



December 19, 2011

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As the Syrian uprising nears its 10th month, the situation on the ground has grown increasingly dangerous for average Syrian citizens. Violent clashes between Syrian armed forces and resistance elements have broken out in all quarters of the country, and armed death squads roam the streets, empowered to arbitrarily arrest – and in many cases torture – Syrians who may or may not be critical of the regime.

The situation is particularly dangerous for Syrians who have traveled abroad, especially to states seen as inimical to the Syrian government, such as the United States. Students, tourists, and other Syrians who have temporarily visited the U.S. are routinely detained and questioned upon returning, and some have disappeared entirely. As a result, many Syrians currently in the U.S. are deeply concerned for their personal safety and the safety of their families if they return home. According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrations, hundreds of Syrians have already filed requests for asylum and protection.

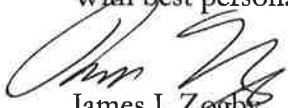
Granting Temporary Protected Status is a safe, compassionate, and reasonable way to protect the lives of Syrian citizens currently in the United States, in a manner that upholds our national values, protects our strategic interests, and builds our international goodwill.

The TPS program has been remarkably successful since its implementation in 1990, and continues to protect citizens of El Salvador, Haiti, Sudan, and other states today. Extending TPS benefits to Syrian citizens will demonstrate that the United States cares about the lives and well-being of the Syrian people, matching our rhetoric on Syria with concrete humanitarian action.

The TPS designation allows beneficiaries to remain and work in the United States, but reverts the beneficiary to his or her previous immigration status as soon as the temporary protection ends. It therefore has no long-term effect on immigration or citizenship status, and only serves to protect individuals in a time of great crisis.

We urge you to add Syria to the list of states granted Temporary Protected Status without delay.

With best personal regards,



James J. Zogby
President