



The U.S. Must Redesignate Haiti *for Temporary Protected Status (TPS)*

With deteriorating conditions in Haiti, the Biden administration should redesignate TPS for the country and work to protect and expand additional safe and legal pathways for people to come to the U.S.

The situation in Haiti is increasingly dire, with violence, instability, and a looming famine [forcibly displacing hundreds of thousands of people, half of whom are children](#). Redesignating and extending Haiti for [Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\)](#) is critical to providing safety and stability for vital members of our American communities. Just as importantly, protecting and expanding additional safe and legal pathways for Haitian individuals to come to the U.S. would save countless lives, keep families and communities safe and together and could prevent further chaos and cruelty at our borders and beyond.

The [current TPS designation for Haiti](#) expires on August 4, 2024. The Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security must decide if conditions in the country warrant an extension and redesignation by June 5, 2024. With a recent increase in extraordinary levels of armed violence and humanitarian crises in the country, the Biden administration should redesignate and extend TPS for Haiti.

In December 2022, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas announced a redesignation and extension of TPS for Haiti, [citing](#) “socioeconomic challenges, political instability... violence and crime — aggravated by environmental disaster.” Since that time, the situation in Haiti has deteriorated so much that the country which faces a security emergency with increasingly powerful armed groups and a [years-long dismantling of democracy](#) is now in the middle of political and economic collapse with a multitude of humanitarian crises such as a record level of hunger, a health emergency, and widespread human rights violations including killings and kidnappings.

“Do not travel to Haiti due to kidnapping... civil unrest, and poor health care infrastructure.”

[U.S. State Department Travel Advisory, Level 4: Do Not Travel](#)

These worsening and compounding crises make it impossible to safely return Haitian nationals. Haitians who are deported face deadly [violence and insecurity](#). Failing to provide Haitian nationals with protections, including TPS, would have devastating [human consequences](#), effectively sending more people to their deaths while further destabilizing the country.

TPS Can Save the Lives of Haitian Nationals and Keep Families Together

Congress created [TPS](#) to prevent tragedies just like this, giving the executive branch the [power to grant relief](#) from deportation and give work authorization in cases where violence and other crises make returning to a country unsafe. Given the multiple crises unfolding in Haiti, the Biden Administration should use its statutory authority to immediately extend and redesignate Haiti for TPS, as well as protect and expand more safe and legal pathways for Haitians to come to the U.S.

Doing so would [provide clear benefits to American communities](#). The estimated 308,000 Haitians who are living in the U.S. and are currently eligible for TPS contribute \$4.4 billion to our economy each year, and 75,000 of them are working in labor-short industries, providing essential services and creating greater certainty for employers. These individuals have lived in the U.S. for many years, building families and powering U.S. communities across the country. Over 200,000 U.S. citizens including 87,000 children live with these TPS-eligible individuals.

Redesignating and extending Haiti for TPS could protect at least 169,000 more people, according to FWD.us [estimates](#) as of September 30, 2023. Continuing to provide TPS protections for Haitian nationals will ensure that families remain together and are able to continue building meaningful lives in American society, with even greater certainty while helping to stabilize their family members in Haiti. Moreover, redesignating Haiti for TPS will allow more Haitians in the U.S. to contribute their skills and talents to American communities and the American workforce while supporting and empowering cities welcoming new arrivals fleeing some of the worst armed conflicts and humanitarian and environmental disasters of our time.

“This situation is beyond untenable for the people of Haiti.”

[Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, March 6, 2024](#)

Political and Economic Collapse

Nearly a year and a half after its latest TPS designation, Haiti [is on the verge of political and economic collapse](#), as government institutions crumble and public services are virtually nonexistent. For years Haiti's government has faced [political instability](#), exacerbated by the assassination of President Jovenal Moïse in 2021 and the subsequent further breakdown of the democratic process and government institutions. Armed groups now control 80% of the capital city Port-Au-Prince and in March 2024 following coordinated attacks by these groups which included shutting down the country's main airport, Haitian government officials [declared a state of emergency](#), putting in place a curfew. Shortly after de facto Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry [stated](#) he would resign as soon as a transitional presidential council was established. Henry has since [resigned](#) and the transitional council has officially been appointed. Tragically, violence and insecurity in the country continues. As this political instability came to a head, the U.S. State Department began [evacuating nonessential embassy employees](#) and [American citizens](#) on chartered flights including helicopters, demonstrating the Biden administration's understanding of the urgency and seriousness of the security crises in the country.

In addition to having to flee from violence on a daily basis, Haitians all over the country are struggling to care for themselves and their loved ones with the economy grounding to a halt. Individuals are unable to [access fuel, transportation](#), or roads to get to work, and businesses, schools, banks, and government institutions have been forced to close. Attacks on the capital city's [electrical stations](#) have left multiple areas in the entire country without power. On top of collapsing infrastructure, the effects of COVID-19 and the [7.2 earthquake](#) that hit Haiti in 2021 have further strained the country's already weakened economy. Haiti's extreme vulnerability to natural disasters has hindered its economy and following the 2021 earthquake government officials estimated it would cost an additional [\\$2 billion to rebuild the country](#).

Haiti is extremely reliant on its agriculture industry with many of the nation's food insecure population living in rural areas in the country. Severe floods in November 2023 damaged crops, further contributing to supply chain challenges and already soaring food prices. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [reported](#) that production for grains plummeted in 2023 by "39% for maize, 34% for rice and 22% for sorghum compared to the five-year average." Without access to food, income, or government services, Haitians are facing a looming famine, all while having to endure threats of armed violence and widespread human rights violations.

"The violence has also had the effect of blocking trade routes and aid routes, and shuttered schools... groups have cut off access to food, to clean water, to health care, to electricity."

[U.S Secretary of State Antony Blinken, February 22, 2024](#)

Widespread Armed Violence and Human Rights Abuses

The serious security concerns cited in the [2023 federal register notice on the U.S.'s extension and redesignation of TPS for Haiti](#) have escalated dramatically. The “sharp deterioration in an already fragile security situation” is now [an understatement](#). At a March 2024 meeting on Haiti, Secretary of State Antony Blinken [said](#) that the “political crisis, escalating violence, unrest,” had “created an untenable situation for the Haitian people,” and “that urgent action is needed.”

With the majority of Haiti’s capital now [under the control of armed groups](#), and a collapse of democracy in the country, human rights abuses in the country are now widespread. Sexual violence is [routinely used as a weapon](#) by armed groups and children have been [forced out of school](#) and are being [forcibly recruited by armed groups](#). In addition to these violations, Haitians are [subjected to kidnappings and killings](#). In just the first few months of 2024, over [1,193 people have been killed and at least 692 injured](#) at the hands of armed group violence. This follows thousands more losing their lives at the end of 2023. [According to the UN](#), from October to December 2023, 2,300 people were killed, kidnapped, or injured in Haiti, 1,600 of which were killings. The U.S. Department of State has publicly acknowledged the dangers facing Haitians in the country including in their human rights practices report.

“Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment... harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention... serious abuses in a conflict, including widespread civilian deaths or harm, enforced disappearances or abductions, torture, and physical abuse... lack of investigation of and accountability for gender-based violence... crimes involving violence and threats of violence targeting... (LGBTQI) persons; and existence of some of the worst forms of child labor.”

[U.S. State Department Human Rights Practices Report: Haiti](#)

Humanitarian Catastrophe: Famine and the Health Emergency

In addition to the sheer levels of violence by militant groups, the lack of food, water, medical care, and goods and services is severely exacerbating the country's [humanitarian catastrophes](#) and displacing hundreds of thousands. The UN now [estimates](#) that nearly half of Haiti’s residents require humanitarian assistance. At [least 362,000 thousand people, half of whom are children](#), are currently displaced. Food and water are in short supply with Haiti’s largest source of drinking water [stopping](#) their deliveries. [Hospitals, factories, and businesses](#) have shut down, leaving many without basic necessities or access to work. The UN World Food Programme has determined that at least [4 million](#) people, almost half of the entire country, are facing acute hunger, while [1.4 million](#) are “one step away from famine.” Haiti Programme Director Jean-Martin Bauer has [said](#) that the malnutrition rates in the eastern part of Haiti’s capital are on par with “any war zone in the world.”

“Haiti is one of the world’s most severe food crises – 1.4 million Haitians are one step away from famine.”

[Jean-Martin Bauer, UN World Food Programme Haiti Country Director, March 12, 2024](#)

In addition to the food emergency in Haiti, the country's already delicate health infrastructure is collapsing, exacerbating humanitarian crises in the country. Half of all medical facilities in Port-au-Prince are [closed or are not able to operate fully](#). Hospitals have been set on fire, doctors face intimidation and violence, including murder, and cannot safely go to work. Further, due in part to the years-long [blocking](#) of trade, roads and the capital city's port [medical supplies are scarce](#).

“The health system is on the brink of collapse.”

[Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, March 6, 2024](#)

Lack of medical services, particularly provisional and emergency services continue to leave Haitians vulnerable to the 2022 resurgence of the [cholera epidemic](#) in the country which has proven to be one of the [deadliest in the world](#). In 2023 there were 76,556 suspected and confirmed cases and 1,156 deaths, according to the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#). These figures are likely much higher due to underreporting and lack of access to medical care for Haitian people.

In the context of extraordinary levels of armed violence and humanitarian crises facing Haiti, it is imperative that the United States do everything in its power to provide protections for Haitian nationals in the United States. In light of the new and worsening crises in Haiti, the Biden administration must extend and redesignate Haiti for TPS, so individuals who have arrived since the current designation can also access protections and are not forced to return to a country where their lives are severely at risk.

Additional Ways the Biden Administration Can Protect Haitian Nationals

In September 2021, the world watched in horror as [thousands of Haitian asylum seekers faced racist abuse](#) at the hands of U.S. government officials and were [subsequently deported](#). The chaos and cruelty that played out in Del Rio, Texas, was a tragic example of the failed framework of deterrence and a reminder of the need for the United States to honor its legal obligations to those forced to flee their homes, including Haitians.

“We also reiterate our call to all States to not forcibly return people to Haiti, including those who have had their asylum claims rejected.”

[Elizabeth Tan, Director of UNHCR’s Division of International Protection on UNHCR’s new guidance on international refugee protection for Haitians, March 20, 2024](#)

In addition to redesignating Haiti for TPS, the Biden administration can take more steps to protect vulnerable Haitians at our borders and beyond right now such as ensuring access to our asylum system and halting deportations to the country. The administration should also work to remove the monthly cap and expedite and expand processing for the [Cuba-Haiti-Nicaragua-Venezuela \(CHNV\) parole process](#) as well as the Haitian Family Reunification Program. At the same time, it is critical that the Biden administration put an end to harsh [offshoring and externalization policies](#), which interfere with the journey of Haitian and other Black asylum seekers. This includes ending interception policies on land and at sea, and abandoning any reported [plans to house Haitian asylum seekers at the Guantánamo Bay military base](#).

Expanding TPS to more Haitians is [popular with the American electorate](#) and supported by [members of Congress](#). It will provide immediate humanitarian relief to individuals and families, while simultaneously boosting [the U.S. economy](#), and its labor force, and supporting and empowering American cities and states, while [reducing future forced migration](#).

The Biden administration has the opportunity to provide safety and opportunity to Haitians in dire need of protection. Expanding access to TPS for Haitian nationals is just one step the United States can take to save lives and keep families and communities safe and together. The Biden administration must follow through on its commitment to building a humane and working immigration system in the U.S., beginning with extending and redesignating Haiti for TPS.

For more information on the need to protect Haitian immigrants and asylum seekers including through TPS please visit <https://haitianbridgealliance.org>.