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December 10, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Nebraska Avenue Complex  
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20395

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
Harry S. Truman Building  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

**RE: COALITION OF ADVOCATES CALL FOR TPS FOR ETHIOPIA ON UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS DAY**

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken,

We write to you as members of the steering committee for the Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure Administrative Advocacy Coalition (TPS-DED AAC) to uplift and reiterate our call for temporary protected status (TPS) for Ethiopia, which we made once more this August.<sup>1</sup> As the in-country humanitarian crisis continues to devolve, we demand an end to the delays and a long overdue 18-month TPS designation to Ethiopia. On this United Nations Human Rights Day, we ask you to stand up for human rights in Ethiopia and protect Ethiopian nationals living in the United States from being forced back to life-threatening conditions.

Additionally, we continue to raise racial equity concerns towards inaction from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on new TPS designations and needed redesignations for countries with majority Black populations, including Mauritania, Cameroon, Haiti, and the Bahamas. President Biden's commitment to advance racial equity across America and support underserved communities must include Black immigrants, including TPS designations for countries like Ethiopia. Importantly, as a blanket protection, TPS fills in the gaps for those who may have slipped through the cracks of the asylum system, making designations particularly essential to protect Black immigrants who are affected by systemic racism in the U.S. asylum system.

The TPS-DED AAC is a national coalition of more than 100 organizations with deep expertise in law and policy surrounding TPS and DED.<sup>2</sup> Member organizations range from community-based organizations directly serving impacted communities in the United States to international NGOs, working in and providing insight from affected countries. It is with this collective expertise and lived experiences that we urge action for Ethiopia.

For over a year, Ethiopia has suffered increasing conflict, violence, and ethnic cleansing, exacerbated by severe famine conditions and infrastructure failure. Since our letter to your administration in August, conditions have continued to deteriorate. According to USAID, 6.5 to 7 million people in northern Ethiopia now face severe acute food insecurity and 8.1 million are

<sup>1</sup> 84 Organizations to Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and Secretary Antony Blinken, U.S. Department of State, "Request for New 18-month Designation of TPS for Ethiopia," August 4, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3Gpi5OR>.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.tpsdedaac.org/>.

in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>3</sup> We are particularly concerned over new reports of drone warfare against civilians and vital infrastructure, a continued escalation of violence that deepens this human rights and humanitarian crisis.<sup>4</sup> As of November 4, 2021, the U.S. State Department has increased the country-wide travel warning for Ethiopia to the highest level, directing a cease to all travel to the country due to “armed conflict, civil unrest, communications disruptions, crime, and the potential for terrorism and kidnapping in border areas.”<sup>5</sup> The next day, the State Department withdrew all non-emergency U.S. government employees and their family members from Ethiopia due to violence and severe supply shortages.<sup>6</sup> On December 3, 2021, UN human rights experts released a statement condemning widespread sexual and gender-based violence in northern Ethiopia attributed to multiple combatant groups, calling the incidents “some of the most egregious violations of human rights and humanitarian law.”<sup>7</sup> The Ethiopian government’s blockade on humanitarian aid continues, cutting off basic services including communication to the outside world, banking, and trade.<sup>8</sup> As violence and food shortages continue to worsen and spread throughout the country, the United States must not return anyone to such conditions.

Protecting Ethiopians, the second largest community of Africans in the United States, from return to untenable conditions is a vital statement to Ethiopia and our allies that our nation is restoring its commitment to human rights, globally and at home.<sup>9</sup> In addition, like many TPS holders, Ethiopians have served as essential workers during the pandemic, contributing to the economy and enriching U.S. communities. We again call on you to provide an 18-month TPS designation for Ethiopia, to publish a Federal Register Notice, and to launch a public information campaign to notify the impacted community of the decision and any actions they must take.

Thank you for your time, and please contact Lisa Parisio at [lparisio@cliniclegal.org](mailto:lparisio@cliniclegal.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

**UndocuBlack Network**

**Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)**

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<sup>3</sup> “Ethiopia – Northern Ethiopia Crisis,” USAID, November 30, 2021, [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-11-30\\_USG\\_Northern\\_Ethiopia\\_Crisis\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_2.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-11-30_USG_Northern_Ethiopia_Crisis_Fact_Sheet_2.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Dan Sabbagh, “Ethiopia-Turkey pact fuels speculation about drone use in Tigray war,” *The Guardian*, November 4, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/04/ethiopia-turkey-pact-fuels-speculation-about-drone-use-in-tigray-war>.

<sup>5</sup> “Ethiopia Travel Advisory,” U.S. State Department, November 6, 2021, accessed December 7, 2021, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/ethiopia-travel-advisory.html>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> “Rights experts call for end to violence against women in Tigray conflict,” *UN News*, December 3, 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1107122>.

<sup>8</sup> David Del Conte, “100 Days of Blockade in Tigray,” Refugees International, October 6, 2021, <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2021/10/6/100-days-of-blockade-in-tigray>; “Ethiopia – Northern Ethiopia Crisis,” USAID.

<sup>9</sup> Monica Anderson, “African immigrant population in U.S. steadily climbs,” Pew Research Center, February 14, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/14/african-immigrant-population-in-u-s-steadily-climbs/>.