

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 19, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

RECEIVED
By ESEC at 8:20 am, Nov 20, 2024

Dear President Biden,

We urge you to consider the designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ecuador due to extraordinary and temporary conditions that prevent Ecuadorians from returning safely.

Ecuador is experiencing its deadliest armed conflict, making it the most dangerous country in mainland Latin America.¹ The security situation in Ecuador has sharply deteriorated, with nationals enduring extreme levels of violence. A 2024 Human Rights Watch report for Ecuador notes that Ecuador's homicide rate surged from 13.7 per 100,000 people in 2021 to 25.9 in 2022. In 2023, it escalated further to about 45.² Recent data estimates that in August 2024 the homicide rate was 60 per 100,000 people which is 31.5 times higher than the average daily death rate. A 2023 Gallup poll found that only 27% of Ecuadorians felt safe while walking alone at night marking a new record low.³

In addition to violence, Ecuador has also faced significant environmental challenges, such as the devastating 2016 earthquake and the recent shocks of a 6.8 magnitude earthquake in March 2023, which further strained the country's infrastructure and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis.⁴ These environmental disasters, alongside the ongoing armed violence, present compelling grounds for TPS designation under statutory requirements.

Given the dire circumstances and the statutory grounds for TPS designation, we respectfully ask the Department of Homeland Security to grant TPS for Ecuador. This urgent designation will provide much-needed relief and protection for the 200,000 Ecuadorians currently in the United States, ensuring their safety and well-being amidst the ongoing crises in their home country.

By designating TPS for Ecuador, the Biden Administration can offer vital protection to vulnerable individuals by keeping families together and granting access to work permits while also providing a temporary safe haven. We urge you to act swiftly and compassionately to grant TPS for Ecuador, ensuring that the United States remains a beacon of refuge and support in times of crisis.

Sincerely,

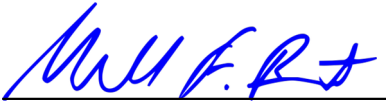
¹ The Economist, (Jan 2024) How Ecuador became Latin America's deadliest country

<https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2024/01/10/how-ecuador-became-latin-americas-deadliest-country>

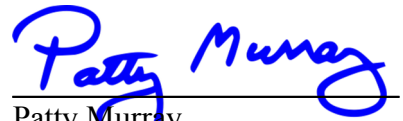
² Human Rights Watch, Ecuador Events of 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/ecuador>

³ Julie Ray, (Sept 2024) Global Safety Starts to Slip, Gallup <https://news.gallup.com/poll/650516/global-safety-starts-slip.aspx>

⁴ International Rescue Committee (March 2024) Crisis in Ecuador: What you need to know and how to help <https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-ecuador-what-you-need-know-and-how-help>



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/

George S. Helmy
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



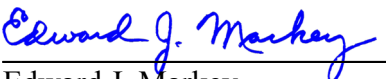
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
The Honorable Anthony Blinken, Secretary, Department of State



December 17, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

Thank you for your November 19, 2024 letter to President Biden requesting a designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ecuador. Your letter was referred to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and 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. To designate a country for TPS or extend a country's TPS designation, the Secretary must find one or more of the following facts: (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.¹

I appreciate the concerns you have outlined regarding the situation in Ecuador and your interest in its designation for TPS. Please be assured DHS is monitoring conditions in Ecuador. 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 of the country.

USCIS also offers support that may be available upon request to assist eligible noncitizens affected by emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.² Such support may include the following assistance:

¹ See Immigration and Nationality Act § 244(b)(1).

² Additional information is available at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website at: uscis.gov/newsroom/immigration-relief-in-emergencies-or-unforeseen-circumstances.

- 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 because of the emergency or unforeseen circumstances; and
- Replacement of lost or damaged immigration or travel documents issued by USCIS, such as a Permanent Resident Card (Green Card).

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