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A file photo shows a teenage girl from El Salvador being embraced by a family friend before leaving Vive La Case refugee center with her family in Buffalo, N.Y., to file a claim with customs officials at the U.S.-Canadian border to remain in the United States. Hundreds of faith leaders and organizations urged the Trump administration to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for El Salvador before it expires in September 2026. (OSV News/Reuters/Chris Helgren)

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Hundreds of faith leaders and organizations urged the Trump administration to extend Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for El Salvador before it expires in September.

A TPS designation grants the U.S. government the power to shield eligible migrants from deportation if they are from countries experiencing dangerous conditions such as war, disaster, or other unrest. El Salvador's TPS designation is scheduled to expire Sept. 9, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. The removal of that legal status would impact about 170,000 Salvadoran nationals in the U.S., according to the Congressional Research Service.

In an Aug. 21 letter to President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin, more than 270 faith leaders and organizations — including several U.S. bishops and many Catholic groups including the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, also known as CLINIC — argued that Mullins should extend El Salvador's TPS designation to prevent disruption to U.S. communities where Salvadoran migrants have established ties and prevent family separation due to remaining dangerous conditions in that country.

"We believe that sending hundreds of thousands of Salvadoran TPS holders back into an unstable and unfamiliar country that does not have the capability to support its own nationals is a danger to those individuals and a decision that would have severe negative consequences for years to come," the letter said. "A thoughtful review of the current conditions in El Salvador, consideration of their contributions as TPS holders to the United States and the administration's obligation to respect the statutory framework which governs TPS, supports an extension of El Salvador's TPS designation."

In their letter, the signatories added that although they "all come from various faith backgrounds, we have a shared purpose in respecting human life, upholding the inherent dignity of every individual person, maintaining the family unit, and protecting those who are unable to safely return to their home country due to conflict, natural disasters, or some other extraordinary condition."

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Among the many Catholic signatories on the letter were Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami, Archbishop Gregory Hartmayer of Atlanta, Atlanta's auxiliary bishops and Bishop Stephen Parkes of Savannah. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Ignatian Solidarity Network, and CLINIC were also among the many Catholic groups signing the letter, as were religious orders such as the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration.

In a statement, Elnora Bassey, a policy attorney at CLINIC, argued, "Sending Salvadoran TPS holders back into unsafe conditions at a time where deportees in El Salvador are being detained without adequate representation, kidnapped, or potentially face some other harm, is cruel and can have a long-lasting harmful impact on those forced to return."

"At a time where immigrants are being targeted and lawful protections are becoming less available to those who need it, the administration has an opportunity to make a choice that demonstrates its ability to protect vulnerable populations and that we are a nation that demonstrates compassion for all people regardless of status," Bassey said.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the Trump administration to end TPS designation for Haitian and Syrian nationals. Catholic leaders have also

urged protection for nationals from those countries who would be subject to dangerous conditions in their countries of origin.

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. [View the full series](#).