

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 21, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to respectfully urge your Administration to consider designating the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Unprecedented flooding in Pakistan is currently impacting approximately 33 million people and has killed nearly 1,500,¹ including 458 children.² Given the severity of this crisis, the United States must ensure that Pakistani nationals present in the United States are not forced to return to conditions that could imperil their lives.

Current conditions in Pakistan represent an ongoing environmental disaster – one of the statutory bases for TPS designation. Extreme flooding has left most regions of the country uninhabitable and unsafe. According to data from the European Space Agency, approximately one-third of Pakistan is underwater.³ The Indus River is exceeding its capacity, which has led officials to evacuate entire villages in hopes of mitigating further disaster. Half of Pakistan’s municipal districts have declared a “state of calamity” and the country’s National Disaster Management Authority estimates that one in seven Pakistanis has been affected.⁴ According to Pakistan’s finance minister, the damage is likely to exceed \$10 billion, which is equivalent to 4 percent of the country’s annual gross domestic product.⁵

Even as Pakistanis are reeling from the physical destruction caused by the flooding, they are also facing the spread of waterborne illness that this environmental crisis has exacerbated. Tens of thousands have been stricken by diarrhea, malaria, acute respiratory infections (ARI), skin and eye infections, typhoid, and other health issues resulting from contamination of the water supply.⁶ While we applaud your Administration’s decision to provide a much needed \$30 million

¹ “Pakistan floods: Officials struggle to stop biggest lake overflowing,” BBC, September 7 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-62764224>

² “A third of Pakistan is underwater amid its worst floods in history. Here’s what you need to know,” CNN, September 2, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/02/asia/pakistan-floods-climate-explainer-intl-hnk/index.html>

³ “Pakistan: 2022 Monsoon Floods - Situation Report No. 04: As of 2 September 2022,” ReliefWeb, September 2, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-2022-monsoon-floods-situation-report-no-04-2-september-2022>

⁴ “U.N. chief calls Pakistan floods a ‘climate catastrophe’,” The Washington Post, August 30, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/08/29/pakistan-floods-climate-change/>

⁵ “WHO Pakistan Floods Situation Report Issue 2 - 3 September 2022,” Relief. Web, September 5, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/who-pakistan-floods-situation-report-issue-2-3-september-2022>

⁶ “USAID Deploys a Disaster Assistance Response Team to Respond to Flooding in Pakistan,” USAID, September 2, 2022, <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/sep-02-2022-usaid-deploys-a-disaster-assistance-response-team-to-respond-to-flooding-in-pakistan>

in humanitarian assistance and dispatch a USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team, further action is needed to mitigate the harmful effects of this crisis.⁷

Forcing Pakistanis to return to a country that is experiencing what U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres has called a relentless impact of “epochal” levels of rain and flooding would be a grievous obstruction to relief efforts. It would also risk fueling further displacement, destabilizing the region, and undermining key U.S. national security interests.⁸ The use and implementation of TPS as a humanitarian tool would provide necessary relief to individuals that are unable to return to their country due to the extraordinary environmental and public health conditions.

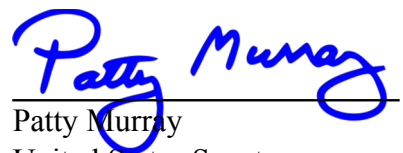
Additionally, designating Pakistan for TPS would also contribute to your Administration’s multi-pronged disaster response. It would decrease the strain on Pakistani infrastructure and provide a safe haven for those who cannot return to their homes or whose homes have been destroyed. Should Pakistan officially request TPS designation given the current conditions that the country is facing, we urge you to prioritize such a request and take it into serious consideration while you continue to monitor ongoing developments and deliberate on the best way to aid the Pakistani community. TPS is a small but consequential step that the United States can take to immediately reduce the human suffering caused by this natural disaster and would reaffirm our stance as a global leader committed to humanitarian relief efforts and protections.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your timely reply.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator

⁷ “Pakistan: \$160 million UN emergency plan launched, as ‘monsoon on steroids’ continues,” United Nations, August 30, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/08/1125752>.

⁸ “In Pakistan’s Record Floods, Villages Are Now Desperate Islands,” New York Times, September 14, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/14/world/asia/pakistan-floods.html>



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United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
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Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

cc: Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of State Anthony J. Blinken
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan