



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

June 12, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As Co-Chairs of the U.S.-Lebanon Friendship Caucus, we write to you regarding Lebanon's upcoming presidential election. We remain concerned that Lebanon's constitutional processes have stalled, resulting in multiple failed parliamentary electoral sessions and a continued presidential vacancy.

Lebanon has been without a president since October 2022. Since then, the Lebanese Parliament has sought to elect a president eleven times. On Wednesday, June 14, 2023, Parliament will attempt to elect a president once again. It is time for those who seek to undermine the parliamentary process, block open election procedures, and continue to prevent multiple rounds of ballots to either resolve the impasse and allow the country to move forward, or be held accountable. It is concerning that in the past, the Parliament's balloting was not allowed to go to a second round, once again preventing the selection of a candidate and further prolonging the political, economic, and humanitarian crises in Lebanon.

The inability to select a president is playing out against the backdrop of what the World Bank has estimated is one of the worst economic collapses since the 1850s.¹ Since 2019, Lebanon's economy has disintegrated, leaving over three-quarters of the population in poverty. On June 8, 2023, the International Monetary Fund warned that Lebanon must take immediate action on economic reforms to prevent "irreversible damage" to the economy.² The duly elected Lebanese Parliament cannot move forward with legislation to implement much needed economic reforms until a president is elected.

¹ World Bank, *Lebanon Sinking (to the Top 3)*, Lebanon Economic Monitor Spring 2021, World Bank Washington, DC. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/35626>

² Andrea Shalal, *IMF says Lebanon needs urgent economic reforms to stop deepening crisis*, Reuters, June 8, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/imf-says-lebanon-needs-urgent-economic-reforms-stop-deepening-crisis-2023-06-08/>

The United States has a strong interest in a stable, independent Lebanon. Unfortunately, the presidential vacancy stands in the way of such cooperation. If Parliamentary leaders and other political elites are unable to follow through on Lebanon's own constitution, preserve a quorum, and allow the multiple rounds of balloting necessary for the selection of a president, the United States and our partners and allies in the region, must consider more serious measures.

We believe that the Administration should emphatically restate the importance of selecting a president who will represent the needs of the Lebanese people and move forward with necessary economic reforms before it is too late. We request your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A black ink signature of Darrell Issa, written in a cursive style.

Darrell Issa
Member of Congress

A black ink signature of Darrin LaHood, written in a cursive style.

Darrin LaHood
Member of Congress

A blue ink signature of Debbie Dingell, written in a cursive style.

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress