

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 5, 2024

**RECEIVED**

**By ESEC at 8:04 am, Jun 06, 2024**

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
301 7th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken:

We urge you to designate Lebanon for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Lebanese nationals present in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Lebanon currently faces escalating armed conflict in the region, fueling an ever-worsening humanitarian emergency. Prior to the conflict, Lebanon was experiencing an unprecedented multifaceted crisis involving dire food insecurity, economic collapse, massive hyperinflation, and a stalled government formation process. Designating Lebanon for TPS would benefit an estimated 12,000 eligible individuals currently present in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

The heightened tensions in the region have worsened Lebanon's already precarious situation.<sup>3</sup> After the horrific October 7, 2023 attacks on Israel led by Hamas, the armed conflict between Hezbollah and Israel has intensified and represents the largest armed exchange between them since 2006. This intensification has led to significant displacement, with more than 92,000 civilians displaced in Lebanon.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Department of State has issued a Level 4 Travel Advisory for Southern Lebanon due to "cross-border rockets, missiles, and artillery fire exchanged on a daily basis" and a Level 3 Travel Advisory for Lebanon overall due to "crime, terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, unexploded landmines, and armed conflict."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A TPS designation may be due to natural disasters, armed conflicts, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions. See 8 U.S.C. §1254a.

<sup>2</sup> FWD.us, *Temporary Protected Status protects families while also boosting the U.S. economy*, (Feb. 2023) ([https://www.fwd.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/230306\\_FWD\\_TPSReport\\_v2-2.pdf](https://www.fwd.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/230306_FWD_TPSReport_v2-2.pdf)).

<sup>3</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Lebanon* (2023).

<sup>4</sup> OCHA, *Lebanon: Flash Update #16 – Escalation of hostilities in south Lebanon, 18 April 2024*, (Apr. 24, 2024), (<https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-flash-update-16-escalation-hostilities-south-lebanon-18-april-2024>); *How Hezbollah attacks displace 60,000 Israelis, six months on*, Reuters (Apr. 4, 2024), (<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/six-months-hezbollah-fire-keeps-uprooted-israelis-limbo-2024-04-04/>).

<sup>5</sup> Department of State, Travel Advisories, *Lebanon Travel Advisory*, (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/lebanon-travel-advisory.html>) (May, 7,

Prior to the armed conflict, Lebanon was experiencing severe economic collapse.<sup>6</sup> In four years, Lebanon's gross domestic product (GDP) has plummeted by 38 percent, the local currency has lost at least 98 percent of its value against the U.S. dollar since late 2019, triggering hyperinflation.<sup>7</sup> Nominal food prices are increasing 350 percent year-over-year, which has been exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Data released by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) projects that from April 2024 to September 2024, approximately 1.1 million people—including both Lebanese citizens and refugees—are projected to face acute food insecurity in Lebanon.<sup>8</sup>

The economic collapse in Lebanon is further compounded by a persistent political vacuum. Since President Michael Aoun's term ended on October 31, 2022, the country has been governed by a caretaker government, lacking the full authority and capacity to effectively address the nation's escalating crises.<sup>9</sup> With the absence of a stable government, coupled with a crumbling economy, Lebanon meets the extraordinary and temporary conditions required under the TPS statute.

Considering the ongoing and escalating armed conflict, as well as the safety and security risks, Lebanese nationals currently present in the United States should not be forced to return. Designating Lebanon for TPS would enable Lebanese nationals currently in the United States, including students, tourists, and workers, to be able to remain safely in the United States and to work legally to support themselves and their families. We urge you to designate Lebanon for TPS to protect Lebanese nationals in the United States without delay.

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2024).

<sup>6</sup> World Bank, *Lebanon Sinking into One of the Most Severe Global Crises Episodes, amidst Deliberate Inaction*, (June 1, 2021) (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/01/lebanon-sinking-into-one-of-the-most-severe-global-crises-episodes>).

<sup>7</sup> Harvard Kennedy School Growth Lab, *Towards a Sustainable Recovery for Lebanon's Economy*, (Nov. 2023) (<https://growthlab.hks.harvard.edu/sites/projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/growthlab/files/2023-11-cid-wp-439-lebanon-sustainable-recovery.pdf>).


<sup>8</sup> USAID, *Fact Sheet #1: Lebanon – Complex Emergency*, (Apr. 3, 2024) ([https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-04-03\\_USG\\_Lebanon\\_Complex\\_Emergency\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_1.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-04-03_USG_Lebanon_Complex_Emergency_Fact_Sheet_1.pdf)).


<sup>9</sup> Department of State, *Secretary Blinken's Meeting with Lebanese Caretaker Prime Minister Mikati*, (Nov. 4, 2023) (<https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-meeting-with-lebanese-caretaker-prime-minister-mikati-2/>).

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The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
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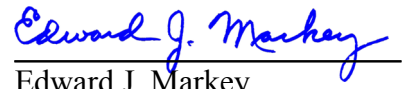
Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

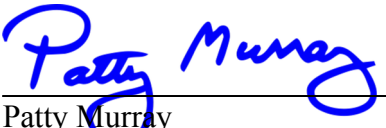
Sincerely,

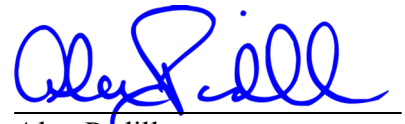
  
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Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

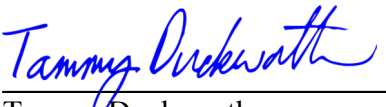
  
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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

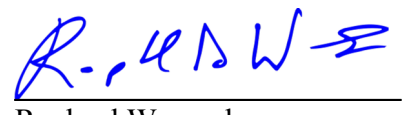
  
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Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

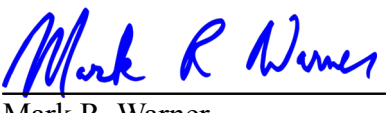
  
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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

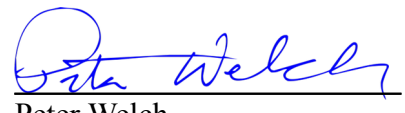
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Patty Murray  
United States Senator

  
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Alex Padilla  
United States Senator

  
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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

  
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Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator

  
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Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

  
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Peter Welch  
United States Senator

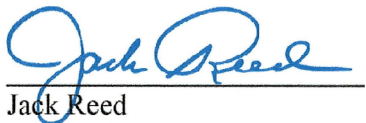
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The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
June 5, 2024  
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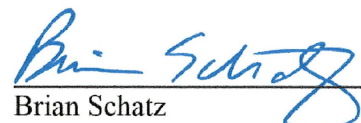
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



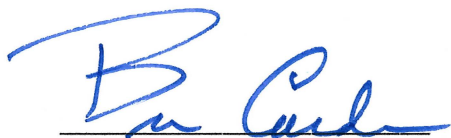
Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

August 22, 2024

The Honorable Gary C. Peters  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Peters:

Thank you for your June 5, 2024, letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in support of a designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Lebanon. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

I appreciate the concerns you have outlined regarding the situation in Lebanon. On July 26, 2024, President Joseph Biden issued a memorandum to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security determining that it was in the foreign policy interest of the United States to defer, through January 26, 2026, the removal of certain Lebanese nationals present in the United States. This position is known as Deferred Enforced Departure (DED).<sup>1</sup> This memorandum also directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to take appropriate measures to authorize employment for such individuals. More information regarding DED for Lebanese nationals can be found in the President's memorandum. DHS will issue a Federal Register Notice as soon as possible, to provide additional information about the implementation of the President's memorandum.

Please be assured that DHS is monitoring conditions in the region, and engaging with our partners at the U.S. Department of State, and with other interagency partners. In addition to DED and TPS, USCIS offers support to assist eligible noncitizens affected by emergencies, or unforeseen circumstances. Such measures may include:

- Change or extension of nonimmigrant status if eligible individuals are currently in the United States, even if the request is filed after the authorized period of admission has expired;
- Expedited processing of requests for advance parole documents;
- Expedited adjudication of requests for off-campus employment authorization for F-1 students experiencing severe economic hardship;
- Expedited adjudication of employment authorization applications, where appropriate;

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<sup>1</sup> See Presidential Memorandum for the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security on the Deferred Enforced Departure for Certain Lebanese Nationals, July 26, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2024/07/26/memorandum-on-the-deferred-enforced-departure-for-certain-lebanese-nationals/>

- Assistance if applicants received a Request for Evidence or a Notice of Intent to Deny and were unable to appear for an interview, submit evidence, or respond in a timely manner due to the circumstances; and
- Replacement of lost or damaged immigration or travel documents issued by USCIS, such as a Permanent Resident Card (Green Card).

More information is available at <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/immigration-relief-in-emergencies-or-unforeseen-circumstances>.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The cosigners of your letter will receive a separate, identical response. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (240) 721-3801.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou  
Director