delivered to 5,919 individuals, comprising 4,723 children and 1,196 caregivers. Parenting programmes engaged 5,926 caregivers, predominantly women.

In parallel, UNICEF and partners conducted extensive awareness-raising activities to strengthen child protection and risk mitigation across Syria. A total of 32,330 individuals were reached through child protection sessions, while 50,048 individuals, including 37,100 children, benefited from explosive ordnance risk education (EORE).

To enhance the quality and reach of child protection services, 212 frontline workers, including 113 women, received training on child protection principles and response mechanisms, equipping them with the skills needed to better support vulnerable children and families.

UNICEF supported the repatriation of Iraqi families from Al-Hol camp, ensuring protection for 16 unaccompanied and separated children through best interest assessments and family reunification.

Education

By combining infrastructure rehabilitation, non-formal education, and teacher capacity-building, UNICEF continues to strengthen education delivery across Syria, ensuring that all children — especially the most vulnerable — have access to safe, inclusive, and quality learning opportunities.

In August 2025, UNICEF continued to expand access to quality education for children across Syria, with a focus on areas heavily affected by displacement and returns. Despite persistent challenges — including damaged infrastructure and overcrowded classrooms — UNICEF worked closely with government and sector partners to sustain safe learning opportunities and strengthen the education system.

During the reporting period, 490,606 children and adults, including 283,892 girls and women, were reached through formal education interventions, while 16,864 children (8,655 girls) and 51 adults benefited from non-formal education (NFE) services. To improve access to safe learning environments, UNICEF completed the rehabilitation of four schools in Homs and installed seven prefabricated classrooms in Rural Damascus, enabling 2,534 children, including 1,770 girls, to attend school in safer, more conducive settings. These investments are particularly critical in areas with high concentrations of returnees, where existing infrastructure is overstretched.

Since the beginning of the year, over 210,230 children, including

111,841 girls, have been supported through NFE services such as remedial classes, early childhood education, digital learning, psychosocial support, and life skills development. In Aleppo, youth-led initiatives helped reconnect out-of-school children with routine education and promoted inclusive learning. In conflict-affected areas of Homs and Hama, community platforms provided structured group activities that helped children regain social confidence and emotional well-being.

To enhance teaching quality, UNICEF trained 3,372 formal school teachers, including 2,777 women, in participatory and child-centred methodologies during August. This training aims to enhance classroom practices, foster active student engagement, and enhance overall learning outcomes.

WASH

UNICEF's WASH programme in Syria continued to deliver life-saving water, sanitation, and hygiene services to vulnerable communities, including internally displaced persons and returnees. By integrating emergency response with system strengthening, UNICEF aims to ensure sustainable access to safe water and sanitation, particularly in areas facing water scarcity, infrastructure damage, and heightened public health risks.

In August 2025, UNICEF sustained critical WASH operations across Syria, reaching over 113,600 people amid persistent drought, displacement, and damaged infrastructure. Nationwide, UNICEF supported the provision of safe water through the installation of 1,000 chemical dosing pumps and the distribution of more than 900 metric tons of disinfection materials, alongside protective equipment for national operators, to ensure water quality.

In Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa, UNICEF provided 1,500 m³/day of water trucking in camps and host communities, ensuring safe water for 75,000 people. Emergency waste management services reached 14,500 internally displaced persons, while the rehabilitation of water and sewerage networks improved services for 100,800 residents in Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa. In Aleppo, large-scale rehabilitation of water and sewage networks was launched to benefit 700,000 people, alongside the rehabilitation of stations in Maaret An-Numan District (Bsida, Has, and Dana), serving 250,000 people in Idleb.

In the coastal governorates of Lattakia and Tartous, recent interventions have significantly improved access to safe water for an additional 88,000 people, contributing to enhanced public health.

UNICEF's comprehensive WASH response continues to combine immediate life-saving interventions with longer-term, sustainable solutions, ensuring that vulnerable communities across Syria can access safe water and dignified sanitation services.

Social Protection

Building on progress made in July, UNICEF significantly scaled up its integrated social protection programme during the reporting period. In August, a total of 12,423 individuals were reached across Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Rural Damascus, and Lattakia governorates, including 2,185 women, 2,173 men, and 8,065 children (4,009 girls). The majority of those supported were returnees, while 5,199 were from host communities and 244 were internally displaced persons, reflecting the programme's focus on displacement-affected populations.

Between January and August 2025, UNICEF provided cash assistance to 35,983 individuals in nine governorates, including 22,249 children (10,619 girls), 7,611 women, and 6,123 men. This support was delivered through three key components: the integrated social protection programme for children with disabilities, which reached 4,519 children; the cash for basic needs programme, which supported 14,929 individuals; and targeted cash assistance for nutrition outcomes, which reached 3,474 families with children aged 0–23 months, benefiting over 10,000 children.

Despite persistent economic challenges, UNICEF ensured the timely delivery of cash support to families in need, helping to reduce financial vulnerability and improve access to essential services. These efforts contributed to strengthening household resilience and safeguarding the well-being of children and caregivers in some of Syria's most underserved communities.

Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP)

© UNICEF/Sawas

Girls engage in hands-on learning at a UNICEF-supported Innovation Lab, August 2025.

In August, UNICEF continued to strengthen coordination, partnerships, and programming for adolescents and youth in Aleppo, Idleb, and surrounding areas. Key coordination meetings included planning with the Ministry of Industry to institutionalise UNICEF-supported trainings; a network meeting with current and new ADAP partners to share approaches and lessons learned; and the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Directorate of Culture (DoC) to facilitate programme delivery in newly rehabilitated cultural centres and other DoC facilities.

Assessments were conducted at Idleb University and in eastern rural Aleppo to identify youth needs related to employability skills, labour market demands, and social reintegration. Child-friendly awareness shows reached children in vulnerable rural areas, focusing on self-protection and self-care, in coordination with child protection and DoC theatre programmes.

Sports for development initiatives engaged around 100 young people, including internally displaced persons and host community members, promoting teamwork, psychosocial well-being, and social cohesion. In partnership with Techno Labs, youth developed tech-based business models through entrepreneurship training, with over 50 per cent of participants being young women. Training of volunteers strengthened civil society capacities, equipping youth with leadership skills, promoting social cohesion, and addressing hate speech. Youth clubs continued to support the social reintegration of returnee adolescents and the inclusion of young people with disabilities.

ADAP interventions engaged 4,767 young people (including 2,330 young women) in community-level social cohesion and civic engagement, emergency response and relief efforts, rapid needs assessments, and the dissemination of SBC and PSEA messages. Life skills, citizenship education, and employability training reached 10,700 young people (including 6,392 young women) through adolescent-friendly spaces and mobile teams. Additionally, 2,257

young people (including 1,419 young women) accessed safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse, strengthening accountability and protection systems.

Social and Behaviour Change (SBC)

In August, UNICEF's Social and Behavioural Change (SBC) programming continued to strengthen trust, empowerment, and social cohesion across Syria, addressing barriers to health, education, and protection for displaced, returnee, and host communities. SBC interventions remained results-driven, contributing to the resolution of complex humanitarian challenges and reinforcing social support networks.

SBC teams collaborated with Health, Nutrition, and WASH sectors to respond to wildfires in Tartous and Lattakia through hygiene kit distribution and emergency care awareness sessions. In Aleppo, youth-led outreach reconnected 350 children with immunisation services, while campaigns engaged business owners in child labour prevention and used storytelling to address violence, bullying, and disability inclusion.

In Homs and Hama, integrated SBC, health, and nutrition interventions improved maternal and child health outcomes. Child-centred activities supported emotional recovery and social reintegration in conflict-affected districts, with children and caregivers participating in interactive storytelling, guided discussions, role-playing, and creative exercises to foster peer engagement and reduce isolation.

In Deir-ez-Zor, the first Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) Working Group meeting revitalised coordination among 20 partners. The "Together for Furat Safe" campaign, aimed at preventing river drownings, reached nearly 14,000 people through community and digital engagement.

In Al-Hassakeh and Ar-Raqqa, SBC initiatives promoted inclusion and resilience in displacement-affected camps. Activities focused on reducing adolescent aggression in Al-Hol and equipping mothers with early learning support to improve children's readiness for formal schooling. SBC teams facilitated 87 awareness sessions, engaging 657 returnee families in Al-Hol, Areesha, Al-Roj, and Ar-Raqqa on health, social cohesion, and protection from exploitation.

Accountability to Affected Population (AAP)

In August 2025, UNICEF reinforced its commitment to accountability to affected populations (AAP) by enhancing targeted information-sharing and strengthening complaints and feedback mechanisms. In Aleppo, 2,018 families received tailored SMS messages under the social policy programme for cash-based nutrition support. Each message included personalised details on entitlements, collection codes, and AAP messaging, helping families better understand and access their assistance.

In Rural Damascus, two field visits were conducted to implementing partners—NFRD and Inash Alfakeer—to provide capacity-building for newly appointed AAP focal points and to reinforce complaints and feedback systems. During these visits, 10 children were engaged to identify preferred channels for feedback and participation, ensuring that programme design remains responsive to the voices of affected children.

UNICEF also partnered with UNHCR to share information on UNICEF's programmes and available services, and feedback mechanisms, with returnees through the Syria is Home platform.

The UNICEF service line managed 546 cases in August, achieving an 87 per cent resolution rate. The majority of cases were information requests (83 per cent), followed by complaints (13 per cent) and reports of new needs (3 per cent). Most cases originated from Aleppo, with additional reports from Lattakia and Rural Damascus governorates.

This feedback mechanism continues to play a critical role in strengthening accountability to affected populations, ensuring that families and individuals can access timely information, raise concerns, and communicate emerging needs in a safe and responsive manner.

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

In August, UNICEF continued mainstreaming prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) across programmes, with a stronger emphasis on outreach to affected populations and frontline capacity. In coordination with the accountability to affected populations (AAP) and social protection teams, an innovative approach was launched in Aleppo, where 1,370 families receiving cash support were reached through bulk SMS with key PSEA messages, including safe reporting channels and conduct standards for humanitarian workers.

In As-Sweida, UNICEF supported the emergency response through the prepositioning and distribution of 12,000 dignity kits for women and girls of reproductive age, helping to ensure dignity and safety amid limited access to basic hygiene materials and enabling them to manage their periods discreetly and hygienically.

Capacity-building remained central to UNICEF's efforts. In Al-Hassakeh, Ar-Raqqa, Aleppo, and Idleb, 63 partners and contractors participated in PSEA field support sessions focused on SEA risk identification, mitigation, and compliance with partnership agreements. In Tartous, UNICEF and the inter-agency network rolled out a PSEA training of trainers, equipping 23 focal points and two Directorate of Social Affairs and Labour (DoSAL) staff to lead organisational-level training plans.

Moving forward, UNICEF will continue advancing the national PSEA framework in partnership with government counterparts and inter-agency actors, with a focus on strengthening implementation at the sub-national level.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP, COORDINATION AND STRATEGY

During August, **UNICEF-led sectors and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR)** consolidated efforts to strengthen humanitarian coordination at the Damascus level, including unified reporting as part of the transition to the One-Syria response framework.

Since January, the **Education sector** and its partners have supported access to education for over 700,000 children across Syria. In August alone, 124,467 children accessed non-formal education opportunities, including remedial catch-up classes, accelerated learning programmes (ALP), self-learning or empowered learning (SLP), and literacy and numeracy support. Moreover, 19,923 children benefited from school-based psychosocial support in non-formal settings, including 583 children attending early childhood education programmes. To improve access to safe and conducive learning environments, partners rehabilitated classrooms and facilities in 31 schools, benefiting over 15,000 children. An additional 2,280 children were supported with school furniture. Capacity development activities included training 55 Ministry of Education staff on coordination, needs assessments, and evidence-based planning for education in emergencies. This training is being cascaded to sub-national enumerators contributing to the Joint Education Needs Assessment (JENA), which will inform the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) and the education sector response

strategy.

The **Education sector** developed a joint relocation strategy for schools currently serving as shelters for internally displaced persons in As-Sweida and Dar'a governorates. In collaboration with the protection, camp coordination and camp management (CCCM), and shelter sectors, the strategy identifies alternative housing solutions and temporary education centres. It aims to balance the right to education with the centrality of protection for displaced populations, providing a practical framework for local authorities and partners to define roles and ensure accountability to both host communities and internally displaced persons.

The **Nutrition sector** transition neared completion in August, with 61 partners integrated and coordination platforms unified into a national mechanism supported by six active sub-national sectors. Since January, partners have reached nearly 1.2 million people (322,439 girls, 315,392 boys, 534,076 women, and 4,268 men) with life-saving preventive and curative services. This included treatment of 45,088 children with moderate wasting, 10,779 with severe wasting, 713 with severe wasting and medical complications, and 37,806 women with moderate wasting. Preventive services reached 448,151 women with infant and young child feeding (IYCF) messages, 21,446 pregnant and lactating women (PLWs) with cash and voucher assistance (CVA), 489,332 children with micronutrient powders, and 301,897 PLWs with micronutrient supplements.

In response to the escalation in southern Syria, the sector contributed to an inter-sector interim plan targeting 235,292 people in As-Sweida and Dar'a with a budget of USD 1.8 million. A key challenge has been the indiscriminate distribution of breastmilk substitutes (BMS). The IYCF in emergencies (IYCF-E) strategy was activated, focusing on protecting breastfeeding, establishing safe feeding spaces, linking with child protection, and providing ready-to-use infant formula only for infants unable to be breastfed, prioritising those under six months. A joint statement to protect and promote breastfeeding has been finalised in English and Arabic for dissemination following MoH approval.

The **CP Area of Responsibility (AoR)** continued to provide technical support and coordination to partners responding to evolving child protection needs across Syria. Building on the six-month response plan finalised in July for As-Sweida, partners focused on mitigating critical risks, including psychological distress and trauma, unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in shelters, exposure to violence, harmful coping mechanisms, and risks from unexploded ordnance (UXOs). The AoR also supported interventions addressing gaps in legal documentation, which continue to limit children's access to essential social services. The protection sector and AoRs jointly developed and widely disseminated critical advocacy messages on the protection of children. Partners received technical support to respond to urgent child protection needs, including reintegration support for 155 children relocated from camps in Raqqa to Aleppo.

A mid-year review of the child protection response brought together 70 partners, including representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MoSAL) and the Directorate of Social Affairs and Labour (DoSAL), to map priorities for the second half of the year. Focus areas included case management, reintegration, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). During the workshop, three key strategies were validated and endorsed: the CP AoR strategy, the localisation strategy, and the institutional capacity-building plan. Donor engagement remained a central priority, with briefings conducted to define child protection needs and priorities for 2026. These efforts strengthened coordination, supported timely responses to emerging risks, and reinforced strategic planning to accelerate results for children.

In August, the **WASH sector** sustained its leadership of the national response, coordinating implementation of the 2025 Humanitarian Response Plan while finalising dedicated response plans for the worsening drought and escalation of hostilities in the south. In close cooperation with the General Water Establishment, coordination systems were strengthened through the establishment of a WASH information management working group, deployment of a sector coordinator in Syria, and development of key tools, including a WASH sector contingency plan, partner capacity mapping, and donor mapping. During the reporting period, 64 WASH partners reached more than 661,800 people, bringing the total number of people assisted in 2025 to 5.57 million. Interventions included rehabilitation and maintenance of 414 WASH facilities and emergency services in 920 communities and 649 registered camps. In southern Syria, where the situation remains highly fragile, 11 partners provided emergency WASH support to over 321,800 people in As-Sweida and Dar'a since July. This response included trucked and bottled water, hygiene kits, and materials to sustain the operation and maintenance of WASH facilities, including fuel supplies—ensuring continuity of essential services for displaced populations and host communities.

HUMAN INTEREST STORIES AND EXTERNAL MEDIA

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Tasneem, 11, holds a puppet while attending a psychosocial support session on expressing feelings at a UNICEF-supported child friendly space in Damascus, Syria, on 17 July 2025.

UNICEF in Syria remains committed to upholding the rights and well-being of every child, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs remain central to all actions. All communication and advocacy efforts strictly adhere to UNICEF's child safeguarding policies and do-no-harm principles.

From 1 to 31 August 2025, UNICEF issued a press release calling for urgent action as humanitarian needs for children and families in As-Sweida continued to escalate. In addition, UNICEF, in partnership with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, released a joint press release and a news note with the Ministry of Health announcing the provision of refrigerated trucks to strengthen vaccine cold chain in support of Syria's Expanded Programme on Immunization.

In addition, UNICEF spokespeople participated in two media interviews: one with the International Journal on Hydropower and Dams covering Tishreen hydropower dam and the work undertaken by UNICEF and its partners; and another TV interview with Rudaw Media Network, focusing on the humanitarian situation in As-Sweida, particularly its impact on children.

From ruins to resilience: Khadijeh rebuilds her life amid conflict

In war-scarred Deir-ez-Zor, Khadijeh and her 10-year-old daughter, Ghuson, are rebuilding their lives with support from a UNICEF-backed community centre. There, Khadijeh found strength and sisterhood, while Ghuson gained confidence, a safe space to learn, and crucial skills to protect herself from explosive ordnance — a deadly threat that endangers children across Syria every day. UNICEF continues to provide psychosocial support and protection, but greater investment in demining and safety is urgently needed to uphold every child's right to grow up free from fear.

Nourished by love: UNICEF supports mothers throughout their breastfeeding journey with expert guidance and essential nutritional care

Inam, a 28-year-old mother from Harasta, turned to a UNICEF-supported health centre for guidance when told to stop breastfeeding during pregnancy. With expert advice, antenatal care, and nutritional support, she continued breastfeeding safely while preparing for the arrival of her fourth child. Today, both baby Ahmad and his brother Amer receive regular monitoring and nutrition, giving them a healthier start in life.

A safe place to heal and grow: UNICEF-supported integrated centres help families in Syria find safety, care, and a path forward

At a UNICEF-supported integrated centre in Damascus, children and caregivers access essential services ranging from healthcare and nutrition to mental health and psychosocial support. Children receive regular check-ups, growth monitoring and recreational activities that help them heal and build resilience, while mothers benefit from antenatal and postnatal care to safeguard their health and that of their babies. Caregivers also gain parenting guidance and psychological support in a safe, child-friendly environment. Centres like this are lifelines for families, offering stability, care and hope amid the challenges of conflict and displacement.

When hope lights the way: Zeina's journey to empowerment

"Don't focus on what's missing, focus on what's blessed" — this lesson became 22-year-old Zeina's mantra as conflict and displacement turned her life upside down in Rural Damascus. After repeated displacements and her parents' divorce, Zeina sought new opportunities and found them at a UNICEF-supported youth-friendly space in Jaramana, where she completed an Office Management course. The training helped her secure a job as an accountant — a step towards her dream of studying economics and opening her own business. On International Youth Day, Zeina's story is a powerful reminder of how safe learning spaces empower young people with the skills and confidence to shape their futures.

UNICEF ramps up health and nutrition support for children fleeing violence in southern Syria

Recent violence in As-Sweida Governorate has displaced more than 191,000 people, mostly women and children, while severely damaging water, electricity and fuel supplies. Food, medicine and other essentials are becoming increasingly scarce, and insecurity continues to hinder humanitarian access. In response, UNICEF has deployed 14 mobile health and nutrition teams, reaching over 4,000 children and women with life-saving supplies and services. In temporary shelters in Rural Damascus, additional mobile teams and a medical point provide medical check-ups, nutrition screening, maternal and child health support, and guidance on hygiene and feeding practices. These efforts are helping prevent disease outbreaks, detect and treat malnutrition, and safeguard the health and well-being of the most vulnerable children and families during this critical time.

Lighting the way: honouring Syria's humanitarians on World Humanitarian Day

On World Humanitarian Day, UNICEF pays tribute to the courage and commitment of its 260 staff across Syria, working every day to reach children in one of the world's most complex crises. From delivering life-saving supplies in emergencies to strengthening health, education and protection systems for the future, these humanitarians embody resilience and hope. Their stories — from ensuring safe deliveries and treating malnutrition to keeping operations running during outbreaks and earthquakes — reflect an unwavering belief in every child's right to safety, dignity and opportunity. Even in the darkest times, UNICEF staff in Syria remain a source of light, proving that change is possible, and that hope continues to grow.

A story of transformation: UNICEF empowers young people in Syria by strengthening vocational skills and expanding access to meaningful education

At just 17, Elia from Jaramana had to leave school to help support his family, as his mother's medical treatment placed heavy financial strain on them. A UNICEF-supported youth-friendly space offered him a lifeline through vocational training in mobile phone maintenance. With hands-on practice and ongoing mentorship, Elia gained the skills to increase his income and secure a brighter future. Today, he dreams of opening his own repair shop — and one day an academy — to pass on knowledge and opportunity to other young people.

- Lighting the way: honouring Syria's humanitarians on World Humanitarian Day
- A story of transformation; UNICEF empowers young people in Syria by strengthening vocational skills
- UNICEF as part of inter-agency convoy to As-Sweida Governorate
- UNICEF supports returnees, more than half being children, in Al Sholah village
- UNICEF supports access to water in Al-Hasakeh
- From ruins to resilience: Khadijeh rebuilds her life amid conflict
- Nourished by love; UNICEF supports mothers throughout breastfeeding journey with expert guidance
- A safe place to heal and grow; UNICEF-supported integrated centres help families in Syria find safet
- When hope lights the way: Zeina's journey to empowerment
- UNICEF ramps up health and nutrition support for children fleeing violence in southern Syria

HAC APPEALS AND SITREPS

- All Humanitarian Action for Children Appeals
  https://www.unicef.org/appeals
- All Situation Reports
  https://www.unicef.org/appeals/situation-reports

NEXT SITREP: 25 OCTOBER 2025

ANNEX A - PROGRAMME RESULTS

Consolidated Programme Results

Sector			UNICEF and IPs response			Cluster/Sector response		
Indicator	Disaggregation	Total needs	2025 targets	Total results	Progress*	2025 targets	Total results	Progress*
Health (including public health emergencies)								
Children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities	Total	-	1.7 million	1.7 million	▲ 17%	-	-	-
Number of children under 1 year reached with routine vaccination (DTP3 containing vaccine)	Total	-	689,500	291,548	▲ 5%	-	-	-
Number of caregivers reached with health promotion, including immunization messages	Total	-	620,800	1.6 million	▲ 18%	-	-	-
Nutrition								
Children 6-59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment[18]	Total	-	31,977	6,662	▲ 5%	-	-	-
Primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling[19]	Total	-	1.5 million	729,800	▲ 22%	-	-	-
Children 6-59 months receiving micronutrient powder[20]	Total	-	974,800	374,019	▲ 6%	-	-	-
Child protection and GBViE								
Women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions	Total	-	169,550	153,927	▲ 14%	-	-	-
Children who have received individual case management	Total	-	17,800	10,210	▲ 8%	34,660	3,879	▲ 11%
Children and caregivers provided with landmine or other explosive weapons prevention and/or survivor assistance interventions [21]	Total	-	653,600	591,206	▲ 8%	-	-	-
Children accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support[22]	Total	-	254,500	76,623	▲ 6%	351,054	27,791	▲ 8%
Education[23]								
Children supported with educational services and supplies in formal settings	Total	-	2.6 million	888,236	▲ 19%	-	282,600	-
Children in non-formal education benefiting from education services	Total	-	598,057	210,230	▲ 3%	-	188,400	-
Teachers and education personnel trained[24]	Total	-	19,020	30,459	▲ 18%	-	20,056	-
Water, sanitation and hygiene[25]								
People accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs	Total	-	3.9 million	1.9 million	▲ 7%	-	-	-

Sector			UNICEF and IPs response			Cluster/Sector response		
Indicator	Disaggregation	Total needs	2025 targets	Total results	Progress*	2025 targets	Total results	Progress*
People accessing appropriate sanitation services	Total	-	1.9 million	1.3 million	▲ 28%	-	-	-
People reached with handwashing behaviour-change programmes[26]	Total	-	400,000	404,510	▲ 1%	-	-	-
People reached with critical WASH supplies[27]	Total	-	1.6 million	239,077	▲ 1%	-	-	-
Social protection								
Number of girls and boys with disabilities provided with regular cash transfers and case management services [28]	Total	-	25,000	4,519	▲ 1%	-	-	-
People reached with UNICEF-funded humanitarian cash transfers[29]	Total	-	188,000	31,464	▲ 7%	-	-	-
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)								
People engaged in reflective dialogue through community platforms	Total	-	500,000	329,836	▲ 9%	-	-	-
People sharing their concerns and asking questions through established feedback mechanisms	Total	-	7,000	1,992	▲ 13%	-	-	-
PSEA								
People who have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers	Total	-	3.2 million	1 million	▲ 4%	-	-	-
Adolescents/youth								
Affected adolescents and youth (10-24 years) receiving life-skills and citizenship education and employability skills	Total	-	200,000	66,885	▲ 5%	-	-	-
Adolescents and youth (10-24 years) promoting social cohesion and civic engagement at community level	Total	-	300,000	167,439	▲ 2%	-	-	-

**Progress in the reporting period 1-31 August 2025*

ANNEX B — FUNDING STATUS

Consolidated funding by sector

		Funding available		Funding gap	
Sector	Requirements	Humanitarian resources received in 2025	Resources available from 2024 (carry over)	Funding gap (US$)	Funding gap (%)
Health	69,275,784	15,073,961	12,011,534	42,190,289	61%
Nutrition	42,454,399	11,050,312	12,208,038	19,196,049	45%
Child protection	45,235,385	8,276,366	9,430,468	27,528,551	61%
Education	133,893,107	24,846,074	11,648,993	97,398,040	73%
WASH	126,735,233	14,045,918	17,059,957	95,629,358	75%
Social protection	55,579,937	5,421,792	6,793,920	43,364,225	78%
Cross-sectoral	761,538	457,614	313,162	-	0%
PSEA	685,385	137,061	-	548,324	80%
Adolescents/youth	13,672,685	1,013,378	1,200,818	11,458,489	84%
Total	**488,293,453**	**80,322,476**	**70,666,890**	**337,304,087**	**69%**

Funding available - funding available in the current appeal year to respond in line with the current HAC appeal.
Humanitarian resources– humanitarian funding commitments received from donors in the current appeal year.
Resources available from 2024 (carry over)– funding received in the previous appeal year that is available to respond in line with the current HAC appeal

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ENDNOTES

1. UNHCR, Syria Governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview, 25 September 2025. Available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118813

2. UNHCR, Syria Governorates of Return Overview As of 25 Sep 2025. Available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118814

3. As per the INSO EO incident/accident and casualty numbers shared by Mine Action AoR. The period covered is between 1 January and 5 September 2025.

4. Humanitarian Response Priorities, January - December 2025 issued in July 2025. Available at: https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-humanitarian-response-priorities-january-december-2025

5. Humanitarian Response Priorities, January - December 2025 issued in July 2025. Available at: https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-humanitarian-response-priorities-january-december-2025.

6. Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) Appeal 2025 describes the figures as 16.7 million in line with the HNO 2024. The HAC 2025 is being revised, and the PiN and CiN in the revised HAC 2025 will be aligned to the HNRP 2025.

7. UNHCR, Syria Governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview, 25 September 2025. Available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118813

8. UNHCR, Syria Governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview, 25 September 2025. Available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118813

9. As per the INSO-EO incident/accident and casualty numbers shared by Mine Action AoR. The period covered is between 1 January and 5 September 2025.

10. OCAH, Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update - The Wildfires in Lattakia - No. 2 (As of July 13, 2025). Available at: https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-flash-update-wildfires-lattakia-no2-13-july-2025

11. As per the assessments of the UNICEF Tartous office Team.

12. WFP, August 2025 Situation Report, https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/wfp-syria-emergency-response-external-situation-report-24-july-2025?utm_source=chatgpt.com

13. UNHCR, Syria Governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview, 25 September 2025. Available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118813

14. Children are 57 per cent of the total population as per various UNHCR updates on sex and age disaggregation.

15. UNHCR, Syria Governorates of Return Overview As of 25 Sep 2025. Available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118814

16. UNOCHA, Humanitarian Response in Southern Syria, Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1 As of 22 September 2025. Available at: https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-humanitarian-response-southern-syria-situation-report-no-1-22-september-2025

17. DTM, Emergency Tracking and Humanitarian SitRep - As-Sweida, 24 August 2025, https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-emergency-tracking-and-humanitarian-situation-report-sweida-conflict-round-12-24-august-2025

18. The underachievement attributes to the reporting stoppage from the MoH after the fall of the previous regime. However, UNICEF coordinates to support the ministry and build the staff capacity for reporting.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. The overachievement is attributed to a joint campaign conducted with the Ministry of Health to raise awareness of explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) among the most vulnerable populations, including those newly returned.

22. The low achievement is attributed to the funding gap.

23. More than 70 per cent of individuals in need of education are experiencing high levels of severity, reinforcing UNICEF’s commitment to prioritise support for the most vulnerable children and communities across the country.

24. It is anticipated that the number of teachers and educational supervisors reached will continue to increase throughout the remainder of 2025.

25. Over 90 per cent of individuals in need of WASH services are classified as experiencing high severity of need. In line with UNICEF’s commitment to reaching the most vulnerable populations and communities nationwide, WASH response activities are prioritised for those living in remote, rural, and hard-to-reach areas, where facilities typically serve the most vulnerable people.

26. Due to displacement movements and the presence of high-risk areas in north-west Syria, WASH activities have exceeded initial projections, reflecting the evolving needs of affected populations.

27. WASH NFI support is primarily being provided by other active NGOs in the sector. As a result, UNICEF has placed greater emphasis on infrastructural rehabilitation, where it has the comparative advantage to have the significant impact.

28. The low level of achievement is primarily attributed to the country’s ongoing cash liquidity constraints, which continue to hinder programme implementation and scale-up.

29. Ibid.

Exhibit 30

TRANSCRIPTS Transcript Providers

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CNN News Central

Interview with Kristi Noem, Homeland Security Secretary: President Trump Signs Laken Riley Act Into Law; Trump Administration Offers Buyouts to 2 Million Federal Workers; Democratic Ex-Senator Bob Menendez Sentenced to 11 Years in Prison. Aired 3:30-4p ET

Aired January 29, 2025 - 15:30 ET

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[15:30:00]

KRISTI NOEM, HOMELAND SECURITY SECRETARY: People's lives were lost because criminals, dangerous criminals, were allowed to be released back into the United States to perpetuate more crime. So it also allows states to go after civilly federal officials that let these criminals go, that turn them back on our streets to endanger more families. So I'm really thankful that that was added through the amendment process and that it is something that is a tool for states to hold some accountability to the federal officials that allow these things to happen.

BORIS SANCHEZ, CNN HOST: Well, I ask you about the protections because opponents have argued that they're not actually spelled out in this bill. So in theory, if someone was simply arrested for shoplifting, just arrested, not convicted, their case wasn't adjudicated, they could be detained without bond for the duration of their proceedings. Does that raise concerns to you about due process?

NOEM: Well, what we need to remember is all these individuals came into our country already and broke our federal law. They broke our federal law and then they perpetuated another crime. So they will be detained and they will get due process and they will go through our judicial system.

And we will make sure that when they commit these types of crimes, they'll be held accountable to that. So this bill is moving forward in a way that has Republican support, bipartisan support.

SANCHEZ: And Democrats, sure.

NOEM: It was great to see senators. It will be amazing to -- go ahead.

SANCHEZ: As far as what the bill spells out, though, these aren't individuals that have been determined, some of them to have committed crimes. You could simply be accused of shoplifting, accused, suspected of shoplifting and then get deported. So how does that fit into what you're describing? Because they could be detained almost indefinitely until their status is adjudicated.

NOEM: Well, I think if you look at the situations, they've already broken a law, then they've come in and perpetuated and been accused of another broken law. And they will be detained until that is moving forward. And we have a resolution to that process and that crime.

You know, this is a bill that people have agreed on that is necessary in this country because of what we saw happen under the Biden administration. So it has wide support. The president was proud to sign it today.

And these families that lost their children to tragedies, they were thrilled to see some results from those tragedies come for the better good of the United States of America.

SANCHEZ: I do ask, I want to ask you about how this sort of detainment is going to be funded. There are some estimates that have this new framework for detainment costing something like $83 billion over the next three years. The bill doesn't outline how exactly that's going to be funded. So I wonder where is that money coming from.

NOEM: Well, to start standing up some of these detainment centers, we're using operations and budget that we already have in place, but we will need more help. We will need more dollars from Congress. And the reconciliation process is going to be utilized to have that debate on the Capitol Hill.

We've got senators and representatives that recognize that in order to do this and to fix the situation that the Biden administration perpetuated, we're going to need the resources not only to incarcerate and go out and get these dangerous individuals off our streets. We're going to have to detain them, put them through a process to

repatriate them back to their home countries. And for me, we really need to focus on fixing our legal immigration system as well.

I need more resources to have our judicial courts and immigration courts resourced up that we have more judges so that when people want to come to this country legally, they can do that in a timely process.

SANCHEZ: So how many of those that have been arrested since these crackdowns began have been felons? How many have had felonies versus misdemeanors? In other words, how many folks have actually been convicted of crimes versus how many of them have just been in the country without documentation?

NOEM: Many of these individuals that we have done targeted operations to go find and to bring into custody do have felonies against them. They're the murderers, the rapists, the worst of the worst. And I think you've probably heard many other people talk about the fact that these are going to be the worst first, will be the ones that will be held accountable and pulled off of our streets.

And it was amazing when I was in New York City yesterday, just the community members that were constantly walking by, a lot of these individuals and officers that were going after these bad criminals were saying, thank you. Thank you for making our streets safe again. Thank you for being here and making sure that we can walk our kids to school again safely, that we can go to work safely, and that our community will be better because of what we're doing here today.

SANCHEZ: But undoubtedly, you said many, but it doesn't sound like you have a specific number for how many have actually been felons and how many have had misdemeanors for not having documents, something that in the United States is prosecuted as a civil matter.

[15:35:00]

NOEM: Well, I'll tell you that what we are doing is targeting those felons, targeting those that have violent acts and have broken crimes. But also when we're going into these situations, perhaps into an apartment to get somebody that is on our list that needs to be removed from that community to make it safer. There are people that are in that apartment with them. We're talking to all of those as well and vetting to see who they are.

Sometimes we have found apartments and facilities that have children and families there that we're talking to them to see who they are and make sure that they aren't children who are being trafficked, that they're truly with family members, that they're in a situation where they're hanging around dangerous criminals.

We want to make sure that they're not people who are a part of that chain that is funneling drugs or weapons or perpetuating some of these crimes in our communities. So that evaluation and those numbers is changing every single day based on who's around these criminals and who's around those dangerous individuals.

SANCHEZ: But as you are conducting these sweeps, there undoubtedly have to be occasions where someone who has not committed a felony is getting swept up and perhaps that's a person who has been law abiding and who has been in this country perhaps for decades and who contributes through paying taxes. Do they also deserve to be deported if they've lived most of their lives in the United States?

NOEM: You know, every situation is different and I won't speak to every single situation and every single operation we've had where our officers have gone out into these targeted operations. But what I will say is, of course, we do the due diligence that law enforcement always has been. We ask questions. We see who they are. We ask for their paperwork. We ask for their I.D. We're just making sure that these individuals are people who love this country, who obey our laws and that the scales of justice are applied equally.

You know, we expect our American citizens to obey our laws. Even people who aren't our citizens should be obeying our laws and that's the process we're going through that law enforcement always has.

SANCHEZ: Some of those folks may have had status at one point but then lost it. And I do wonder, for example, the administration announced this morning that TPS protections for Venezuelans are being rolled back. By our count, there's something like a half a million, more than half a million that stand to be affected.

By Saturday's deadline, are they going to lose protected status? Does that make it more likely that they will get deported?

NOEM: Well, you know, one of the decisions that was made recently is that in the Department of Homeland Security, Secretary Mayorkas put in place an 18-month extension of the temporary protective status. I rolled that back. I rolled it back to the six months that it always has been. And he really put that in place to tie my hands. My ability to keep integrity into this program.

So this program has been in place for years. We're going to make sure that it's used properly and that's the president's heart and desire as well. So when the president gives a directive, the Department of Homeland Security will follow it and we're going to make sure that those who come in under a program, under a visa, and are here in this country, that they're following the rules of that program. That's been abused over the years and

it needs to be fixed.

So those folks who are in violation of these programs, they need to recognize that they're accountable to that. They agreed to follow the rules when they came and that they need to be held accountable when they don't follow them.

SANCHEZ: But if they are following the rules of a program that you have deemed to be illegitimate, does that still put them at risk of being deported even if they are following those rules?

NOEM: You know, we are getting direction on how this works from the direction of the president of the United States. And he is pausing this program to re-evaluate. We know that it has been abused in the past and that there's many people from other countries that are affected as well from this TPP program. And we're going to make sure that we fix it so that it's utilized in the right way.

SANCHEZ: Lastly, Secretary, I do wonder if there are protections in place for people who are here legally. I think of family members of my own that don't speak English very well, hardly at all. Are there protections in place to prevent against racial profiling?

NOEM: Oh, absolutely. Yes, absolutely. These folks can live in peace knowing that all of their willingness to come to this country legally and to be here, we welcome them with open arms.

That's America's story and something that we're proud of. So I understand that the American people clearly sent a message in November that they wanted this country to be a nation of laws. That's what the president's following through on. And transparency is going to be our hallmark. People need the answers to their questions. And that's what I'm here for, is to make sure that they understand that we love this country.

We want our citizens to feel comfortable and at peace and to have their safety and their streets back again.

SANCHEZ: Secretary Kristi Noem, we have to leave the conversation there. Appreciate you coming on and sharing your perspective. We hope to chat again soon.

NOEM: You bet. Thank you.

SANCHEZ: Stay with CNN NEW CENTRAL. We're back in just moments.

[15:40:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SANCHEZ: In another shake-up by the Trump administration, federal employees working from home are now faced with the choice of returning to the office full-time or taking a buyout.

JESSICA DEAN, CNN HOST: The White House is offering voluntary resignations in a move President Trump says is designed to shrink and reform the government. Employees received an e-mail with the subject line, fork in the road, and were told if they wanted to leave, to simply respond with the word resign by next Thursday. Then they would receive severance payments through September 30th. President Trump addressed the buyouts this afternoon.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

[15:45:00]

DONALD TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: We have informed the federal workforce, which they've looked to do for many years, that if they're working for the federal government, they must show up to the office on time and on schedule.

It's unfair to the millions of people in the United States who are in fact working hard from job sites and not from their home. As federal employees, they must meet a high standard. They're representing our government. They're representing our country.

If they don't agree by February 6th to show up back to work in their office, they will be terminated and we will therefore be downscaling our government.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

DEAN: Joining us now is the president of the National Federation of Federal Employees, Randy Erwin. Randy, thanks so much for being here with us this afternoon. I first just want to get kind of the top lines, what you've heard from members about this surprise announcement.

RANDY ERWIN, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES: I think they're

surprised by it. I mean, I think we knew that Trump wanted to downsize the federal workforce. This so-called Doge thing was talking about that at length. So we knew some of this stuff was coming.

But, you know, they got this unique thing, this deferred resignation. You know, just very strange implementation of this. It doesn't make a lot of sense, but we are advising our members not to accept this. This is not a good deal for federal workers. It's not really even an offer to not have to work until September 30th.

You would resign, but you would still have to work. So I don't know what kind of a deal that is. But, you know, also in the verbiage of what they kind of, you know, put out to everybody, not even a name on who this e-mail is coming from.

So, you know, what a strange thing. Just hit, you know, reply, resign. I mean, who does things this way?

But, you know, bottom line is it's a bad deal. We're telling them not to do it. And it's really irresponsible to run federal government that delivers such critical services to the American people in this manner.

SANCHEZ: Randy, can you give us an estimate of how many of your 110,000 members might take the offer? And what agencies do you think might be the most affected?

ERWIN: I don't think we have any way of knowing right now. I wouldn't be surprised if 5 percent did or so like that. And what was your second question?

SANCHEZ: Just which agencies, which federal agencies do you think might be most impacted?

ERWIN: Yes. Well, you know, they did this throughout the federal government. So that's incredible.

You know, about one third of the federal government is the Department of Defense where we have about 50,000 members. You know, boy, what a hit to our, you know, readiness in the military if we see people taking resignations en masse. I mean, they talk about federal workers like they're not doing anything.

You know, 87 percent of federal workers are spread throughout the country. They're not here in Washington. They're doing critical services, keeping our military ready.

The next biggest agency is Department of Veterans Affairs, 370-some- thousand workers, nurses and doctors, people we represent that care for the American veteran. If these people leave en masse, we lose the ability to

make good on our promise to care for the American veteran. And they're just putting out e-mails asking people to resign en masse. It is clear that they don't care about how our government functions and delivers those services.

DEAN: Is there concern about the funding for these buyouts?

ERWIN: Absolutely. I mean, another reason that we are advising our members not to accept this deal is because there's a good chance they're going to get stiffed. You know, they would essentially be signing away their rights, signing away their job, and then when the administration has to deliver on their promises, they will renege on that because Congress never authorized it.

So you don't, you know, make offers like this. This is not the way you run the federal government, and it's just highly irresponsible. And in the end, it's the American people that are going to suffer because of it.

SANCHEZ: Randy, I'm curious to get your reaction to not only the characterization that President Trump had of folks who are working from home, essentially calling them unproductive, but also the demand in this letter that states that federal workers should be reliable, loyal, trustworthy, and striving for excellence in their daily work. What did you think of that?

ERWIN: You know, it's absolutely chilling. You know, we kind of had, you know, federal employees swear an oath to uphold the Constitution and in a non-bipartisan way carry out the critical duties, you know, in the federal service. It's tremendous work they do.

But, you know, in this kind of deferred resignation offer that they put out, they said there's going to be some changes coming.

[15:50:00]

There's a big fork in the road, and we are going to demand loyalty and trustworthiness, and if you're not delivering on that, you will be targeted for retribution and removal. And, you know, this is -- I've never seen anything like this.

And people really need to understand that independent civil service that carries out, you know, the laws of this country is absolutely a critical pillar to our democracy. And, you know, if Congress allows this to continue, if, you know, if they're, you know, if Congress allows this to continue, they are going to just, like, antagonize

workers and break the law and do the things that it's clear that they're doing. And some of the things we know they're going to do they haven't even done yet, but we saw it in Project 2025 and things like that, or they did it in the previous administration.

But, you know, we can't go down this road. It's a critical pillar of our democracy to have a civil service that works for the American people, and they are trying to tear that down. They're trying to do it right now, and people should be in the streets mad about it.

DEAN: All right, Randy Erwin, we'll leave it there. Thank you very much for your time. We appreciate it.

ERWIN: Thank you so much.

DEAN: We have some breaking news to share with you. Former New Jersey Democratic Senator Bob Menendez sentenced by a federal judge to 11 years in prison.

SANCHEZ: This comes after his conviction last year on bribery and corruption charges. CNN's Kara Scannell was in court for the sentencing. She's been tracking this story throughout.

Kara, take us through what you saw. What was the former senator's reaction?

KARA SCANNELL, CNN CORRESPONDENT: So the former senator did not betray any emotional reaction when the judge handed down that sentence of 11 years, but he did address the court before the judge did issue the sentence. And during that time, Menendez told the judge that he was standing before him as a chastened man. He said that every day I'm awake is a punishment. I lost everything I ever cared about. At various times, he became choked up, having to stop when he was

speaking, talking about the ways he had helped certain constituents over the years and the achievements that he had achieved for not only himself but the Hispanic community, he said, through his election.

But as the prosecutors had said to the judge, that at some point Menendez had turned that public service into service for himself.

And as the judge handed down this 11-year sentence, he said, you've done a great deal of good. Somewhere along the way, you lost your way. Your working for the public good became working for your good. The public cannot be led to believe that you can get away with bribery, fraud, and betraying his voters, his constituents.

So a big sentence here. Prosecutors have been asking for at least 15 years. Menendez initially came into court saying he was to do community service. But even they acknowledged after seeing the sentences of other co-defendants, they had asked the judge for less than eight years. Judge finding 11 years in prison for Senator Menendez -- Boris, Jess.

DEAN: All right, that breaking news for us. Kara Scannell, thank you very much for that. And stay with CNN. We'll be right back.

[15:55:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SANCHEZ: NASA has remained insistent that these folks are not stuck, and yet their space mission was only supposed to last a week. Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams have been there since June.

DEAN: Longer than a week.

SANCHEZ: Longer than a week because of an issue with their spacecraft, and apparently President Trump says that he's had enough.

DEAN: Take a look at this exchange between Trump and Elon Musk. Trump tells Musk to, quote, go get them. Musk replies to Trump telling him he'll bring them home.

But in the most recent delay, it was his own company, SpaceX, that delayed the astronauts' plan return back in December with Musk's company saying it needed more time.

And joining us now is former NASA astronaut Leroy Chiao. Leroy, great to have you here with us. Thanks so much. The plan by NASA has clearly been delayed several times. The vehicle to bring them home is docked at the space station. Walk us through the complications here.

LEROY CHIAO, NASA ASTRONAUT (RET.): Well, sure. I mean, the next crew to launch, Crew 10, is going to be launching on a brand new Dragon spacecraft built by SpaceX. And so it's taking a few more extra weeks to go through testing, final testing, and mission assurance. And that's being done jointly by NASA and SpaceX. Crew 9, which Suni and Butch became a part of after their ride home

wasn't going to make it, they are waiting to come down. Of course, normally we would launch Crew 10, and they would spend about a week together before Crew 9 came back.

But they could come back earlier. Their spacecraft is ready to go. It serves as a lifeboat during their mission. And so if something happens, or if they're told to, they can easily get into that vehicle and come down very quickly.

SANCHEZ: Leroy, I wonder whether the Biden administration could have done more to get them down, because that's who Donald Trump and Elon Musk are blaming for them being up there.

CHIAO: Well, the situation is that, you know, it kind of made sense. Once things evolved and it was clear the Starliner should not be used to carry them back, it was decided that they would join the next crew, right, that was about to launch. And so that's why two members of that crew were removed.

They were already up there. And then it was decided that they would stay for the entire mission duration. However, they could have come down earlier. And really what happens is if they come down early is they would disrupt the workflow aboard the station, because now you would leave one American on board and you would have three Americans come back with a Russian, four people coming down on that spacecraft.

And if that's the decision that will be made, then, you know, some research will be deferred or delayed. And, you know, we're at this point, we're near the end of the mission, so coming back a couple months early shouldn't be a huge, huge impact if that's what happens.

DEAN: And just quickly before you go, look, they've been up there since June. I know we've talked before. You said they can handle this. But at a certain point, it probably feels like it's time to come home.

CHIAO: Well, you know, there's no question, certainly personal and perhaps future professional plans are disrupted by this unexpected delay. You know, seven to 10 days turned into seven or eight months, right?

[16:00:00]

And so I'm sure a part of them is looking forward to maybe coming home a little early, but at the same time, they're consummate professionals and they're ready to stay up there and finish all the work.

DEAN: We look forward to welcoming them back.

SANCHEZ: Yes, I hope they didn't have to keep flipping their underwear inside and out. Laundry in space, I hope. Leroy Chiao, thank you so much.

DEAN: Yes, I don't know how that would take a tour while you do that.

SANCHEZ: Let's save that conversation for "THE LEAD" with Jake Tapper, which starts right now.

Exhibit 33

← Post

Reply

Homeland Security ✓
@DHSgov

Today's SCOTUS decision is a win for the American people and the safety of our communities. The Biden Administration exploited Temporary Protected Status to let half a million poorly vetted migrants into this country—from MS-13 gang members to known terrorists and murderers.

The Trump Administration is reinstituting integrity into our immigration system to keep our homeland and its people safe.

@TriciaOhio

5:18 PM · May 19, 2025 · **51.9K** Views

147 597 2.9K 68

Exhibit 39

DECLARATION OF DAHLIA DOE

I, Dahlia Doe, upon my personal knowledge, hereby declare as follows:

1. I was born in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 1997.

2. Although I am a national of Syria, I have never lived in the country and spent my entire life in the United Arab Emirates before moving to the United States. Even though I was born in Dubai, I do not have citizenship or residency in the United Arab Emirates. It is nearly impossible to obtain a passport or permanent residence in the United Arab Emirates as someone born to non-Emirati parents, given the country's strict naturalization and immigration laws.

3. In 2015, I came to the United States on a student visa to pursue a Dual Degree in Business and Political Science, after obtaining a full-tuition scholarship. I initially lived in Upstate New York while enrolled in university. I now currently live in the Bronx, New York City.

4. I'm so lucky to live in the United States and be reunited with my immediate family members who are all now either U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents. My parents are lawful permanent residents and my sister is a U.S. citizen. I also have a niece and nephew that I'm close to. We are a deeply tight-knit family, and I can't imagine my life far away from them.

5. After graduating from college in 2019, I received a job offer at a market research company where I have been employed for the past six years.

6. In 2021, I obtained Temporary Protected Status (TPS) as a Syrian national. I was so grateful I was able to maintain legal status after my student and Optional Practical Training (OPT) status expired.

7. But now, I stand to lose that protection, as my TPS status will expire on November 21, 2025, as a result of the termination of Syria's TPS designation.

8. TPS is currently my only form of protection from deportation. Although I can continue working based on a pending immigration application, I will not be protected from the threat of immigration confinement and removal if I lose my TPS status and my pending immigration application is denied.

9. Although I have never lived in Syria, I regularly heard about the devastating conditions of the civil war – from widespread violence to indiscriminate government bombings of civilian areas that reduced entire cities to rubble. I felt lucky I was given the opportunity to not only study and build a life in the United States but to also be in safety with my immediate family as opposed to Syrians who have been massively displaced from their homes and families due to the humanitarian crisis.

10. It is because of TPS that I was able to maintain legal status after my OPT ended and avoid being forcibly removed to Syria when the Assad regime was still in full force. I have never lived in Syria, so TPS has protected me from being separated from my family here in the United States.

11. I first heard the announcement about the termination of TPS for Syria on November 19, 2025 from community group chats where I saw a link of the USCIS announcement. I have not received a formal update directly from the USCIS as a TPS holder from Syria.

12. When I first heard about the announcement, I felt super anxious. I would have hoped that the government would give the Syrian community much more time to prepare for this shocking decision. Since the announcement, I have been living in anxiety of being put in removal proceedings if I lose my TPS. As I continue to hear about ICE raids in New York City and elsewhere, I am scared to be vulnerable to losing my legal status and to face this reality.

13. If I was forcibly removed from the United States, I would not be able to return to the United Arab Emirates and would have no choice but to relocate to Syria. I have never lived in Syria and have no immediate family there, and have very limited remaining connections of any kind. If I were deported, I would be sent to Syria, a country I have never called home and where I would face great difficulty and danger.

14. My family and I are Christian and that identity alone would put me at risk in Syria. As a religious minority in Syria, Christians have been increasingly targeted in recent years, and there was recently a church bombing that killed and injured many Syrian Christians. Given the socio-economic and political climate in Syria, I worry about the hostility towards Christians and their way of life, including simple expressions of faith and cultural practices. I fear being unable to freely express my identity and to live safely if I were forced to relocate.

15. Syria also remains unsafe and unstable in the new political climate. The country is still in the early stages of rebuilding after nearly 14 years of war. There are few jobs, limited infrastructure, and ongoing violence. It will take many years before Syria can safely receive returnees or offer them any meaningful opportunities to rebuild their lives.

16. I have been terrified about my future and that of my family since learning that the government plans to imminently terminate TPS for Syria. I am also extremely concerned about being separated from my family in the United States. My elderly father suffers from Parkinson's disease and is very ill. My mother also has medical issues so she cannot fully take care of my dad. I help take care of them both financially and emotionally, including visiting them as frequently as I am able. My family's well-being depends on my continued ability to stay and work in the United States. Losing TPS would not only mean losing my job but also my ability to support my aging parents financially.

17. TPS has also not only allowed me to stay in safety in the United States with my family, but to also grow personally and professionally. I have built a successful career that I am

at risk of losing. I started in an entry-level position and have received four promotions since then. I'm now in a director role where I hold significant responsibilities in overseeing teams, leading client accounts, managing budgets, and mentoring employees both formally and informally.

18. As part of my role at work, I also serve on my company's Refugee Task Force, which supports the hiring and mentorship of refugees and immigrants. My professional life is deeply connected by my commitment to helping others find safety, stability, and opportunity in this country.

19. My long-term goal is to become a Vice President within the company and I am worried that losing TPS may forcibly uproot me from a career in which I have invested so much.

20. If I were forced to the leave the United States, I would not only lose my job but the career I have built, along with the community I have nurtured and the stability I have worked so hard to achieve. Everything I have built over the past decade of living in the United States would disappear.

21. The news of the termination has deeply impacted my mental health. I have severe anxiety thinking about it all the time and I cannot sleep. I've had to start going to therapy to help cope with the stress and uncertainty of possibly being uprooted from my life here in the United States.

22. I'm not only anxious about my own case but also for the Syrian community that I have dedicated my life to serving since living in the United States. I play an active role in supporting the unique challenges faced by Syrian immigrants in the United States.

23. I am deeply connected to the Syrian immigrant community in the United States and have taken on a leadership role in the community. Ever since I heard about the news of terminating TPS, I have been trying my best to be there for other Syrian community members. For the past four weeks, I've been anxiously worried about the stories of community members I've heard – of being forcibly separated from their U.S. citizen children and wrapping up over 10 years of living in the United States. I have barely slept these past four weeks because I am trying so desperately to help not only myself but also be there for other community members.

24. People often ask me for help with finding an attorney to navigate the various issues they're facing – from people in Florida already unable to renew their driver licenses to students having issues with their student status due to expired Syrian passports. I don't know how to answer many of the questions I'm fielding from anxious Syrian community members who may soon lose TPS and who are scrambling to make alternative plans with only two months' notice.

25. I do not have enough time to prepare for the termination of TPS and make alternative plans because the government only announced the termination with two months' notice.

26. I am willing to serve as a class representative on behalf of those who are similarly situated to me who are Syrian TPS recipients.

27. I know that if the class is certified, I will be representing more than just myself in this case. I will be representing the interests of other Syrian TPS recipients. I understand what being a class representative means.

28. I want to help everyone in my situation because I am certain Syria is not safe for Syrians in the United States to return to due to the dire humanitarian crisis. I also don't want anyone to bear the pain of being separated from their children and families. I am willing to be actively involved in this lawsuit as a class representative and to work with my attorneys to help all of the class members.

29. I am providing this declaration anonymously because I fear for the jeopardy of my immigration status and safety based on being a religious minority in Syria.

30. I know that I may soon be in limbo if I lose my TPS, without protection from being detained and placed in removal proceedings. I am afraid that if my name is publicized as part of this lawsuit, I may be targeted and prioritized for immigration enforcement.

31. Given the increased immigration enforcement actions and raids in New York City, including the fact that U.S. citizens and green-card holders have been targeted, I am worried that participating in this lawsuit could bring me to the attention of ICE. I am afraid that, if my name is public as part of this lawsuit, I will be targeted by immigration officials.

32. I also have heard in the news that people who criticize the current presidential administration have been targeted. I am afraid this could happen to me and this could put me and my family's lives in danger.

33. I also fear that if my real name becomes public in this lawsuit, I will be in more danger if I am forced to return to Syria, because people will be able to more easily identify me as a Christian with ties to the United States. As a Christian in Syria with no connections, no family there, and no home or career prospects, I would have no way to survive or thrive in the country. The thought of returning fills me with fear and anxiety, and having my name made public as part of this lawsuit further heightens my concern.

34. Given that the lawsuit criticizes the current country conditions in Syria, I also worry about retaliation from the Syrian government if my name is publicly associated with this legal challenge.

35. TPS has allowed me to live safely and meaningfully in the United States – to provide for my sick father and support my family and contribute to my community. Losing TPS threatens to destroy the life I have built, separate me from my family, and force me to a country where I have never lived and would not be safe or able to survive.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Executed in Bronx, New York on October 19, 2025.

/s/ Dahlia Doe

Dahlia Doe

Exhibit 40

DECLARATION OF SARA DOE

I, Sara Doe, upon my personal knowledge, hereby declare as follows:

1. I was born in Aleppo, Syria. I am a national of Syria.

2. I currently live in New York state, where I recently moved for a new job.

3. I have lived in the United States since 2014, and I have moved all over the United States because of my work. I work as a specialized pediatric doctor.

4. I arrived in Ohio. Later, I lived in Florida and California, where I completed specialized medical fellowships.

5. I completed medical school in Syria, but after the war started, I was not safe there. I lost close family during the war. Two of my brothers were arrested, tortured, and killed in 2013 by the Syrian regime. This made me realize I was not safe in Syria and had to leave. The city I am from, Aleppo, was a site of constant violence and the city has been destroyed, including my family's home, which was hit by a rocket a few months after I left Syria.

6. In Syria, people working in medical fields were targeted for violence because the regime knew that it is our duty to help people and treat them, regardless of patients' political affiliation. I had friends from medical school who were arrested. I was threatened while I was out doing volunteer medical work and also via messages telling me not to do medical work for anyone who wasn't part of the government.

7. I needed a safe place to live and where I could continue my professional development. In the United States, I have been able to build a specialization and do several clinical rotations as part of my medical training. This kind of highly-specialized training was not available in Syria.

8. I am very passionate about what I do. I was recently hired for my dream job as a leadership position at a hospital, where I provide advanced medical care for children all across Upstate New York. People travel from far away, sometimes up to five hours away, to get the specialized care I provide at the hospital alongside my medical team. This work means a lot to me. My specialized medical interventions give my young patients and their families hope. It is extremely rewarding to see the impact my work has on families and I want to continue to use my specialized training and skills to help the community.

9. I have no close relatives in Syria because all of them were killed or fled during the war. My parents are refugees in the United Kingdom. I have extended family in the United States, who have supported me in rebuilding my life in the United States after I left Syria. My family here are all U.S. citizens.

10. In 2015, I first registered for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) as a Syrian national. My TPS status will expire on November 21, 2025, as a result of the termination of Syria's TPS designation.

11. TPS is currently my only form of protection from deportation. It is also the only source of work authorization that I currently have. If I am not able to secure another status before November 21, 2025, I will lose my job at the hospital.

12. My employers are trying to help me apply for another type of status so that I can continue working for them and stay in the United States. However, these applications take a long time to be approved, and the government shutdown has caused additional delays.

13. I first heard the announcement about the termination of TPS for Syria on September 21st. I was working at the hospital when I first heard the news and it shocked me. It was incredibly stressful and sad that I would lose the job I just started and feel so passionate about. I kept working and doing medical procedures, but it was very challenging to stay focused knowing that I might be deported in 60 days.

14. I have been terrified about my future since learning that the government plans to imminently terminate TPS for Syria. I am having difficulty eating and sleeping. I worry because my job requires me to be focused and productive to care for my patients, and with all this stress, it is very difficult to do that. I feel incredibly stressed about making plans for the future, because I don't know if I will be able to stay here. At my job, I have paused any research projects and avoided taking on new responsibilities because of this uncertainty.

15. If TPS is terminated, I will lose my life-long dream that I have worked so hard for. I will not be able to help so many children who require the specialized medical care that only very few, like me, can provide.

16. I cannot return to Syria because I no longer have anything or anyone there. Aleppo, where I am originally from, has been absolutely destroyed by the war. If I were to return, I would not even be able to meet my most basic necessities, let alone be able to continue my specialized medical career and provide medical treatment for those who need it. If I were to return, I would be extremely worried for my safety due to the ongoing armed conflict.

17. The uncertainty of TPS termination would have a devastating effect on my life. I would lose my job and I don't know where I would go after having lost so much, including my brothers and my home in Syria.

18. I do not have enough time to prepare for the termination of TPS and make alternative plans because the government only announced the termination with two months' notice. My employer is racing to help me find an alternative path to work authorization, but we do not have enough time.

19. I am willing to serve as a class representative on behalf of those who are similarly situated to me who are Syrian TPS recipients.

20. I know that if the class is certified, I will be representing more than just myself in this case. I will be representing the interests of other Syrian TPS recipients. I understand what being a class representative means.

21. I want to help everyone in my situation because I know a lot of people who have been here for ten or fifteen years, building a life in the United States, having children, working hard, and they now stand to lose it all because of this sudden termination. I think it is a moral duty to help not just myself but others in this situation. I am willing to be actively involved in this lawsuit as a class representative and to work with my attorneys to help all of the class members.

22. I am providing this declaration anonymously because I fear for my safety.

23. I know that I may soon lose my immigration status if TPS is terminated. I am afraid that if my name is publicized as part of this lawsuit, I may be targeted and prioritized for immigration enforcement. If I am able to apply for alternative forms of status, I am worried that the government might retaliate against me by denying the applications.

24. I also have heard in the news about conservative organizations in the U.S. publishing on the internet names and personal information of people who criticize the current presidential administration. I am afraid this could happen to me and this could put my safety and life in danger–and possibly even the safety of my coworkers and patients who come to me for treatment.

25. I also fear that if my real name becomes public in this lawsuit, I would be in danger if I was forced to return to Syria. I would be targeted for harm in Syria because I am expressing that the situation in Syria is not safe and some people might not like that.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Executed in New York on October 17, 2025

/s/ Sara Doe

Sara Doe

Exhibit 41

DECLARATION OF NESMA DOE

I, Nesma Doe, upon my personal knowledge, hereby declare as follows:

1. I was born in Banias, Syria in 1948. I am a national of Syria.

2. In June 2013, I came to the United States with my sister, her husband and their daughter because of the war in Syria. It was not safe for me to remain there because of the increasing violence so I decided to come to the United States where I could reunite with my immediate family members living here, including my sister's other daughter. Many of my other family members had already fled or have since left Syria—now, I have no family left there.

3. In July 2013, I applied for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) as a Syrian national. I first received it in April 2014. My TPS status will expire on November 21, 2025, as a result of the termination of Syria's TPS designation.

4. I currently live in Tampa, Florida, where I have lived since June 2013 and consider my only home. Many of my relatives—several of whom are U.S. citizens—live in the United States. I live with my sister and her family in Florida, and my brothers have lived in the United States for over forty years. I often spend time with my U.S. citizen family members and am involved in my community, including my local mosque where I briefly taught Arabic classes to the younger generation.

5. I live with my two nieces, who have been my primary caregivers ever since I came to the U.S. I have never been married and consider my nieces as my own daughters.

6. I am nearly eighty-years old and have multiple chronic health conditions, so it is an absolute necessity that I live with and near family members who can help care for me and take me to medical appointments. I have arthritis, which has led to me needing to get a knee replacement and shoulder replacement. I will need to have another shoulder replacement surgery soon. I also have chronic lung disease and thyroid issues that require regular medical care.

7. TPS is currently my only form of protection from deportation. I am unable to work because of my age and health issues, but the work authorization document provides me with a form of identification and allows me to get Florida state identification. That identification expired on September 30, 2025, and Florida will not renew that identification because of the TPS termination.

8. I have a pending immigration application based on my relationship to my U.S. citizen sibling. If this petition is approved, I would be able to adjust my status to that of a lawful

permanent resident (LPR), but I would likely be unable to do so if TPS is terminated and I cannot maintain lawful status in the United States.

9. I first heard the announcement about the termination of TPS for Syria on September 19, 2025 from my niece. I have not received any communication from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) notifying me that TPS for Syria will be terminated in November.

10. Since learning that the government plans to imminently terminate TPS for Syria, I have been under extreme stress. I have had a lot of trouble sleeping because I am so afraid. I know that the situation remains dangerous and not stable in Syria, so I was shocked to learn that the government had decided to terminate TPS.

11. I will suffer significant hardship if TPS is terminated. I currently have no other legal status in the United States.

12. Additionally, I need extensive medical care which I have been receiving from my doctors in the United States. I receive health insurance that is paid for by one of my nieces.

13. I could not receive the medical care I need, including another shoulder replacement surgery, in Syria. I also could not receive physical therapy there that is required to manage my chronic health conditions. There is not even regular electricity in Syria now, and certainly not the type of specialized health care that I need.

14. In addition to the lack of medical care, I have no family members left in Syria who can help me on a day-to-day basis like my nieces in Florida do now. My nieces take turns driving me to medical appointments and come take care of me. There is no one who could help me in the same way in Syria. Because I have no family there, I would be all on my own and would be isolated. It would be devastating to be separated from my family members who live in the United States. Even worse, however, some of my family members who live in the United States would be left with no choice but to be uprooted from their own lives to go back to Syria with me because I am unable to travel to or live in Syria alone, where I have no one to care for me. This would put their lives at risk too.

15. I also know that Syria is not a safe place to live, and that it is particularly dangerous for elderly people. I have heard of many incidents of targeting of vulnerable elderly people in armed robberies because of the dire economic situation, so I am extremely afraid for my safety if I had to return to Syria. In March, there were massacres in my hometown. Many people walk around the streets with weapons and there are high levels of robbery and violent crime. I am afraid that I would be victimized because I am older and unable to defend myself. The thought of returning to Syria makes me extremely anxious.

16. I do not have enough time to prepare for the termination of TPS and make alternative plans because the government only announced the termination with two months' notice. I

expected that I would have more time to figure out a plan—it is impossible to plan to leave the country I have lived in for the past twelve years within two months.

17. I am willing to serve as a class representative on behalf of those who are similarly situated to me who are Syrian TPS recipients.

18. I know that if the class is certified, I will be representing more than just myself in this case. I will be representing the interests of other Syrian TPS recipients. I understand what being a class representative means.

19. I want to help everyone in my situation because I know others are also struggling with having their lives uprooted with such little notice. I am willing to be actively involved in this lawsuit as a class representative and to work with my attorneys to help all of the class members.

20. I am providing this declaration anonymously because I fear for my safety and for that of my family.

21. I know that I may soon lose my immigration status if TPS is terminated. I am afraid that if my name is publicized as part of this lawsuit, I may be targeted and prioritized for immigration enforcement. I worry that the government might retaliate against me by denying any future application for immigration relief.

22. I also understand that some people who have criticized the current presidential administration have suffered retaliation. I am afraid this could happen to me and that my family and I would be put in danger.

23. I also fear that if my real name becomes public in this lawsuit, I would be in danger if I were forced to return to Syria. Even if my name were not made public, I would be targeted for harm in Syria because I have lived in the United States for an extended period of time, so bad actors would likely seek to target me as a victim and assume that my family in the United States might have money for ransom. If my name and the details of my family connections here were publicized, I would be at greater risk of harm in Syria.

24. This declaration was read aloud to me in Arabic, a language I understand, and I have understood and verified its contents.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Executed in Tampa, Florida on October 18, 2025.

/s/ Nesma Doe
Nesma Doe

ATTESTATION AND CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION

I, Shaymaa Majeed, certify that I am fluent in both English and Arabic. On October 18, 2025, I personally spoke with the plaintiff identified in this litigation as Nesma Doe and read the foregoing declaration to her, translated into Arabic faithfully and accurately, over the telephone during a video meeting. Nesma Doe affirmed that she understood my translation and that the information in the above declaration is true and accurate.

I declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Shaymaa

Date: October 20, 2025

Shaymaa Majeed

Exhibit 42

DECLARATION OF LAILA DOE

I, Laila Doe, upon my personal knowledge, hereby declare as follows:

1. I was born in Damascus, Syria in 1976. I am a national of Syria and a Muslim woman.

2. I currently live in DuPage County in Illinois. I have been living in the U.S. since 2013.

3. I live with my 17-year-old daughter, who is also a TPS holder and a senior in high school, and my mother, who is a U.S. citizen and about 80 years old. I am my mother's primary caregiver and the only person who can take care of her.

4. I work with adults and young people with special needs, including individuals with autism and Down syndrome. I currently work in an after-school program for adults between the ages of 21 and 31. I previously worked in public schools and kindergartens. I started working with people with special needs in 2019 and have completed Registered Behavior Technician training and other courses to support my work.

5. In addition to my work, I am an active member of my community. I volunteer at my daughter's high school during parent-teacher conferences. I also volunteer at a daycare, using my training as a behavioral technician to work with children.

6. I am divorced and I am the provider and caretaker for both my daughter and my elderly U.S. citizen mother. My mother, who is about 80, has high blood pressure, high cholesterol, low blood sugar, and sometimes suffers from physical pain. She uses a cane and often forgets to take her medications. I give her showers, help her change her clothes, take her to doctors' appointments, and manage her medical care. My two sisters, who are also U.S. citizens, have families of their own and cannot take care of our mother. Without me, my mother would have no one to rely on.

7. I came to the United States in 2013 with my daughter. I obtained Temporary Protected Status (TPS) as a Syrian national in 2013. My TPS status will expire on November 21, 2025, as a result of the termination of Syria's TPS designation.

8. In 2013, Syria was in the middle of war. My daughter and I we were living in Damascus where bombings were constant. My daughter was three years old, and her daycare was across from a government building. One day, the daycare was bombed, and I rushed to get her. Every day, a different area in Damascus was being bombed. There was once a bombing that happened in the

area where I worked and the next two buildings were impacted. I have been waiting for more than a decade for Syria to become safe, but it never has and still is not safe. I am grateful to have been able to find safety in the United States.

9. TPS is currently my only form of protection from deportation. It is also the only form of work authorization that I have. I have a pending family-based immigration application and I do not know when it will be approved.

10. I first learned about the termination of TPS for Syria through social media. At first, I thought it was fake news, but when I checked the USCIS website, I saw the announcement and immediately printed it. I have not received any notice from USCIS about the termination.

11. Since learning about the government's plan to end TPS, I have been terrified for my future and that of my family. I can barely sleep, and I often cry and pray for the situation to change. Everything in Syria is destroyed, and I have no home there. The stress has affected my health. I've recently been experiencing issues with my eye vision and it started shortly after hearing the news of the termination of TPS.

12. My daughter and I will suffer severe hardship if TPS is terminated. My daughter is a senior in high school and will graduate in May 2026. She has lived in the United States since she was three years old and does not speak or understand Arabic. All her education, friends, and future are here. She wants to go to college and study nursing or another medical field. If we are forced to leave, her education and dreams of becoming a nurse will be destroyed. I'm unable to afford private school for my daughter in Syria in which classes are taught in English. As a result, my daughter would be forced to complete her studies in Arabic and be left behind when she is so close to finishing high school and starting college.

13. I am the only person who works in our household. If I lose my work authorization, I will not be able to pay our rent, electricity bills, gas, and buy groceries for me, my daughter, or my mother. I will not be able to pay for my mother's medication or support any expenses related to my daughter's education.

14. I cannot return to Syria because it is still unsafe and unstable. My sister still lives in Damascus. Two months ago, her neighborhood was hit by airstrikes. The explosion broke their windows and cracked their doors. They had to hide in the basement with blankets and were terrified. Several people in their neighborhood were killed, and cars were destroyed because of the airstrikes.

15. As a divorced woman living alone, I would face serious risks if I returned to Syria. In my former neighborhood in Damascus, I heard of two single women who lived alone and were recently murdered and robbed in their homes. One of them lived in a building only five minutes from my family's home. Both women were in their forties, around my age. Even though their buildings had security cameras, the attackers still entered and killed them.

16. Women in Syria face constant harassment and fear for their safety. Taxi and rideshare drivers often follow women home and harass them, especially if they think they live in wealthier areas. This happened before I left Syria, and my sister and friends there tell me it has only gotten worse since the regime fell.

17. For the past three years, I have been working towards enrolling in a nursing program so that I can have a more stable career. To be able to apply to nursing school, I have been taking English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. I am just two courses away from qualifying to apply for a nursing program. If I lose TPS, I will lose my chance to finish my education and pursue a career as a nurse.

18. The government announced the termination of TPS with only two months' notice. That is not enough time to make any alternative plans, especially because I am caring for my elderly mother and my daughter, who is still in high school and in the middle of the school year.

19. I am willing to serve as a class representative on behalf of those who are similarly situated to me who are Syrian TPS recipients.

20. I know that if the class is certified, I will be representing more than just myself. I will be representing the interests of other Syrian TPS recipients. I understand what being a class representative means.

21. I want to help others in my situation because I know how painful and frightening it is to face the loss of safety and stability. I want to help protect families like mine from being separated or sent back to danger.

22. I am providing this declaration anonymously because I fear for my safety and for that of my family.

23. I know that I may soon lose my immigration status if TPS is terminated. I am afraid that if my name is publicized as part of this lawsuit, I may be targeted and prioritized for immigration

enforcement. I have heard of ICE raids and increased immigration enforcement happening in Chicago area and am worried I too will be at risk if I lose TPS. For example, I've heard of Syrian green-card holders with no criminal history in the Chicago area who have been targeted by immigration officials.

24. I also fear that if my real name becomes public in this lawsuit, I would be in danger if I were forced to return to Syria. Speaking publicly about the dangers in Syria could be seen as criticism of the authorities or armed groups, and I could face retaliation.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Executed in DuPage County, Illinois on October 19, 2025.

/s/ Laila Doe

Laila Doe

Exhibit 43

DECLARATION OF WALEED DOE

I, Waleed Doe, upon my personal knowledge, hereby declare as follows:

1. I was born in Damascus, Syria in 1983. I am a national of Syria.

2. In July 2011, I came to the United States on a student visa to obtain my MBA. At the same time, the civil war was breaking out in Syria and the country was becoming increasingly violent. Although I was born in Syria, I have never lived in the country for more than a couple months and lived my entire life in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). I do not have residency status in the UAE, however. I have no way to obtain either permanent residency or citizenship in the UAE.

3. In 2012, I obtained Temporary Protected Status (TPS) as a Syrian national soon after the program opened. My TPS status will expire on November 21, 2025, as a result of the termination of Syria's TPS designation.

4. I currently live in Clifton, New Jersey, where I have lived since 2021. I live with my wife and our three U.S. citizen children, who are seven years old, four years old, and nine months old. Our older daughter recently has undergone evaluation for Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

5. My wife, who is also Syrian, also has TPS and does not have any other immigration status. My family and children are the most important things in the world to me. I am terrified of what will happen to my children if my wife and I have to leave the United States.

6. My wife and I are very involved in volunteer work in my community in New Jersey. We both volunteer at local mosques, and my wife teaches Qur'anic studies and Arabic at the Masjid.

7. I am the primary breadwinner for our family. I am a senior manager at a private company in New Jersey, managing contacts between the business departments and the data science and engineering departments. I have also recently begun doing contract work in the information technology (IT) sector. My wife works part-time as a teacher, but I cover most of the cost of rent, education for our children, and other necessary costs for our family.

8. TPS is currently my only form of protection from deportation. It is also my only form of work authorization. Without TPS, I will not be able to pay our rent, buy groceries, or pay for my U.S. citizen children's education.

9. If we lose TPS, it would be particularly devastating for our family because my wife also has work authorization only through TPS, so she will also be unable to work when TPS is terminated. This means our family would be left with no income at all.

10. I first heard the announcement about the termination of TPS for Syria on the day it was announced through social media. I have not received any communication from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) notifying me that TPS for Syria will be terminated in November.

11. I have been terrified about my future and that of my family since learning that the government plans to imminently terminate TPS for Syria. We have started to think about finding a therapist for my wife because of the stress this has caused, which is something we had never previously considered.

12. Nearly all of my wife's immediate family is in the United States, and her parents and two siblings are U.S. citizens. My wife is very concerned about being separated from her family, and we fear that our children will either be separated from us or separated from their grandparents and other U.S. citizen family members if we all had to leave the United States.

13. I will suffer significant hardship if TPS is terminated. I currently have no other legal status in the United States, nor does my wife.

14. I have never lived in Syria and my children have spent their entire lives in the United States. I do not have close family in Syria and I cannot imagine building a life for us there.

15. I also know that Syria is not a safe place to live, and I would be afraid for my wife and children, as well as for my own safety if we lived there. There is still widespread violence and I fear my family could be harmed or even killed in Syria.

16. I am also afraid that my family would have trouble accessing basic resources in Syria, including education for my children. My children have done their entire education in the United States and all of their main curriculum classes are in English, and they would not be easily able to adapt to the school system in Syria. Additionally, my children would not receive the medical care they need in Syria. Even before the civil war in Syria, the medical system was not advanced. I fear that my U.S. citizen daughter would not be able to find treatment for her learning disability there. There are no experts who specialize in ADHD. There is also a cultural taboo towards the condition, which would negatively impact my daughter.

17. If TPS is terminated, my whole family will lose our health insurance because we receive insurance through my employer. If I lose work authorization, we will lose not only our income but our healthcare too, just as my daughter is being evaluated for a potential learning disability.

18. I am currently in the process of starting my business to do contract work with IT/consulting for small businesses. All of that will be thrown away if I lose my ability to work. If I had to leave the United States, I do not know how I could rebuild my business abroad, or what sort of job I would be able to do to provide for my family.

19. I do not have enough time to prepare for the termination of TPS and make alternative plans because the government only announced the termination with two months' notice. This has thrown my family's life into chaos. We have lived in our current home in New Jersey for nearly five years. Our three children are in the middle of the school year here. Our whole life is in New Jersey and we have nowhere else we could go. It is impossible to think about uprooting my family and my children on such short notice. My wife and I are having to contemplate the devastating choice of leaving the United States and being separated from our U.S. citizen children.

20. I am willing to serve as a class representative on behalf of those who are similarly situated to me who are Syrian TPS recipients.

21. I know that if the class is certified, I will be representing more than just myself in this case. I will be representing the interests of other Syrian TPS recipients. I understand what being a class representative means.

22. I want to help everyone in my situation because I understand how difficult it is to face the uncertainty that comes with suddenly losing status. I cannot imagine how difficult it will be for people, especially families with children, to leave the country. I am willing to be actively involved in this lawsuit as a class representative and to work with my attorneys to help all of the class members.

23. I am providing this declaration anonymously because I fear for my safety and for that of my family.

24. I know that I may soon lose my immigration status if TPS is terminated. I am afraid that if my name is publicized as part of this lawsuit, I may be targeted and prioritized for immigration enforcement as I have seen happen to so many others on the news. This is the biggest concern for me and my family because my eldest child is only seven years old. If something were to happen to me and my wife, I do not know what would happen to our children. It would impact their lives and be traumatic for them.

25. I am worried that participating in this lawsuit could bring me to the attention of local law enforcement. There has been significant ICE enforcement activity in New Jersey and I am afraid that, if my name is public as part of this lawsuit, I will be targeted by local law enforcement and turned over to immigration officials.

26. I also have heard in the news about conservative organizations in the U.S. publishing on the internet names and personal information of people who criticize the current presidential administration. I am afraid this could happen to me and this could put me and my family in danger.

27. I also fear that if my real name becomes public in this lawsuit, I would be in danger if I were forced to return to Syria. I fear that if my name is attached to a lawsuit discussing the country condition in Syria, this could be perceived as a criticism of the current government or of the groups that control different regions of Syria, and I may face retaliation if forced to return to Syria.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Executed in Clifton, New Jersey on October 19, 2025.

/s/ Waleed Doe
Waleed Doe

Exhibit 44

DECLARATION OF MUSTAFA DOE

I, Mustafa Doe, upon my personal knowledge, hereby declare as follows:

1. I was born in Damascus, Syria in 2003. I am a national of Syria.

2. I currently live in Manhattan, NY.

3. In 2021, I moved to the United States on a student visa to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Global Studies with a minor in Political Science and Entrepreneurship, after obtaining a full-tuition scholarship.

4. The ability to study in the United States gave me something I never had before—academic freedom and the safety to speak and think openly. While I was in Syria, I was involved in advocacy for gender equality and environmental justice but had to do this work very carefully. I had friends in Syria who disappeared due to their activism which was one of the driving forces for me to leave Syria.

5. While in the United States, my studies focused on politics and the Middle East, and I was excited I was able to participate and organize activities on-campus without the threat of government retaliation. As a survivor of sexual assault myself, I also became a resident advisor on campus and helped advocate for Title IX reform to support my fellow peers.

6. All of this would have been impossible in Syria during this time where any form of advocacy and discussion of social justice would result in arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, and even death.

7. I've been privileged to be able to live in safety in the United States since 2021. My parents also live here now and are both green card holders. Most of my extended family on my father's side lives in the United States, and have been living here since the 1960s. They are naturalized citizens or were born in the United States.

8. After I graduated in May 2025, I began working for a global corporation where I manage their social impact, sustainability, and philanthropic initiatives. I'm passionate about environmental justice and want to continue building my career in this field.

9. I also lead our social ambassadors' network at the company and have helped grow our staff's capacity to provide critical volunteer services. This work is extremely meaningful to me. It represents everything I could not do in Syria and would not be able to do if I were forced to return.

10. In 2023, I obtained Temporary Protected Status (TPS) as a Syrian national. My TPS status will expire on November 21, 2025, as a result of the termination of Syria's TPS designation.

11. I currently have Optional Practical Training (OPT) status and work authorization until next summer, when my OPT expires. I will then be left without protection from immigration confinement and deportation as I await adjudication of my pending asylum application and explore alternative permanent pathways through a family-based immigration petition.

12. I was immensely grateful for the opportunity to study, live, and find safety in the United States because of the past harms and trauma I experienced in Syria that I continue to struggle and cope with to this day. While I was a minor, I was sexually trafficked, blackmailed, and subjected to severe abuse. There was a man who targeted minors in my community who coerced us into sexual activities with him and other people all under the government's watch. I was not protected by local authorities under the Assad regime. Rather than providing protection, the government punished survivors of sexual trafficking

13. The psychological trauma from these experiences has left lasting scars. After I came to the United States, a therapist at my university explained that the issues I experienced in Syria were not normal and that I should seek professional help. After seeking professional support, I have been diagnosed with severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. I have been in therapy and on medication for years. I have invested time and energy into getting better and had finally starting to feel a sense of safety and stability in my life.

14. When I first heard the announcement about the termination of TPS for Syria on a Whatsapp group, I thought it was a joke. The situation in Syria remains extremely unstable, with the U.S. government itself maintaining a "Do Not Travel" advisory.

15. I have not received any communication from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) notifying me that TPS for Syria will be terminated in November.

16. The news immediately made me anxious because TPS has served as a safety net from being forcibly deported to the very country and people I fled for my safety. It has allowed me to remain reunited with my parents in the United States. My employer's global operations have banned sending personnel or equipment to Syria because of the instability, high security risks, and embargo. I could not continue my work from there even if I were to keep my job.

17. I have been terrified about my future since learning that the government plans to imminently terminate TPS for Syria. I strongly believe if I were to return to Syria, I would be in grave danger.

18. The same individuals that targeted me in Syria still send me violent messages, including death threats, until this day. I've even reached out to local authorities here in the United States out of desperation, but they've told me they cannot do anything beyond ensuring my safety domestically. The fear of having to encounter my abusers has already started to trigger mental health issues that I've been actively working to overcome since I've moved to the United States.

19. If I were returned to Syria, I also worry about suffering from severe psychological harm that may even lead to suicidal ideation and possibly death, as I won't be able to access the medications I need and have been taking for years to manage my mental health. I also worry I won't be able to access critical preventative sexual healthcare I currently take, and this would put my health at severe risk. My life depends on these medications.

20. I am also concerned about my safety based on belonging to the LGBTQI community and the persecution I would face based on this identity alone. Given the ongoing hostility in Syria towards LGBTQI individuals, coupled with the fact that I'm not a practicing Muslim, I fear deeply for my life and the freedom to authentically live my life the way I have been able to in the United States.

21. In addition, I worry that I would be at risk of harm in Syria because I have strong ties in the United States, and in particular, I have had internships with the U.S. government entities. In Syria, any affiliations with the United States exposes one to harm by radical actors, and I would not be able to seek protection from the Syrian government.

22. If I were forced to return to Syria, I would be alone and vulnerable without a support system. I would be extremely devasted to be forcibly separated from my parents in the United States. I support my parents financially and emotionally, and if I had to leave, my parents would lose their caregiver and would be alone in the United States without any of their children to look after them. I help manage all of my parents' affairs, from doing their taxes and navigating their healthcare – especially recently since my mother had surgery. They wouldn't know what to do without me.

23. Many of my family members left Syria because they faced threats and were tortured by the Syrian government during the Assad regime. I also have several family members that were forcibly disappeared and killed by the regime. I have no one left in Syria and have no safe place to return to.

24. I have a vibrant and rich community here in the United States, including a significant other that I would be forcibly separated from. My partner is Jewish and he would not be able to live with me in Syria as his life would be at risk based on his Jewish religious identity.

25. If TPS is terminated, I would be in limbo status now and be without any status or protection from deportation once my OPT expires. This has led to extreme stress and anxiety. I've tried to limit my news intake as much as possible as recommended by my psychiatrist given that I've already started to experience insomnia. As a result, my psychiatrist has increased the dosage of my medical treatment given my escalating levels of anxiety and triggers of my PTSD based on the fear of returning to persecution I fled in Syria.

26. I am willing to serve as a class representative on behalf of those who are similarly situated to me who are Syrian TPS recipients.

27. I know that if the class is certified, I will be representing more than just myself in this case. I will be representing the interests of other Syrian TPS recipients. I understand what being a class representative means.

28. I want to help everyone in my situation because many people are afraid of facing the legal system right now and it is likely that there are countless Syrian TPS holders who are not aware their legal status will terminate next month. I would like to use my privilege and knowledge of the legal system to represent my community. I am willing to be actively involved in this lawsuit as a class representative and to work with my attorneys to help all of the class members.

29. I am providing this declaration anonymously because I fear for my safety and for that of my family.

30. I know that I may lose my immigration status in the future if TPS is terminated. I am afraid that if my name is publicized as part of this lawsuit, I may be targeted and prioritized for immigration enforcement.

31. Given the increased immigration enforcement actions and raids in New York City, I am worried that participating in this lawsuit could bring me to the attention of ICE. I am afraid that, if my name is public as part of this lawsuit, I may be targeted by immigration officials. When I was at my university, I was immensely stressed out when I saw international students having their visas revoked and subject to immigration confinement. I feared going to campus and would stay at home out of fear. I cannot live in this fear again especially with the mental health issues I am already battling.

32. I also have heard in the news that people who criticize the current presidential administration have been targeted. I am afraid this could happen to me and this could put my family's lives in danger.

33. I also fear that if my real name becomes public in this lawsuit, I will be in danger if I am forced to return to Syria. If my name and the sensitive personal information included in this declaration is made public, it will expose me to prosecution by government authorities in Syria for being part of the LGBTQI community. It will also increase my vulnerability to the very same private actors who trafficked and blackmailed me as a minor and were already able to find my name and contact information while I sought safety in the United States.

34. I have finally found refuge, family, community, and purpose in the United States. My goal is to become an attorney specializing in international and civil law, and to work on prosecuting the same exact human rights violations I have been subjected to in my life. I

would be devastated if I was forced to go back to a country where I fled my persecutors and return to the danger I fought so hard to protect myself against.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Executed in New York, New York on October 19, 2025

/s/ Mustafa Doe
Mustafa Doe

Exhibit 45

DECLARATION OF AHMAD DOE

I, Ahmad Doe, upon my personal knowledge, hereby declare as follows:

1. I was born in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 1980. I am a citizen of Syria. I do not have the right to reside in the UAE permanently.

2. In 2022, I came to the United States on a J-1 visa to work as a journalist at a federally-funded U.S. media agency. I have worked as a journalist and in media for over a decade, including at news agencies.

3. Since moving to the United States, I have lived in Arlington, Virginia, where I currently reside with my wife. My wife and I have built a community and life in the United States and our entire lives are here.

4. In April 2025, due to federal funding cuts, I was laid off from my job and lost my J-1 visa.

5. In May 2025, I applied for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) as a Syrian citizen. I have never been arrested nor have any criminal convictions, and I meet all the other eligibility requirements for TPS. I anticipated that my application would be approved.

6. My application is still pending, and now it will not be approved as a result of the termination of Syria's TPS designation. As a result, I will not be able to maintain lawful status and protection from deportation, nor obtain work authorization through TPS.

7. My wife, who is not a Syrian national, only had work authorization through my J-1 visa. When I lost my visa, she lost her ability to work, and so she also lost her job in April. We now have no income and are living off of our meager savings.

8. I have multiple job offers from media companies that want me to work for them in the United States, including my prior company who wants me to resume but needs me to have my own work authorization, but I cannot resume working without authorization. If I were able to obtain TPS, it would allow me to work and maintain status so that I can pursue permanent residency through an employer in the United States. Without TPS, however, I will not have that option and may have to imminently leave the United States, even though I have job offers here.

9. I had begun the process to seek permanent residency in the United States through a limited pathway available to journalists. I have an initial petition approved, but I cannot apply for permanent residency until a visa number becomes available. I understand I could be waiting for a long time, as only 100 of these visas are made available each year.

10. I cannot return to Syria and fear I would be killed in Syria because I have criticized the current and prior regimes as a journalist.

11. I first heard the announcement about the termination of TPS for Syria on September 19 from a former colleague who also has a pending TPS application. I have not received any communication from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) notifying me that TPS for Syria will be terminated in November. I was extremely disappointed and devasted at the thought of being deported to Syria.

12. Because I cannot obtain employment authorization through TPS, I have been unable to renew my driver's license, which has made it impossible for me to live my daily life.

13. After months of waiting and following every procedure in good faith, I was devastated to learn that my expedite request had been denied on the grounds that I supposedly had not submitted supporting documents—even though I had, and even though USCIS had already acknowledged that my case met the minimum criteria for an expedite request. It felt deeply unfair and disheartening to be treated this way after providing clear evidence of my job loss, financial hardship, and complete lack of income. I had trusted the system and done everything correctly, yet the decision showed no consideration for the reality of my situation.

14. This experience has left me feeling frustrated and hopeless. I came to the United States with a strong sense of purpose and contribution—I built a respected career in journalism, reporting on issues vital to U.S. public diplomacy, and I've always believed in the American values of fairness and opportunity. Now I find myself struggling just to maintain the basics of life—work authorization, the ability to drive, and the right to stay in the country I have served and called home.

15. It feels as if all the passion and motivation that once drove me have been crushed by circumstances beyond my control. I used to dream of pursuing a PhD in International relations/public diplomacy and launching a media platform to connect U.S. diplomatic voices with audiences in the Middle East. Today, instead of building toward those goals, I am fighting simply to survive—to live legally, to work, and to preserve my dignity.

16. I have built a life and community in Virginia. I speak four languages, have a master's degree, and have a distinguished career in journalism. As a result, I have been highly sought after by multiple employers in the United States, but now I have gone from being someone considered extraordinary to the country to someone at risk of being deported.

17. The uncertainty of my legal status with the upcoming termination of TPS has caused me severe stress and depression.

18. I will suffer significant hardship if TPS is terminated and my application is never approved because of the termination. I currently have no other legal status in the United States.

19. I am willing to serve as a class representative on behalf of those who are similarly situated to me who are Syrian TPS applicants with pending applications.

20. I know that if the class is certified, I will be representing more than just myself in this case. I will be representing the interests of other Syrian TPS applicants. I understand what being a class representative means.

21. I want to help everyone in my situation because I know others are suffering the same uncertainty of losing their job or having to uproot their lives and families. I am willing to be actively involved in this lawsuit as a class representative and to work with my attorneys to help all of the class members.

22. I am providing this declaration anonymously because I fear for my safety and for that of my family.

23. I know that I will not be able to maintain immigration status in the United States if TPS is terminated. I am afraid that if my name is publicized as part of this lawsuit, I may be targeted and prioritized for immigration enforcement as I have seen happen to so many others on the news.

24. I am worried that participating in this lawsuit could bring me to the attention of local law enforcement. I am afraid that, if my name is public as part of this lawsuit, I will be targeted by local law enforcement and turned over to immigration officials.

25. I also have heard in the news about conservative organizations in the U.S. publishing on the internet names and personal information of people who criticize the current presidential administration I am afraid this could happen to me and this could put me and my family in danger.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Executed in Arlington, Virginia on October 19, 2025.

/s/ Ahmad Doe

Ahmad Doe

Exhibit 46

EXPERT DECLARATION OF STACY TOLCHIN

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I, Stacy Tolchin, declare under penalty of perjury as follows:

1. I am an attorney licensed to practice by the State of California. If called to testify, I could and would do so as follows:
2. I have been asked to provide an expert opinion to explain some of the law governing what protections Temporary Protected Status (TPS) has afforded to the Syrian immigrant communities at issue in this case, and how those protections do and do not overlap with the rights Syrian TPS holders may have under other immigration laws. I make this declaration based on my personal and professional knowledge, my skill, experience, training, and education, and facts and data regularly relied upon in my field that are currently available to me. If additional information becomes available, or if I believe it would be appropriate to respond to any critique or contrary theories, I will advise Plaintiffs' counsel that I intend to do so and will seek their help in following the appropriate judicial procedures. The opinions in this declaration are my own.

Qualifications

3. I received my Juris Doctorate from the University of California at Los Angeles in 2001 and have been practicing law for over 23 years.
4. I am admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court; the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth, Tenth, Fifth, and Second Circuits; and the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, Eastern District of California, Central District of California, Southern District of California, Court of Federal Claims, and District of New Mexico.
5. My business address is Law Offices of Stacy Tolchin, 776 E. Green St. Suite 210, Pasadena, CA 91101. I practice throughout the state of California.
6. I am a recipient of the American Immigration Lawyers' Association Southern California Chapter 2019 Annual Pro Bono Award, the University of California at Los Angeles Law School's 2018 Alumni Public Service Award, the National Lawyers Guild of Southern California 2017 annual award, the American Immigration Lawyers Association's 2009 Jack Wasserman Award for Excellence in Immigration Litigation, the 2009 American Civil

Liberties Unio of Southern California Equal Justice Advocacy Award, the 2008 National Immigration Law Center Annual Award, the 2007 "Unsung Hero" Award for the National Lawyers Guild of the Bay Area, and was recognized in 2003by the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee of San Francisco. I was also named to "Super Lawyers" from 2012-2025.

7. I am a former member of the Board of Directors of the National Immigration Project for the National Lawyers Guild, a member of the National Lawyers Guild, the Los Angeles County Bar Association immigration section, and the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

8. I specialize in immigration-related litigation before the federal courts. Cases I have litigated include: *Alvarado-Herrera v. Garland*, 993 F.3d 1187 (9th Cir. 2021) (establishing the legal standard for the "reasonable fear" screening test before an immigration judge); *Arce v. United States*, 899 F.3d. 796 (9th Cir. 2018) (establishing that the federal courts have authority to consider damages actions under the Federal Tort Claims Act in cases involving unlawful deportations); *Bonilla v. Lynch*, 840 F.3d 575 (9th Cir. 2016) (establishing federal court jurisdiction to review motions to sua sponte reopen based on changes in law); *Mendiola v. Holder*, 576 F. App'x 828 (10th Cir. 2014) (petition for review in Tenth Circuit challenging removal of a lawful permanent resident based on change in law); *Bains v. Holder*, 584 F. App'x 574 (9th Cir. 2014) (petition for review challenging removal order based on changed circumstances arising in India); *Duran Gonzales v. U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, 712 F.3d 1271 (9th Cir. 2013) (class action litigation involving applications for lawful permanent residency where the applicants had been previously deported); *Huerta v. Holder*, 484 F. App'x 172 (9th Cir. 2012) (petition for review based on ineffective assistance of counsel); *Padilla-Padilla v. Gonzales*, 463 F.3d 972 (9th Cir. 2006) (challenge to Board of Immigration Appeals' failure to follow its internal regulations); *Silaya v. Mukasey*, 524 F.3d 1066 (9th Cir. 2008) (finding that victim of gang-rape in the Philippines had suffered past persecution based on her father's political opinion); *Husyev v. Mukasey*, 528 F.3d 1172 (9th Cir. 2008) (finding that courts have jurisdiction to review agency's failure to follow asylum regulations); *Hassine v. Johnson*, 2014 WL 5035173 (E.D. Cal. 2014) (petition for de novo naturalization case and award of attorneys' fees); *Zavala v. Ridge*, 310 F. Supp. 2d 1071 (N.D. Cal. 2004) (Department of

Homeland Security's "automatic stay" regulation that keeps non-citizens in custody while their immigration cases are pending, even after an immigration judge has ordered their release, is facially unconstitutional); *Singh v. Still*, 470 F. Supp. 2d 1064 (N.D. Cal. 2007) (successful petition for writ of mandamus challenging Department of Homeland Security's unreasonable delay in the adjudication of applications for permanent residency); *Shahwan v. Chertoff*, C 05 4218 MMC (N.D. Cal. 2005) (granting petition for writ of habeas corpus where petitioner was not informed when he traveled on "advance parole" that he would be ineligible for a bond hearing before an immigration judge); and *Araujo v. INS*, 301 F. Supp. 2d 1095 (N.D. Cal. 2004) (Federal Tort Claims Act action finding that the United States government was liable for damages to a non-citizen for unlawful deportation).

9. I have deep expertise and extensive practice experience in immigration law, including in the law governing the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) statute, 8 U.S.C. § 1254a, and its interaction with various other provisions of the immigration law, including the law governing asylum, detention, and other related areas of immigration law. I have represented many individuals who had (or had previously held) TPS in removal proceedings. I also successfully represented a class of TPS holders who challenged policies related to their eligibility to adjust status after having traveled on authorized TPS travel in *Gomez v. Jaddou*, Case 1:21-cv-09203-ALC (S.D.N.Y), which resulted in a change in USCIS policy that recognized TPS recipients who returned to the United States with authorized travel were "admitted."

Overview

10. Until the decisions challenged in this case, Temporary Protected Status was available, broadly speaking, to Syrian nationals who had resided here continuously since on or before January 25, 2024, unless they had a felony or two or more misdemeanor convictions. I understand that the decision to terminate TPS for Syria is the subject of this lawsuit.

11. As I explain herein, although many Syrian TPS holders may also be eligible for protection from removal and work authorization through other avenues, only a small minority will actually receive relief, and it is very likely that many Syrian TPS holders would *not* be protected to the same degree by any other statute. In fact, many of them would not be protected at all from loss of employment and removal were they to lose TPS.

Protections Under the TPS Statute

12. The TPS statute provides a very clear form of immigration status, and robust protection to live and work in the United States, to people who hold TPS. Congress has explicitly forbidden the removal of anyone who has TPS. Subsection (a)(1)(A) of the statute provides that the federal immigration enforcement authorities "shall not remove the alien from the United States during the period in which such status is in effect."

13. Congress has also mandated that TPS holders receive employment authorization. Subsection (a)(1)(B) of the statute provides that federal immigration authorities "shall authorize the alien to engage in employment in the United States and provide the alien with . . . [a] work permit."

14. Furthermore, although in general the federal government has broad powers to detain (that is, to jail) non-citizens charged with being deportable under the immigration laws, Congress has expressly forbidden the detention of people who have TPS. Subsection (d)(4) of the TPS statute provides "An alien provided temporary protected status under this section shall not be detained by the Attorney General on the basis of the alien's immigration status in the United States."

15. The TPS statute makes these protections broadly available to people who meet the primary eligibility criteria—which are that one has to be a Syrian national who has continuously resided in the United States since on or before January 25, 2024. For someone who meets those criteria, the statute provides the robust protection from detention and deportation and access to work authorization described above, so long as the individual does not have a felony or two or more misdemeanor convictions, and has not engaged in certain other highly unusual conduct (concerning the persecution of others and other rare circumstances).

Asylum and Other Forms of Protection

16. Some Syrians who currently have TPS could be eligible for asylum and related protections under 8 U.S.C. § 1158, but that is not true for all of them, and the asylum statute's protections are weaker than those under TPS for several reasons. Further, only a minority of Syrian asylum applications are approved. Applicants whose asylum applications are not approved are automatically placed in removal proceedings.

17. To establish eligibility for asylum, an applicant must show a "well-founded fear" of

"persecution" "on account of" one of five distinct grounds: "race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." Each of these is a term of art with technical legal meaning that restricts the availability of asylum in different ways. For example, a Syrian who fled because of generalized violence in their hometown, or because of lack of access to food, medical care, and other basic resources likely cannot establish persecution on account of a protected ground.

18. In addition, because asylum is so legally complex, many applicants hesitate to apply without legal assistance, but legal representation is often expensive. If applicants fail to apply within one year of their arrival, or generally six months after falling out of any non-immigrant status, they are presumptively ineligible for asylum. 8 U.S.C. § 1158(a)(2)(B).
19. Even if someone has affirmatively applied for asylum, that alone does not guarantee protection from removal or even work authorization. The government takes the position that it can detain and begin removal proceedings against someone with a pending application, so long as the application has not been granted and they have no other valid legal status. Work permits are available no earlier than six months after someone files for asylum, and the agency is not legally required to provide them. 8 U.S.C. § 1158(d)(2).
20. The government also now takes the view that it may remove people to third countries "without adequate notice and a 'meaningful opportunity' to present a claim under the Convention," even if they have a fear of return to their home country and may be subject to a fear-based form of relief. *Dep't of Homeland Sec. v. D.V.D.*, 145 S. Ct. 2153, 2155 (2025) (Sotomayor, J., dissenting). The government has sought to remove to South Sudan and Libya individuals who are not citizens of those countries and have no ties to them. While this issue is being litigated, the Supreme Court has allowed such third-country removals to move forward. *Id.* (staying a preliminary injunction which had prohibited the defendants from removing the plaintiffs and putative class members to a third country without "written notice of the third country" and "a meaningful opportunity ... to submit an application" for relief under the Convention Against Torture).
21. It is of course possible that any given Syrian TPS holder may have some other pathway to lawful status, such as through family members who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents, sponsorship by their employer, or other avenues. For example, some Syrian TPS holders may be eligible to change status to other non-immigrant statuses, such as H-1B, a

non-immigrant status for foreign professionals, provided they meet the eligibility requirements for the other non-immigrant statuses. But these pathways to lawful status are rare for individuals who arrived in the last several years. Further, if a TPS holder falls out of lawful status because of the termination of TPS, then they will not be eligible to change status to a different non-immigrant status.

22. Some Syrian TPS holders may also be eligible to pursue family- and employment-based pathways to permanent residency. But these pathways involve multi-step, complicated processes that often takes years to complete. And if TPS holders fall out of lawful status while waiting for one of these pathways to become available, they can, in some cases, lose their eligibility to pursue adjustment of status to permanent residency from within the United States.

23. To summarize, notwithstanding the availability of asylum and other forms of relief under the immigration laws, many thousands of Syrian TPS holders— likely the vast majority— will lose their lawful immigration status and work authorization if the TPS vacatur and termination at issue in this case go into effect. That legal change will immediately render them potentially subject to arrest and detention under the immigration laws. Those who can present a claim for relief will remain detained until presented to an Immigration Judge, before whom they would have to attempt to establish eligibility for asylum or another fear-based form of relief under the narrow criteria described above. Even if they are able to establish a fear of return to their home country, they face the risk of a third-country removal. Individuals who are eligible for another form of relief may become ineligible, even if consideration of that form of relief is already in process, in light of eligibility requirements for certain statuses that individuals maintain a legal immigration status during the course of their application.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Executed this 16th day of October, 2025, in Pasadena, California.

_____

Stacy Tolchin

Exhibit 47

Appeal

Syrian crisis

After 14 years of conflict and crisis, children continue to pay the heaviest price.

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English العربية

Millions of Syria's children have grown up knowing nothing but conflict. Even before the escalation of fighting in late 2024, a protracted war, economic decay, disease outbreaks, mass displa and shattered infrastructure had left millions of children in need of humanitarian assistance. As

insecurity and uncertainty continue, UNICEF remains on the ground delivering lifesaving assistance and supporting Syrian families.

What's happening? | **Crisis snapshot** | **News and features** | **Latest appeal**

Impact on children | **How we're responding** | **Results for children** | **Situation updates**

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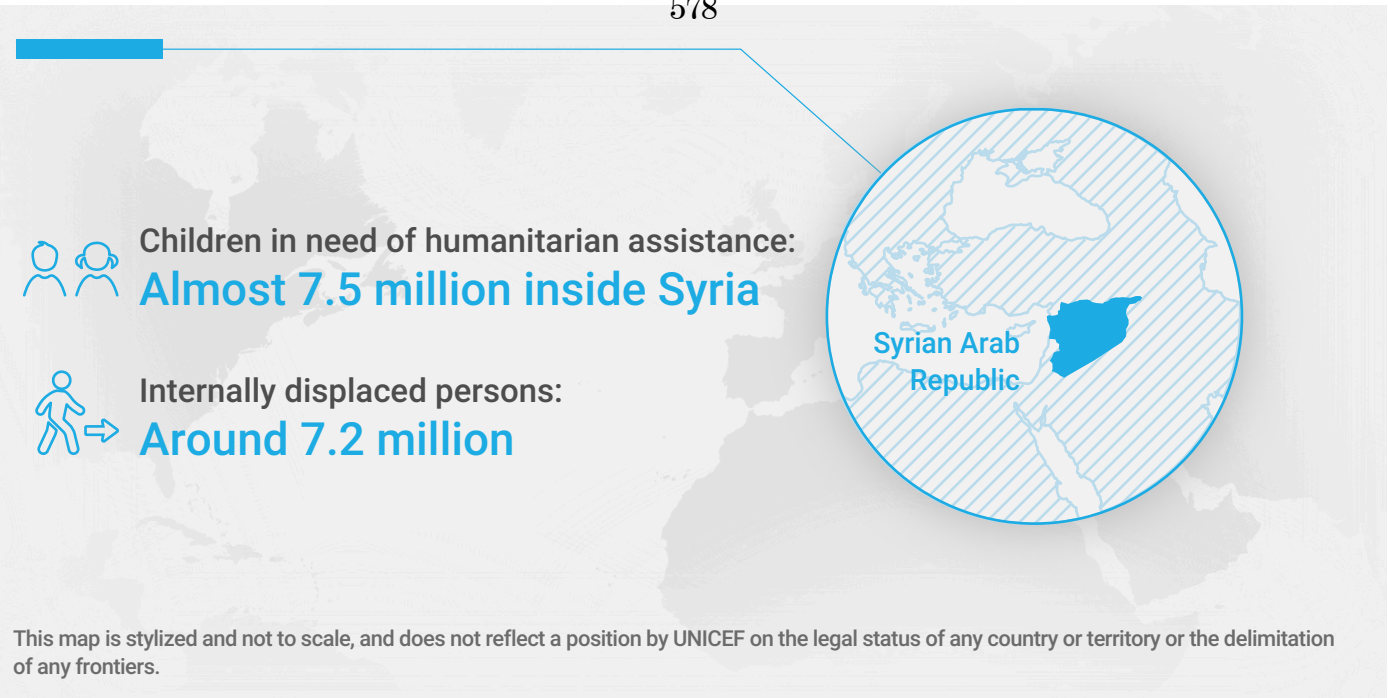
What's happening in Syria?

Children in Syria are facing one of the most complex emergencies in the world. More than 7 million children in Syria require humanitarian assistance, while more than 6 million children are in urgent need of protection services as insecurity and economic hardship deepen child rights violations, fear and distress.

Healthcare remains fragile, with almost 40 per cent of hospitals and health facilities partly or completely non-functional. Destruction or damage to thousands of schools and massive displacement of families has left many children out of school, putting them at greater risk of child labour, child marriage, trafficking, and recruitment and use by parties to conflict. Over a decade of devastating conflict has also left communities across Syria littered with deadly remnants of war, including hundreds of thousands of pieces of unexploded ordnance scattered across the country.

Meanwhile, lack of access to safe water, poor sanitation, increasing food insecurity, and the collapsing health system have resulted not only in increased vulnerability to fast-spreading waterborne and vaccine-preventable diseases, but also sparked a dramatic increase in malnutrition among children.

Syrian crisis snapshot



How have children been affected by the crisis?

For many children in Syria, conflict is the only thing they know. They continue to live in fear of violence, landmines, and explosive remnants of war. Across the country, insecurity and economic hardship continue to contribute to human rights violations, fear and psychological distress, leading to gender-based violence, child marriage and the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

The country also faces one of the largest education crises in recent history, with a whole generation of Syrian children paying the price of conflict. Education facilities are overstretched, and many schools cannot be used because they have been destroyed, damaged, shelter displaced families or are being used for other purposes. Children with disabilities carry a double burden when it comes to violence, threats to their health and safety, hunger, risk of abuse, and loss of education. Lack of mobility and difficulty fleeing harm have further compounded the challenges they face.

UNICEF remains on the ground delivering lifesaving assistance and supporting Syrian families as they chart a new path for their country. But a credible and inclusive political transition must prioritize the rights of Syria's 10 million children.

Recent Syria news and features

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News note 28 August 2025

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Go to UNICEF Syrian Arab Republic

What is UNICEF doing to help children in Syria?

Across Syria and in the neighbouring countries, UNICEF and partners continue to work to protect children, to help them cope with the impact of conflict. This includes improving psychosocial support to help children and caregivers recover from trauma, as well as delivering lifesaving support and services for children struggling physically and psychologically.

UNICEF delivers critical humanitarian assistance, such as safe drinking water, vaccines and other health and nutrition items across the country, including accessing hard-to-reach areas. Meanwhile, UNICEF and partners are improving school facilities, training teachers and repairing water and sanitation facilities.

In response to the escalations in late 2024, UNICEF deployed mobile medical teams, facilitated education for thousands of vulnerable children through prefabricated schools, and ensured access to clean water for millions of people.

Results for children in Syria

In 2024, UNICEF and partners:

Reached 465,000 children under 1 with routine vaccination

Helped 4.6 million people access a sufficient quantity of safe water

Supported 1.8 million children with education services in formal settings

Reached 2 million caregivers with awareness on infant and young child feeding

Helped 2.2 million children and women access primary health care in UNICEF-backed facilities

Reached 536,000 children and caregivers with explosive hazards prevention or assistance

Page updated: 11 September 2025

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Page

UNICEF Syria

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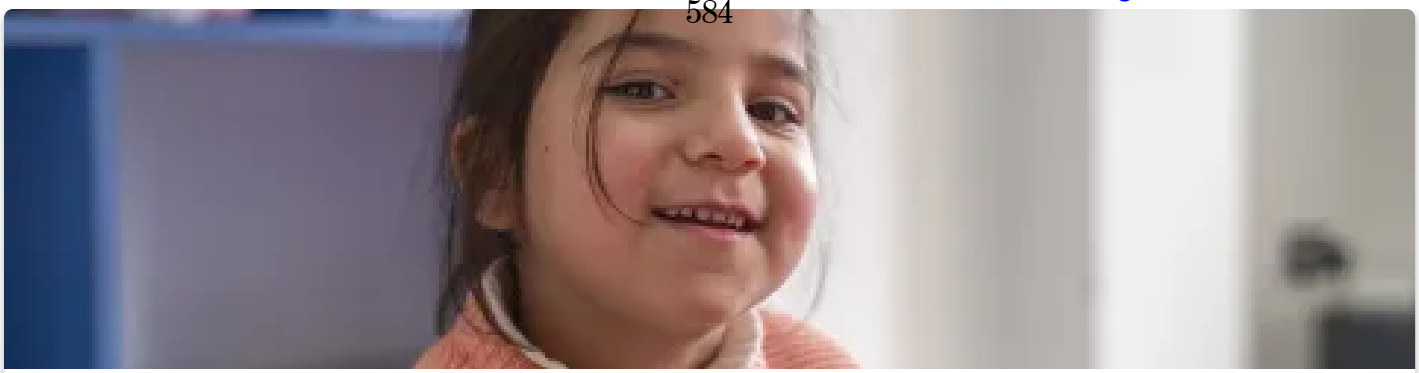

Appeal

Syrian Arab Republic Appeal

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UNICEF strives to uphold the rights of every child, protecting them from harm and all forms of discrimination, so that grow up healthy and educated to reach their full potential. This work is in line with UNICEF's globally recognized ma its support of national priorities.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

DAHLIA DOE; SARA DOE; NESMA DOE; LAILA DOE; WALEED DOE; MUSTAFA DOE; and AHMAD DOE, on their own behalf and on behalf of others similarly situated, *Plaintiffs*, – *versus* – Kristi NOEM, Secretary, United States Department of Homeland Security, in her official capacity; UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY; UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES; and UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, *Defendants*.	Case No. 1:25-cv-08686-KPF

MEMORANDUM OF LAW IN SUPPORT OF MOTION TO POSTPONE EFFECTIVE DATE OF AGENCY ACTION

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INTRODUCTION

After 13 years of civil war, Syria continues to endure pervasive armed conflict and a humanitarian crisis that the U.S. government itself has stated renders no part of the country safe. Yet Defendants have decided to terminate Temporary Protected Status ("TPS"), effective November 21, 2025, for almost 7,000 Syrians who have lived in the United States for years. There is no reasonable basis in fact for this decision. It is instead part of the Trump Administration's preordained, political decision—motivated by animus—to end this Congressionally-authorized program by terminating TPS designations across the board.

Plaintiffs are seven Syrian nationals, with family ties in the United States, who face near-certain danger if forced to return to Syria. They urge the Court to order immediate postponement of the effective termination date of Syrian TPS because, absent this Court's intervention, Syrians and their family members will suffer irreparable harm. On November 21, 2025, Syrian TPS holders and applicants will lose work authorization and protection from detention and deportation, leaving them vulnerable to family separation and removal to a country currently embroiled in conflict and crisis.

Plaintiffs are likely to succeed on the merits of their claims that Defendants' actions in terminating Syria's TPS are contrary to law, arbitrary and capricious, and unconstitutional in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act. Defendants' termination of TPS for Syria violates the TPS statute because Defendants failed to adhere to its statutory mandates. Defendants made their decision to terminate Syria's TPS *before* undertaking the interagency consultation and objective review of country conditions required by Congress—and then issued a pretextual decision that relied on impermissible extra-statutory factors. In an unacknowledged and

unexplained break with decades of past practice, Defendants arbitrarily provided TPS holders just *60 days* to prepare for loss of status despite their many years residing lawfully in the United States. Moreover, Defendants' actions were motivated by the racial, ethnic, and national origin-based animus that undergirds the Trump Administration's attempts to end TPS for the nationals of non-white, non-European countries and were therefore unconstitutional.

A decision declaring the termination unlawful after it has already gone into effect could never undo the damage done to Plaintiffs and their families and communities. Plaintiffs thus ask that this Court expeditiously enter an order postponing the effective date of the Secretary's termination notice pending final resolution of this case on the merits.

STATEMENT OF THE RELEVANT FACTS

I. Statutory Scheme for Temporary Protected Status

Congress created TPS in 1990 to provide "a more formal and orderly mechanism for the selection, processing, and registration" of individuals "from countries experiencing turmoil," rather than relying on the prior practice of ad hoc presidential action for those purposes. H.R. Rep. No. 100-627, at 4 (1988). While a country is designated for TPS, beneficiaries receive employment authorization and protection from immigration detention and removal. 8 U.S.C. §§ 1254a(a)(1), (d)(4). The statute affords protection to qualifying individuals regardless of whether they meet the requirements for asylum or other immigration relief. *Id.* § 1254a(b)(1).

The statute provides that the Secretary of Homeland Security, *see* 6 U.S.C. § 557, may designate a country for TPS and its nationals within the United States for temporary immigration relief if the Secretary finds that any of three circumstances are met:

(a) there is an "ongoing armed conflict within the state" and returning nationals "to that state would pose a serious threat to their personal safety;"

(b) there has been "an earthquake, flood, drought, epidemic, or other environmental disaster in the state" the foreign state is "unable, temporarily, to handle adequately the return of" nationals; or
(c) there exist "extraordinary and temporary conditions in the foreign state that prevent aliens who are nationals of the state from returning to the state in safety," unless the Secretary "finds that permitting the [noncitizens] to remain temporarily in the United States is contrary to the national interest of the United States."

8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1)(A)-(C).

In keeping with its intent to free the designation of countries for protection from domestic politics, Congress established a statutory framework governing TPS decision-making. The statute first requires the Secretary to consult with "appropriate" agencies. *Id*. § 1254a(b)(1). After that, she "may designate" a country based on armed conflict, environmental disaster, or other extraordinary conditions. *Id.* A designation lasts 6-18 months, effective either upon notice in the Federal Register or "such later date as [the Secretary] may specify." *Id*. § 1254a(b)(2). The Secretary has substantial discretion over initial designations. So long as she determines certain country conditions exist, she may choose whether and when to designate a country for TPS.

By contrast, Congress strictly limited the Secretary's discretion to review existing TPS designations. After a country is designated for TPS, the statute requires periodic review. *Id*. § 1254a(b)(3)(A). At least 60 days before the end of each designation period, the Secretary, "after consultation with appropriate agencies of the Government," must "review the conditions in the foreign state" and determine whether the conditions for TPS designation "continue to be met." *Id.* The review process typically begins months before the 60-day deadline. *See* Exh. 1 at 20-21.[1] Generally, USCIS manages and coordinates the periodic review process for the Secretary, compiling a country-conditions report and soliciting materials from the State Department. *See Saget v. Trump,* 375 F. Supp. 3d 280, 299-300 (E.D.N.Y. 2019); Exh. 1 at 20-26. Based on the

[1] Plaintiffs' exhibits are attached to the declaration of Guadalupe Aguirre, filed concurrently with this motion.

materials provided, USCIS prepares a detailed recommendation for the Secretary. *Id.* USICS's recommendation is called a "Decision Memo." *Saget,* 375 F. Supp. 3d at 299.

Unless the Secretary determines that the country "no longer continues to meet the conditions for designation," the designation "is extended" automatically for at least 6 months. 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(B), (C). The statute "essentially provides extension as a default." *Nat'l TPS All. v. Noem,* 773 F. Supp. 3d 807, 851 (N.D. Cal. 2025), *aff'd,* 150 F.4th 1000 (9th Cir. 2025) ("*NTPSA I*").[2] In contrast, if the Secretary timely "determines" that a country "no longer continues to meet the conditions for designation under" § 1254a(b)(1), she "shall terminate the designation by publishing notice in the Federal register." 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(B). Termination "shall not be effective earlier than 60 days after the date the notice is published or, if later, the expiration of the most recent previous extension." *Id.*

The Secretary has discretion to postpone the effective date of a termination "in order to provide for an orderly transition." *Id.* § 1254a(d)(3). Prior to 2025, in each of the twelve TPS terminations announced over the past two decades, the agency provided at least a six-month orderly transition period and, more commonly, a twelve- or eighteen-month period. *See* Exh. 2. Prior to 2025, in the 35-year history of the TPS program, only four TPS designations were terminated without an orderly transition period. Each of those terminations occurred more than twenty years ago and involved designations that had been in place for three years or less. *Id.*

II. TPS Designation for Syria

The Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") initially designated Syria for TPS in 2012 based on brutal government repression of Syrian citizens, armed conflict between government

[2] A subsequent final judgment in the *NTPSA I* case, No. 25-CV-01766-EMC, 2025 WL 2578045 (N.D. Cal. Sep. 5, 2025), has been stayed by the Supreme Court in a non-precedential order that does not include any analysis of the merits of the claims. *See Noem v. Nat'l TPS All.,* No. 25A326, 2025 WL 2812732, at *1 (Oct. 3, 2025).

forces and anti-government groups, and largescale internal displacement. 77 Fed. Reg. 19026, 19027 (Mar. 29, 2012). DHS then extended TPS for Syria, and redesignated it for TPS, numerous times as the initial armed conflict developed into a civil war that saw the destruction of critical infrastructure, mass displacement, human rights abuses, and more than 550,000 civilian casualties. 89 Fed. Reg. 5562, 5565 (Jan. 29, 2024).[3] Throughout this period, Syrians suffered from a severe humanitarian crisis, with high levels of food insecurity and limited access to healthcare and clean water, compounded by a major earthquake in February 2023. *Id.*

Then-Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas issued the latest extension and redesignation of TPS for Syria in January 2024, reasoning that Syria still suffered from "ongoing armed conflict" and "extraordinary and temporary conditions." *Id.* at 5565. Secretary Mayorkas noted the continuing civil war in Syria, then in its thirteenth year, which had displaced 61 percent of Syria's pre-war population. *Id.* He also considered (1) widespread human rights abuses and civilian deaths; (2) the fact that 85% of the population could not meet their basic needs; (3) dire economic conditions; (4) the continued effects of the February 2023 earthquake; (5) lack of access to healthcare; and (6) lack of access to clean water for more than half the population. *Id.* at 5562-5567.

III. The First Trump Administration's Attempts to End Access to TPS

The first Trump Administration attempted to end access to TPS for many non-white, non-European countries. Between 2017 and 2018, DHS announced that it would terminate TPS for Sudan, Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nepal. *Ramos v. Nielsen*, 709 F. Supp. 3d 871, 876–80 (N.D. Cal. 2023). Litigation and congressional investigations revealed that the termination decisions were based not on an objective review of country conditions as required by

[3] *See* 78 Fed. Reg. 36223 (Jun. 17, 2013); 80 Fed. Reg. 245 (Jan. 5, 2015); 81 Fed. Reg. 50533 (Aug. 1, 2016); 83 Fed. Reg. 9329 (Mar. 5, 2018); 84 Fed. Reg. 49751 (Sep. 23, 2019); 86 Fed. Reg. 14946 (Mar. 19, 2021); 87 Fed. Reg. 46982 (Aug. 1, 2022); 89 Fed. Reg. 5562 (Jan. 29, 2024).

statute but rather on a "predetermined decision to terminate TPS and abate the presence of non-white immigrants in the country." *Saget,* 375 F. Supp. 3d at 369; *see Ramos v. Nielsen*, 336 F. Supp. 3d 1075, 1094 (N.D. Cal. 2018). That attempt to end TPS failed; court orders prevented all the terminations from taking effect. *See, e.g.*, *Ramos*, 709 F. Supp. 3d at 878.

IV. Defendants' Ongoing Project to End Access to TPS

The second Trump administration arrived in office with explicit plans to end TPS for nationalities it deems undesirable. At her confirmation hearing, DHS Secretary Kristi Noem asserted that "[TPS] has been abused and manipulated by the Biden Administration and that will no longer be allowed." Exh. 3 at 27,18-20. Her assertion echoed statements made by President Trump and Vice President Vance during the campaign. *See* Exhs. 4, 5. Indeed, in an October 2024 interview, then-candidate Trump stated that he intended to "revoke" TPS if elected because—notwithstanding TPS's clear statutory basis—"in my opinion, it's not legal." Exh. 6.

On the day he took office, President Trump issued Executive Order 14159, "Protecting the American People Against Invasion." E.O. 14159 § 16(b), 90 Fed. Reg. 8443, 8446. The so-called "invasion" in the President's view was the purported "unprecedented flood of illegal immigration into the United States." *Id.* § 1. The Order directed the DHS Secretary to "promptly take all appropriate action," to rescind prior administrations' decisions that allegedly "increased or continued [the] presence of illegal aliens in the United States," including by reviewing "designations of Temporary Protected Status." *Id.* § 16. Although TPS holders are by definition lawfully present, the Order mandated that TPS designations be "appropriately limited in scope" to ameliorate the "continued presence of illegal aliens in the United States." *Id.*

Even before Defendant Noem was confirmed on January 25, 2025, DHS had begun to terminate TPS. DHS began drafting the decision to vacate the TPS extension for Venezuela on

January 24th. *NTPSA I*, 2025 WL 2578045, at *7. Vacatur of TPS was unprecedented. By January 25, when Defendant Noem was confirmed, the decision to vacate the extension of TPS for Venezuela had already been made. *Id.*

The same day, DHS began to draft a notice terminating TPS for Venezuela—before the required country conditions analysis was conducted. *Id*. Notably, this termination was based in part on the assertion that it is "contrary to the national interest" to continue TPS for Venezuela, 90 Fed. Reg. at 9040, 9042, the first time in the program's 35-year history that this factor, distinct from "conditions in the foreign state," 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(B), was relied upon at termination. *See* Exh. 7 ¶¶ 5-6. [4]

Less than a month later, on February 24, 2025, Defendant Noem announced a partial vacatur of the July 2024 extension of TPS for Haiti. *Haitian Evangelical Clergy Ass'n v. Trump,* No. 25-CV-1464*,* 2025 WL 1808743, at *1 (E.D.N.Y. July 1, 2025) ("*HECA*"). DHS's press statement reiterated Defendant Noem's pre-confirmation assertions that "for decades the TPS system has been exploited and abused" and claimed that it was "returning integrity to the TPS system" and "returning TPS to its original status: temporary." Exh. 9. The statement linked the decisions concerning Haiti and Venezuela to the administration's project to shrink "the TPS system." *Id.*

Between May and July 2025, Defendant Noem issued decision after decision terminating TPS for six countries, all of which are acknowledged by the administration to suffer from significant instability and dire humanitarian conditions.

- **Afghanistan** (May 13, 2025): Despite an ongoing Level 4 State Department "Do

[4] On September 8, 2025, the Secretary issued a second termination notice for TPS for Venezuela, terminating the 2021 designation, ensuring that all Venezuelan TPS holders will lose their TPS by November 7, 2025. 90 Fed. Reg. 43225.

Not Travel" warning "due to civil unrest, crime, terrorism, risk of wrongful detention, kidnapping, and limited health facilities," Exh. 10, Defendant Noem concluded "that requiring the return of Afghan nationals to Afghanistan does not pose a threat to their personal safety" and, citing E.O. 14159, stated that permitting Afghans to stay was "contrary to the national interest." 90 Fed. Reg. 20309, 20310.

- **Cameroon** (June 4, 2025): The Secretary found TPS holders could safely return to the country even though "two major [armed] conflicts" . . . "remain active" and, citing E.O. 14159., stated that permitting them to stay was "contrary to the national interest." 90 Fed. Reg. 23697, 23698. The State Department's travel advisory urges "increased caution . . . due to armed violence, civil unrest, crime, health, kidnapping, and terrorism." Exh. 11.
- **Nepal** (June 6, 2025): Just three months after the termination notice, 90 Fed. Reg. 24151, the State Department urged the public to "reconsider travel" to Nepal due to "civil unrest." Exh. 12.
- **Haiti** (July 1, 2025): The Secretary justified termination based solely on a finding, citing to E.O. 14159, that extension is not in the national interest—claiming that crisis-level conditions actually *required* termination because continuing TPS for a country facing total societal collapse is "contrary to the U.S. national interest." 90 Fed. Reg. 28760, 28762-64 (acknowledging "widespread gang violence . . . sustained by the country's lack of functional government authority" has "destabilized Haiti" and that "'Haiti is in the grip of severe humanitarian and human rights crisis,'" but nonetheless terminating TPS). Two weeks later, the State Department issued a Level 4 travel advisory, advising "Do Not Travel" due to

"kidnapping, crime, civil unrest, and limited health care." Exh. 13.

- **Honduras** (July 8, 2025): The State Department maintains a travel advisory urging the public to "reconsider travel" to Honduras due to "violent crime." Exh. 14; *cf.* 90 Fed. Reg. 30089 (Honduras Termination Notice).
- **Nicaragua** (July 8, 2025): The State Department maintains a travel advisory, urging the public to "reconsider travel" due to "arbitrary enforcement of laws, the risk of wrongful detentions, and limited healthcare availability." Exh. 15; *cf.* 90 Fed. Reg. 30086 (Nicaragua Termination Notice).

V. Preordained Termination of TPS for Syria

On September 19, 2025, Defendant Noem announced the termination of TPS for Syria, presenting the termination as a measure to "restor[e] sanity to America's immigration system[.]" Exh. 16. The Secretary reached two remarkable conclusions: first, that an armed conflict no longer exists in Syria; and second, that although "most Syrians require some form of humanitarian assistance," nothing prevents the safe return of Syrian nationals. 90 Fed. Reg. 45398, 45400 (Sep. 22, 2025).

In reaching these conclusions, the Secretary minimized the scope of continuing violence. Although the Assad regime fell in December 2024, armed conflict permeates Syria, as "sectarian violence involving members of minority communities, Syrian security forces, nonstate armed groups, and armed vigilantes have threatened Syria's stability since March," with thousands of civilian deaths and more than 200,000 newly displaced people. Exh. 17 at 2, 9-12. Moreover, the interim government "does not exercise control over all of Syria," with areas of the country under control of different armed factions. *Id.* at 1; *see also* Exh. 25 (recent Reuters investigation describing eastern Syria as a "lawless frontier under the control of armed groups with scores to

settle."). In addition, Turkish and Israeli forces control portions of Syria, Exh. 17 at 1, and Israel launches airstrikes and ground incursions deeper into Syria, Exh. 18 at 21-22. The Secretary's assessment contradicts the State Department's Level 4 "Do Not Travel" advisory, issued in July 2025, which warns that "No part of Syria is safe from violence" due to "terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, hostage taking, and armed conflict." Exh. 19.

The termination notice failed to address many factors considered in the January 29, 2024, redesignation, including human rights abuses; infrastructure destruction; widespread food insecurity and lack of clean water; the ongoing effects of the earthquake; the devastated economy; and lack of healthcare access. *Compare* 89 Fed. Reg. 5562 *with* 90 Fed. Reg. 45398. The Secretary asserted that country conditions were irrelevant, because "even assuming the relevant conditions remain both 'extraordinary' and 'temporary,'" termination of TPS is "required because it is contrary to the national interest" to allow Syrian nationals to remain in the United States. 90 Fed. Reg. at 45400. To support this finding, the notice cited purported difficulties vetting Syrian nationals and the prosecutions of two Syrian nationals in the United States, neither of whom is identified as a TPS recipient. *Id.* Further, the termination pointed to "foreign policy reasons" for ending TPS and cited a directive instructing the Department of State to "put American citizens first," *Id*. at 45401-02.

LEGAL STANDARD

"The standard for a stay" postponing the effective date of agency action pending adjudication of underlying claims "under 5 U.S.C. § 705 is the same as the standard for a preliminary injunction." *New York v. United States Dep't of Educ*., 477 F. Supp. 3d 279, 294 (S.D.N.Y. 2020). Plaintiffs are therefore entitled to a stay if they show "(1) irreparable harm; (2) either (a) a likelihood of success on the merits or (b) both serious questions on the merits and a

balance of hardships decidedly favoring the moving party; and (3) that a preliminary injunction is in the public interest." *N. Am. Soccer League, LLC v. U.S. Soccer Fed'n, Inc.,* 883 F.3d 32, 37 (2d Cir. 2018).

ARGUMENT

I. Plaintiffs Are Likely to Succeed on the Merits.

A. The Court Has Jurisdiction Over Plaintiffs' Claims.

A strong presumption of judicial review of agency action applies in this case, which is unaffected by the TPS statute's narrow jurisdiction-stripping provision. That carveout provides that "[t]here is no judicial review of any *determination* of the Attorney General with respect to the designation, or termination or extension of a designation, of a foreign state under this subsection." 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(5)(A) (emphasis added). The operative word is "determination," which the Supreme Court has interpreted to mean "*a single act* rather than a group of decisions or a practice or procedure employed in making decisions." *McNary v. Haitian Refugee Cent., Inc.,* 498 U.S. 479, 492 (1991) (emphasis added). The "determination" in the TPS statute is "whether conditions" in a given country meet or "continue to" meet the "conditions for such designation." 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(A); *see also id.* § 1254a(b)(3)(B) ("determines . . . that a foreign state . . . no longer meets the conditions for designation"); *id.* § 1254a(b)(3)(C) ("does not determine . . . that a foreign state . . . no longer meets the conditions for designation.").

Every court to consider the scope of Section 1254a(b)(5)(A) has found that the provision does not bar courts from reviewing collateral challenges to the process underlying TPS determinations and ensuring that agency actions conform to the requirements of the APA and the Constitution. *See Saget*, 375 F. Supp. 3d at 330-33; *Centro Presente v. DHS*, 332 F. Supp. 3d 393, 405-409 (D. Mass. 2018); *CASA de Maryland, Inc. v. Trump*, 355 F. Supp. 3d 307, 319-322 (D. Md. 2018); *Ramos v. Nielsen*, 321 F. Supp. 3d 1083, 1101-08 (N.D. Cal. 2018); *NTPSA I*, 773 F.

Supp. 3d at 830-31; *CASA, Inc. v. Noem,* 2025 WL 1907378, at *10 (D. Md. July 10, 2025); *HECA*, 2025 WL 1808743, at *5-6; *Nat'l TPS All. v. Noem,* 2025 WL 2233985 at *9-11 (N.D. Cal. July 31, 2025) ("*NTPSA II*").[5]

B. The Termination Violates the APA Because it is Contrary to Law and Arbitrary and Capricious.

i. The termination was pre-determined and thus contrary to law.

The Immigration and Nationality Act ("INA") directs the Secretary to review TPS designations prior to the expiration of each extension period to determine whether TPS protections will remain available to people whom DHS previously found could not safely return to their home countries. The statute requires that the Secretary's decision to extend or terminate TPS designations be made *after*, and based on, "consultation with appropriate agencies" and a "review [of] the conditions in the foreign state." 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(A). And Congress's directive that the Secretary "shall review the conditions in the foreign state," *id.*, "evinces Congressional intent that the Secretary undertake a periodic review grounded in fact—*i.e.,* based on objective conditions in the foreign country and regardless of any government official's political motives—and in good faith." *Saget,* 375 F. Supp. 3d at 346. Finally, the statute requires the Secretary to publish "the true and factual basis for termination" in the Federal Register. *Id.* at 346-47; *see* 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(B). If the Secretary instead issues a predetermined and pretextual termination notice, she violates these statutory mandates, and her decision is "not in accordance with the law." *Saget*, 375 F. Supp. 3d at 345-46.

The statements and actions of the Secretary, the President, and others make clear that the decision to terminate TPS for Syria was a predetermined *fait accompli.* President Trump campaigned

[5] The *NTPSA II* decision has been stayed, pending appeal, by the Ninth Circuit in a non-precedential order with no reasoning. *NTPSA II,* No. 25-4901, Dkt. No. 19.1 (9th Cir. Aug. 20, 2025).

on a message that if elected, he would end humanitarian immigration programs across the board, including by "revok[ing] TPS." Exh. 6; *see supra* pages 9-10. At her confirmation hearing, Defendant Noem asserted that TPS "had been abused and manipulated" and suggested that TPS extensions "will no longer be allowed." Exh. 3 at 27.

Once in office, the Secretary followed through on her promises to end TPS, terminating the designation for eight countries in as many months. Rather than making individualized and objective determinations about conditions in particular countries, as required by statute, the Secretary approached all of these decisions as part of one overarching, political effort to "return[] integrity to the *TPS system*." Exh. 9 (emphasis added). And she celebrated her decisions to revoke TPS as putting an end to an "immigration scheme[] that make[s] Americans less safe." Exh 8.

In their rush to end TPS, Defendants have repeatedly failed to engage in the interagency consultations and objective country-conditions review that Congress required. Defendants have routinely failed to consult with other agencies. *See NTPSA I,* 2025 WL 2578045 at *7, *30 (Venezuela termination decision made without any recommendation from State); Exhs. 20 & 21 (same as to Nicaragua); *cf.* Exh. 1 at 18-23 (detailing usual consultation process). USCIS—the subcomponent of DHS that heads and coordinates the periodic review process—has recommended termination *before* receiving any country-conditions materials to review. *NTPSA I,* 2025 WL 2578045 at *7 (Venezuela); Exh. 20 & Exh. 21 (USCIS Decision Memo recommending termination for Nicaragua written before reviewing country conditions); Exh. 22 (same, as to Honduras). And Defendants have wildly distorted the objective review process to cherry pick "positive improvements," *see, e.g.,* Exh. 23, while disregarding entire categories of country conditions that do not suit their goal of terminating TPS. This has resulted in country conditions assessments that directly contradict those of the U.S. State Department and contrast sharply with

explicit "Do Not Travel" advisories to the public. *Compare* 90 Fed. Reg. at 20311 (justifying termination of Afghanistan's TPS based on the Taliban's promotion of tourism and social media images of the "peaceful countryside") *with* Exh. 10 (warning against travel to Afghanistan "for any reason" because of "civil unrest, crime, terrorism, risk of wrongful detention, kidnapping, and limited health facilities").

The termination of Syrian TPS is no different. Defendant Noem was told to end TPS, and she wanted to end TPS, so she did—without the required objective review of country conditions. The Federal Register notice leaves little room to doubt these conclusions. The Secretary found no "ongoing armed conflict" in Syria, contrary to the U.S. State Department's own Do Not Travel warning that warns of "active armed conflict" *see* Exh. 19 (July 23, 2025) ("[n]o part of Syria is safe from violence" due to "[h]ostage taking by armed groups, terrorism, remnants of war such as unexploded ordnance, and aerial bombardment."); *see also* Exhs. 17 & 18. Indeed, the very sources on which the Secretary relies make clear that violence and armed conflict, far from being "sporadic" and "episodic" in Syria, 90 Fed. Reg. at 45400, remain widespread and systematic. *See* Exhs. 17; 24 (cited in 90 Fed. Reg. at 45400 ns. 10, 11). Further, the Secretary entirely ignored a specific armed conflict—Israel's ongoing ground incursions and air strikes across Syria. *See* Exh. 18 at 21-22; Exh. 26.

As to "extraordinary and temporary conditions," the termination notice does not meaningfully dispute that such conditions exist and prevent safe return to Syria. In a single paragraph, the Secretary acknowledged that "most Syrians require some form of humanitarian assistance" but claimed that the humanitarian crisis did not prevent nationals from returning safely. 90 Fed. Reg. at 45400. And the termination notice does not acknowledge that even the paltry sources it cites discuss ongoing displacements of Syrians, Exh. 27, and portray a "humanitarian

situation" that "remains dire," with limited access to life-saving resources, Exh. 28—because those facts run contrary to the goal of termination. *See also* Exh. 29 (documenting a "deeply concerning [] humanitarian situation" with "escalation of violence," "unprecedented levels [of] food insecurity," and "severe drought").

Defendants' decision to end TPS for Syria was clearly predetermined—based on express promises to end TPS, systematic terminations of similarly-situated countries, and the flawed and selective country conditions analysis—and this predetermined decision contravenes the mandates of the TPS statute and violates the APA.

ii. The termination's reliance on the "national interest" is contrary to law and arbitrary and capricious.

The termination notice's incredible conclusions make clear that Syria's country conditions were not considered relevant to the termination decision. Rather, the driving factor justifying the termination is the purported "national interest"—which Defendant Noem claimed, without statutory basis, "require[s]" termination regardless of ongoing conditions in Syria. 90 Fed. Reg. at 45400. Defendant Noem's reliance on the "national interest" to terminate the TPS designation is both contrary to the TPS statute and arbitrary and capricious.

At initial designation, the INA allows the Secretary to consider whether allowing noncitizens to remain in the country "is contrary to the national interest of the United States" only when the Secretary is designating a country for TPS under the "extraordinary and temporary conditions" provision. 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1)(C). The Secretary may not consider "national interest" when designating a country for TPS based on ongoing armed conflict, nor when designating based on environmental disaster. *Compare id.* § 1254a(b)(1)(C) *with* § 1254a(b)(1)(A)-(B). Syria has been designated for TPS based on both the "ongoing armed conflict" and "extraordinary and temporary conditions" criteria since its first redesignation in

2013. *See supra* n. 3.

That limitation carries over to termination decisions: the Secretary can consider only whether the country "continues to meet the conditions for designation." 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1)(A). The "national interest" therefore can play no part in revoking a designation made on the basis of an armed conflict. But here, it did. As made clear from the Secretary's numerous statements about TPS, she wanted to end TPS to serve the Trump administration's view of the "national interest." The entire termination decision—including the decision to ignore the ongoing armed conflict in Syria—reflects the primacy of this single criterion. Indeed, the Secretary gave the game away by admitting that country conditions were simply not relevant because the national interest "required" termination. 90 Fed. Reg. at 45400. In reviewing a designation based on "ongoing armed conflict," this reliance on the "national interest" violates the TPS statute.

Even as to "extraordinary and temporary conditions," Congress did not permit consideration of the "national interest" during the periodic review process. Rather, when conducting the periodic review and determining whether to extend or terminate TPS for an already-designated country, the Secretary must review "the conditions in the foreign state" and determine if those conditions for designation continue to be met. 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(3)(A). In other words, when reviewing TPS for an already-designated country, the statute directs the Secretary to focus solely on conditions in *that* country—not in the United States.

The reliance on "national interest" to terminate is also arbitrary and capricious. No prior Secretary had ever terminated a TPS designation on the basis that extending TPS was "contrary to the national interest." *See* Exh. 7. When an agency breaks with long-standing past practice, the agency must "display awareness that it *is* changing position," offer "good reasons for the new policy," and consider "serious reliance interests" engendered by the prior policy. *FDA v. Wages &*

White Lion Invs., LLC., 604 U.S. 542, 570 (2025). Failure to do so renders an agency action arbitrary and capricious. *Id.* at 567. Here, the Secretary failed across the board. She did not acknowledge her break with past practice, offered no reasons for that break, and did not consider the reliance interests of TPS holders who expected that TPS would be terminated only based on improved country conditions.

iii. The termination decision was arbitrary and capricious because it was politically influenced and pretextual.

A TPS decision is arbitrary and capricious if it is based on "improper political influence"—where political pressure "caused the agency's action to be influenced by factors not relevant under the controlling statute." *Saget*, 375 F. Supp. 3d at 359-60 (quoting *Town of Orangetown v. Ruckelshaus*, 740 F.2d 185, 188 (2d Cir. 1984)). Here, the President gave a political direction to terminate TPS to advance his own anti-immigrant agenda, without regard for the country conditions considerations required by statute. *See supra* pages 9-10. Defendant Noem expressly stated that she would follow the President's "directive" to terminate TPS. *Id.*; *see also* Exh. 30. And once in office, she immediately proceeded to revoke and terminate TPS designations, explicitly linking her decisions to the President's instructions to "limit[] TPS." *See* 90 Fed. Reg. at 9043 (Venezuela); *id.* at 28762 (Haiti); *id*. at 20310 n.3 (Afghanistan); *id*. at 23698 (Cameroon); *id*. at 24152 n. 10; (Nepal); *id*. at 30088 n. 4 (Nicaragua); *id*. at 30091 n.10 (Honduras) (all citing E.O. 14159).[6] The otherwise unjustifiable termination of Syria's TPS was the latest casualty of this same political directive, and was therefore "influenced by factors not relevant under the controlling statute." *See Saget*, 375 F. Supp. 3d at 359-60.

[6] The termination notice for Syria is the first that does not directly cite to E.O. 14159, as a justification for termination—likely in an attempt to mask the unlawful policy to mass-terminate TPS from judicial review. *See NTPSA II*, 2025 WL 2233985 at *12 (holding that citation of E.O. 14159 supported finding that Secretary was following Presidential directive).

The termination decision is also arbitrary and capricious because it is pretextual. As the Supreme Court has made clear, "[t]he reasoned explanation requirement of administrative law . . . is meant to ensure that agencies offer genuine justifications for important decisions." *Dep't of Com. v. New York*, 588 U.S. 752, 785 (2019). "Accepting contrived reasons would defeat the purpose of the enterprise." *Id.*; *accord Saget*, 375 F. Supp. 3d at 359-362. The complete disconnect between what the Secretary and the Trump Administration have said about TPS outside the confines of the Federal Register and the deeply implausible reasoning in the termination notice leave no doubt that the Secretary's stated justifications are pretextual.

iv. The termination impermissibly broke with past practice regarding orderly transition periods without explanation and is therefore arbitrary and capricious.

In an unjustified and arbitrary break with past practice, Defendant Noem gave Syrian TPS holders only 60 days to pack up their bags and leave. Prior to 2025, no termination that ended a TPS designation that had been in place for longer than three years provided affected TPS holders with less than six-months' notice. *See* Exh. 2. Between 2004 and 2025, all terminations of a designation of *any length* provided at least a six-month transition period, and more commonly a 12 or 18-month transition period. *Id.* (four six-month transition periods, four 12-month periods, and four 18-month periods); *see also NTSPA II,* 2025 WL 2233985 at *13 (finding no dispute that agency's prevailing practice was to provide at least a six-month orderly transition). Here, the TPS designation for Syria has been in place for well over a decade, and many Syrian TPS holders have significant roots in the United States. *See generally* Exhs. 39-45.

Agencies may change their policies. But when an agency breaks with long-standing past practice, the agency must offer "good reasons for the new policy," and consider "serious reliance interests" engendered by the prior policy. *FDA*, 604 U.S. at 570. The Secretary has complied with none of these requirements. Rather than "display[ing] awareness" of the longstanding past practice

of providing at least a six-month orderly transition period when ending a TPS designation, she acknowledged that the agency had "allowed for an additional transition period . . . under certain previous [TPS] terminations" but did not recognize that providing at least a six-month transition period had been the agencies' practice, without exception, for more than two decades. 90 Fed. Reg. at 45402.

Further, the termination notice does not offer a "good reason" for the shift in a decades-long policy. The notice justifies the 60-day period as "sufficient and warranted" based only on the "Secretary's finding that continuing to permit Syrian nationals to remain temporarily in the United States is contrary to the U.S. national interest." *Id.* Defendants do not provide any explanation for why this finding justifies this extreme and harmful shift from past practice, nor does they explain why allowing for a longer transition period would harm the national interest. *Id.* Nor does the notice address the rationale DHS previously provided in support of an "orderly transition" period—allowing TPS recipients time to apply for other immigration benefits for which they are eligible, or to prepare for and arrange their departure. *See, e.g.*, 81 Fed. Reg. 66054 (Sep. 26, 2016) (Sierra Leone).

Finally, while the termination notice pays lip service to the reliance interests of TPS holders, 90 Fed. Reg. at 45402, it fails to actually "assess whether there were reliance interests, determine whether they were significant, and weigh any such interests against competing policy concerns." *DHS v. Regents of the Univ. of Cal.*, 591 U.S. 1, 33 (2020). It does not consider that TPS holders from countries of longstanding designation, like Syria, would reasonably expect that, if TPS were terminated, that they would have at least six months to take care of their affairs, apply for another status, or plan to depart the country. By ignoring these important reliance interests and decades of past practice without acknowledgment or justification, Defendants' failure to provide an

orderly transition period runs afoul of the APA.

C. The Termination Is Contrary to Law Because it Violates the Fifth Amendment.

The Fifth Amendment's Due Process Clause "contains an equal protection component" that prohibits federal government officials from discriminating on the basis of certain immutable characteristics, including race, ethnicity, and national origin. *Washington v. Davis*, 426 U.S. 229, 239 (1976); *Bolling v. Sharpe*, 347 U.S. 497, 499 (1954).[7] Here, Defendants' decision to terminate TPS for Syria violates Plaintiffs' equal protection rights because it was motivated by discriminatory animus and resulted in disparate impact against noncitizens who are not white or of European origin.

Courts apply strict scrutiny to assess government decisions motivated by discriminatory purpose. *Jana-Rock Constr., Inc. v. New York State Dep't of Econ. Dev.*, 438 F.3d 195, 204 (2d Cir. 2006). The limited exception for deferential review adopted in *Trump v. Hawaii,* 585 U.S. 667 (2018), applies only to restrictions on entry *into* the United States and does not apply to TPS determinations, which concern individuals already in the country. *See Saget,* 375 F. Supp. 3d at 367; *NTPSA I*, 2025 WL 2578045, at *35; *NTPSA II,* 2025 WL 2233985 at 14-15; *see also United States v. Suquilanda,* 116 F.4th 129, 140 (2d Cir. 2024) (applying strict scrutiny to equal protection challenge to domestic immigration law).

To establish an equal protection claim, plaintiffs must allege that a government actor intentionally discriminated against them because of race, ethnicity, or national origin. *Jana-Rock*, 438 F.3d at 204. Plaintiffs can show this intentional discrimination by, among other things,

[7] The doctrinal and factual analysis is the same whether this claim is viewed as about race, ethnicity, or national origin discrimination. *See, e.g.*, *United States v. Virginia*, 518 U.S. 515, 532 n.6 (1996) (strict scrutiny applies to classifications based on national origin); *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Pena*, 515 U.S. 200, 223–24 (1995) (strict scrutiny applies to classifications by ethnicity).

establishing that "a discriminatory purpose [was] a motivating factor" in the challenged government action. *Vill. of Arlington Heights v. Metro. Hous. Dev. Corp.*, 429 U.S. 252, 265 (1977); *see Brown v. City of Oneonta, N.Y.,* 221 F.3d 329, 337 (2d Cir. 2000).

Discriminatory purpose can be demonstrated by "sensitive inquiry into such circumstantial and direct evidence of intent as may be available." *Arlington Heights*, 429 U.S. at 266. Evidence of discriminatory intent can include the sequence of events leading to a decision, departures from normal procedures or substantive conclusions, the background of a decision, and disparate impact. *Id*. at 266–67. For instance, "the combination of a disparate impact on particular racial groups, statements of animus by people plausibly alleged to be involved in the decision-making process, and an allegedly unreasoned shift in policy" can in tandem establish that "a discriminatory purpose was a motivating factor in a decision." *Deide v. Day,* 676 F. Supp. 3d 196, 221 (S.D.N.Y. 2023) (quoting *Centro Presente,* 332 F. Supp. 3d at 415). Defendants' use of "charged code words" may serve as "evidence of discriminatory intent by sending a clear message and carrying the distinct tone of racial motivations and implications." *Mhany Mgmt., Inc. v. Cnty. of Nassau,* 819 F.3d 581, 609 (2d Cir. 2016) (internal citation omitted).

Plaintiffs have—even before discovery—marshalled compelling evidence of discriminatory intent. Both Defendant Noem and President Trump have repeatedly used charged code words in describing policy goals that dehumanize non-white, non-European noncitizens and lay bare their animus. Defendant Noem has described immigration as an "invasion happening on purpose . . . to remake the foundation of this country," Exh. 31, and her agency has encouraged noncitizens to "[r]emigrate," Exh. 49, a term that invokes white nationalism and ethnic cleansing via "mass deportation of non-white immigrants," Exh. 50. *See also* Exh. 32 (explaining that invasion rhetoric echoes the "great replacement theory" that non-white immigrants will "replace"

the white race, and in doing so undermine the country's perceived white foundation, history, and culture). Defendant Noem has described TPS as an "immigration scheme that makes Americans less safe," Exh. 8, and her agency has described TPS holders as "poorly vetted migrants" that include "known terrorists," "MS-13 gang members," and "murderers." Exh. 33. These statements "reflect the Secretary's animus against immigrants and the TPS program even though individuals with TPS hold lawful status." *NTPSA II,* 2025 WL 2233985 at *16. "By stereotyping the TPS program and immigrants as invaders that are criminal . . . Defendant Noem's statements perpetuate the discriminatory belief that certain immigrant populations will replace the white population." *Id.*

President Trump, who instructed the Secretary to end TPS, has repeatedly expressed racist and xenophobic animus, including campaigning on a message that migrants are "poisoning the blood of our country." Exh. 34; s*ee also* Compl. ¶¶ 90-93; 101-110. He has employed rhetoric equating immigrants from Muslim-majority countries with enemies and terrorists—often specifically naming Syria. Compl. ¶¶ 89-93. During his campaign, President Trump promised to reinstate his previous ban on the entry of nationals from Muslim-majority countries, including Syria, claiming that some "very, very rough people come out of these areas" and generalizing that all Syrians "want to blow up our country." Exh. 35. And with E.O. 14159, issued on day one of his presidency, President Trump directly "connected TPS" with an "invasion," painting TPS holders, among other immigrants, as presenting "'significant threats to national security and public safety, committing vile and heinous acts against innocent Americans." *NTPSA II*, 2025 WL 2233985, at *17 (citing E.O. 14159).

Further, the "historical background of the decision" shows this is the latest decision in "a series of official actions taken for invidious purposes." *Arlington Heights,* 429 U.S. at 267. The termination of TPS for Syria is the eighth in as many months—and courts have already found the

preceding terminations were motivated by improper animus. *NTPSA I*, 773 F. Supp. 3d at 855-866; *NTPSA II*, 2025 WL 2233985 at *14-17; *see also NTPSA I*, 2025 WL 2578045 at *35-36 (denying government's motion for summary judgment on equal protection claims). Defendants have not been able to provide a reasoned or lawful explanation for the shift in policy to mass-terminate TPS designations that have been in place for decades—because their policy shift can only be explained by discriminatory motive. *Centro Presente*, 332 F. Supp. 3d at 415 (plaintiffs plausibly alleged that TPS terminations violated equal protection where terminations rested on an "unreasoned shift in policy"). And simultaneous to their attempts to rapidly terminate TPS (a humanitarian protection) for noncitizens from majority non-white countries, the administration has coopted the United States' longstanding overseas refugee program to accelerate new admissions of only one population—white Christian Afrikaners from South Africa—all the while suspending admissions for refugees from non-white countries. Exh. 36; 37; *see also* Exh. 38 (suspending parole program *en masse* for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans, while leaving similar program for Ukrainians intact).

Finally, the disparate "impact of the official action," and "whether it bears more heavily on one race," is relevant in assessing discriminatory intent. *Arlington Heights,* 429 U.S. at 266 (internal quotation marks omitted). Here, Defendant Noem's decision to terminate TPS for thousands of Syrians—both individually and in combination with the decision to terminate TPS for seven other countries with non-white majorities—"bears more heavily" on people perceived in this country as non-white. *Id*.

The historical and contemporaneous evidence of decision-makers' animus towards non-white, non-European immigrants in general, and TPS holders in particular; the charged code words used to justify the termination of TPS; the unreasoned shift in policy to terminate TPS across the

board for non-European countries; and the disparate impact of the termination policy support the conclusion that Plaintiffs are likely to succeed on the merits of their equal protection claim. At the very least, there are serious questions going to the merits that justify postponement of the termination notice.

II. Syrian TPS Holders and Applicants Face Irreparable Harm Without Postponement.

"A showing of irreparable harm is the single most important prerequisite" for the issuance of preliminary relief pending disposition of the merits of the case. *Faiveley Transp. Malmo AB v. Wabtec Corp.*, 559 F.3d 110, 118 (2d Cir. 2009) (cleaned up). A party seeking preliminary relief must show that "but for the grant of equitable relief, there is a substantial chance that upon final resolution of the action the parties cannot be returned to the position they previously occupied." *Brenntag Int'l Chems., Inc. v. Bank of India*, 175 F.3d 245, 249 (2d Cir. 1999). The harm must be "actual and imminent." *Freedom Holdings, Inc. v. Spitzer,* 408 F.3d 112, 114 (2d Cir. 2005) (internal citation omitted).

The substantial and imminent irreparable harm that Plaintiffs face on November 21 could not be clearer. First, Plaintiffs have established *per se* irreparable harm because they allege cognizable violations of their constitutional rights. "[T]he alleged violation of a constitutional right triggers a finding of irreparable injury." *Conn. Dep't of Env't. Prot. v. O.S.H.A.*, 356 F.3d 226, 231 (2d Cir. 2004) (internal citations and quotation marks omitted).

Furthermore, the termination of TPS will immediately trigger the loss of Plaintiffs' lawful status to reside in the United States, and with it, their permission to work, their livelihoods, and ability to pursue long-held professions.[8] *See Arizona Dream Act Coal. v. Brewer,* 855 F.3d 957,

[8] Individuals with pending applications for TPS, like Plaintiff Ahmad, are protected from deportation and eligible for work authorization while their TPS application is pending. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(a)(4)(B); 8 C.F.R. § 244.10.

978 (9th Cir. 2017) ("[l]oss of opportunity to pursue one's chosen profession constitutes irreparable harm."). Plaintiffs will lose jobs and careers into which they have invested years, including plaintiffs who work as a highly-specialized pediatrician, Exh. 40 ¶¶ 3, 11, as a journalist, Exh. 45 ¶¶ 3, 7, 9, as a behavioral health specialist for adults with special needs, Exh. 42 ¶¶ 4, 9, and in a senior management role at private company, Exh. 43 ¶¶ 7-8. In addition to losing her job, Plaintiff Laila Doe will have to abandon the nursing degree she has been working towards for years. Exh. 42 ¶ 17. As the sole breadwinner in her family, Laila will no longer be able to provide for her elderly U.S. citizen mother and her teenage daughter if she loses TPS. *Id.* ¶¶ 12-13. Similarly, Plaintiff Waleed Doe will lose his senior management job, leaving him and his wife, also a TPS holder, without the ability to work and provide for their three U.S. citizen children. Exh. 43 ¶¶ 4, 7. Plaintiffs will lose access to essential health care where eligibility is linked to their work or their status. *See, e.g.,* Exh. 43 ¶ 17. In many states, TPS holders will lose their drivers' licenses—losing both their mobility and their only state-issued identification. *See* Exh. 41 ¶ 7; *see also Brewer*, 855 F.3d at 978 (loss of driver's licenses causes cascading and irreparable harms).

In addition, Plaintiffs without any other immediate status will be subject to arrest and detention pending deportation as of November 21, 2025. Exh. 46 ¶¶ 14, 23; *see* Exhs. 39-45 (plaintiffs have no other status). "The deprivation of [a noncitizen's] liberty is, in and of itself, irreparable harm." *Torres-Jurado v. Biden*, 2023 WL 7130898, at *5 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 29, 2023) (internal citation omitted). Plaintiffs will be subject to placement in removal proceedings and could soon face deportation to a country where violence and human-rights abuse are pervasive while food, housing, water, and medical care are scarce. *See supra* pages 12-13; 17-18. Plaintiff Sara Doe faces deportation to a country that she previously fled after family members were killed and

TPS applicants also face irreparable harm from the termination of TPS, as they will lose this crucial protection and work authorization.

where she faced threats for her medical work. Exh. 40 ¶¶ 5-6. Laila faces return to her sister's home in Damascus, in a neighborhood that was hit by airstrikes only two months ago. Exh. 42 ¶¶ 14-15. Plaintiff Nesma, age 77 and with chronic health conditions, faces loss of all family connection and support, with no way to survive as an elderly single woman in Syria. Exh. 41 ¶¶ 13-15. And TPS holders who grew up outside of Syria—but have no residency or citizenship status in any other country—face return to a wholly unfamiliar and hostile country. *See* Exhs. 39, 45.

Many Plaintiffs will suddenly find themselves unable to apply for other types of immigration relief, either because the alternative form of relief depends on maintaining lawful immigration status, or because they are subject to detention or deportation while they wait. *See* Exh. ¶¶ 16-23; *see also* Exhs. 40-45. For many TPS holders with other potential pathways to status, the rapid termination of TPS has left them without time to pursue or complete these complex, multi-step processes. *See, e.g.,* Exh. 40 ¶¶ 12, 18.

TPS holders also face harmful choices concerning family separation. Because they have lived here for years, many TPS holders have U.S. citizen children who have never been to Syria. *See* Exh. 43 ¶¶ 4, 11-15. These TPS holders "will confront the impossible choice of either leaving their [U.S. citizen] children behind or taking their children with them to a country [in] which they may not be safe." *Saget*, 375 F. Supp. 3d at 75 (finding irreparable harm). And many TPS holders have extensive U.S. citizen and permanent resident family members and dread the separation and isolation that will result from leaving them behind in the United States. *See* Exhs. 39-44. The possibility of being separated from loved ones, giving up one's life in the United States, and returning to danger has caused Plaintiffs enormous mental anguish. *See* Exhs. 39-45.

All of these injuries are severe and irreparable and weigh heavily in favor of postponement.

III. The Balance of Hardships and Public Interest Weigh Heavily in Favor of Postponement

The final considerations—the balance of hardships and public interest—merge when the government is a party. *Nken v. Holder,* 556 U.S. 418, 435 (2009). These considerations weigh heavily in favor of Plaintiffs.

"[T]here is no public interest in allowing Defendants to proceed with unlawful, arbitrary, and capricious executive or agency actions that exceed their statutory authority." *Make the Road N.Y. v. Pompeo*, 475 F. Supp. 3d 232, 269 (S.D.N.Y. 2020); *accord, e.g.*, *Saget*, 375 F. Supp. 3d at 377. "To the contrary, there is a substantial public interest in having governmental agencies abide by the federal laws that govern their existence and operations." *League of Women Voters of United States v. Newby*, 838 F.3d 1, 12 (D.C. Cir. 2016) (internal citation omitted).

In contrast, there is strong public interest in allowing Plaintiffs to retain TPS pending a final resolution of this case on the merits. To start, "there is a public interest in maintaining families together," *You v. Nielsen*, 321 F. Supp. 3d 451, 469 (S.D.N.Y. 2018); *accord, e.g.*, *Torres-Jurado*, 2023 WL 7130898 at *5. Plaintiffs here face separation from their elderly parents, spouses or minor children who rely on them, putting this interest in stark relief. *See supra* page 29. Moreover, the public has an interest in avoiding "economic and public health harms." *Make the Road N.Y. v. Cuccinelli*, 419 F. Supp. 3d 647, 665–66 (S.D.N.Y. 2019), *aff'd as modified sub nom. New York v. DHS*, 969 F.3d 42 (2d Cir. 2020). If removed to Syria, TPS holders will likely experience worse health outcomes, malnutrition, poverty, and poor educational attainment. *See* Exhs. 28, 29, 47.

Additionally, postponement of the termination is in the public interest because the Secretary's unlawful termination of Syria's TPS designation will impose significant economic costs—both direct and indirect—on the communities where Syrian TPS holders currently live.

TPS holders are both employed at high rates, Exh. 48, and ineligible for public assistance. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(f)(2). Syrian TPS holders hold crucial jobs in their communities. *See supra* page 28. The termination of Syria's TPS designation, and the corresponding end to TPS holders' work authorization, will cause economic harm in communities where Syrian TPS holders have settled. The termination would also inflict non-economic harm on those communities, given that "immigrants without legal status are less likely to report crimes or testify in court, reducing public safety and making effective law enforcement more difficult." *NTPSA I*, 773 F. Supp. 3d at 841.

For these reasons, the public interest and balance of the equities—like each of the other factors to be considered—strongly favors postponement of the termination of TPS for Syria.

CONCLUSION

For all the foregoing reasons this Court should grant Plaintiffs' motion.

Dated: October 21, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

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**Application for admission Pro Hac Vice forthcoming*

CERTIFICATION OF WORD COUNT

I hereby certify that the word count of this motion Memorandum of Law in support of Plaintiffs' motion to postpone complies with the word limits of Local Rules of the United States District Courts for the Southern & Eastern Districts of New York § 7.1(c) and United States District Judge Katherine Polk Failla, Individual Rules of Practice of Civil Cases § 4(B). According to the word-processing system used to prepare this Memorandum of Law, the total word count for all printed text exclusive of the material omitted under Loc. R S.D.N.Y & E.D.N.Y § 7(c) and U.S. Dist. J. Katherine Polk Failla, Individual Rules of Practice of Civil Cases § 4(B) is 8,750 words.

Dated: October 21, 2025
New York City, New York

/s/ *Guadalupe Aguirre*
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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Dahlia Doe, et al., Plaintiffs, v. Kristi Noem, et al., Defendants.	Case No. 1:25-cv-08686-KPF **[PROPOSED] ORDER GRANTING MOTION TO POSTPONE EFFECTIVE DATE OF AGENCY ACTION**

After consideration of the briefs and arguments of counsel, and the evidence filed in support of and in opposition to Plaintiffs' Motion, the Court finds that Plaintiffs have carried their burden to demonstrate a need for postponement of the effective date of agency action in this case to preserve the status quo pending resolution of this case on the merits.

Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT Plaintiffs' Motion is GRANTED as follows:

1. The Court concludes that Plaintiffs have carried their burden of showing (1) a likelihood of success on the merits of their claims under the Administrative Procedure Act ("APA"), Immigration and Nationality Act ("INA"), and the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution; (2) that the termination of the Temporary Protected Status ("TPS") designation for Syria is causing and will cause irreparable harm to TPS holders, their families, and the public absent postponement of the effective date of the termination; and (3) that the balance of equities

and the public interest weigh in Plaintiffs' favor. Accordingly, a postponement of agency action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 705 of the APA and the inherent equitable powers of this Court is warranted.

2. It is hereby ORDERED that the effective date of implementation and/or enforcement of the decision to terminate TPS for Syria is immediately postponed and stayed pending resolution of this case on the merits.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: _____ 2025

_____

United States District Judge Katherine Polk Failla

Exhibit 1

From: Ezeldin, Amany S [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=B8B74085EEF745D59C1682D10157316B-EZELDIN, AM]
Sent: 4/7/2025 5:33:54 PM
To: El-Hage, Rabia S [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=dafa0d3323bc45a9a7af6cc93dc6ae4a-El-Hage, Ra]
Subject: RE: TPS Data Pull for Cameroon, Nepal

I know. It's so laughable that it's even in the paper.

From: El-Hage, Rabia S <[redacted]>
Sent: Monday, April 7, 2025 2:30 PM
To: Ezeldin, Amany S <[redacted]>
Subject: RE: TPS Data Pull for Cameroon, Nepal

Such a LOW number of fraud found:

Count of receipt_number	Column Labels		
Row Labels	Cameroon	Nepal	Grand Total
	6260	12858	19118
Fraud Found	4	1	5
Fraud Not Found	1		1
Grand Total	**6265**	**12859**	**19124**

Statement of Findings Determination on TPS Receipts Provided by TPS Country

SOF Determination	Cameroon	Nepal	Total
Total	6,265	12,859	19,124
Fraud Found	4	1	5
Fraud Not Found	1	-	1
No SOF Match	6,260	12,858	19,118

Rabia Elhage
Policy Analyst
Office of Policy and Strategy
Humanitarian Affairs Division
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
Cell: [redacted]

From: Ezeldin, Amany S <[redacted]>
Sent: Friday, March 28, 2025 9:40 AM
To: Salazar, Carly L <[redacted]>; Vagle, Ruhee V <[redacted]>; El-Hage, Rabia S <[redacted]>; Miller, Kelley K <[redacted]>
Cc: Block, Andrew J <[redacted]>; Ridley, Sasha M <[redacted]>
Subject: FW: TPS Data Pull for Cameroon, Nepal

Hi all,

These are the FDNS stats for the Cameroon and Nepal DMs. I sent a message to RCD to find out which doc versions we should be updating. Let's wait to hear back from them with the right links to update. I'm kind of talking to myself here because everyone on this message has an OOO (😊), so if I don't hear back from RCD today, please make sure these get updated.

Thanks,
Amany

From: Austin, Janna C <[redacted]>
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 12:27 PM
To: Ezeldin, Amany S <[redacted]>; Block, Andrew J <[redacted]>; Sanger, Jennifer E <[redacted]>; Heffner, Morgan L <[redacted]>; Dombek, Christopher D [redacted]
Cc: Knechtges, Eric A <[redacted]>; Sotomayor, Paloma <[redacted]> Cutlip-Mason, Rená E <[redacted]>; Ridley, Sasha M [redacted] Simanski, John F <[redacted]>; Montezemolo, Markus K (Mark) <[redacted]>
Subject: RE: TPS Data Pull for Cameroon, Nepal

Good Afternoon Amany,

I apologize for the delayed response. I've attached the data pull. Our Reports and Analysis Branch (RAB) followed the same procedure as the previous request for Afghanistan and South Sudan.

For the receipt information, the receipts were passed through NexGen to identify any receipt associated with a Statement of Findings (SOF). There were only 5 Fraud Found SOFs for the 19,124 receipts.

Regarding the FDNS NexGen record association, we removed duplicate alien numbers, which returned 18,846 unique alien numbers. Those a-numbers were passed through NexGen to identity if the individual was the primary entity on a National Security, Fraud or Public Safety record. RAB provided a few summary tables in the workbook to show the results of this pull, as well as a table on whether the alien number is associated with any Fraud, Public Safety, or National Security Record.

Please let us know if you have any further questions.

Thank you,

Janna

Janna Austin
Acting Chief of Staff
FDNS Front Office
Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
Cell: [redacted]

From: Ezeldin, Amany S <[redacted]>
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 3:19 PM
To: Block, Andrew J <[redacted]>; Austin, Janna C <[redacted]>; Sanger, Jennifer E <[redacted]>; Heffner, Morgan L <[redacted]>; Dombek, Christopher D

<[redacted]>
Cc: Knechtges, Eric A <[redacted]>; Sotomayor, Paloma <[redacted]>
Cutlip-Mason, Rená E <[redacted]>; Ridley, Sasha M <[redacted]>
Simanski, John F <[redacted]>; Montezemolo, Markus K (Mark) <[redacted]>
Subject: RE: TPS Data Pull for Cameroon, Nepal

Hi Janna,

I'm following up since Andrew is out of the office, and I'm not sure if he may have received a response that I didn't see. Is there an update on this data request? I'm also noting that we should be giving more lead time for responses, and we'll be sure to provide as much time in advance as possible moving forward.

Thanks,
Amany

From: Block, Andrew J <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 8:48 AM
To: Austin, Janna C <[redacted]>; Sanger, Jennifer E <[redacted]>; Heffner, Morgan L <[redacted]>; Dombek, Christopher D <[redacted]>
Cc: Knechtges, Eric A <[redacted]>; Sotomayor, Paloma <[redacted]>
Cutlip-Mason, Rená E <[redacted]>; Ezeldin, Amany S <[redacted]>
Ridley, Sasha M <[redacted]>; Simanski, John F <[redacted]>; Montezemolo, Markus K (Mark) <[redacted]>
Subject: RE: TPS Data Pull for Cameroon, Nepal

Thank you, Janna! Yes, we'll provide more lead time in the future.

Andrew Block
Program Analyst
Office of Policy & Strategy
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
Cell: [redacted]

From: Austin, Janna C <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 11:42 AM
To: Block, Andrew J <[redacted]>; Sanger, Jennifer E <[redacted]>; Heffner, Morgan L <[redacted]>; Dombek, Christopher D <[redacted]>
Cc: Knechtges, Eric A <[redacted]>; Sotomayor, Paloma <[redacted]>
Cutlip-Mason, Rená E <[redacted]>; Ezeldin, Amany S <[redacted]>
Ridley, Sasha M <[redacted]>; Simanski, John F <[redacted]>; Montezemolo, Markus K (Mark) <[redacted]>
Subject: RE: TPS Data Pull for Cameroon, Nepal

Good Morning, Andrew,

I am so sorry for the delayed response. Yes, our Systems integration Division Reports and Analysis Branch is working on the data pull and should be able to have the data to you by COB Wednesday. If possible, could you provide at least a week on future requests? This team receives a significant number of data requests and any additional lead time you can provide is very much appreciated.

Thank you so much,

Janna

Janna Austin
Acting Chief of Staff
FDNS Front Office
Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
Cell: [redacted]

From: Block, Andrew J <[redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 11:38 AM
To: Austin, Janna C <[redacted]>; Sanger, Jennifer E [redacted] Heffner, Morgan L <[redacted]; Dombek, Christopher D <[redacted]
Cc: Knechtges, Eric A <[redacted]; Sotomayor, Paloma <[redacted] Cutlip-Mason, Rená E <[redacted] Ezeldin, Amany S [redacted] Ridley, Sasha M <[redacted]
Subject: RE: TPS Data Pull for Cameroon, Nepal

Hello All – Just checking in to confirm whether you're able to provide the analysis we requested. Thank you again for your help.

Andrew Block
Program Analyst
Office of Policy & Strategy
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
Cell: [redacted]

From: Block, Andrew J
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 3:29 PM
To: Austin, Janna C <[redacted]>; Sanger, Jennifer E <[redacted]>; Heffner, Morgan L <[redacted]; Dombek, Christopher D <[redacted]
Cc: Knechtges, Eric A <[redacted]; Sotomayor, Paloma <[redacted] Cutlip-Mason, Rená E <[redacted] Ezeldin, Amany S <[redacted] Ridley, Sasha M <[redacted]
Subject: RE: TPS Data Pull for Cameroon, Nepal

Hi All – Some folks are out this afternoon, so for the sake of keeping this moving, I've attached the spreadsheet from OPQ.

Would a deadline of **COB Wednesday, March 26** be feasible for receiving the results?

Andrew Block
Program Analyst
Office of Policy & Strategy
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
Cell: [redacted]

From: Block, Andrew J
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 10:02 AM
To: Austin, Janna C <[redacted]>
Cc: Heffner, Morgan L <[redacted]>; Dombek, Christopher D <[redacted]>; Knechtges, Eric A <[redacted]>; Sotomayor, Paloma <[redacted]>; Cutlip-Mason, Rená E <[redacted]>; Vagle, Ruhee V <[redacted]>; Miller, Kelley K <[redacted]>; El-Hage, Rabia S <[redacted]>; Salazar, Carly L <[redacted]>; Ezeldin, Amany S <[redacted]>; Sanger, Jennifer E <[redacted]>; Ridley, Sasha M <[redacted]>
Subject: TPS Data Pull for Cameroon, Nepal

Hi Janna,

I work in OP&S on the TPS program, and we'd like to ask for another analysis like the one you arranged for Afghanistan and South Sudan. This time it's for Cameroon and Nepal.

I have a spreadsheet from OPQ with all the information that I believe is needed to run the data. If I send you the spreadsheet shortly, do you think you'd be able to share the results of the analysis next week? I plan to send it under separate cover with fewer recipients because of the PII.

Best regards,
Andrew

Andrew Block
Program Analyst
Office of Policy & Strategy
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
Cell: [redacted]

From: Blatt, Rebecca A <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2025 12:15 PM
To: Austin, Janna C <[redacted]> Sanger, Jennifer E <[redacted]>
Cc: Dombek, Christopher D <[redacted]>; Heffner, Morgan L <[redacted]>; Knechtges, Eric A <[redacted]>; Sotomayor, Paloma <[redacted]>; Ridley, Sasha M <[redacted]> Cutlip-Mason, Rená E <[redacted]>; Vagle, Ruhee V <[redacted]> Miller, Kelley K <[redacted]>; Block, Andrew J <[redacted]>; Ezeldin, Amany S <[redacted]>
Subject: TPS Data Pull for PS/NS/Fraud

Hi Janna and Jen—

OP&S is working on improving the TPS decision memos and we are adding a national interest analysis. Right now, we are focusing on Afghanistan and South Sudan. I'm including Chris and Morgan for vis as they've helped with similar review in the past and might be able to provide insight. The last time we looked at this was a little over a year ago re: NCTC checks and what information we were finding.

We are wanting to provide data/analysis in our TPS decision memo. For example, "X Afghan individuals have a record indicating Public Safety" etc. We can also ask what Thierry/DO is doing with the TSDS to do a reverse look up for this population to make sure we are not missing anyone w/ a NS record.

I'm not sure if the best route here is to pull it from ELIS to see what TPS applicants have a security check hit or if it's better to pull from NexGen for I-821s from AFG and S. Sudan?

Please let me know if a call is better.

Thank you,

Rebecca Blatt
Division Chief |Security and Public Safety Division
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services | Office of Policy & Strategy
[redacted]