

For Immediate Release:

Media Contact: info (at) arcsyria.org

DHS Approves 18-Month Extension for Syria Temporary Protected Status
Decision Follows Sustained Advocacy by Syrian American Organizations with Congress and Trump Administration

(Washington, D.C. - August 1, 2019) Today the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [announced its decision to extend Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\) for Syrians](#) for 18 months. This decision allows for around 7,000 Syrians residing in the United States to remain on TPS, and follows sustained advocacy efforts by a coalition of Syrian American organizations and TPS holders across the country engaging with Congress, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the public.

“As Syrian American organizations, we are reassured by the Administration’s decision to extend TPS, which will allow Syrians to remain safely in the United States. The threat to civilians living in Syria and those returning is still very real, and we appreciate the Administration listened to our concerns and those of Members of Congress who advocated for Syria TPS. The State Department issued a travel advisory in April of this year stating plainly: *‘No part of Syria is safe from violence.’* Until that changes, no Syrian should be forced back to a war zone.”

TPS for Syria was first designated in 2012 to protect Syrians who were in the United States and could not return due to the crackdown on peaceful protests and the decimation of infrastructure and economy due to violence and armed conflict. Since then, more than 500,000 Syrians have been killed, at least 5.6 million Syrians have become refugees, and at least 6.6 million Syrians have been internally displaced from their homes.

Syrian TPS holders are artists, teachers, doctors, engineers and others from across the United States—but most importantly, they are our neighbors. As hardworking taxpayers, they not only contribute to our economy, but they strengthen our local communities and our national fabric. TPS holders undergo background checks and are vetted regularly to maintain their status.

“As a TPS holder, I can’t tell you how much my family and I are relieved about this decision. It opens new horizons for us and allows us to feel more at peace. I am an art teacher, mother to two teenagers and the breadwinner of my family. I just earned my master’s degree last year. I will create more art, exhibit more frequently and be a productive artist in my community. I am so happy,” **said Nada, a Syrian TPS holder living in Syracuse.**

Since 2012, TPS for Syria has been extended, protecting Syrian TPS holders, and redesignated, allowing Syrians who qualify but did not previously hold TPS status to apply for TPS as well. In breaking with this trend, last year, DHS extended TPS for Syrians for 18 months, but did not

redesignate. Today, DHS again extended TPS but did not redesignate, leaving potentially thousands of Syrians in the US in limbo.

“While the decision to extend is a correct one and will provide continued refuge for Syrians living here, as organizations made up of and representing Syrian Americans across the country organizations, we remain gravely concerned for the Syrians in this country not protected by TPS. If Syria is unsafe for American travelers and current TPS holders, it’s also unsafe for Syrians who came to the United States more recently. We urge the Administration to take a closer look at redesignation until the country is at peace and ready to accept returning Syrians,” the **coalition said**.

Coalition advocacy efforts by the American Relief Coalition for Syria (ARCS), Americans for a Free Syria (AFS) and the Syrian American Council (SAC) included:

- Congressional engagement, including working with Members of Congress to send letters to DHS, in addition to private advocacy.
- Administration engagement, including meetings with DHS officials, crafting legal petitions, providing background materials and inviting TPS holders tell their stories.
- Public and grassroots engagement, building public awareness and broad support for renewal.

Due to today’s decision, TPS for Syrians is now set to expire on March 31, 2021. Current Syrian TPS holders are required to renew their status before it expires; more information will be made available on the [DHS website](#).

Syrian TPS holders across the country are available for interviews immediately in response to the decision, including:

- Ahmad, Orthodontic Assistant, Atlanta, GA
- Monzer, Dental Student (DDS), Iowa City, IA
- Nada, Artist and Curator, Syracuse, NY
- Michael, Stand-up Comedian, Brooklyn, NY
- Bilal, Software Developer, Cleveland, OH
- Sally, Store Manager, Columbus, OH
- Muaz, Musician and DJ, Arlington, VA

###