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for Economic Justice

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January 5, 2018

The Honorable Kristjen Nielsen

Secretary

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

3801 Nebraska Avenue NW Washington, D.C. 20528

RE: EXTENDING THE LIFESAVING TPS DESIGNATION FOR EL SALVADOR FOR AT  
LEAST ANOTHER 18 MONTHS

Dear Secretary Nielsen,

A multi-faith organization, **Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice** "educates, organizes, and mobilizes the faith community to accompany workers and their families in their struggle for good jobs, dignity, and justice." Together with the diverse undersigned faith leaders and faith-based organizations, **we ask that you extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for El Salvador migrants for at least another 18 months.** Our traditions demand that we welcome refugees, immigrants, and sojourners. **Leviticus 19:33-34** reminds us: "Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God." **Matthew 25** records Jesus saying: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. ... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." **Surah 2:177** of the Quran teaches that: "Righteousness is not the mere turning of your faces toward the East or West. Rather, true righteousness dwells in one ... who gives of his wealth in charity to close relatives and orphans, and to the indigent and the wayfarer, and to beggars...."

Approximately 200,000 Salvadorans currently live in the U.S. as TPS holders. TPS holders are an integral part of the fabric of our community. They worship in our congregations, they are our caretakers, our teachers, our entrepreneurs, and they are our neighbors. Salvadoran TPS holders not only contribute to our nation's economy, but many of them are also parents to 192,700 U.S. citizen children, as well as spouses and partners to permanent legal residents.

Salvadoran TPS holders are living under the shadow of a January 8th deadline, when a decision must be made whether to extend TPS or not; we strongly urge you to grant an 18-month extension. When Salvadoran TPS was extended in 2016, the U.S. government cited persisting dire climate conditions, which were "brought about by numerous natural disasters, including hurricanes, tropical storms, flooding, volcanic seismic activity, prolonged drought that caused widespread food and water insecurity [and] the spread of mosquito-borne illnesses." These crises continue to plague El Salvador and impede El Salvador's recovery. In addition El Salvador has the highest murder rate in the world, and Salvadorans are subjected to numerous violent human rights abuses.

About 90 percent of children who entered the United States through the Central American Minors (CAM) program, fleeing violence or persecution in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala have a parent or guardian in the United States who is a TPS holder. Terminating El Salvador's TPS designation would jeopardize the lives of these children. As primary caregivers are stripped of TPS and become eligible for removal, families would be at increased risk of separation.

As people of faith, we hold before us the obligation of welcoming all who need refuge. We pray that you may find compassion and urge you to extend El Salvador's TPS designation for at least another 18 months, as it currently does not have the infrastructure or institutions to adequately handle the return of its nationals.

Blessings,

Rabbi Jonathan Klein, Executive Director

And The 240 Undersigned<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Affiliations for Identification Purposes

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 Rabbi Dr. Mel Gottlieb, Orthodox  
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 Sister. Diane Smith, Sister Of St. Joseph  
 Rev. Dr. Eric Smith, UMC  
 Rabbi Joel Soffin, Reform  
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 Deacon Minh Tong  
 Pastor Frederick Trost, United Church Of Christ  
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U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

March 8, 2018

Rabbi Jonathan Klein  
Executive Director  
Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice  
464 Lucas Avenue #202  
Los Angeles, California 90017

Dear Rabbi Klein:

Thank you for your January 5, 2018 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Secretary Nielsen asked that I respond on her behalf.

I appreciate your interest in the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for El Salvador. The Secretary of Homeland Security's authority to designate a country for TPS and to extend or terminate a country's existing designation is based upon specific statutory criteria. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) § 244(b). U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is principally responsible for advising the Secretary on TPS issues and implementing the program.

At least 60 days before the current expiration date for a TPS designation, the Secretary must review conditions in the foreign country and, after consultation with other appropriate federal agencies, determine whether the statutory conditions for TPS continue to be met. Under the INA, if the Secretary determines that the conditions for designation are no longer met with respect to a country, the Secretary is required to terminate the designation. *See* INA § 244(b)(1),(3).

Secretary Nielsen decided to terminate the TPS designation for El Salvador after considering information from several U.S. Government sources, with a delay of 18 months to allow for an orderly transition before the designation terminates on September 9, 2019. DHS is committed to an orderly transition that will allow time for El Salvador to prepare for the return and reintegration of its citizens. USCIS will work with the State Department and the government of El Salvador to help inform relevant stakeholders in-country and in the United States to ensure an orderly return and reintegration of El Salvador's citizens. Additional details on the Secretary's decision and the process for current El Salvador TPS beneficiaries to renew their work authorization documentation until TPS terminates on September 9, 2019, can be found on the USCIS website and in the notice that was published in the *Federal Register* on January 18, 2018.

Rabbi Jonathan Klein

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Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Please feel free to share this information with your co-signers. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. Francis Cissna". The signature is stylized, with the first letters of the first and last names being prominent.

L. Francis Cissna  
Director