News



U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., addresses immigration rights activists during a rally calling for "permanent protections for Temporary Protected Status holders" in front of the White House in Washington Feb. 12, 2019. (CNS/Jim Bourg, Reuters)

by Catholic News Service

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The Department of Homeland Security has filed notice that it is extending temporary protected status for foreign nationals from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti and Sudan until Jan. 2, 2020.

The notice, published in the Federal Register March 1, said the extension came in response to a preliminary injunction issued by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in a lawsuit challenging plans to end the special status for migrants from the four countries.

Temporary protected status, or TPS, is a designation for those who come to the U.S. from certain countries because of a natural disaster, continuing armed conflict or other extraordinary conditions.

The Department of Homeland Security announced in 2017 that it was ending temporary protected status for recipients from the four countries in late 2018 and throughout 2019. Officials said conditions in those countries had improved and the migrants could safely return, even as the U.S. Department of State warned against travel to those nations.

Temporary protected status will continue as long as the preliminary injunction remains in effect. The government has appealed the preliminary injunction to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit.

Jill Marie Bussey, director of advocacy at the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, welcomed the extension in a statement March 1.

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"We remain grateful to and inspired by the TPS holders and U.S. citizen children in this case challenging the legality of DHS's decision to terminate TPS for these four countries," Bussey said.

"We are mindful that the preliminary injunction is temporary in nature and tenuous as the government has sought to overturn it on appeal. Further, it does not provide the extension of protections to Hondurans, Nepalis or Liberians," she added.

Bussey also called on Congress to "provide the long-term solutions that are urgently needed to provide permanent protection" to temporary protected status recipients and others in the U.S. under other special programs.

The series of announcements by the Department of Homeland Security met with an uproar from immigrant advocates, including Catholic leaders, and temporary protected status recipients, who said serious challenges remained in each of the countries covered by the program because of crime, violence or little progress in response to devastating national disasters.

The federal court case in California challenged the Department of Homeland Security orders on El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti and Sudan, on grounds that the situation in each of the four nations had not improved and that tens of thousands of people would be in danger if they returned to their home countries. They also contended that the countries could not easily repatriate large numbers of people.