

September 17, 2020

President Donald. J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Acting Secretary Chad Wolf  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20016

**RE: 148 STATE, LOCAL, AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR IMMEDIATE 18-MONTH DESIGNATION OF DEFERRED ENFORCED DEPARTURE OR TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR LEBANON**

Dear President Trump and Acting Secretary Wolf:

The undersigned 148 state, local, and national organizations write to call for an immediate 18-month designation of Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) or Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Lebanon in light of the recent Beirut explosions compounded by civil and political unrest, economic and humanitarian crisis, and COVID-19. DED and TPS are effective and proven policy tools to ensure that the United States does not return anyone to a country that has become temporarily unsafe for its residents. Given the conditions in Lebanon, including the collapse of the government, significant instability within political leadership, and other foreign policy factors, an immediate designation of either DED or TPS is warranted and necessary.

**I. DEFERRED ENFORCED DEPARTURE (DED) AND TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS (TPS)**

TPS is a statutory status given to nationals of a certain country living in the United States if conditions in the country make return unsafe.<sup>1</sup> The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) may designate a country for TPS if conditions in the country meet requirements regarding ongoing armed conflict, natural disasters (including epidemics), or other extraordinary and temporary conditions in the country that temporarily prevent safe return.<sup>2</sup> TPS provides protection from deportation and permission to work in the United States for the duration of the designation.<sup>3</sup>

DED was established to provide the president with a vital tool in U.S. foreign policy and is also used to protect foreign nationals in the United States from civil, political, and humanitarian crises in their home country that make it unsafe for them to return, or whose suspension of deportation serves other United States foreign policy or domestic interests.<sup>4</sup> DED provides similar protections as TPS, but DED does not require a registration process and is triggered when an individual is identified for removal. In this way, a

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<sup>1</sup> Jill H. Wilson, *Temporary Protected Status: Overview and Current Issues*, Congressional Research Service (April 1, 2020), [www.everycrsreport.com/files/20200401\\_RS20844\\_234bceecdf5e83dc354590e7862953603997186b.html](http://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20200401_RS20844_234bceecdf5e83dc354590e7862953603997186b.html).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

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

DED designation uses minimal resources administratively and has an immediate effect for those who qualify.

## II. DESIGNATION OF TPS OR DED FOR LEBANON IS WARRANTED UNDER THE LAW AND BY MORALITY

Lebanon is currently facing both extraordinary and temporary conditions that warrant an immediate 18-month designation of either TPS or DED. The United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon has stated, “[t]he scale of the loss from the Beirut explosions is so vast, it is likely every single person in Lebanon has been touched by this terrible event.” While the extent of the disaster continues to unfold, approximately 200 people were killed, at least 6,000 injured, 2,500 homes were left “uninhabitable,” and six hospitals, 20 health clinics, 120 schools, and 200,000 other homes were damaged.<sup>5</sup> At least 300,000 people are newly displaced.<sup>6</sup> 70,000 people have lost their jobs.<sup>7</sup> The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Acting Ambassador John Barsa also stated that the blast “disrupted food imports at the port and destroyed shops and businesses that families have relied on for generations for their livelihoods.”<sup>8</sup>

The Beirut explosions come on top of other deteriorating conditions in the country including a political, economic, and humanitarian crisis compounded by COVID-19.<sup>9</sup> Human rights violations are ongoing in the country, including arrests of journalists covering the government and economic crisis, prosecution of civilians (including children) in military courts, and persecution of women and the LGBTQ community.<sup>10</sup> The human rights crisis in Lebanon led to mass protests in late 2019, marked by attacks on peaceful protestors and the eventual resignation of the prime minister.<sup>11</sup>

COVID-19 cases were quickly rising before the explosion, with the economic crisis leaving hospitals and health care facilities unable to purchase basic supplies.<sup>12</sup> After losing their jobs, people became unable to afford prescription medication and lost health insurance.<sup>13</sup> Cases of the virus are now surging in the aftermath of the explosions, with hospitals and other facilities destroyed.<sup>14</sup> The country is heading into a lockdown, sure to deepen the economic and food crises.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *UN and partners launch \$565 million appeal for Lebanon*, UN News (Aug. 14, 2020), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1070242>; Press Briefing with USAID Acting Administrator John Barsa on Lebanon Humanitarian Assistance (Aug. 13, 2020), [www.state.gov/press-briefing-with-usaid-acting-administrator-john-barsa-on-lebanon-humanitarian-assistance/](http://www.state.gov/press-briefing-with-usaid-acting-administrator-john-barsa-on-lebanon-humanitarian-assistance/); Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 (2020 update), UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon (March 17, 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-2017-2020-2020-update>.

<sup>6</sup> *Beirut blast: Here's how you can help the UN aid Lebanon's recovery*, UN News (Aug. 7, 2020), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1069782>.

<sup>7</sup> Linda Givetash, *After the explosion, the virus: Lebanon faces COVID-19 lockdown after Beirut blast*, NBC (Aug. 18, 2020), [www.nbcnews.com/news/world/after-explosion-virus-lebanon-faces-covid-19-lockdown-after-beirut-n1237067](http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/after-explosion-virus-lebanon-faces-covid-19-lockdown-after-beirut-n1237067).

<sup>8</sup> Press Briefing with USAID Acting Administrator John Barsa on Lebanon Humanitarian Assistance (Aug. 13, 2020), [www.state.gov/press-briefing-with-usaid-acting-administrator-john-barsa-on-lebanon-humanitarian-assistance/](http://www.state.gov/press-briefing-with-usaid-acting-administrator-john-barsa-on-lebanon-humanitarian-assistance/).

<sup>9</sup> *UN and partners launch \$565 million appeal for Lebanon*, UN News (Aug. 14, 2020) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1070242>.

<sup>10</sup> Lebanon: Events of 2019, Human Rights Watch, [www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/lebanon](http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/lebanon).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> Deborah Amos, Lama Al-Arian, *Amid Lebanon's Economic Crisis, The Country's Health Care System Is Ailing*, NPR (Feb. 9, 2020), [www.npr.org/2020/02/09/800410394/amid-lebanons-economic-crisis-the-countrys-health-care-system-is-ailing](http://www.npr.org/2020/02/09/800410394/amid-lebanons-economic-crisis-the-countrys-health-care-system-is-ailing).

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Linda Givetash, *After the explosion, the virus: Lebanon faces COVID-19 lockdown after Beirut blast*, NBC (Aug. 18, 2020), [www.nbcnews.com/news/world/after-explosion-virus-lebanon-faces-covid-19-lockdown-after-beirut-n1237067](http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/after-explosion-virus-lebanon-faces-covid-19-lockdown-after-beirut-n1237067).

<sup>15</sup> Liz Sly, *Coronavirus surge in Lebanon compounds the misery in a battered country*, THE WASHINGTON POST (Aug. 22, 2020), [www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/lebanon-covid-surge-explosion-beirut/2020/08/22/43323d18-e3ce-11ea-82d8-5e55d47e90ca\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/lebanon-covid-surge-explosion-beirut/2020/08/22/43323d18-e3ce-11ea-82d8-5e55d47e90ca_story.html).

Prior to the explosions and COVID-19, 3.2 million people, more than half of Lebanon's population, were in need of humanitarian aid.<sup>16</sup> Economic collapse in the country has accelerated since 2019 with the currency losing 60 percent of its value in the span of a month.<sup>17</sup> Under massive inflation, workers have lost the value of their salaries (if they still have jobs at all) as well as their savings.<sup>18</sup> Under these conditions, it is becoming impossible to purchase essentials like food and medication.<sup>19</sup> Food inflation has hit 200 percent and at least 60 percent of the population does not have adequate food.<sup>20</sup> Even prior to the pandemic and the tragedy in Beirut, some experts predicted Lebanon was already on a path to famine.<sup>21</sup> Lebanon depends on imports for 85 percent of its food sources. With the largest port in the country destroyed by the explosions, the already dire situation is quickly becoming catastrophic.<sup>22</sup>

### III. DESIGNATION OF TPS OR DED FOR LEBANON IS IN LINE WITH U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND OTHER NATIONAL INTERESTS

The United States has long been a strategic and humanitarian ally to Lebanon.<sup>23</sup> Following the tragedy on August 4, the United States reiterated and demonstrated this historic support for the Lebanese people. The U.S. Department of Defense got to work minutes after the explosion and was on the ground with life-saving aid in 48 hours.<sup>24</sup> USAID Acting Ambassador Barsa swiftly deployed to Beirut "to make clear to the people of Lebanon that the United States stands with them after the tragic explosions."<sup>25</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State, the United States has provided billions of dollars of aid since 2006 and currently "seeks to maintain its traditionally close ties with Lebanon and to help preserve its independence, sovereignty, national unity, and territorial integrity."<sup>26</sup>

The United States and other countries have rallied to support Lebanon, and efforts toward recovery and political reform in response to the tragedy are underway.<sup>27</sup> As a country without the capacity to receive its nationals from abroad, TPS or DED designation is not only vital to address the current crisis but vital to keep Lebanon on pace toward recovery. Lebanon has long been a key player and ally to U.S. peace

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<sup>16</sup> Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 (2020 update), UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon (March 17, 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-2017-2020-2020-update>.

<sup>17</sup> Abbie Cheeseman, 'We're on the road to collapse': Inside Lebanon's crippling economic crisis, NBC (July 18, 2020), [www.nbcnews.com/news/world/we-re-road-collapse-inside-lebanon-s-crippling-economic-crisis-n1234005](http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/we-re-road-collapse-inside-lebanon-s-crippling-economic-crisis-n1234005).

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*; Abbie Cheeseman, 'People will die within months': Lebanon heads for famine as pandemic accelerates hunger, THE TELEGRAPH (June 30, 2020), [www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/people-will-die-within-months-lebanon-heads-famine-pandemic/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/people-will-die-within-months-lebanon-heads-famine-pandemic/).

<sup>19</sup> Abbie Cheeseman, 'We're on the road to collapse': Inside Lebanon's crippling economic crisis, NBC (July 18, 2020), [www.nbcnews.com/news/world/we-re-road-collapse-inside-lebanon-s-crippling-economic-crisis-n1234005](http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/we-re-road-collapse-inside-lebanon-s-crippling-economic-crisis-n1234005).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*; 60% of people in Lebanon struggle to get enough food, Action Against Hunger, <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/60-people-lebanon-struggle-get-enough-food>.

<sup>21</sup> Abbie Cheeseman, 'People will die within months': Lebanon heads for famine as pandemic accelerates hunger, THE TELEGRAPH (June 30, 2020), [www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/people-will-die-within-months-lebanon-heads-famine-pandemic/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/people-will-die-within-months-lebanon-heads-famine-pandemic/).

<sup>22</sup> Ishaan Tharoor, Lebanon's crises are only getting worse, THE WASHINGTON POST (Aug. 12, 2020), [www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/08/12/beirut-blast-lebanon-crisis/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/08/12/beirut-blast-lebanon-crisis/).

<sup>23</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Relations with Lebanon, July 30, 2018, [www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-lebanon/](http://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-lebanon/) ("The United States is Lebanon's primary security partner. Since 2006, the United States has provided Lebanon over \$1.7 billion in security assistance. U.S. assistance supports the Lebanese Armed Forces' ability to secure Lebanon's borders, counter internal threats, and defend national territory.").

<sup>24</sup> Jim Garmone, Defense Personnel Among First to Deliver Aid to Lebanon, DOD NEWS (Aug. 19, 2020), [www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2317478/defense-personnel-among-first-to-deliver-aid-to-lebanon/](http://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2317478/defense-personnel-among-first-to-deliver-aid-to-lebanon/).

<sup>25</sup> Press Briefing with USAID Acting Administrator John Barsa on Lebanon Humanitarian Assistance (Aug. 13, 2020), [www.state.gov/press-briefing-with-usaid-acting-administrator-john-barsa-on-lebanon-humanitarian-assistance/](http://www.state.gov/press-briefing-with-usaid-acting-administrator-john-barsa-on-lebanon-humanitarian-assistance/).

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Relations With Lebanon, Department of State, [www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-lebanon/](http://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-lebanon/).

<sup>27</sup> Pledging Total Support towards Lebanon's Recovery Efforts from Deadly Blast, Deputy Secretary-General Opens Aid Conference, Calling for Swift Response, UN PRESS, (Aug. 9, 2020), <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/dsgsm1437.doc.htm>; Lebanese continue their recovery efforts and demand reform, U.S. joins Beirut blast probe, THE ARAB AMERICAN (Aug. 14, 2020), <https://www.arabamericannews.com/2020/08/14/lebanese-continue-their-recovery-efforts-and-demand-reform-u-s-joins-beirut-blast-probe/>

efforts in the Middle East, hosting the highest per capita number of refugees in the world, primarily from Syria, Palestine, and Iraq.<sup>28</sup> A designation of DED or TPS would protect Lebanese nationals in the United States and contribute to stability in Lebanon and in the region, serving U.S. interests and sending a clear message of solidarity with the Lebanese people to the global community.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Offering help, safety, and security to those in need is foundational to U.S. values. With Lebanon rapidly descending into multiple crises with devastating human consequences, it is imperative that the United States ensure nationals and those who last habitually resided in Lebanon are able to remain here. Even under the devastating impact of humanitarian strife and recent events, Lebanon can build toward a stronger future with the support of its allies.

In line with the above policy principles, we urge you to grant the maximum protection possible through an 18-month designation of DED or TPS for Lebanon. This relief will not only benefit and protect Lebanese individuals in the United States, but also their families and communities here and in Lebanon. Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jill Marie Bussey, Director of Advocacy at the Catholic Legal Immigration Network at [jbussey@cliniclegal.org](mailto:jbussey@cliniclegal.org) and Abed Ayoub, Director of Legal and Policy Affairs at the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee at [aayoub@adc.org](mailto:aayoub@adc.org).

Sincerely,

Adhikaar

Adorers of the Blood of Christ, US Region

Adrian Dominican Sisters

Advocates for Immigrant Rights

Agencia ALPHA

Al Otro Lado

Alianza Americas

Alliance for Immigrant Neighbors

America's Voice

American Immigration Lawyers Association

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Arab American Institute

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence

Augustinian Defenders of the Rights of the Poor

Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore

Blind Justice

Bowling Green First Baptist Church International Ministry

Cape Cod Coalition for Safe Communities

Capuchin Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order (Detroit)

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<sup>28</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Relations with Lebanon, July 30, 2018, [www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-lebanon/](http://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-lebanon/).

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans  
Catholic Charities of Central & Northern Missouri/Refugee & Immigration Services  
Catholic Charities of SW Kansas  
Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona  
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)  
Catholic Multicultural Center  
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies  
Center for Victims of Torture  
Central American Resource Center  
Centro Comunitario CEUS  
Centro Legal de la Raza  
Church World Service  
Community of the Holy Spirit  
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes  
Connecticut Shoreline Indivisible  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship  
Crossing Borders Dubuque IA  
Daughters of Charity  
Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel  
Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services, Inc.  
Dominican Sisters  
Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids  
Dominican Sisters of Houston  
Elisaban Law Firm PLLC  
End Streamline Coalition  
Episcopal Church of St. Matthew Tucson  
Episcopal Church of the Mediator  
Faith in Public Life  
Families Rights Network  
Family Action Network Movement  
Family Haven  
FANM In Action  
Franciscan Action Network  
Freedom Forward  
Glenmary Home Missioners  
Guadalupe Presbyterian Church Detention Ministry  
HIAS  
Hidden Valley Zen Center  
Human Rights First  
IHM Sisters  
Immigrant Action Alliance (formerly Friends of Miami-Dade Detainees)  
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project  
Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder County

Immigration Hub  
Immigration Refugee Initiative St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Naperville, IL  
Immigration Task Force of the Archdiocese of St. Louis  
International Refugee Assistance Project  
Jefferson County Immigration Rights Advocates  
Jesuit Social Research Institute  
Jewish Social Services  
Jose Marin Law  
Justice & Compassion Ministries, California-Pacific Conference of The United Methodist Church  
Justice For Muslims Collective  
Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province  
Kitsap Immigration Center  
La Comunidad, Inc.  
Latin American Coalition  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Littleton Immigration Resources Center  
LUCHA Ministries, Inc.  
Lutheran Campus Center  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
Lutheran Immigration Refugee Services, Baltimore, MD  
Mary's Place Refugee Outreach  
Massachusetts TPS Committee  
Migrant and Immigrant Community Action Project  
Migrant Center for Human Rights  
Mosaic Compassion  
Multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)  
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild  
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
New York Justice for Our Neighbors, Inc.  
New-Voice Immigration Assistance Services  
NHCUCC Immigrant and Refugee Support Group  
Oblate, St. Scholastica Monastery, Chicago  
OCCORD  
Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, Society of the Sacred Heart USC  
Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity, Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth  
Ohio Immigrant Alliance  
Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church  
Pax Christi Illinois  
Peace and Justice Team Congregation of Saint Joseph  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
RISE Law Center

Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn  
RSHM Life Center  
School Sisters of Notre Dame Atlantic Midwest Province JPIC Officet Province  
School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific Province  
Siena Group  
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth  
Sisters of Charity of New York  
Sisters of IHM  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team  
Sisters of St. Francis  
Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin, Ohio  
Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania OH  
Sisters of St. Joseph  
Sisters of St. Joseph, TOSF  
Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth  
Sisters of the Living Word  
Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary  
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)  
St Nicholas Peace and Justice Committee, Evanston Il.  
St. Benedict Parish  
St. John Chrysostom Church  
St. Norbert Abbey  
Student Clinic for Immigrant Justice  
Tabernacle Lutheran Church  
The Episcopal Church  
The HANA Center  
The Interfaith LGBTI Clergy Association  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES)  
Thrive International Programs, Inc.  
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
United Church of Christ  
United Methodist Church  
University of Dallas  
UUSC Congregational Accompaniment Project for Asylum Seekers  
Weinstock Immigration Lawyers, P.C.  
Westwood Hills Congregational United Church of Christ  
Win Without War  
World Relief