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DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE

## Congress of the United States House of Representatives

January 29, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
300 7th Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20024

SCANNED/RECEIVED  
BY ESEC/SEC  
2018 JAN 30 AM 8:02

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

In light of the Administration deciding to imperil the lives of tens of thousands of people in the United States as Temporary Protected Status (TPS) beneficiaries, I write to urge you to extend the existing TPS for Syrian nationals (and individuals without nationality who last habitually resided in Syria) because it is still unsafe for those individuals to return to Syria due to ongoing civil war. TPS designation has allowed Syrians to reside in and be physically present in the United States since March 29, 2012. This status was granted because the ongoing armed conflict in the region contributed to a deterioration of the country and a severe disruption of living conditions.

Since the conflict in Syria began, more than 5.4 million people have fled the bombs and bullets that have devastated their home country. Millions more have been displaced inside Syria's borders. President Bashar al-Assad's regime has shown no interest in relenting in his crusade to dismantle his country and destroy the future for millions of Syrians. This continuing threat coupled with the presence of the Islamic State has caused widespread insecurity for Syrians. Finally, the civil war has created a brutal and violent environment in which international humanitarian organizations have faced severe obstacles to access to cities across Syria.

The ongoing civil war in Syria has continued to prevent individuals from returning safely home. Given that basic humanitarian assistance -- including medical care, food, and supplies -- is often unavailable for those in need of relief, Syrians face serious danger in returning home. Extending TPS for Syrians recognizes that the conditions that led to the initial TPS designation have not positively changed, and in many ways have worsened. Further, when former Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano granted TPS, it was made clear that DHS would conduct full background checks on Syrians registering for TPS. As a result, there should be no security concern with allowing Syrians who received TPS to continue to remain in the United States.

The ongoing civil war in Syria has created extraordinary conditions that prevent Syrian nationals from safely returning home. I await your assurance that critical TPS benefits for Syrians will be extended ahead of March 31, 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Pascrell Jr." The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bill" and last name "Pascrell" being more prominent, and "Jr." written in a smaller, simpler script at the end.

Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

February 22, 2018

The Honorable Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Pascrell:

Thank you for your January 29, 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 Syria. The Secretary of Homeland Security's authority to designate or redesignate 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).

After carefully considering relevant conditions in Syria and the statutory TPS requirements, Secretary Nielsen decided to extend the TPS designation for Syria for 18 months, through September 30, 2019. Prior to the conclusion of this 18-month extension, the Secretary will review conditions in Syria and, after consultation with other appropriate federal agencies, determine whether another extension, a redesignation, or a termination is warranted, in full compliance with the INA. Additional information on the extension of TPS for Syria can be found in Secretary Nielsen's January 31, 2018 announcement of the decision posted on the DHS website, on the USCIS website, and in a notice that will be published in the *Federal Register*.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (202) 272-1940.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "LFC", written over a horizontal line.

L. Francis Cissna  
Director