

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2024

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th St, SW
Washington, DC 20528

Secretary Antony Blinken
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St, NW
Washington, DC 20451

RECEIVED

By ESEC at 11:51 am, Mar 22, 2024

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken,

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to advance protections for refugees and asylees who make significant contributions to the American economy. We are writing today to urge you to review country conditions and consider the designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ecuador.

As you know, Section 244A(b)(1)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act grants the Administration the authority to denote TPS to the nationals of a particular country if requiring the return of their nationals to that state would pose a serious threat to their personal safety.

Long considered a bastion of peace in the region, Ecuador has seen a sharp rise in violence for the last couple of years, with violent deaths nearly doubling between 2022 and 2023.¹ In response to the rise in cartel-related violence, President Noboa instituted a 60-day state of emergency on January 8th and later declared the country to be in an “internal armed conflict,” imposing a nationwide curfew and authorizing the military to patrol the streets and take control of prisons.² Since January 9th, the Ecuadorian Military has detained more than 3,200 individuals and recovered thousands of pieces of weapons and ammunition.³ Despite these measures, armed groups continue to threaten the press, medical institutions, community leaders, and the public at large.

¹ Symmes Cobb, J., & Valencia, A. (2024, January 19). *What is happening in Ecuador?* | Reuters. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/what-is-happening-ecuador-2024-01-10/>

² Ecuador, U. S. M. (2024, January 17). *Message for U.S. citizens nationwide state of emergency*. U.S. Embassy & Consulate in Ecuador. <https://ec.usembassy.gov/message-for-u-s-citizens-nationwide-state-of-emergency-2/>

³ Salazar. (2024, January 23). *Más de 3.000 Detenidos registra El Bloque de Seguridad en Ecuador*. Seguridad | Noticias | El Universo. <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/seguridad/mas-de-3000-detenidos-bloque-de-seguridad-estado-excepcion-ecuador-seguridad-toque-queda-nota/>

While the Biden Administration has offered assistance to the Ecuadorian Government, this does not address the more than 450,000⁴ Ecuadorian immigrants living in the United States. In addition, Ecuador has been the second-highest source country for asylum seekers in New York City since 2022.⁵ Despite the well-documented insecurity that drove these constituents to make the perilous journey through the Darién Gap, many of them are in removal proceedings and face imminent deportation. A TPS designation would allow many in our Ecuadorian community to breathe a sigh of relief by keeping families together and making them eligible for work authorization to support themselves.

We must protect our Ecuadorian constituents from deportation to a conflict zone. We urge you to consider a TPS Designation for Ecuador.

Sincerely,



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress
Chairwoman, Congressional
Hispanic Caucus

⁴ Pew Research Center. (2023, August 16). *Ecuadorian-origin population in the U.S., 2000-2021*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/chart/us-hispanics-ecuadorian-origin-population/>

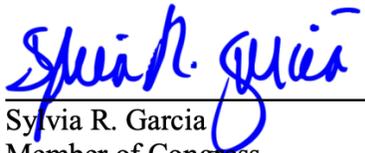
⁵ Sahalie, D. (2023, August 30). *Venezuela, Ecuador, and Colombia are top countries of origin for NYC asylum-seekers*. City & State New York. <https://www.cityandstateny.com/policy/2023/08/venezuela-and-colombia-are-top-countries-origin-nyc-asylum-seekers/389888/>



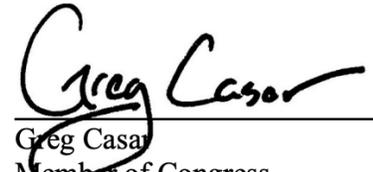
Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



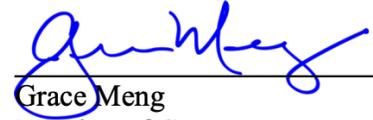
Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



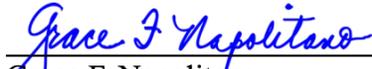
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress


Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

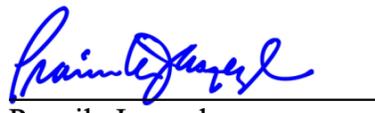

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

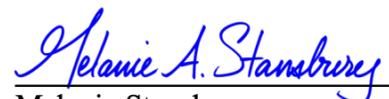

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress


James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

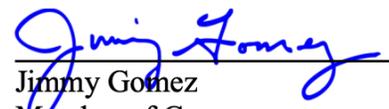

Cori Bush
Member of Congress


Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress


Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress


Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress


Jim Himes
Member of Congress


Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

April 3, 2024

The Honorable Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Ocasio-Cortez:

Thank you for your March 22, 2024 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requesting Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ecuadorian citizens in the United States. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a country for TPS and extend or terminate a country's existing TPS designation based upon specific statutory criteria. In order to designate a country for TPS or extend a country's TPS designation, the Secretary must find one or more of the following:

- (1) there is an ongoing armed conflict within the country that would pose a serious threat to the personal safety of the country's nationals if they were returned;
- (2) there has been an environmental disaster resulting in a substantial, but temporary, disruption of the living conditions in the area affected, the country is temporarily unable to handle adequately the return of its nationals, and the country has officially requested TPS designation; or
- (3) there exist extraordinary and temporary conditions in the country that prevent nationals from returning in safety, and the Secretary does not find that permitting the country's nationals to remain temporarily in the United States would be contrary to the national interest of the United States.

To determine TPS eligibility, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) relies upon specific requirements found in federal statutes and policies. You can find more information about these requirements under the "Eligibility Requirements" heading at uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status.

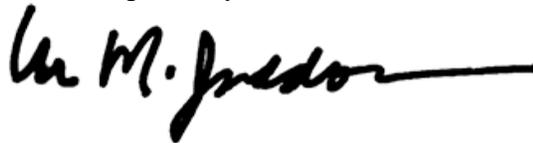
I appreciate your concerns and the information you shared about conditions in Ecuador. Please be assured DHS continues to monitor conditions in Ecuador and remains committed to administering its programs, including TPS, in an equitable manner. DHS also offers immigration relief and applies flexibilities that may be available upon request to eligible individuals in the United States affected by emergencies or unforeseen circumstances. Such relief and flexibilities may include:

- Change or extension of nonimmigrant status, if eligible nationals are currently in the United States, even if the request is filed after the authorized period of admission has expired;
- Expedited processing of requests for advance parole documents;
- Expedited adjudication of requests for off-campus employment authorization for eligible F-1 students experiencing severe economic hardship;
- Expedited adjudication of employment authorization applications, where appropriate;
- Assistance if applicants received a Request for Evidence or a Notice of Intent to Deny and were unable to appear for an interview, submit evidence, or respond in a timely manner because of the circumstances; and
- Expedited replacement of lost or damaged immigration or travel documents issued by USCIS, such as a Permanent Resident Card (Green Card).

More information is available at <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/immigration-relief-in-emergencies-or-unforeseen-circumstances>.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The cosigners of your letter will receive a separate, identical response. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (240) 721-3801.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director