

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 18, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Samantha Power  
Administrator  
USAID  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Blinken and Administrator Power:

We write with concern about the deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation in Lebanon. We appreciate the efforts that the Biden administration has made to address the immediate humanitarian needs of the Lebanese people, including a recent commitment of \$98 million of additional U.S. humanitarian assistance, as well as support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and the ongoing coordinated diplomatic effort with our allies to address these challenges. However, reporting indicates that, without additional support, key institutions in Lebanon, including higher education institutions and the health system, face potential collapse. Additionally, we ask that you continue to support accountability for institutions and individuals responsible for the economic and political mismanagement that has led to the current crisis, as well as ongoing efforts to investigate the cause of the Beirut port explosion last August.

In the past two years, Lebanon has experienced a series of overlapping crises. In addition to the global pandemic and being host to the largest number of refugees per capita, last year Lebanon experienced a massive explosion at the port of Beirut which killed hundreds, injured thousands and left hundreds of thousands of people homeless due to the blast's destruction of their homes. Lebanon has also seen an economic crisis which has resulted in over 90% devaluation in its currency, widespread unemployment and poverty. The Lebanese people are now experiencing shortages of food, fuel, and medicine. The economic crisis in Lebanon has been ranked by the World Bank as one of the top three "most severe crises episodes globally since the mid-nineteenth century."

This crisis has had compounding negative impacts on Lebanon's health system, with shortages of medicine, electricity, and key personnel. According to recent reporting, between 40 and 50 percent of Lebanon's doctors have left the country. These developments have threatened access to both lifesaving medical procedures and routine primary care. As you look to support the Lebanese people, we ask that you prioritize efforts to restore these critical services and prevent further brain drain of critical medical providers.

Additionally, we ask that you take action to address the funding shortfall for Lebanon's education system, including Lebanese American University and the American University in Beirut. In the FY21 appropriations legislation, Congress passed a new \$50 million fund that would help fund the future leaders of countries in economic crisis, and the legislation specifically

named Lebanon in the report. These funds are designated for trusted American universities, which are essential for not only providing current employment and economic lifelines to tens of thousands of people in Lebanon but also for rebuilding the countries' civil society, building up institutional capacity within the country, and promoting American public diplomacy in a region increasingly being influenced by hostile domestic and foreign corruption. So far, these funds have not been distributed by USAID. We ask that you provide a timeline for the delivery of these funds, as well as how much of this funding will go to universities in Lebanon. Additionally, we request a breakdown or additional details on any State Department funding included in the August 4, 2021 announcement.

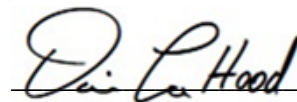
Finally, we request that you continue to prioritize ongoing efforts to investigate the cause of the Beirut port explosion last August, as well as support accountability for those Lebanese public officials implicated in wrongdoing that has contributed to the current economic crisis. In spite of international calls for an independent investigation following the Beirut port blast on August 4, 2021, current efforts have proceeded slowly. Additionally, during the ongoing political and economic crisis, evidence has come to light regarding the misuse of public funds, as well as other breaches of public trust by political figures. A full accounting of the facts in these matters and real accountability is key to restoring trust in Lebanon's political system and addressing the multitude of crises the country currently faces.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request, and for your continued engagement on this issue.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



Darin LaHood  
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist  
Member of Congress



Darrell Issa  
Member of Congress