

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 18, 2024

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

Dear President Biden,

As Members of Congress, we are deeply concerned about the dire political and humanitarian situation in Lebanon. Since our letters sent on June 12, 2023 and August 3, 2023 to Secretary Antony Blinken regarding Lebanon's continued political crisis and inability to elect a president, the security and governmental situation in Lebanon has changed dramatically for the worse. Now, with the future of Lebanon being determined as we write, it can no longer afford an inability to move forward with much needed economic and political reforms to combat the malign influence of non-state actors, rampant corruption, and economic collapse without a president. That is why vigorous and creative U.S. leadership is urgently needed. We urge you to opt against a distant role and take a direct and robust approach toward engagement regarding the current presidential paralysis in Lebanon.

Since October 7, 2023, we have watched Israel fight against Iranian terror proxies Hamas and Hezbollah, including increasingly significant engagement on the southern border of Lebanon. Hezbollah is today dramatically weakened through the targeting of Hezbollah militants and leadership. As Hezbollah's grip on Lebanon weakens, and it continues to lose leaders, foot soldiers, infrastructure, financing, and influence, we believe the United States should move forward with direct pressure of Speaker Nabih Berri, Lebanon's Parliament, and other political leaders to act quickly and hold immediate elections for president. Any continued delay by the Speaker of the Parliament – or others – to obstruct the constitution and hold an open and fair parliamentary session to elect a president is unacceptable.

We believe that electing a president is not ancillary to the current conflict but of central importance to the future of Lebanon. Without a president, and fully operational government, the Lebanese people are denied a national voice and lack a realistic leadership structure to negotiate efforts towards peace on the southern border. This situation has clearly benefited Hezbollah and its terror masters in Tehran that call the shots from the shadows and continue to harm the Lebanese people.

We also underscore the necessity of a stronger approach from your Administration. The United States must throw its diplomatic weight behind advancing this reform, including through the Quint, and economically by imposing meaningful sanctions. The U.S. should also be

prepared to use all the tools we have to review and freeze the assets – including dollar-denominated and other assets within the United States – of those who continue to block the electoral process.

Over the last 20 months, Speaker Nabih Berri, has specifically obstructed the electoral process and is clearly not acting in the best interest of Lebanon and its people. He continues to be a main barrier to the opening of Parliament and this and any intentional prevention of a timely presidential election must be viewed for what it is – exceedingly harmful to Lebanon’s citizens and potential future recovery.

Ongoing U.S. support for the people of Lebanon through humanitarian assistance, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs, and support for the Lebanese Armed Forces remain critical to ensuring a stable, prosperous, and independent Lebanon in the future. While the current situation in Lebanon is challenging, there is also hope and opportunity for the future of Lebanon without the malign influence of Hezbollah.

Given the long-term investment and relationship between the U.S. and Lebanon, we hope to see the pressure we believe is now required move the Parliament to elect a president who will be best for the people of Lebanon and work toward a peaceful future based upon the foundation of United Nations Resolution 1701 and other international agreements. The political elites cannot continue to serve special interests at a time of great need to the Lebanese people. Given the economic, humanitarian, and national security interests at stake, we request your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Darin LaHood
Member of Congress



Darrell Issa
Member of Congress

cc/ The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Janet Yellen
Secretary of the Treasury
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20220