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October 1, 2024

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20451

Secretary Blinken,

One of the most important responsibilities of the State Department is to protect Americans overseas, especially in times of crisis. In alignment with this mission, I write to urge you to swiftly arrange evacuation flights for American citizens and their immediate family members with valid travel documents and/or visas currently in Lebanon.

As you know, the situation in Lebanon has significantly worsened in recent days. The conflict is risking the health and safety of those in the region, including U.S. citizens, and due to the escalation of this situation in Beirut, many are seeking to leave. I understand the State Department is encouraging Americans to book tickets on commercial flights, but this option is proving impossible for most trying to find safe routes out of the country.

There is only one commercial airline carrier currently available for Americans to depart Lebanon, resulting in both a lack of available seats and affordability. Families continue to share their stories of booking commercial flights, only for them to be canceled the day of the flight. These families are left with no other option but to try to rebook for a flight days later, and they fear the new flight could be similarly canceled. These flights are costing upwards of \$8,000 a ticket, which is also imposing a steep financial barrier to those seeking to leave.

Given the severe challenges Americans are experiencing in booking commercial flights, I ask the State Department to immediately arrange evacuation flights to ensure Americans can safely and quickly depart Lebanon.

The State Department has estimated that 86,000 U.S. citizens live in Lebanon as of 2022. Since Saturday, over 5,000 U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents have completed the State's Department's crisis intake form requesting support and information about departure assistance out of Lebanon. There is a clear demand for assistance departing Lebanon, and I ask the State Department to redouble its efforts to help those wishing to leave due to the unpredictable nature of the conflict.

The escalation of this conflict has already hurt and killed thousands in Lebanon and continues threatening to injure, kill, or displace countless others. Many communities across the United States, including mine in Michigan, are home to significant Lebanese communities who fear for the safety of their loved ones. Just this morning, we learned heartbreaking news that Kamel Jawad, a United States citizen from Dearborn, Michigan, was killed in Lebanon earlier today as he was taking care of his elderly mother. The escalation in Lebanon took his life, and it is critical we act now to protect others who could also be harmed. As a nation, we must do more to ensure the safe return of Americans from Lebanon and bring peace to the Middle East.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debbie Dingell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress