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Anti-Discrimination Committee

August 24, 2021

The Honorable Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
Washington, D.C. 20528

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

Re: Request for Designation of Lebanon for Temporary Protected Status

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken,

In light of severe economic collapse, a health crisis, and an unstable political climate, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, along with the undersigned 76 organizations, is requesting that you designate Lebanon for Temporary Protected Status (“TPS”) in accordance with your authority to do so as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1254a. This request is being made because of the civil strife that has entrenched Lebanon over the past year. Currently, the political and economic instability plaguing the country is getting worse, and reports indicate that geopolitical tensions could escalate.

TPS is a temporary protection that allows people from a designated country to remain in the United States while conditions in their home country make safe return impossible. The Secretary of Homeland Security can designate a country for TPS if the country is experiencing ongoing armed conflict, natural disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions. TPS allows its beneficiaries to stay in the United States during the designation period and to legally work. It is a life-saving protection, especially for those who are ineligible for or who have been denied asylum.

Lebanon’s unstable political climate, current economic collapse, humanitarian crisis, and armed conflicts make it unsafe for Lebanese nationals to return. The country has been without a fully functioning government for nearly a year following multiple waves of protests against government corruption.¹ Lebanon is in the throes of economic depression and political instability, and there are renewed fears that a full-scale

¹ *A New Season of Unrest in Lebanon*, THE ARMED CONFLICT LOCATION & EVENT DATE PROJECT (ACLED), <https://acleddata.com/2021/05/12/a-new-season-of-unrest-in-lebanon/> (last visited Jun. 23, 2021).



conflict will emerge at the southern border.² This kind of political paralysis is not new; it has happened many times in the country's history and shows no signs of improvement.³ Furthermore, regional tensions between Israel, Palestine, and surrounding countries have also raised alarm for the possibility of armed conflict in Lebanon. Lebanon, which houses over 470,000 Palestinian refugees, has been the site of multiple armed confrontations with Israel in the past.⁴

There is evidence that the return of Lebanese nationals would pose a serious threat to their personal safety, as Lebanon is in the midst of a severe economic and public health humanitarian crisis. At the start of 2019, Lebanon was "already grappling with the impact of a grave socio-economic as well as sanitary crisis."⁵ Recent events have only worsened the tragic conditions, curating a hazardous, and at times life-threatening environment to most of its population. On August 4, 2020, a massive blast in Beirut's seaport, killing nearly 200 people, injuring around 6,000, and leaving 300,000 without shelter.⁶ The blast exacerbated public health concerns amidst the COVID-19 pandemic⁷, weakening an already-exhausted hospital infrastructure. The explosion also impacted the country's food supply, as over seventy percent of Lebanon's food came through the Beirut port.⁸ Additionally, sanctions imposed by the U.S. and European Union have also contributed to the economic crisis facing the nations.⁹

In the aftermath of the Beirut Port Explosion, Lebanon has entered a severe depression. Entry of Lebanese nationals currently poses a serious threat to their health and safety. According to the World Bank Lebanon's

² *Israel shells Lebanon after failed launches toward Israeli territory -Israeli military*, REUTERS (May 17, 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/air-raid-sirens-sound-israel-near-lebanon-border-israeli-military-says-2021-05-17/>.

³ *Little Hope Left: Lebanon's Paralysis and a Collapsing State*, ALJAZEERA, (May 24, 2021) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/24/little-hope-left-lebanons-paralysis-and-a-collapsing-state>.

⁴ *Where We Work: Lebanon*, UNRWA, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>.

⁵ *The Humanitarian Response to the Beirut Port Explosions: Lebanon 2020 Flash Appeal*, OCHA (Apr. 30, 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/humanitarian-response-beirut-port-explosions-lebanon-2020-flash-appeal-end-report-30>

⁶ *World Report 2021: Lebanon*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH.

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): *COVID-19 in Lebanon*, <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/covid-3/coronavirus-lebanon> (Aug. 16, 2021)

⁸ *World Report 2021: Lebanon*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH.

⁹ U.S. State Department: Joint Statement by Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen Welcoming the EU Sanctions Regime on Lebanon, <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-by-secretary-of-state-antony-j-blinken-and-treasury-secretary-janet-l-yellen-welcoming-the-eu-sanctions-regime-on-lebanon/> (July 30, 2021)



current financial crisis is likely to rank in the top three most severe crisis's episodes globally since the mid-nineteenth century, and has been categorized as a "Fragility, Conflict & Violence (FCV) State."¹⁰ Without a functioning government to guide them through disaster, the value of the Lebanese Pound has plummeted and essential services like waste disposal have been terminated.¹¹ This economic meltdown has translated into severe shortages of necessities like medicine, fuel, and clean water, as Lebanon's public water supply system is on the brink of collapsing.¹² Successful delivery of critical public services is essential to the welfare of Lebanese residents, and the "sharp deterioration in basic services [will] have long-term implications: mass migration, loss of learning, poor health outcomes, lack of adequate safety nets, among others."¹³

In early August of this year fuel shortages have added to the growing issues facing the Lebanese population. The shortage of fuel has led to power outages, including at medical facilities¹⁴. Senior U.N. officials have stated that the on-going fuel crisis can be potentially catastrophic for thousands inside Lebanon¹⁵.

Designation of Lebanon for TPS will not burden the U.S.; rather, it will likely prove advantageous to the U.S. economy and social welfare. The total number of Lebanese nationals who could benefit from designation is approximately up to 28,500. Lebanese nationals in the U.S. will likely lend their skills and knowledge to key industries in the U.S. The presence of immigrants has been proven to increase human capital which increases productivity and nourishes local businesses.¹⁶ TPS beneficiaries in particular have made significant contributions to the US economy and become vital parts of their local communities.¹⁷

¹⁰ *Lebanon Sinking into One of Most Severe Global Crises Episodes*, THE WORLD BANK PRESS RELEASE (Jun. 1, 2021) <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/01/lebanon-sinking-into-one-of-the-most-severe-global-crises-episodes>.

¹¹ *World Report 2021: Lebanon*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH.

¹² *Millions of Lebanese Risk Losing Access to Safe Water: UNICEF*, AlJazeera (Jul. 23, 2021), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/23/over-71-of-lebanese-risk-losing-access-to-safe-water-unicef>

¹³ *Lebanon Sinking*, THE WORLD BANK PRESS RELEASE.

¹⁴ *Fuel shortages leave Lebanese hospitals in 'critical condition'*, Al Jazeera (Aug. 16, 2021), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/16/fuel-shortages-leave-lebanese-hospitals-in-critical>

¹⁵ *Fuel crisis in Lebanon potential catastrophe for thousands: senior UN official*, UN News (Aug. 17, 2021), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097962>

¹⁶ *Citizenship for Undocumented Immigrants Would Boost U.S. Economic Growth*, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS (Jun. 14, 2021), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/reports/2021/06/14/500433/citizenship-undocumented-immigrants-boost-u-s-economic-growth/>.

¹⁷ *There Is No Evidence That TPS Designations Increase Irregular Migration to the United States*, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS, (Feb. 17, 2021), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2021/02/17/495821/no-evidence-tps-designations-increase-irregular-migration-united-states/>.



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There has also been no indication that TPS designation has encouraged greater, irregular numbers of migration from the designated areas, including when Lebanon has been designated in the past.¹⁸

The U.S. has already invested billions of dollars over the past 10 years in Lebanon's recovery.¹⁹ TPS would strengthen that investment. Lebanon's stability is also key to the stability of the region, which is within U.S. foreign policy interests.

We implore you to designate Lebanon for TPS. The ADC and undersigned groups look forward to working with your office to ensure that this request is granted. Should you have any questions or concerns, or seek to schedule a meeting, please feel free to contact ADC Legal and Policy Director Mr. Abed Ayoub at 202-244-2990 or via email to aayoub@adc.org.

Signed,

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

National Organizations

ACT for Lebanon
Advocating Opportunity
African Communities Together
America's Voice
American Immigration Lawyers Association
Amnesty International USA
Arab American Institute (AAI)
Armenian-American Action Network
Casa Reina
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel
Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, US Area
Haitian Bridge Alliance
Hanan Refugees Relief Group
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC
Human Rights First
ICNA Council for Social Justice
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ U.S. State Department: *U.S. Relations with Lebanon*, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-lebanon/> (Aug. 16, 2021)



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Nicaragua Center for Community Action
No Separate Justice
Northeastern University Immigrant Justice Clinic
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
UndocuBlack Network
United Stateless

State and Local Organizations

Adhikaar
Alianza Sacramento
American Civic Association
Arab American Civic Council
Benedictine Sisters of FL
Boston University International Human Rights Clinic
Buen Vecino
CAIR California
Campaign for Immigrant Detention Reform (CIDR)
Caroline House
Centro Romero
Church of Our Saviour/La Iglesia de Nuestro Salvador
Church of the Ascension
Church Women United in New York State
Cleveland Jobs with Justice
Connecticut Shoreline Indivisible
Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington Chapter (CAIR-WA)
Dominican Sisters of Houston
Friends of Broward Detainees
Greater Cleveland Immigrant Support Network
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
International Institute of New England
Jewish Voice for Peace, Atlanta Chapter
Khanbabai Immigration Law
La Comunidad, Inc
LUCHA Ministries, Inc.
Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer
NH Conference United Church of Christ Immigrant and Refugee Support Group
Opening Doors International Services, Inc.
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Province of St. Joseph, Capuchin Franciscans
Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York



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Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester
Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, St. Francis Province
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, MO
Social Justice Coalition, Central Lutheran Church
True Alliance Center Inc.
University of Maryland Chacon Center for Immigrant Justice
United Methodists' Holy Land Task Force
Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid, Inc.
Wallingford Indivisible
Wayne Action for Racial Equality
Yemeni American Merchants Association (YAMA)