



May 21, 2019

## **Amnesty International USA Statement in Support of the Venezuela TPS Act of 2019 (H.R. 549) and the American Promise Act of 2019 (H.R. 2821)**

On behalf of Amnesty International USA and our over two million members and supporters in the United States, we express our strong support for H.R. 549, which would grant Venezuelan nationals in the United States Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and for H.R. 2821, the American Promise Act of 2019, which would extend permanent protections for certain nationals of countries designated for TPS and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED).

### **TPS for Venezuelans is a Necessary Response to a Human Rights Crisis**

Venezuela is currently undergoing a massive institutional crisis which has had a devastating impact on the human rights of its people. The skyrocketing rate of inflation – which currently stands at [over one million percent](#) – has left Venezuelans unable to afford even basic goods, and the shortage of food products and essential medicines has left many Venezuelans both starving and sick. As of 2018, the country lacked [85% of essential medicines](#), and nearly two-thirds of the population [reported](#) involuntary weight loss. The government's refusal to act in the face of these severe shortages of medicine and food jeopardizes Venezuelans' lives and violates their human rights. Venezuelans who have been brave enough to stand up for change have faced [deadly crackdowns](#) by the Maduro regime, which has overseen the deaths of hundreds of political dissidents and the arbitrary detention of thousands more.

The ongoing crisis in Venezuela has impelled [3.7 million people](#) living within its borders to seek protection throughout the region – that is *one in every ten Venezuelans*. An exodus of this scale requires a coordinated, regional response centered on the need to protect Venezuelans experiencing massive violations of their human rights.

Today, in terms of numbers of people fleeing, the Venezuelan exodus is outpaced only by the Syrian refugee crisis, and there is every reason to believe the situation will continue to deteriorate, forcing more and more individuals to flee. In May 2019, the U.N. Refugee Agency announced that [a majority of individuals](#) who have been forced to flee Venezuela are likely in need of refugee protection.

Venezuela's [regional neighbors](#) have shouldered most of the burden of response. Colombia has taken in over 1.2 million Venezuelans since the onset of the crisis and has implemented an “open-door” policy allowing Venezuelans to access its territory. Other neighboring countries, notably Peru and Ecuador, have also received hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans.

In the United States, over [70,000 Venezuelans](#) had applied for asylum as of June 2018, and advocacy groups estimate that [upwards of 150,000 Venezuelan people](#) in the United States could benefit from TPS. This is a fraction of the numbers Venezuela's neighboring countries have



already received. Yet, notwithstanding the grave human rights crisis there, the United States [reportedly continued](#) deportations to Venezuela throughout 2018.

Amnesty International has issued a call to the international community to recognize that Venezuela is facing a situation of massive human rights violations, and that Venezuelans seeking international protection require an immediate response under a framework of respect for human rights, with strict adherence to the principle of non-*refoulement*. Passage of H.R. 549 would provide life-saving protection for Venezuelans who have sought safety at our shores and would demonstrate solidarity with our regional neighbors in providing a humanitarian response to an unprecedented crisis.

### **The U.S. Should Provide Permanent Solutions for Nationals of Countries Designated for Humanitarian Protection**

Around the globe, Amnesty International has documented the current conditions in many of the countries that have been designated for TPS and DED – including violence, poverty, and instability in [El Salvador](#), [Honduras](#), and [Haiti](#); political repression in [Sudan](#), [Nicaragua](#), [Guinea](#), and [Sierra Leone](#); armed conflict in [South Sudan](#), [Syria](#), [Somalia](#), and [Yemen](#); and impunity in [Liberia](#) and [Nepal](#).

Without a pathway to permanent protection for nationals of these designee countries, thousands of longtime U.S. residents could be uprooted from their homes and families and deported to countries where levels of violence, danger, and instability may be too high for safe return, and where they would face an uncertain and precarious future. The costs for these nationals and their families – and for human rights around the world – would be immense. The pathway to residence that H.R. 2821, the American Promise Act of 2019, would provide to certain nationals of these designated countries is essential to ensure they can access lasting protection in the United States.

We urge members of the House Judiciary Committee to vote for both measures and to reject any harmful additions that could undercut the human rights-based spirit in which they have been introduced. For more information, please contact Charanya Krishnaswami, Americas Advocacy Director, at [ckrishna@aiusa.org](mailto:ckrishna@aiusa.org) or at (202) 675-8766.