

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2913

To designate Lebanon under section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to permit nationals of Lebanon to be eligible for temporary protected status under such section, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 26, 2023

Ms. TLAIB (for herself and Mrs. DINGELL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on the Budget, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To designate Lebanon under section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to permit nationals of Lebanon to be eligible for temporary protected status under such section, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Lebanon TPS Act of
5 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) On August 4, 2020, one of the most power-
2 ful explosions ever to impact an urban population
3 ripped through the Lebanese capital of Beirut. The
4 blast—linked to 2,750 metric tons of ammonium ni-
5 trate stored in a warehouse—killed at least 220 peo-
6 ple, wounded approximately 7,000, left an estimated
7 300,000 people homeless, and caused approximately
8 \$15,000,000,000 in property damage.

9 (2) The COVID–19 pandemic has taken a
10 heavy toll on Lebanon, which has recorded over
11 1,235,000 cases and 10,800 deaths since the pan-
12 demic began. Lebanon’s public health system, al-
13 ready weakened by the Beirut disaster and political
14 upheaval, has struggled to cope in the face of the
15 pandemic.

16 (3) Lebanon lacked a fully formed government
17 for much of the COVID–19 pandemic and the polit-
18 ical establishment remains highly polarized and di-
19 vided. The political crisis has become so severe that
20 on April 18, 2023 Lebanon’s parliament voted to ex-
21 tend the terms of municipal councils and other local
22 officials to avoid further paralysis. The current gov-
23 ernment is acting in a caretaker capacity and the
24 presidency has been empty since President Aoun’s
25 term expired in October 2022.

1 (4) Lebanon has been experiencing one of the
2 worst economic crises in its history at the same time
3 as the COVID–19 pandemic, Beirut Port explosion,
4 and political crisis.

5 (5) According to the United Nations, over
6 3,500,000 Lebanese people are estimated to live in
7 poverty and around three-quarters are now income
8 vulnerable. Before the value of the Lebanese pound
9 started spiraling in late 2019, the country’s monthly
10 minimum wage was 675,000 pounds—about \$450—
11 but today it is worth less than \$7.

12 (6) Per the United Nations, 36 percent of the
13 Lebanese population (1,380,000 people) is experi-
14 encing extreme poverty.

15 (7) Since October 2019, the Lebanese pound
16 has lost more than 95 percent of its value, placing
17 Lebanon amongst the top 5 economic crises globally
18 according to the World Bank.

19 (8) Food prices have skyrocketed throughout
20 the crisis, increasing 400 percent in 2020 alone.

21 (9) In July 2021, the United Nations Chil-
22 dren’s Fund (UNICEF) warned that Lebanon’s
23 water system is on the verge of collapse, with more
24 than 70 percent of the country facing critical water
25 shortages. In January 2019, 1,000 Lebanese pounds

1 bought 4 liters of water. By August 2021, it only
2 bought half a liter.

3 (10) In October 2022, Lebanon reported its
4 first cholera cases in 30 years, with 5,819 suspected
5 and confirmed cases and 23 deaths reported by De-
6 cember 31, 2022.

7 (11) Dire fuel shortages plague Lebanon, lead-
8 ing the American University of Beirut Medical Cen-
9 ter, Beirut's top hospital and one of the leading
10 medical centers in the region, to issue a warning in
11 August 2021 that hundreds of patients would die if
12 they failed to secure enough fuel to keep their gen-
13 erators running.

14 (12) The United Nations has reported that, as
15 of December 2022, the mass exodus of public health
16 workers from Lebanon has continued with dev-
17 astating effect, with approximately 40 percent of
18 doctors, 15 percent of specialized neonatal intensive
19 care unit nurses, and 30 percent of midwives leaving
20 the country over the course of the crisis. This has
21 resulted in critical gaps in the quality, availability,
22 and accessibility of health care for the population.

23 (13) The combined crises have strained many of
24 Lebanon's public institutions to the breaking point,
25 including the Lebanese Army, whose budget and sol-

1 diers' salaries have been devastated by the devalu-
2 ation of the Lebanese pound.

3 (14) On October 14, 2021, gunmen fired on a
4 crowd of protestors gathered near the Beirut Justice
5 Palace sparking heavy armed clashes in nearby
6 neighborhoods. The ensuing fighting killed at least 7
7 individuals and wounded more than 30 others.

8 (15) Numerous residents of Beirut living in the
9 vicinity of the clashes have been quoted by domestic
10 and international media comparing the October 14th
11 clashes and ongoing tensions to the devastating
12 1975–1990 Lebanese civil war, reflecting well-found-
13 ed fears of the potential for a return to significant
14 sectarian violence.

15 (16) The United States has long stood with the
16 Lebanese people in times of need and standing with
17 them now is both morally right and in line with our
18 national interests.

19 (17) In the aftermath of the Beirut Port explo-
20 sion, President Biden's pledge of an additional
21 \$98,000,000 in aid to Lebanon on the first anniver-
22 sary of the disaster was a good first step in sup-
23 porting the Lebanese people. Designating Lebanon
24 for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is the logical
25 next step given the circumstances.

1 (18) Lebanon needs significant continued inter-
2 national support to prevent the worsening of its eco-
3 nomic, social, political, and public health crises and
4 to rebuild from this period of extraordinary difficulty
5 for the Lebanese people.

6 (19) A report from FWD.us published in Feb-
7 ruary 2023 estimated that 12,000 individuals in the
8 United States would be eligible for TPS if Lebanon
9 was designated, of which 64 percent are members of
10 the workforce with an annual economic contribution
11 of approximately \$420,000,000.

12 (20) A country is designated for TPS when it
13 is determined by the United States Government that
14 it is unsafe for its citizens to return to due to “ongo-
15 ing armed conflict”, “environmental disaster”, or
16 “extraordinary and temporary conditions in the for-
17 eign state that prevent aliens who are nationals of
18 the state from returning to the state in safety”.

19 (21) As of April 2023, the Department of
20 State’s Lebanon Travel Advisory specifically directs
21 individuals to “Reconsider travel to Lebanon due to
22 crime, terrorism, armed conflict, civil unrest, kidnap-
23 ping”, and goes on to specifically advise that individ-
24 uals do not travel to “the border with Syria due to
25 terrorism and armed conflict”, “the border with

1 Israel due to the potential for armed conflict”, and
2 “refugee settlements due to the potential for armed
3 clashes”.

4 (22) The beginning of April 2023 witnessed the
5 heaviest and most significant cross border confronta-
6 tion on the Israeli/Lebanese border since the 2006
7 war, raising fears of a broader armed confrontation.

8 (23) The combined crises facing Lebanon
9 amount to extraordinary and temporary conditions
10 that prevent Lebanese nationals from safely return-
11 ing to Lebanon. Any returned individual would have
12 to contend without access to clean water, adequate
13 health care, and affordable basic necessities—all in
14 the face of the very real threat of significant political
15 violence and armed conflict. After years of uncer-
16 tainty, these individuals deserve stability and tem-
17 porary relief in the United States.

18 **SEC. 3. DESIGNATION FOR PURPOSES OF GRANTING TEM-**

19 **PORARY PROTECTED STATUS.**

20 (a) DESIGNATION.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of section 244
22 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.
23 1254a), Lebanon shall be treated as if it had been
24 designated under subsection (b)(1)(A) of that sec-
25 tion, subject to the provisions of this section.

1 (2) PERIOD OF DESIGNATION.—The initial pe-
2 riod of the designation referred to in paragraph (1)
3 shall be for the 18-month period beginning on the
4 date of the enactment of this Act.

5 (b) ALIENS ELIGIBLE.—As a result of the designa-
6 tion made under subsection (a), an alien who is a national
7 of Lebanon is deemed to satisfy the requirements under
8 paragraph (1) of section 244(c) of the Immigration and
9 Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1254a(c)), subject to paragraph
10 (3) of such section, if the alien—

11 (1) has been continuously physically present in
12 the United States since the date of the enactment of
13 this Act;

14 (2) is admissible as an immigrant, except as
15 otherwise provided in paragraph (2)(A) of such sec-
16 tion, and is not ineligible for temporary protected
17 status under paragraph (2)(B) of such section; and

18 (3) registers for temporary protected status in
19 a manner established by the Secretary of Homeland
20 Security.

21 (c) CONSENT TO TRAVEL ABROAD.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Homeland
23 Security shall give prior consent to travel abroad, in
24 accordance with section 244(f)(3) of the Immigra-
25 tion and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1254a(f)(3)), to

1 an alien who is granted temporary protected status
2 pursuant to the designation made under subsection
3 (a) if the alien establishes to the satisfaction of the
4 Secretary of Homeland Security that emergency and
5 extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the
6 alien require the alien to depart for a brief, tem-
7 porary trip abroad.

8 (2) TREATMENT UPON RETURN.—An alien re-
9 turning to the United States in accordance with an
10 authorization described in paragraph (1) shall be
11 treated as any other returning alien provided tem-
12 porary protected status under section 244 of the Im-
13 migration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1254a).

14 **SEC. 4. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.**

15 The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of
16 complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010,
17 shall be determined by reference to the latest statement
18 titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this
19 Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record
20 by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, pro-
21 vided that such statement has been submitted prior to the
22 vote on passage.

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