

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 5, 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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<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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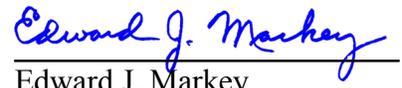
Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

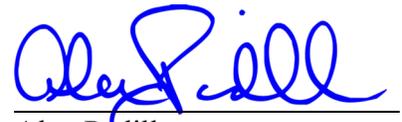
  
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Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

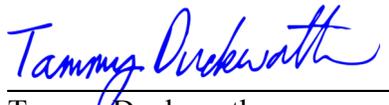
  
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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

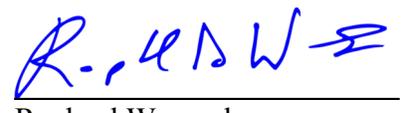
  
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Debbie Stabenow  
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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

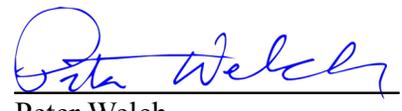
  
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United States Senator

  
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Alex Padilla  
United States Senator

  
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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

  
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Raphael Warnock  
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United States Senator

  
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