

Support Temporary Protected Status for Guatemalans

By Elenora Giddings Ivory

[November 3, 2005] The National Immigration Forum is asking that advocates send a letter in support of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Guatemalans in the wake of Hurricane Stan. As was widely reported in the press, Guatemala was hit by a tropical storm early in October that killed many people, left thousands homeless, and caused widespread damage to the country's agricultural production. The Guatemalan government has made a request to the U.S. government that Guatemalans in the U.S. be granted Temporary Protected Status. The National Immigration Forum has already sent a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff supporting the request for Temporary Protected Status. If you are interested in sending such a letter please use the sample letter below to draft your own. You may also go to the PresbyAction Center to send an email to Mr. Chertoff at the Department of Homeland Security. go to www.capwiz.com/pcusa/mail/compose

A brief explanation of Temporary Protected Status can be found at:

<http://www.immigrationforum.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=287>

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Secretary Michael Chertoff
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528
VIA FAX: (202) 282-8236

Dear Secretary Chertoff,

I am writing to you to support the Guatemalan Government's request that, in the wake of Hurricane Stan, Guatemalans in the U.S. be given protection from deportation by a grant of Temporary Protected Status.

On the first week of October of this year, extremely heavy rainfall caused by Hurricane Stan fell over Central America and southern Mexico. Guatemala was most affected by the disaster, with loss of life, widespread damage to infrastructure, and agricultural losses.

In Guatemala, there are hundreds of confirmed deaths, and thousands are missing, with entire communities buried. More than 120,000 people have been displaced. Some 700 communities have been affected. Thousands of homes have been destroyed, and tens of thousands have been damaged.

A preliminary assessment of damage to the infrastructure has found more than five thousand kilometers of road severely damaged, with nineteen main bridges out. Damage to hydroelectric plants is considerable, as is

damage to the electrical distribution system. Food shortages for the general population are acute. News reports of the disaster indicate that more than one third of the countries' agriculture was wiped out as a result of the storm.

The Guatemalan community here in the U.S. sends more than \$2 billion worth of remittances that help maintain social stability and provide basic needs to relatives in Guatemala. These remittances take on added importance while Guatemala recovers from the storm.

Until the country can get back on its feet, we believe that granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Guatemalans in the United States will help ameliorate the desperate situation of those victims that may benefit from funds sent by relatives in the U.S. We also believe that it is in the interest of the U.S. not to return people so soon after this natural disaster, as that may create instability in a country that is only recently coming back from civil war, and where poverty was already very high before the storm.

Such a grant would certainly not be without precedent, as Nicaraguans and Hondurans were granted Temporary Protected Status after suffering widespread destruction from Hurricane Mitch in 1998.

We are aware that the Guatemalan Government has officially requested TPS for Guatemalans in the United States, as the conditions that justify this are widely prevalent in the country. Therefore we strongly support granting TPS, and we ask that you give this request serious consideration.

Sincerely,