

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 9, 2023

The Honorable President Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

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

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

RECEIVED

By ESEC at 12:52 pm, Nov 09, 2023

Dear President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Secretary Blinken,

We are writing to urge you to review country conditions and designate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Mali. The ongoing armed conflict, persistence of violence and human rights violations, abuses perpetrated by State and non-State actors, along with both targeted and indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population make the safe return of Malians impossible.

As you know, the administration can grant TPS to foreign nationals if their country of origin is impacted by armed conflict, unprecedented natural disaster, or other extraordinary, temporary conditions. Mali has been experiencing heightened levels of political and economic instability, and a security crisis since a military coup in 2012.¹ Despite being engaged in a democratization process since 1991, Mali's political tensions have resulted in coups in 2020 and 2021.² Widespread human rights violations and abuses against civilians, including war crimes, have been attributed to armed extremist groups, ethnic militias, and government security forces.³

After an economic recession in 2020, Mali's economic recovery in 2021 was weaker than initially projected and poverty continues to accelerate.⁴ Consequently, the country is experiencing extreme poverty and food insecurity, with limited access to safe drinking water, healthcare, and other necessary resources. Additionally, climate change related environmental challenges have impacted the sustainable use of natural resources, resulting in desertification, mining, loss of biodiversity, and water pollution.⁵

Of the 12.9 million people affected by these crises in 2022, 6.3 million are in need of humanitarian assistance.⁶ The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has projected for 2022, that the persistence of State absence, rampant impunity, and widespread armed

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali%E2%80%99s-unfortunate-military-coup-unnecessary-setback-democracy>

² <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/mali/>

³ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/mali>

⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-economic-update-resilience-uncertain-times-renewing-social-contract>

⁵ <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/MLI>

⁶ <https://gho.unocha.org/mali>

violence will continue to generate multiple and protracted displacements, further accentuating the civilian population's vulnerabilities and increasing the risk of community tensions.⁷ Due to the current extraordinary and temporary country conditions, Malians would be placed at serious risk if returned. These conditions have also contributed to significant hardship to Malian students in the U.S. As a result, we additionally request DHS to issue Special Student Relief (SSR) in conjunction with a designation of TPS.

Accompanying the TPS designation, we request a culturally relevant outreach campaign to the impacted community. It is essential that the administration prioritizes equity in the consideration of TPS for Mali and all countries whose conditions meet TPS requirements, regardless of their racial makeup. We thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to working with you on taking the necessary measures to protect the Malian community in the United States.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



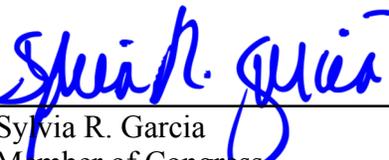
Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

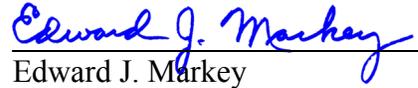
⁷ <https://gho.unocha.org/mali>



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



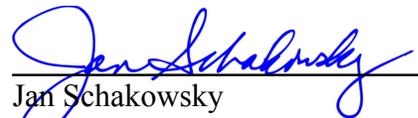
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



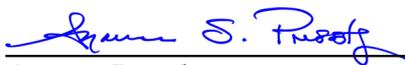
Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



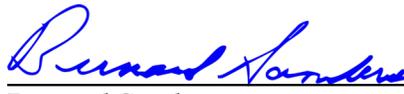
Zoë Lofgren
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



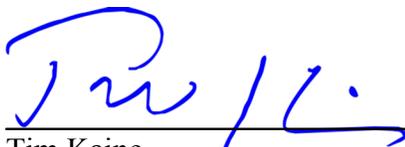
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



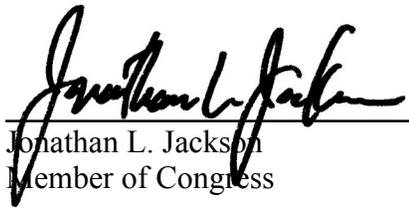
Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress



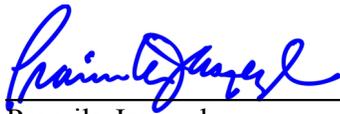
Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Cori Bush
Member of Congress



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

March 1, 2024

The Honorable Yvette D. Clarke
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Clarke:

Thank you for your November 9, 2023 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in support of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Mali and Special Student Relief (SSR) for Malian students. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

I appreciate the concerns you have outlined regarding the situation in Mali and your interest in its designation for TPS. DHS is committed to administering its programs, including TPS, in an equitable manner and makes decisions to designate TPS after consultation with interagency partners and careful consideration of the circumstances in the particular country. Please be assured DHS is monitoring conditions in Mali. As you noted, 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. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act § 244(b)(1), 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(b)(1).

DHS, pursuant to federal regulations, also makes decisions to authorize SSR due to emergent circumstances, after consultation with interagency partners, and careful consideration of the conditions in the country in question. Under SSR regulations, DHS may suspend the applicability of certain minimum course load requirements and employment limitations, allowing eligible F-1 nonimmigrant students to apply to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for employment authorization. DHS continues to assess whether to suspend certain regulatory requirements for certain F-1 nonimmigrant students from Mali.

In addition to employment benefits available under SSR, federal regulations allow eligible students in F status, who are experiencing severe economic hardship caused by circumstances beyond their control, to apply to USCIS for off-campus employment authorization. These circumstances can include unexpected changes in the financial condition of their source of support.

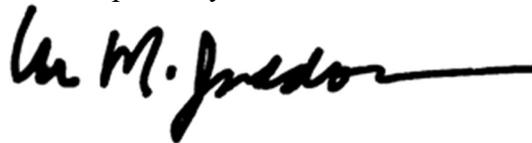
For your reference, in addition to TPS, USCIS may, upon request, grant immigration relief to eligible noncitizens affected by emergencies or unforeseen circumstances. Such relief may include the following actions:

- 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 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 due to the circumstances; and
- 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", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director