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FEATURED Q&A

Will the U.S. Gov't Extend Protections for Nicaraguans?



Some U.S. lawmakers are urging the Biden administration to extend Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for Nicaraguan migrants. A pro-TPS rally is pictured. // File Photo: Northwestern University.

Q A bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers from Florida on July 15 urged the administration of President Joe Biden to “re-designate and extend” Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for Nicaraguans living in the United States, a designation that would protect them from deportation. The United States first granted Nicaraguans the designation in 1998 after Hurricane Mitch struck Central America, and a court injunction is currently in effect, allowing Nicaraguans to maintain the status after beneficiaries sued the federal government following former President Donald Trump’s efforts to do away with it. How likely is the Biden administration to solidify the TPS designation for Nicaraguans? What criteria will go into the decision? What factors are in play concerning a TPS designation for other Latin Americans, such as Venezuelans, for whom the Biden administration already extended it for those who were already eligible, and what is the state of extending TPS to migrants from other countries in the region?

A Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick, member of the U.S. House of Representatives (D-Fla.): “As stated in the letter, which I cosigned to the Biden administration along with my congressional colleagues, Florida is home to a vibrant community of Nicaraguans, many of whom are undocumented and have resided in the United States for years while unrest in Nicaragua continues. The recent expiration of Nicaragua’s TPS designation places more than 4,500 Nicaraguans who fled the destruction of Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and the more than 60,000 Nicaraguans fleeing the repression of the Daniel Ortega regime at grave risk if they are forcibly repatriated. Generally, the se-

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

Nicaragua Orders Closure of Church Radio Stations

Nicaraguan authorities ordered the shutdown of six radio stations belonging to the Roman Catholic Church in the government’s latest move against organizations not affiliated with the state.

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ECONOMIC

Remittances to Mexico Top \$5 Bn for Second Straight Month

Remittances to Mexico exceeded \$5 billion for the second consecutive month in June. For the year’s first half, Mexico received \$27.6 billion in remittances, a 16.6 percent increase year-on-year.

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ECONOMIC

New Argentine Economy Minister Names Advisors

Argentina’s incoming economy minister, Sergio Massa, on Monday named his top advisors and vowed to halt inflation in the South American country.

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Massa // File Photo: Argentine Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Nicaragua Orders Closure of Church Radio Stations

Authorities in Nicaragua on Monday ordered the shutdown on six radio stations belonging to the Roman Catholic Church in the government's latest move amid its crackdown on organizations not affiliated with the state, the Associated Press reported, citing church officials. Authorities dispatched riot police to surround one of the stations, the wire service reported. Rev. Rolando Álvarez, the bishop of Nicaragua's northern Matagalpa province, told parishioners during Mass that state telecommunications agency Telcor had sent him a letter informing him of the radio station closures. Álvarez demanded that Telcor's director show him the legal reason for the closures and called the shutdowns "an injustice," the AP reported. An outspoken critic of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, Álvarez has called for the release of jailed political opponents of Ortega. Earlier this year, he went on a hunger strike in protest of what he called "police persecution" against him, the AP reported. On Monday, Álvarez said police officers had entered and occupied the parish house in Sebaco, 65 miles north of Managua, where one of the church radio stations had operated. The parish priest, Rev. Uriel Vallejos, was inside the house that the police had occupied, according to the Matagalpa diocese. "We want to make clear that if they touch one of our priests, they touch the entire Matagalpa diocese," the diocese said in a statement. "I am being besieged; the police have broken the chapel's locks to enter where the [radio] equipment is to take it," Vallejos said in a written statement, the AP reported. "The police are attacking the faithful who are inside the school [next door]," he added. Ortega's government released no public comment on the radio station closures. In recent months, the government has closed more than 1,000 nongovernmental groups, the AP reported. Last week, a group of 16 U.N.-appointed human rights experts called the Nicaraguan govern-

ment's shutdown of the civil society organizations "deeply concerning," adding that they will have "a chilling effect on activists and human rights defenders across the country," the United Nations said in a statement. In a letter to Nicaragua's government, the experts said the actions represent "a clear pattern of repressing civic space."

ECONOMIC NEWS

Mexico's Remittances Top \$5 Bn for Second Consecutive Month

Remittances to Mexico exceeded \$5 billion for the second month in a row in June, with a 15.6 percent increase as compared to the same month last year, the Bank of Mexico said Monday, Dow Jones Newswires reported. In the first six months of this year, remittances to Mexico totaled \$27.6 billion, 16.6 percent more than the first half of 2021. The June total of \$5.15 billion was just under the \$5.17 billion in remittances that Mexico received in May, the central bank said. The average remittance transfer to Mexico in June was \$408. "Migrants around the world actively conserve daily spending in order to sustain their ability to send money home to support loved ones," said WorldRemit, a U.K.-based money-transfer company, Dow Jones reported. The United States—which has seen an increased cost of living—is the source of 95 percent of remittances to Mexico, the wire service reported. "This suggests that migrants have been able to adjust their consumption baskets as a result of price changes, shielding them at least partially from being affected by those items that have had the most sizable increases," analysts at Grupo Financiero Banorte said in a note. In a separate note, Alberto Ramos, managing director and head of Latin America economic research at Goldman Sachs, said remittance flows to Mexico could decline in the months ahead. "The moderating activity and income growth profile in the [United States] and high base for remittances in 2021 should lead to a

NEWS BRIEFS

Teachers in Panama Returning to Classrooms After Month-Long Strike

Teachers in Panama are set to return to their classrooms today following a month-long strike that turned into the largest social protest the Central American country has seen in years, the Associated Press reported. The educators said they were frustrated about high gas, food and medicine prices, and they were pushing for an increase in education investment. Panamanian President Laurentino Cortizo's government last week regulated the prices of food items, allowing for a 30 percent decrease in the basic food basket's cost, Reuters reported. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the July 20 issue of the Advisor.]

Peru's Level of Inflation Declines Slightly in July

Inflation declined slightly last month in Peru, coming off a peak in June that was the country's highest rate of inflation in 25 years, the government said Monday, Reuters reported. In July, the annual rate of inflation stood at 8.74 percent, down slightly from 8.81 percent in June. The June figure marked the country's highest inflation rate since July 1997. On a monthly basis, prices rose 0.94 percent in July, following an increase of 1.19 percent in June.

Petrobras Starts Giving Portugal's Petrogal Access to Processing Units

Brazilian state oil company Petrobras started an operation giving Petrogal Brasil access to its Rio de Janeiro- and São Paulo-based natural gas processing units, Petrobras said on Monday in a securities filing, Reuters reported. "The contract provides for Petrogal's access to the gas processing units, owned by Petrobras located in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, linked to the Integrated Drainage System," Petrobras said, the wire service reported.

moderation in remittance flows to Mexico in coming quarters," said Ramos.

New Argentine Economy Minister Names Top Advisors

Argentina's incoming economy superminister, Sergio Massa, on Monday appointed his top advisors, promising to stop high inflation and the Argentine economy's deterioration, Reuters reported. President Alberto Fernández appointed Massa following his decision to fire Silvina Batakis, who had been the country's economy minister for less than a month. Fernández gave Massa broader powers, including control of the government's agriculture and production policies, creating what Argentine analysts are calling a "super ministry," The Wall Street Journal reported. Massa appointed Eduardo Setti as finance secretary in the ministry, and he tapped Daniel Marx as part of his public debt monitoring team, Reuters reported. Raúl Rigo will serve as the ministry's treasury secretary. "The objective is to strengthen reserves, ensure treasury financing and promote the development of a national capital market," Massa said in a Twitter posting, the wire service reported. Massa is the third person to lead Argentina's Economy Ministry in less than a month. Batakis was sworn into the post days after her predecessor, Martín Guzmán, resigned in early July. Massa is set to step down today as the head of the Argentine Congress' lower house before being sworn in as the country's economy minister on Wednesday, the wire service reported.

BUSINESS NEWS

DolEx Dollar Express, Barri Financial Announce Merger

U.S.-based money-transfer companies DolEx Dollar Express and Barri Financial Group announced Monday that they have agreed

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tary of homeland security may designate a foreign country for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) due to conditions in the country that temporarily prevent its nationals from returning safely or in certain circumstances where the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately. In the case of Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela and the Republic of Haiti, those countries and their nationals are eligible for TPS designation and extension due to ongoing insecurity. It is in the national security and strategic interest of the United States to provide refuge to those seeking safety. Otherwise, we will continue to see the rise of migrants taking dangerous and deadly routes to our shores. However, we must be mindful that TPS is merely a temporary solution, especially for those already living in the United States. House Democrats passed legislation that would create a pathway to permanent residency and citizenship for TPS and DACA recipients. I urge my colleagues in the Senate to pass the law immediately to ensure a permanent solution for hard-working immigrants and migrants."

A Tim Kaine, member of the U.S. Senate (D-Va.): "As we continue pressing for the restoration of democratic rights in Nicaragua, and work with regional and international partners to support the Nicaraguan people in finding a way forward, we can also allow Nicaraguans currently in the United States to

live and work here legally by redesignating Nicaragua for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) until it is safe for them to return to Nicaragua."

A Louis DeSipio, associate professor of political science and chair of Chicano/Latino studies at the University of California

Irvine: "Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a necessary tool in the toolbox of U.S. foreign policy that needs to continue to be available to policymakers. It has unfortunately become caught up in the ongoing debate about the future of U.S. immigration policy. As a result, policymakers are politicizing the program and forcing the courts to be arbiters over procedural matters about its implementation. This clouds an important power that the United States has traditionally exercised. The program is designed to be a tool when countries with whom the United States has ongoing ties are experiencing extraordinary and temporary domestic challenges that disrupt their national economies and the opportunities of their nationals to thrive. Although TPS status can be extended to any country, it has been used primarily in the Americas. The recent extension of TPS status for Venezuelans is a positive sign that the Biden administration is committed to implementing the designation in times of crisis. Similar protections for Nicaraguans should follow; the advocacy from Florida lawmakers adds to the political incentives

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to merge, the firms said in a statement. The merger of two companies, both headquartered in Texas, "combines two complementary cross-border money transfer services platforms, creating a premier consumer financial services company that will be well-positioned to capitalize on a growing set of opportunities in the market," the companies said. The combined company will offer money-transfer services, as well as check cashing and other services and products, the companies said in their statement. The merged company will be

based in Houston and will maintain offices in Arlington, Tex., Mexico and Spain, the companies said. Mario Trujillo of DolEx will chair the new entity's board, while Alberto Laureano of Barri will be its chief executive officer. "This merger has made sense for a number of years, we are excited to finally have the opportunity to combine two of the strongest brands in the Hispanic community to expand their reach and use our complementary footprints to serve existing and new customers better," Trujillo said in the statement.

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for Biden, but U.S. foreign policy interests should be the dominant factor guiding the program's use. A case for extending TPS protections to Nicaraguans residing in the United States can be made along

“U.S. foreign policy interests should be the dominant factor guiding the program's use.”

— Louis DeSipio

lines comparable to the recent decision about the political and economic situation of Venezuelans. Should Congress be able to find a compromise to restructure U.S. immigration policy broadly, a piece of the compromise needs to be an opportunity for some long-term TPS recipients to transition to permanent residence.”

A Manuel Orozco, director of the Migration, Remittances and Development Program at the Inter-American Dialogue: “The request focuses on an effort to extend the 18-month period, which ends in December 2022, to 4,500 Nicaraguans under protection and include more than 60,000 who have left Nicaragua since the political crisis of 2018. The number of Nicaraguans coming to the United States between September 2020 and June 2022 is now more than 180,000 people, the majority of whom are seeking asylum. The administration is hard-pressed to assign the status given the pressure from other sectors to do so for Venezuelans and other Central Americans (Hondurans and Salvadorans). The criteria this time will include

the period following the April 2018 crisis for people seeking relief as they left the country for political reasons. Many of those who have arrived at the U.S. border have submitted claims for asylum application, and the TPS extension would apply to those who are not on any regular or adjusted status.”

A Edison Lanza, nonresident senior fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue and former special rapporteur for freedom of

expression at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: “The proposal of a bipartisan initiative to extend and reassign Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for Nicaraguans living in the United States is a good first step. This status has had a positive effect on people who have had to immigrate to the United States because of calamities such as Hurricane Mitch, and it has also aided their family members who have remained in Nicaragua and now receive help from relatives abroad. However, the situation in Nicaragua has been aggravated by other factors. The repression that the Ortega-Murillo regime has unleashed since the protests of April 2018 and deep human rights violations have led to the forced exile of members of civil society, journalists, student delegates and democracy activists, as well as people linked to them. A TPS definition that contemplates the situation of persecution and repression in Nicaragua, as well as the deterioration of the country's social and economic situation, would offer some oxygen to a community that needs stability to confront these current challenges.”

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at ekuleta@thedialogue.org.

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