Hundreds of Thousands of Families to Face End of Immigration Protection: Decision to End Temporary Protected Status for El Salvador Is a Travesty

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SILVER SPRING, Maryland – The Trump administration's decision to end Temporary Protected Status for El Salvador in September 2019 will mean wrenching decisions and heartache for 200,000 families that have made the United States their home while their native land continues to struggle. "This is yet another ill-conceived decision by an administration that ignores the immense contributions to our country by immigrants and that has lost sight of the United States' long history as a safe haven for people who flee danger abroad," said Bishop Kevin Vann, chairman of the board of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., and bishop of the Diocese of Orange in California. "By terminating TPS for El Salvador, hundreds of thousands of people, including U.S. citizen children and extended family, will be faced with wrenching decisions about how to proceed with their lives. The administration fails to address how it makes the United States any safer to expel people who have been living and working legally as valued residents of our country. Instead of withdrawing their protections, our government should welcome these long-term, settled members of our communities and find ways to give them a permanent path to residency." Jeanne Atkinson, executive director of CLINIC, decried the decision as purely political. "This was a political calculation that is inconsistent with the law and practices of all previous administrations, both Republican and Democrat. Instead of factoring in existing conditions in El Salvador, the Trump administration has once again callously disregarded the impact on well-established families as well as on the struggling country to which it intends to return them." "By looking only at the effects of El Salvador's initial disaster, the administration is ignoring the significant subsequent environmental and civil crises, including horrific gang violence, that continue to disrupt the country, making it a travesty to send people home," Atkinson said. She noted that the government of El Salvador itself pleaded with the administration NOT to cancel TPS, saying it will be unable to absorb hundreds of thousands of its nationals even 18 months from now. "This decision affects 200,000 people who have been in the U.S. for two decades," Atkinson added. "It leaves them with no recourse to maintain their lives and throws to Congress the responsibility for 'fixing' a problem the administration is creating." "TPS holders have repeatedly been well-vetted, under many security measures and are deeply rooted in our country. Their children include 193,000 U.S. citizens. How many of us would willingly bring our U.S.-raised children to a country as violent and impoverished as El Salvador?" Jill Marie Bussey, director of Advocacy for CLINIC, said: "The termination of TPS for El Salvador will set off a chain reaction. TPS holders who are deported to El Salvador will become prime targets for gang extortion and violence because of their American bank accounts and U.S. connections. They will assuredly flee back to the United States." "Meanwhile, when Salvadorans in the U.S. lose their work permits, the financial impact of their lost remittances to El Salvador will be dramatic," Bussey said. "Fully 17 percent of the GDP of El Salvador comes from remittances. Once that lifeline dries up, the people in El Salvador who have been making ends meet with those funds will also feel pressure to flee the country." Bishop Vann added that he has met many Salvadorans whose TPS has given them protection from the long-standing violence in their country and allowed them to start new lives. "They have shown themselves, by their desire for education and care of their families, to be contributors to the common good of the United States. In many places they are our neighbors and friends." "This decision unfortunately calls to mind the anti-foreigner (and at times anti-Catholic) sentiment which has so marred the history of our county. Just today in his annual address to diplomats, Pope Francis lamented the plight of migrant families torn apart by poverty, war, and violence. He reminded us that

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“much talk about migrants and migration… (serves) at times only for the sake of stirring up primal fears.”’ ‘“It must not be forgotten that migration has always existed,” the pope said. “Nor should we forget that freedom of movement, for example, the ability to leave one’s own country and to return there, is a fundamental human right.” The pope went on to call for abandoning “the familiar rhetoric and start from the essential consideration that we are dealing, above all, with persons.”’ The vast majority of Salvadorans with TPS are employed, generating $109.4 billion in income annually. They include 45,500 households with mortgages. The states with the most Salvadoran TPS holders are: California, with 49,100, Texas, with 36,300, Virginia, with 21,500 and Maryland, with 19,800. Besides further destabilizing El Salvador and the region, this decision will harm the U.S. communities that depend on Salvadoran workers. The announcement follows previous decisions by the administration to end TPS for Haiti, (ending July 22, 2019) Sudan (ending Nov. 2, 2018) and Nicaragua (ending Jan. 5, 2019) and to temporarily extend the protection for South Sudan (18 months, ending in March 2019) and Honduras (six months, ending in May 2018). The status of TPS for Honduras and South Sudan could be extended or terminated after their temporary extensions.

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