



Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc.

901 S. Highland St. ▪ Arlington, Virginia 22204 ▪ Tel. (703) 685-0510 ▪ Fax (703) 685-0529

Empowering refugees and immigrants since 1983

October 25, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

RECEIVED

By ESEC at 10:41 am, Oct 26, 2022

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

On behalf of myself, ECDC, and our community, I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for Friday's decision to grant Temporary Protective Status (TPS) to Ethiopians residing here. As we have already expressed in our Press Statement, this critical action will offer relief to Ethiopians in the United States who faced a possible return to a country experiencing one of the most devastating wars and humanitarian crises in the world today.

As you know, thousands of Ethiopians are displaced in Sudan refugee camps due to the ongoing civil war. These Ethiopians, who were unexpectedly upended from the daily routines of their lives, are from all walks of life. Among them are university students, medical doctors, teachers and nurses, other professionals, and mothers and children.

The plight of Ethiopian civilians, accurately depicted in the statement from your office, has been "risk of conflict-related violence, including attacks, killings, rape, and other forms of gender-based violence; ethnicity-based detentions; and human rights violations and abuses."

Moreover, the deliberate humanitarian aid blockade and lack of healthcare access, the continuing war, and the ongoing deliberate destruction of civilians' homes, businesses, health centers, and public infrastructure in the places civilians have left, the trauma of separation from their loved ones, and the current precarious living conditions of the overly crowded and resource-constrained refugee camps make the plight of all those living in the camps even worse.

While the TPS offers relief to those already in the U.S., we hope the U.S. will provide a similar resettlement option to those Ethiopians suffering in refugee camps. Moreover, we trust those Ethiopian students impacted by the crisis back home will receive Special Student Relief (SSR).

Since its establishment in 1983, ECDC has worked to empower refugees and immigrants. Since 1991, when ECDC became a national resettlement agency, it has resettled over 60,000 refugees and immigrants from around the world. During the Afghan Refugee Crisis last year, we successfully resettled 7,368 Afghans across the United States through our 22 community-based affiliates and partners. We are currently supporting Ukrainian parolees and hope to welcome Ethiopians facing a similar situation.

We are committed to continuing to empower refugees and immigrants to become self-sufficient, integrated members of American society who, as we know, do contribute in meaningful ways to their local communities. Rest assured that you have our full support in your endeavors to work out TPS for Ethiopians and indeed other designees as well.

Sincerely,

Tsehaye Teferra, Ph.D.
President and CEO



November 16, 2022

Tsehay Teferra
President and CEO
Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc.
901 S. Highland Street
Arlington, VA 22204

Dear Mr. Teferra:

Thank you for your October 25, 2022, letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) expressing your concern for displaced Ethiopians and Ethiopian students in the United States. Secretary Mayorkas asked that I respond on his behalf.

I appreciate the concerns you have expressed and the information you have shared about the conditions in Ethiopia. On October 21, 2022, DHS announced the designation of Ethiopia for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 18 months.¹ Only individuals who are already residing in the United States as of October 20, 2022, will be eligible for TPS.

A country may be designated for TPS when conditions in the country fall into one or more of the three statutory bases for designation: ongoing armed conflict, environmental disaster, or extraordinary and temporary conditions. This designation is based on both ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary and temporary conditions in Ethiopia that prevent Ethiopian nationals, and those of no nationality who last habitually resided in Ethiopia, from returning to Ethiopia safely. Due to the armed conflict, civilians are at risk of conflict-related violence, including attacks, killings, rape, and other forms of gender-based violence; ethnicity-based detentions; and human rights violations and abuses. Extraordinary and temporary conditions that further prevent nationals from returning in safety include a humanitarian crisis involving severe food insecurity, flooding, drought, large-scale displacement, and the impact of disease outbreaks.

This will be Ethiopia's first designation for TPS. Individuals eligible for TPS under this designation must have continuously resided in the United States since October 20, 2022. Individuals who attempt to travel to the United States after October 20, 2022, will not be eligible for TPS under this designation. Ethiopia's 18-month designation will go into effect on the publication date of the forthcoming Federal Register notice. The Federal Register notice will provide instructions for applying for TPS and an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

Additionally, there are a range of humanitarian options available to individuals outside of the United States including processing through the United States Refugee Admissions Program

¹ Additional information is available online at <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/10/21/dhs-designates-ethiopia-temporary-protected-status-18-months>.

(USRAP) for those designated of special humanitarian concern that have received a referral to the USRAP.² Additional humanitarian options can be found on our website at www.uscis.gov/humanitarian.

With respect to Special Student Relief (SSR), DHS may suspend certain regulatory requirements for an F-1 student from parts of the world that are experiencing emergent circumstances. Regulatory requirements that may be suspended or altered for an F-1 student include: duration of status, full course of study, and off-campus employment eligibility. As appropriate, DHS will issue a Federal Register notice when the Secretary declares that conditions constitute emergent circumstances.

In addition to SSR, USCIS also offers support that may be available upon request to assist eligible Ethiopian nationals, and other individuals who last habitually resided in Ethiopia affected by special situations, including the following:

- Change or extension of nonimmigrant status for noncitizens 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 special situation; 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/humanitarian/special-situations>.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you require any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Ur M. Jaddou
Director

² Additional information on USRAP is available online at <https://www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/>.