

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 12, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

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

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken:

We write to urge you to use your statutory discretion to protect Lebanese nationals who are currently in the United States and permit those affected by the ongoing crises in Lebanon to find safe haven in our country by providing an initial 18-month designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Lebanon. The country continues to face an unprecedented economic, political, and financial disaster hobbled by a stalled government that has generated one of the most pressing humanitarian crises today.

Over the past five years, Lebanon has faced increasing difficulty in providing its citizens basic services due to its harrowing financial crisis. The economic meltdown has not only placed over half of the population below the poverty line in a time of food and fuel shortages, but it has also decimated the medical sector that faces a distinct lack of essential medical supplies and medical professionals. The World Health Organization found that fuel shortages were causing most hospitals to operate at 50% capacity, and almost 40% of skilled medical doctors and 30% of registered nurses had fled the country.¹

Lebanon's economic collapse and ensuing humanitarian catastrophe are unprecedented in their severity. The World Bank ranks the crisis among the top 10 most severe global episodes since the mid-19th century.² In four years, Lebanon's real output has plummeted by 38 percent, the local currency has lost at least 98 percent of its value, and the country has suffered from hyperinflation, with nominal food prices increasing 350 percent.³ Data released by the United Nations and other aid agencies in August 2023 revealed that 1.4 million people, including both Lebanese citizens and refugees, are experiencing high levels of food insecurity in the country. Malnutrition and insufficient food consumption are prevalent.⁴

Lebanon's ongoing political turmoil, which began in 2005 following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, continues to paralyze the country further. Lebanon has remained without a duly elected President and fully empowered cabinet since October 2022. This has left the country in political paralysis without leadership to implement critical economic and social reforms. We

¹ <https://www.emro.who.int/media/news/joint-statement-by-dr-tedros-adhanom-ghebreyesus-who-director-general-and-dr-ahmed-al-mandhari-regional-director-for-the-eastern-mediterranean-on-lebanon.html>

² <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/lebanon>

³ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/12/21/lebanon-s-fragile-economy-pulled-back-into-recession>

⁴ <https://www.nrc.no/news/2023/august/lebanon-debt-and-inflation-contribute-to-food-insecurity/>

appreciate the State Department recognizing the critical need for a president who can guide Lebanon safely through its growing challenges.⁵

The resurfaced conflict along Lebanon’s southern border reiterates the need for the United States to continue to work with our Lebanese partners to ensure that the situation does not further escalate. The current conflict at the Lebanon- Israel border has caused more than 55,000 people from the south to flee to other regions of the country and are living as Internally Displaced Persons. Given the rising unrest looming at the country’s border and the potential of greater widespread conflict, the State Department widely shared updated security guidance, temporarily suspended consular operations, ordered non-essential Embassy staff to depart, and encouraged citizens and legal permanent residents to do the same.”

Section 244(b)(1)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) provides executive authority to grant TPS to individuals who are nationals of a country that has been designated as unsafe for return due to “extraordinary and temporary conditions” unless it would be contrary to the national interest.⁶ Similarly, nationals of a country may be designated for a temporary administrative stay of removal in the form of DED, by Executive Order or a Presidential Memorandum.⁷ Given the extraordinary, overlapping challenges in the country and the hardships that the Lebanese people are facing, Lebanon must receive a designation of Temporary Protected Status or Deferred Enforced Departure to provide immediate relief for those seeking refuge. Based on criteria set forth by the Department of Homeland Security, Lebanon clearly qualifies for TPS designation. We urge you to designate TPS for Lebanon, to publish a timely Federal Register Notice, and to launch a public information campaign to notify the impacted community of the decision and any actions they must take by the designated deadline. We call for a minimum 180-day registration period for those who would benefit under the designation.

The United States has long offered refuge to those seeking shelter from catastrophe. The crisis in the Middle East and the complex crisis in Lebanon provides an opportunity to honor this commitment by supporting Lebanese nationals in their time of need. We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

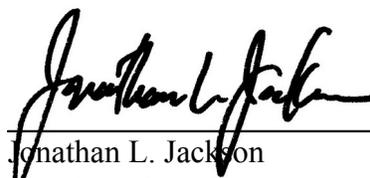
⁵ <https://www.state.gov/one-year-anniversary-of-lebanons-presidential-vacancy/>

⁶ 8 U.S.C. 1254a(b)(1)(C).

⁷ Ben Harrington, *An Overview of Discretionary Reprieves from Removal: Deferred Action, DACA, TPS, and Others*, CONG. RES. SERVICE (Apr. 10, 2018) (“DED resembles TPS in that it protects nationals of certain designated countries from removal, except that DED is rooted in inherent executive power rather than in statutory authority.”).



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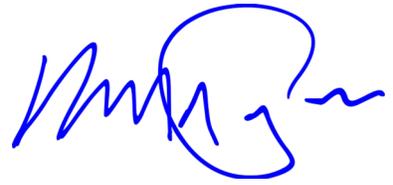
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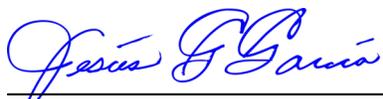
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