



# Guatemala Human Rights Commission / USA

## Fact Sheet

### Temporary Protected Status for Guatemalans

Guatemalans are in urgent need of TPS due to the recent natural disasters in their home country. The economic and environmental damage has been devastating and Guatemalans living and working in the U.S. should not be forced to return to a disaster-stricken area. Additionally, families depend on financial support from their relatives in the U.S.; TPS would support the continued reconstruction of the devastation caused by tropical storms, intense rains, and volcanic activity.

**What is TPS?** Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a benefit granted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that permits individuals from selected countries to remain in the United States for a certain amount of time, regardless of previous immigration status. Grants of TPS are initially made for periods of 6 to 18 months and may be extended depending on the situation. Removal proceedings are suspended for those granted TPS.

DHS may grant TPS to countries due to:

- Ongoing armed conflicts (such as civil wars)
- Environmental disasters (such as hurricanes or earthquakes)
- Other extraordinary or temporary conditions

*TPS does not lead to permanent resident status.*

If granted TPS, individuals:

- Cannot be removed from the U.S.
- Cannot be detained by DHS
- Can obtain an employment authorization document
- Are eligible for travel authorization

*After the designated time period has expired, previous immigration status is restored.*

### Pacaya Eruption and Tropical Storms

On May 27, 2010, the Pacaya Volcano erupted just south of Guatemala City, forcing 2,000 people to evacuate. This was only the beginning. Two days later, tropical storm Agatha ravaged the country, affecting hundreds of thousands. A national state of emergency was declared by President Álvaro Colom.

#### Agatha Damage Report

- 397,808 affected
- 274 dead
- 104,639 homeless
- 162,857 evacuated
- 27,823 in refuge
- 133,102 at risk
- 37 landslides
- Flooding in 384 areas
- Economic damage: \$1.1 billion

National Committee for Disaster Reduction (CONRED)



Sinkhole in Guatemala City

#### Storms Continue

The rainy season has continued to devastate Guatemala. Within the first week of September 2010, there were an additional:

- 53,000 affected
- 43,000 at risk
- 11,500 evacuated
- 44 dead, 254 injured
- 200 landslides and mudslides
- Economic damage: \$500 million

CONRED



Flooding in Escuintla



Evacuees in Santa Ana, Mixta



12 were killed after a bus was crushed in Guatemala City

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## Guatemala Needs TPS Now

### Recovery will be slow: infrastructure was destroyed and crops lost

- Total storm damage in 2010: U.S. \$1.6 billion
- President Colom has asked for \$163 million from US Congress for rebuilding
- USAID gave \$1.3 million in May for Agatha relief and an additional \$100,000 in September
- The UN World Food Program has reported that 330,000 are in dire need of food aid. UNWFP has fed over 100,000.

*Prensa Libre, UNWFP, USAID*



*September flooding in Ciudad Vieja*

### **Countries with TPS**

Citizens from 3 other Central American countries have been granted TPS due to hurricanes and earthquakes.

- *Honduras: granted in January 1999*
- *Nicaragua: granted in January 1999*
- *El Salvador: granted in March 2001*

*U.S. Customs and Immigration Services*

**President Colom, other Central American presidents, and tens of thousands of Guatemalans and U.S. citizens have asked for TPS for Guatemala. Support the request for TPS for Guatemalans by calling the White House Comment Line: (202) 456-1111 and saying “Yes to TPS for Guatemala.”**

### TPS provides indirect financial support

**Remittances:** *Families need financial support now more than ever due to devastating storm damage*

- Approximately 3.7 million Guatemalans (26% of the population) receive remittances from relatives in the U.S.
- In 2009 alone, \$4.1 billion was sent in remittances to Guatemala, comprising 9% of the GDP
- 57% of those receiving remittances live in rural settings – areas that have suffered the most

### Working under TPS

- TPS would grant Guatemalans in the U.S. temporary legal work authorization, making it easier to find jobs and demand fair wages
- In the case of El Salvador, TPS led to a 25% increase in remittances due to increased wages

**Deportation:** *TPS would temporarily halt deportation for those who qualify*

- In 2009, 27,222 Guatemalans were forcibly deported from the U.S.
- From January 1 to July 31, 16,125 Guatemalans were deported, representing at least 16,000 families in Guatemala who rely on remittances for survival

*International Organization for Migration, Migration Information Source*



*Aftermath of a deadly mudslide in San Antonio Palopó*