

AN ANALYSIS OF THE DHS DECISION ON TPS FOR AFGHANISTAN AND CAMEROON

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In deciding that Afghanistan is a safe place for men, women and children to return, Trump officials have delivered a predetermined outcome based on a motivation to end Temporary Protected Status without regard to country conditions. The Trump administration's actions on Afghanistan follow other predetermined outcomes on Temporary Protected Status, where the Department of Homeland Security claimed that conditions in Haiti and Venezuela had improved sufficiently to warrant ending TPS. The administration has also blocked the entry of refugees, including individuals from Afghanistan who fear returning to a country ruled by the Taliban.

DHS CLAIMS IMPROVEMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN, INCLUDING INCREASED TOURISM AND FEWER KIDNAPPINGS, IN ANNOUNCING END TO TPS

"The secretary determined that Afghanistan no longer continues to meet the statutory requirements for its TPS designation and so she terminated TPS for Afghanistan," according to DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin in an April 11, 2025, statement. According to McLaughlin, Noem made the decision on March 21, 2025.¹

"Based on her review and consultation with the Department of State, the Secretary determined that, overall, there are notable improvements in the security and economic situation such that requiring the return of Afghan nationals to Afghanistan does not pose a threat to their personal safety due to armed conflict or extraordinary and temporary conditions," according to a Federal Register notice published May 13, 2025. "She further determined that permitting Afghan nationals to remain temporarily in the United States is contrary to the national interest of the United States."²

DHS cited Executive Order 14159, which provides evidence that terminating TPS for Afghanistan was a foregone conclusion before officials began their analysis. The Federal Register notice states that "continuing to permit Afghan nationals (and aliens having no nationality who last habitually resided in Afghanistan) to reside in the United States on TPS would be inconsistent with E.O. 14159 and otherwise contrary to the U.S. national interest, especially in light of the Secretary's determination that they may return in safety."³

The Federal Register notice quotes the executive order issued on January 20, 2025, as directing the Secretary of Homeland Security to ensure TPS designations are "made for only so long as may be necessary to fulfill the textual requirements of that statute."⁴

¹ Rebecca Beitsch, "DHS ends protections from deportation for Afghanistan, Cameroon," *The Hill*, April 11, 2025.

² "Termination of the Designation of Afghanistan for Temporary Protected Status," USCIS, DHS, Federal Register, May 13, 2025. <https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/2025-08201/temporary-protected-status-designation-of-afghanistan-termination>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

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The evidence indicates that DHS searched for reasons to justify eliminating TPS for Afghanistan. “The Taliban government is promoting tourism to shift its global image,” according to the Federal Register notice. “Tourism to Afghanistan has increased, as the rates of kidnappings have reduced.”⁵ The article DHS cited showed 7,000 tourists, many from China, traveled to Afghanistan in 2023.⁶

DHS estimates that approximately 11,700 Afghan nationals have Temporary Protected Status. DHS will eliminate the status on July 14, 2025, under the Federal Register notice.

Former Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas announced in a news release on March 15, 2022, he would designate Afghanistan for TPS for 18 months.⁷ A Federal Register notice published September 9, 2023, extended the designation for Afghans for an additional 18 months, until May 20, 2025, and redesignated TPS to allow applicants who maintained continuous residence in the United States since September 20, 2023, to be eligible.⁸

The Federal Register notice published September 25, 2023, detailed the reasons for designating and redesignating TPS with almost three dozen footnotes. “In summary, the August 2021 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan has led to significant civilian casualties, ongoing armed conflict between armed groups that continue to fight for power, and an extensive record of repressive policies and human rights abuses against women and girls, members of minority groups, and perceived opponents of the Taliban. This ongoing armed conflict and instability have contributed to a grave humanitarian crisis, including mass displacement, food and water insecurity, lack of access to healthcare, and a fragile economic situation.”⁹

TALIBAN RULE OPPRESSIVE FOR AFGHANS, PARTICULARLY GIRLS AND WOMEN

In a report published two weeks before DHS Secretary Kristi Noem decided against continuing TPS for Afghans, the Congressional Research Service found no significant improvement in Afghanistan’s political, economic or human rights situation.¹⁰

“Afghanistan under the renewed rule of the Taliban is ‘the most repressive country in the world regarding women’s rights,’ according to the head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA),” reported the Congressional

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “Chinese tourists are now travelling to... Afghanistan?!” *Travel Weekly Asia*, November 13, 2024.

⁷ “Secretary Mayorkas Designates Afghanistan for Temporary Protected Status,” U.S. Department of Homeland Security, press release, March 16, 2022.

⁸ “Extension and Redesignation of Afghanistan for Temporary Protected Status,” USCIS, Federal Register, September 25, 2023.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief*, Congressional Research Service, Updated March 7, 2025.

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Research Service. “Between 2001 and 2021, women played public roles in many aspects of economic, political and social life in Afghanistan, with protections for women enshrined in the country’s 2004 constitution. Upon taking power in 2021, the Taliban closed the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, which had been a part of the former Afghan government, and reinstated the Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which enforced the Taliban’s highly oppressive rule in the 1990s.”¹¹

CRS notes that the “ministry monitors the implementation of Taliban edicts that impose new restrictions on Afghan Women.” Among the edicts: The Afghan government prohibited women from driving long distances, flying without a male guardian and going to public parks or bath houses. Male relatives face punishment if women “do not wear hijabs that fully cover their bodies.” According to CRS, “UN experts warn that Taliban policies toward women may constitute gender persecution, a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as ‘gender apartheid.’”¹²

“In March 2022, the Taliban announced that secondary schools for girls would remain closed, shocking many observers,” writes CRS. “In December 2022, the Taliban broadened prohibitions by suspending women from attending university. The effects of Taliban restrictions on girls’ and women’s education have been considerable. UN experts stated in June 2023 that ‘reports of depression and suicide are widespread, especially among adolescent girls prevented from pursuing education.’” The government also restricts where women can work.¹³

The political situation remains oppressive for individuals in Afghanistan. “Nearly every country, U.S. partners and adversaries alike, has urged the Taliban to form a more inclusive government, and many countries have joined the United States in calling for the group to lift restrictions on women and girls and break ties with terrorist groups,” reports CRS. “In response, the Taliban have stalled, equivocated and ultimately either ignored or rejected outright these calls.”¹⁴

The Federal Register notice (May 13, 2025) states, “Armed conflict, primarily between the Taliban and Islamic State’s Khorasan Province (ISIS-K), a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), continues as a source of violence and instability in certain parts of the country.”¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “Termination of the Designation of Afghanistan for Temporary Protected Status,” USCIS, DHS, Federal Register, May 13, 2025.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS REMAIN DISMAL FOR AFGHANS

The return of the Taliban has proven disastrous for the Afghan people in many ways. “Since the takeover by the Taliban in 2021, the Afghan economy has contracted by 27%, leading to economic stagnation, according to UN Development Programme (UNDP),” reported *UN News* in March 2024. “Unemployment has doubled and only 40% of the population has access to electricity. Sectors such as finance have ‘basically collapsed’ and there are no major sources of economic activity such as exports or public expenditure, leaving small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and farmers as the lifeblood of the faltering economy.”¹⁶

The Federal Register notice cited a Voice of America article to argue that “the number of those in need of assistance has declined” in Afghanistan. However, DHS did not include a quote from the article that stated, “More than half of Afghanistan’s population, 23.7 million, are considered in need of humanitarian assistance, but aid agencies will not be able to assist all of them.”¹⁷ It also did not include another quote: “Although the numbers have improved, the situation is still terrible,” said Becky Roby, advocacy manager with the Norwegian Refugee Council.¹⁸

“The Taliban’s return to power resulted in an economic contraction and deepened the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, long one of the world’s poorest and most aid-dependent countries,” reported the Congressional Research Service. “Economic indicators have recovered somewhat since 2022, but the economy remains fragile and weak, leaving over 23 million Afghans—around half the population—considered to be in need of humanitarian assistance, per UN estimates. The Taliban government’s reported ability to divert or misuse some of that humanitarian assistance, and allegations that it has done so, raises difficult questions for policymakers.”¹⁹

In a report updated February 9, 2025, the World Bank notes that while there have been improvements from the catastrophic situation of a few years earlier, the “economic outlook remains highly fragile.” According to the World Bank, “Following two years of severe contraction, Afghanistan’s economy has shown modest growth primarily driven by private consumption. GDP growth of 2.7% in 2023/24 has recouped only about 10% of past economic losses, indicative of the slow and fragile nature of the recovery.”²⁰

¹⁶ “Afghanistan’s economy has ‘basically collapsed’: UNDP, *UN News*, March 7, 2024. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147387>.

¹⁷ Akmal Dawi, “Humanitarian Needs in Afghanistan Improve Slightly, Millions Still in Crisis,” Voice of American (VOA), Mar. 25, 2024, available at <https://www.voanews.com/a/humanitarian-needs-in-afghanistan-improve-slightly-millions-still-in-crisis/7542014.html>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief*, Congressional Research Service, Updated March 7, 2025.

²⁰ The World Bank in Afghanistan, updated February 9, 2025. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/overview>.

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The World Bank noted, “This level of growth has done little to address deeper structural issues and significant vulnerabilities within Afghanistan’s economy. . . . Afghanistan’s economic outlook remains highly fragile with a very limited revenue base.”²¹

“More than 3.5 million children in Afghanistan will suffer from acute malnutrition this year, an increase of 20% from 2024,” reported the *Washington Post*. “Decades of conflict—including the 20-year U.S. war with the Taliban—as well as entrenched poverty and climate shocks have contributed to the country’s humanitarian crisis.”²² U.S. cuts to foreign aid are expected to worsen the crisis.²³

ENDING TPS FOR CAMEROON

On April 11, 2025, the Department of Homeland Security announced that Kristi Noem decided to end TPS for Afghanistan and Cameroon.²⁴ According to CRS, 3,485 individuals from Cameroon had TPS as of December 2024. TPS for Cameroon expires on June 7, 2025.²⁵

In a Federal Register notice published on October 10, 2023, DHS published an Extension and Redesignation of Cameroon for Temporary Protected Status. “Since 2014, ongoing armed conflict between the Government of Cameroon and nonstate armed groups in the Far North Region, specifically Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), has resulted in killings, kidnappings, displacement, and destruction of civilian infrastructure,” according to the Federal Register notice. “While battling these nonstate armed groups, the Government of Cameroon is also attempting to control the continuing secessionist crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. Extraordinary and temporary conditions, including the secessionist crisis, human rights abuses by members of armed groups and forces, food insecurity, spread of disease, and mass displacement continue to prevent Cameroonian nationals (and those who last habitually resided in Cameroon) from returning to Cameroon in safety.”²⁶

According to the European Commission, “Nine out of 10 regions in Cameroon are in the grip of 3 complex and separate humanitarian crises: (i) Lake Chad crisis in the country’s Far North (part of Lake Chad and bordering with

²¹ Ibid.

²² Associated Press, “Afghan children will die because of US funding cuts, aid official says,” *Washington Post*, April 15, 2025.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Rebecca Beitsch, “DHS ends protections from deportation for Afghanistan, Cameroon,” *The Hill*, April 11, 2025.

²⁵ *Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure*, Congressional Research Service, December 5, 2024.

²⁶ “Extension and Redesignation of Cameroon for Temporary Protected Status,” USCIS, DHS, Federal Register, October 10, 2023. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/10/10/2023-22375/extension-and-redesignation-of-cameroon-for-temporary-protected-status>.

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Nigeria), (ii) the Anglophone crisis in the North-West and South-West regions, and a refugee crisis (iii) from the neighbouring Central African Republic.”²⁷

The EU states: “Violence and insecurity have uprooted people: more than 2.1 million people are now internally displaced, returnees or refugees. Today, 2.5 million of the country's 28 million people are facing acute food insecurity, and 146,000 children are acutely severely malnourished. These humanitarian emergencies have a considerable impact on the resilience of host populations who share their already limited resources and strained basic services with the displaced.”

According to Human Rights Watch, in a dispatch published February 14, 2025, “Brutal violence has taken hold in [Cameroon](#)’s North-West and South-West regions since 2016 as armed separatist groups seek independence for the country’s minority Anglophone regions. Attacks on communities and acts of banditry have become the norm. Government security forces were deployed to stop attacks and bring stability, but the conflict has only deepened. [Security forces](#) and [separatist groups](#) have both been responsible for serious abuses against civilians.”²⁸

²⁷ “Cameroon,” European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, European Commission. https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/cameroon_en.

²⁸ Lewis Mudge, “Cameroon’s Massacre Victims Wait for Justice Five Years On,” Human Rights Watch, February 14, 2025.

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