

November 14, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20520

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

RE: ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR REVIEW OF COUNTRY CONDITIONS AND DESIGNATION OF TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR PAKISTAN

Dear President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Secretary Blinken,

The undersigned 146 state, local, and national climate justice, civil rights, immigrant rights, human rights, educational, faith-based, and diaspora organizations write to urge Secretary Mayorkas to review country conditions and **designate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Special Student Relief (SSR) for Pakistan**. An ongoing humanitarian and climate crisis in Pakistan makes the return of its nationals dangerous and inconceivable. Catastrophic flooding has left one-third of Pakistan underwater, and devastated the country's healthcare, education, and agricultural infrastructure.¹ It has resulted in the displacement of 7.9 million people, impacted more than 33 million people, and caused the death of at least 1600 people and counting.² After record flooding, the UN health agency warned that the country is on the verge of a public health crisis as millions suffer from waterborne diseases.³ We believe that the ongoing environmental and humanitarian situation, and extraordinary and temporary conditions in Pakistan warrant an immediate designation of TPS and SSR.

I. Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Special Student Relief (SSR)

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a humanitarian protection and may be used in any circumstance that warrants it under the statute. The Secretary of Homeland Security can designate a country for TPS if the country is experiencing ongoing armed conflict, natural disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions. TPS allows its beneficiaries to stay in the United States during the designation period and receive work permits. It is a life-saving, blanket protection, that allows people from a designated country to remain in the United States while conditions in their home country make safe return impossible.

¹ Katelyn Weisbrod, "In Pakistan, 33 Million People Have Been Displaced by Climate-Intensified Floods," *Inside Climate News*, September 16, 2022, <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/16092022/pakistan-flood-displacement/>.

² International Federation of Red Cross And Red Crescent Societies, "Pakistan: Monsoon Floods - Operation Update #2," ReliefWeb, October 4, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-monsoon-floods-operation-update-2-mdrpk023>.

³ "Pakistan on Verge of Health Disaster after Record Floods, WHO Warns," *This Day*, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/10/05/pakistan-on-verge-of-health-disaster-after-record-floods-who-warns/>.

Special Student Relief (SSR) by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) gives international students more flexibility related to their duration of status, course load, and employment eligibility in recognition of emergency circumstances occurring in their home countries.⁴ SSR is an option when emergent circumstances occur in a given country—“world events that affect F-1 Students from a particular region and create significant financial hardships, such as but not limited to: natural disasters, wars, and military conflicts.”⁵

II. Conditions that warrant a designation of TPS for Pakistan

A. Devastating floods in Pakistan

Around 33 million people, including approximately 16 million children, have been affected by this year’s heavy monsoon rains in Pakistan, which have brought devastating rains, floods, and landslides.⁶ More than 7.9 million people have been temporarily displaced and are in need of assistance.⁷ More than 1,400 health facilities had been fully or partially damaged and access to “health facilities, healthcare workers, and essential medicines and medical supplies” remained the main healthcare challenge, the World Health Organization (WHO) concluded through their study.⁸ Extreme weather events, driven by climate change, are increasingly contributing to community displacement and new patterns of internal and global migration.

B. Humanitarian crisis

Ranked the eighth most vulnerable country to global warming,⁹ Pakistan is currently underwater due to eight consecutive weeks of flooding. Relief agencies have warned that the wait for the water to even recede could last at least six months.¹⁰ In the interim, millions of people have no access to clean potable water or safe shelter and have lost their ability to work the lands impacted by the floods in a country, where agriculture is the predominant source of livelihood.¹¹ Over 1.1 million houses have been washed away as a result of the flooding and an estimated

⁴ “Special Student Relief | Study in the States,” Department of Homeland Security, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/special-student-relief>; Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, *Resources to Support International Students and Scholars from Countries Experiencing Violent Conflict and Humanitarian Crises*, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://www.presidentsalliance.org/policy-brief-automatic-special-student-relief-announcement-to-accompany-temporary-protected-status-country-designation/>.

⁵ Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, “Automatic Special Student Relief Announcement to Accompany Temporary Protected Status Country Designation”, March 1, 2022, <https://www.presidentsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2022-03-01-TPS-SSR-Memo-Final.pdf>.

⁶ “Devastating Floods in Pakistan,” UNICEF, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/devastating-floods-pakistan-2022>.

⁷ Id.

⁸ Amir Khan, “Pakistan Floods: A Health Crisis of Epic Proportions,” *Al Jazeera*, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/9/13/pakistan-floods-health-crisis-of-epic-proportions>.

⁹ “Pakistan Ranked 8th Most Vulnerable Country Due to Climate Change: NA Told,” *Digital Associated Press of Pakistan*, August 10, 2022, <https://www.app.com.pk/national/pakistan-ranked-8th-most-vulnerable-country-due-to-climate-change-na-told/>.

¹⁰ “Pakistan Floods: Six Month Wait for Water to Recede, Warn Relief Agencies,” *UN News*, September 20, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1127051>.

¹¹ “Pakistan Floods: ‘So Many People Needed Help,’” Doctors Without Borders - USA, September 9, 2022, <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/pakistan-floods-so-many-people-needed-help>; Overseas Development Institute, “Rural Livelihood Vulnerability in Semi-Arid Pakistan: Scope of Migration as an Adaptation Strategy,” ReliefWeb, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/rural-livelihood-vulnerability-semi-arid-pakistan-scope-migration-adaptation>.

18,000 schools have been destroyed, a vital need for education for children and the community.¹² The “2022 Pakistan Floods Response Plan (FRP)” was jointly launched by the Government of Pakistan and the United Nations, in Islamabad and Geneva.¹³ The resulting humanitarian crisis would only be exacerbated by an intake of Pakistani nationals if returned from the United States, as the country is unable to handle the return of nationals.

While the country has openly declared the need for humanitarian aid, the underlying fears of economic downfall are stoked by dwindling remittances from foreign countries. The inflow of remittances in Pakistan from foreign countries fell 12.3% in September 2022.¹⁴ Remittances are key to the country’s foreign exchange reserves, as the second largest source of foreign exchange in the country.¹⁵ Remittances sent by millions of Pakistani migrants worldwide have supported the country’s economy by improving livelihoods and easing the pressure at times of economic crisis, such as energy crises, food insecurity, and higher foreign debt repayments.¹⁶ In these difficult times of humanitarian crisis and political instability, the economics of remittances are necessary to rebuild the country. A designation of TPS and SSR would allow Pakistani immigrants including students the ability to work in the country and provide relief to their families back home while improving the economy.

C. Political crisis

The catastrophic crisis has been compounded by the lack of resources. Decades of political instability have displaced over a million people, a number that has consistently grown over the years.¹⁷ The constitutional crisis under ex-prime minister Imran Khan and the uncertainty of elections and security have escalated matters. The situation has been impacted by the current geo-political relationships with the United States. Since losing power, Khan has stoked populist fury with unfounded conspiracy theories accusing the United States of orchestrating his removal.¹⁸ He welcomed the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and embraced Vladimir Putin the day of the Ukraine invasion.¹⁹ Shehbaz Sharif, who replaced Khan following the no-confidence vote, recently stated during an interview that good relations with the United States were critical for Pakistan for better or for worse.²⁰ People in Pakistan have taken to the streets in support,

¹² “Pakistan: More than 6.4 Million in ‘Dire Need’ after Unprecedented Floods,” UN News, September 2, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1126001>.

¹³ Government of Pakistan and UN Country Team in Pakistan, “Joint Launch of 2022 Pakistan Floods Response Plan by Government of Pakistan and the United Nations,” ReliefWeb, August 30, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/joint-launch-2022-pakistan-floods-response-plan-government-pakistan-and-united-nations>.

¹⁴ BR Web Desk, “Remittances Fall 12.3% in September 2022, Amount to \$2.4 Billion,” *Business Recorder*, October 11, 2022, <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40202446>.

¹⁵ International Organization for Migration, “Snapshot: Remittance Inflows to Pakistan during COVID-19,” ReliefWeb, May 17, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/snapshot-remittance-inflows-pakistan-during-covid-19>.

¹⁶ Id; Juniad Ahmed, “Impact of COVID-19: Focusing on Remittance Flows to Pakistan”, ResearchGate, February 2021, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348975138_Impact_of_COVID-19_Focusing_on_Remittance_Flows_to_Pakistan.

¹⁷ “Pakistan Refugee Statistics 1979-2022,” *macrotrends*, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/PAK/pakistan/refugee-statistics>.

¹⁸ “A Political Crisis Is the Last Thing Pakistan Needs,” *The Washington Post*, September 1, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/a-political-crisis-is-the-last-thing-pakistan-needs/2022/08/31/66d83e6a-2996-11ed-a90a-fce4015dfc8f_story.html.

¹⁹ Id.

²⁰ “PM Khan Gone: Pakistan’s Political Crisis Explained in 400 Words,” *Al Jazeera*, April 10, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/10/pakistans-political-crisis-all-you-need-to-know>.

opposition, and frustration with the current crisis. The circumstances are not conducive to the return of Pakistani immigrants from the United States. The ongoing crisis has left many regions of the country uninhabitable and unsafe.²¹ Implementing TPS would allow Pakistani nationals to remain in the United States until Pakistan recovers from this environmental disaster.²²

III. TPS is well established and has been utilized by Congress and prior administrations during natural calamities

The flooding in Pakistan is expected to have implications on U.S. security interests.²³ Congress is expected to evaluate whether or not U.S. assistance in response to the catastrophic floods would serve U.S. interests, especially economic and security objectives.²⁴ Regardless of the conversations around the impact of flooding on the United States, Pakistan's suffering is a direct result of global inaction to the threats of climate change and an unfair consequence for a country that contributes less than one percent to global carbon emissions.²⁵ For a country with CO₂ emission of 0.98% per capita, contributing less than 0.5% to the climate crisis, Pakistan has repeatedly been underfunded and under-resourced by the international community. Governments can no longer ignore their responsibilities to fortify communities vulnerable to global warming, center safe pathways for migration as essential climate adaptations, enact stronger legislation to eliminate carbon emissions, increase mitigation efforts, and implement equitable climate finance like the ***Loss & Damage Finance Facility being discussed under the UN Convention on Climate Change***.²⁶

The U.S. government has provided an estimated \$71 million for development aid to Pakistan for FY2022, with \$84 million requested for FY2023. The funding of over \$1 million in grants, project support, and for programs adapting to address the long-term impact of the 2022 floods is expected to continue.²⁷ USAID has deployed a disaster assistance response team to evaluate the damage and continuing needs.²⁸ The international community must heed demands now and build out a long-term strategy to address the growing displacement of people for reasons related to climate, beyond monetary aid such as reevaluating border policies, reassessing country obligations to asylum seekers, and proactively creating safe pathways for those whose homes are affected to ensure a world in which all humans can live with dignity.

²¹ "Following Devastating Flooding In Pakistan, Feinstein, Gillibrand, Colleagues Call on President Biden to Grant Temporary Protected Status to Pakistani Nationals," United States Senator for California Dianne Feinstein, September 21, 2022, <https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2022/9/following-devastating-flooding-in-pakistan-feinstein-gillibrand-colleagues-call-on-president-biden-to-grant-temporary-protected-status-to-pakistani-nationals>.

²² Id

²³ U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Pakistan's 2022 Floods and Implications for U.S. Interests*, IF12211 (2022), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12211>.

²⁴ Id

²⁵ *CO₂ Emissions by Country*, Worldometer, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>.

²⁶ "Introduction to Loss and Damage | UNFCCC," United Nations Climate Change, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/the-big-picture/introduction-to-loss-and-damage>.

²⁷ U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Pakistan's 2022 Floods and Implications for U.S. Interests*.

²⁸ "USAID Deploys a Disaster Assistance Response Team to Respond to Flooding in Pakistan | Press Release," U.S. Agency for International Development, September 2, 2022, <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/sep-02-2022-usaid-deploys-a-disaster-assistance-response-team-to-respond-to-flooding-in-pakistan>.

“Granting TPS to Pakistani nationals in need is a small but consequential step that the United States can take to immediately reduce the human suffering caused by this natural disaster and would reaffirm our stance as a global leader committed to humanitarian relief efforts and protections,” Senators wrote in a letter calling on President Biden to grant TPS to Pakistani nationals residing in the United States.²⁹

IV. Conclusion

We urge the administration to immediately designate TPS and SSR for Pakistan and provide protection for Pakistani immigrants living in the United States who would face unsafe and life-threatening conditions if returned. In addition, we request a registration period of at least a 180-days for those who would benefit, and an outreach campaign to inform the impacted community.

The movement led by diaspora groups highlights that the pattern of designations granted has continued to exclude or delay consideration of Black and Brown majority countries for TPS. The call for TPS and SSR for Pakistan reiterates the need for the designation of all countries that qualify and where individuals are suffering regardless of racial makeup.

Sincerely,

National

10 Votes

18 Million Rising

350.org

Action Aid U.S.

African Communities Together

Alianza Americas

Alliance of South Asian American Labour-Bangladesh Chapter

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

American Immigration Lawyers Association

American Muslim Bar Association

American Pakistani Advocacy Group (APAG)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence

Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)

Brooklyn Emerge, Inc

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

²⁹ “Following Devastating Flooding In Pakistan, Feinstein, Gillibrand, Colleagues Call on President Biden to Grant Temporary Protected Status to Pakistani Nationals,” United States Senator for California Dianne Feinstein, September 21, 2022, <https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2022/9/following-devastating-flooding-in-pakistan-feinstein-gillibrand-colleagues-call-on-president-biden-to-grant-temporary-protected-status-to-pakistani-nationals>.

Church World Service
Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Families Belong Together
Fridays for Future U.S.
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Grassroots Asians Rising
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
Grassroots Leadership
Haitian Bridge Alliance
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights First
ICNA Council for Social Justice
ICNA Relief USA
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Immigration Hub
InReach
Institute for Policy Studies Climate Policy Program
Just Faith/ PaxChristi
Justice For All
League of Conservation Voters
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
MPower Change
Muslim Advocates
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Jewish Women
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Employment Law Project
National Immigration Law Center
National Network for Arab American Communities
National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA)
Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
No Separate Justice
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE)
Pakistani American Youth Society
People's Action
Progressive Technology Project
Project South
RAICES

Refugees International
Seeding Change
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian SOAR
Stand.earth
Sunrise Movement
Tuaam e Miskeen Foundation
UndocuBlack Network
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United We Dream
World Education Services (WES)

State/Local

Adhikaar for Human Rights & Social Justice
Al-Qaasid Foundation
APNA Brooklyn Community Center
Apna Ghar, Inc
Arts & Democracy
Asian American Advocacy Fund
Asian Pacific Environmental Network
Asian Pacific Islander Political Alliance (API PA)
Asian Student Association at UNC Charlotte
CAA AV Organizing Asian Communities
CAIR-WA
Causa Justa :: Just Cause
Chinese for Affirmative Action
Chinese Progressive Association
Church of the Ascension
Connecticut Shoreline Indivisible
Council of Peoples Organization
Darul Uloom, Inc, NY
Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM)
Dorothy Day House, Washington DC
Franciscans for Justice
Greater Cleveland Immigrant Support Network

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder County
Indivisible Chicago-South Side
Indo-American Center
Islamic Civic Association of Staten Island
Jahajee Sisters
Jakara Movement
Just Neighbors Ministry
Kaurageous Love
Lavender Phoenix
Legal Aid Justice Center
Michigan Immigrant Rights Center
Muslim Community Center for Human Services
Muslim Community Network
Muslims for Just Futures
NC Climate Justice Collective
NC WARN
New Hampshire Conference United Church of Christ, Immigrant & Refugee Support Group
New Immigrant Community Empowerment
New York Immigration Coalition
NM Dream Team
NorCal Resist
Northeast Ohio Friends of Immigrants
OPAWL - Building AAPI Feminist Leadership
People's Power Lab
Project Hajra
Pueblo Action Alliance
Rising Voices
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network
Rogue Climate
Sakhi for South Asian Women
SALAM
Sapna NYC
SEAC Village
SF Labor Council / We Rise SF
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York
Social Justice Coalition
South Asian Network
St. James Cathedral Immigrant Assistance

Strangers No Longer
The Advocates for Human Rights
The Legal Aid Society (New York)
The Legal Project
True Alliance Center, Inc
Turning Point for Women and Families
Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA)
Vietlead
Vote Climate
Wallingford Indivisible
Women In Islam, Inc

International

Greenpeace USA
Non-resident Nepali Association of USA (NRN)
PASWO