

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 17, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20016

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretaries Nielsen and Pompeo:

We write to urge you to extend and re-designate Somalia for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) before the deadline on July 19, 2018. We believe the country's conditions continue to meet the standards for TPS extension, and failing to extend this protection could subject returnees to unnecessary violence, human rights abuses, and possibly death.

Somalia was first designated for TPS in September, 1991 due to extraordinary and temporary conditions in the country. Somalia was re-designated in 2001 and 2012. Most recently, TPS designation for Somalia was extended through September 17, 2018 because conditions in the country, including "(1) ongoing armed conflict and (2) extraordinary and temporary conditions that prevent Somali nationals from returning to Somalia in safety," continued to warrant TPS designation.¹

These conditions continue to persist, therefore extension and re-designation of Somalia for TPS is necessary and justified. The State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices, released in April, 2018, states, "Clan militias and al-Shabaab continued to commit grave abuses throughout the country, including extrajudicial and politically motivated killings; disappearances; cruel and unusual punishment; rape; and attacks on employees of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the United Nations. They also blocked humanitarian assistance, conscripted child soldiers, and restricted freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and movement."² The report notes that there has been a rise in al-Shabaab recruitment of children, killings by clan militias, violence directed at humanitarian organizations, and internal displacement.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia similarly reported that "the overall security situation remains volatile."³ In October, 2017, Somalia witnessed its deadliest terrorist attack to date in a suicide attack that killed an estimated 512 people. The UN Mission also reported that as a result of a severe drought in early 2017, more than six million people continue to face food insecurity and that by the end of 2018 1.2 million children could be malnourished.

¹ Extension of the Designation of Somalia for Temporary Protected Status, 82 Fed. Reg. 4905 (Jan. 17, 2017), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/17/2016-31861/extension-of-the-designation-of-somalia-for-temporary-protected-status>.

² U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2017 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (April 20, 2018) <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2017/af/277045.htm>.

³ U.N. Security Council, Report of the Secretary General on Somalia (May 2, 2018), <http://undocs.org/S/2018/411>; U.N. Security Council, Report of the Secretary General on Somalia (Dec. 26, 2017), http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2017/1109.

On July 9, 2018, the State Department issued a travel advisory that warns U.S. citizens not to travel to the country due to “crime, terrorism, and piracy.”⁴ Clearly, there is considerable risk that Somali nationals forced to return to their home country would face significant danger and unsafe conditions.

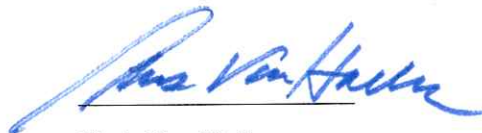
In 1990, Congress established TPS as a form of humanitarian relief for foreign nationals in the United States who would not be able to safely return to their home countries or for countries that would not be able to handle the return of nationals due to extraordinary conditions.⁵ Since then, this protection has helped protect immigrants from returning to dangerous conditions and helped designated countries better focus their efforts to allow for a safe reintegration in the future.

We believe the conditions in Somalia clearly meet the statutory standards for TPS designation, and that forcing Somali TPS holders to return would subject them to extreme risk of violence, death, and human rights abuses. Given the violence and humanitarian crisis in Somalia, the re-designation and extension of TPS for Somalia is necessary to protect this vulnerable population.

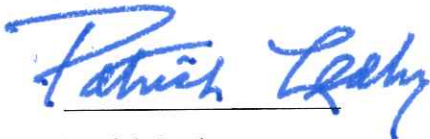
Sincerely,



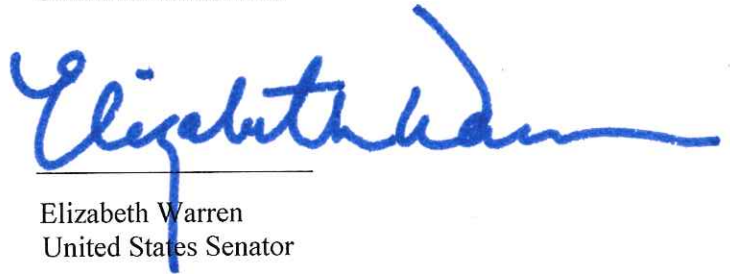
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

⁴ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, *Somalia International Travel Information* (July 9, 2018), <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Somalia.html>.

⁵ 8 U.S.C. §1254a.

Mazie K. Hirono

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United States Senator

Bernard Sanders

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Ben Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

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Chris Coons

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Tim Kaine

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley

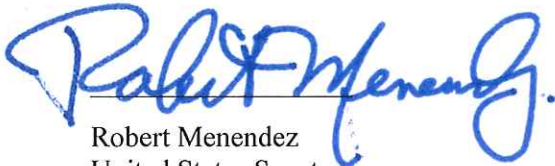
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United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Doug Jones
United States Senator