



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

September 8, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

**RECEIVED**

**By ESEC at 12:34 pm, Sep 09, 2021**

Dear President Biden,

We write to urge you to exercise your 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 designating Lebanon for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), or at a minimum, by allowing Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Lebanese nationals.

Section 244(b)(1) 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 “ongoing armed conflict,” “environmental disaster,” or “extraordinary and temporary conditions in the foreign state that prevent aliens who are nationals of the state from returning to the state in safety,” unless it would be contrary to the national interest.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, nationals of a country may receive a temporary administrative stay of removal in the form of DED, by Executive Order or a Presidential Memorandum.<sup>2</sup> As the current crises in Lebanon clearly meet these criteria, immediate action to protect Lebanese nationals is warranted.

The COVID-19 pandemic, Beirut Port explosion, economic meltdown and ongoing political crisis have combined to create one of the worst humanitarian crises globally, resulting in a widespread lack of access to medical care, potable water, food, electricity, and fuel. According to the United Nations, up to 78 percent of the Lebanese population (3 million people) were living in poverty as of March 2021, with an estimated 36 percent (1.38 million people) experiencing

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<sup>1</sup> 8 U.S.C. 1254a(b)(1).

<sup>2</sup> 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.”).

extreme poverty.<sup>3</sup> Since October 2019, the Lebanese pound has lost 90 percent of its value, resulting in a year-on-year inflation rate of more than 120% from May 2020 to May 2021. At the same time, food prices have skyrocketed, increasing 400 percent in 2020 alone.<sup>4</sup> Fuel shortages are so dire that hospitals are struggling to keep the lights on, leading the American University of Beirut Medical Center, Beirut's top hospital and one of the leading medical centers in the region, to issue a warning that hundreds of patients will die if they fail to secure enough fuel to keep their generators running.<sup>5</sup> On top of all this, Lebanon has not had a fully formed government in over a year, hobbling the ability of authorities to address these crises.

Speaking to the Conference to Support the Lebanese People on the anniversary of the Beirut Port explosion, you, Mr. President, spoke of the United States' "longstanding support for the Lebanese people" and recognized "that the people of Lebanon have suffered more over the past year because of avoidable political and economic crises."<sup>6</sup> While we commend your decision to send an additional \$98 million in humanitarian aid to Lebanon, given the scale of the crises, it is clear that the country is not in a position to safely accept the return of its citizens at this time. Standing with the Lebanese people in their time of need is both morally right and in line with our national interests. As such, it is imperative that your Administration take immediate steps to designate Lebanon for TPS, or at a minimum, defer removal for Lebanese nationals through DED.

The United States has long offered shelter to those seeking refuge from catastrophe. Now is the time to continue this tradition and stand beside the Lebanese people in their time of need. We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Lebanon Emergency Response Plan 2021 - 2022 (August 2021), United Nations, (Aug. 5, 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-emergency-response-plan-2021-2022-august-2021>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> [American](#) University of Beirut Medical Center, Office of Communications Announcement, dated August 14, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Morgan Chalfant, Biden pledges \$100 million in aid to Lebanon on anniversary of Beirut blast, The Hill, (Aug. 4, 2021), <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/566329-biden-pledges-100-million-in-aid-to-lebanon-on-anniversary-of-beirut>.

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
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Yvette D. Clarke  
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Ilhan Omar  
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Grace Meng  
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Jamaal Bowman  
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Judy Chu  
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Ritchie Torres  
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Frank Pallone  
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Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress

Cori Bush  
Member of Congress

Marie Newman  
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

October 12, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Dingell  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

Thank you for your September 8, 2021 letter to President Biden in support of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Lebanese nationals. The White House forwarded your letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Secretary Mayorkas asked that I respond on his behalf.

The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a country for TPS and extend or terminate a country's existing TPS designation based upon specific statutory criteria. In order to designate a country for TPS or extend a country's TPS designation, the Secretary must find one or more of the following: (1) there is an ongoing armed conflict within the country that would pose a serious threat to the personal safety of the country's nationals if they were returned; (2) there has been an environmental disaster resulting in a substantial, but temporary, disruption of the living conditions in the area affected, the country is temporarily unable to handle adequately the return of its nationals, and the country has officially requested TPS designation; or (3) there exist extraordinary and temporary conditions in the country that prevent nationals from returning in safety, and the Secretary does not find that permitting the country's nationals to remain temporarily in the United States would be contrary to the national interest of the United States. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act § 244(b)(1). DHS makes decisions to designate TPS after consultation with interagency partners and careful consideration of the circumstances of the country.

DED is an administrative stay of removal that may be authorized by the President for a designated group of foreign nationals. The authority to grant DED arises from the President's constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States. *See* Memorandum on the Deferred Enforced Departure for Certain Hong Kong Residents (August 5, 2021). The President can authorize DED for any reason related to this authority. Although DED is not a specific immigration status, individuals covered by DED are not subject to removal from the United States for a designated period of time. The President may direct DHS to offer certain benefits, such as employment authorization or advance parole to reenter the United States after travel abroad, to eligible foreign nationals covered by the DED directive. The Secretary authorizes employment for the period of time and under the conditions pursuant to the

presidential directive. DHS is responsible for adjudicating and processing any DED-related applications for employment authorization or advance parole documents. In general, eligibility standards are set forth in the presidential designation of DED for each specific group of eligible foreign nationals.

I appreciate the concerns you have outlined about the current conditions in Lebanon. DHS is monitoring conditions in the country and will work with interagency partners in doing so.

DHS is committed to administering its programs in an equitable manner. Please be assured that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services offers support that may be available upon request<sup>1</sup> to assist eligible foreign nationals residing in the U.S. who have been affected by extraordinary conditions back home. Such support may include:

- Excusal of a nonimmigrant's failure to timely file an application for change of nonimmigrant status or extension of nonimmigrant stay if the delay was due to circumstances beyond their control;
- 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;
- 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 because of the extraordinary circumstances; and
- Replacement of lost or damaged immigration or travel documents issued by USCIS, such as a Permanent Resident Card (also known as a Green Card).

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", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou  
Director

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<sup>1</sup> Additional information is available at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website at: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/special-situations>.