



San Salvador, February 2, 2018

In the context of a delegation visit from U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities from the State of Maine, Sister Cities, the Share Foundation and CISPES would like to offer the following statement. As organizations that have extensively worked with the Salvadoran community both in El Salvador and in the United States, we forcefully denounce the Department of Homeland Security's decision to rescind Temporary Protective Status (TPS) for over 200,000 Salvadorans who currently reside in the U.S.

Salvadorans need no reminder that many of their 2 million countrymen living in the U.S. are there as a direct consequence of actions taken by the United States. They were impelled to leave their homeland by conditions of violence and economic deprivation that have their historical roots in a U.S. subsidized war, followed by punishing trade policies. These inconvenient facts are not acknowledged in our domestic discussions of migration.

Rescinding of Temporary Protective Status of 200,000 Salvadorans targets 135,000 hardworking households. Half of them have lived in the U.S. for over twenty years. Twenty percent arrived at age fifteen or younger. Collectively these Salvadorans have 172,000 children. Most of those are American citizens who will face the choice of having one of both parents deported, or emigrating to a country they do not know.

We'd like to offer three points regarding:

1. What the TPS decision was and was not about,
2. What the current Salvadoran government could or could not have done about it, and
3. What the future may hold for Salvadoran immigrants in the U.S

First: Donald Trump's decision to revoke TPS for Salvadorans had nothing to do with:

- Whether current conditions of life in El Salvador make it perilous for Salvadorans in the exterior to return home,
- Whether damaged infrastructure from an earthquake was repaired, despite the claims of the U.S. State Department
- Or how the loss of millions of dollars of remittances would affect Salvadoran families and the Salvadoran economy

In truth, President Trump's decision had nothing at all to do with the realities of El Salvador or the lives of Salvadorans. It had everything to do with appealing to anti-immigrant sentiments and racism in order to intensify the political support of his shrinking political base. President Trump's recent statements regarding Haiti, El Salvador and the

entire continent of Africa placed his racist attitude towards people of color on full display; they are unacceptable and we condemn them.

Second: In this context, we think it's important for Salvadorans to understand that the TPS decision never depended, therefore, on how forcefully or effectively the Salvadoran government made its case to the United States. It would not have mattered at all which political party was governing El Salvador.

Suggestions in the Salvadoran press to the contrary are false. We urge Ambassador Manes, who has thus far declined to correct these mischaracterizations, to make that plain. Unless she does so, the U.S. Ambassador can reasonably be viewed as being used to influence the electoral process in El Salvador.

Finally: Future decisions on immigration policy are in the hands of Congress, and much can happen in 18 months. Meanwhile, organizing in the United States to secure permanent status for immigrants losing TPS, for DACA recipients, and for the majority of undocumented immigrants who do not have special status, is deep and wide. As one example, the National TPS Alliance organized and led by TPS beneficiaries will be holding a national conference in Washington, DC this weekend, and lobbying Congress to support permanent status legislation. The American Promise Act in the House of Representatives and the SECURE Act in the Senate are two such bills the Alliance supports. U.S. – El Salvador Sister Cities, SHARE and CISPES are committed to working with the social movements across the United States towards a just and humane immigration policy, for the sake of both of our countries. We thank the sanctuary movement, the immigration NGOs and community for leading work to secure residency for the refugee community.

There is reason to be hopeful. Despite what we often hear, polls show majorities of voters in both parties support a path to citizenship for immigrants without documents. It is our responsibility to organize to ensure that our fellow U.S. residents come to see TPS beneficiaries and all undocumented people in the same light.

Of course this outcome is far from certain. But we believe as did our beloved civil rights leader Martin Luther King, that "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice"

Thank you.