

**Statement of Lisa A. Johnson**  
**Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Lebanese Republic**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**May 16, 2023**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Lebanese Republic. I would like to express my gratitude to the President and Secretary of State for the confidence they have shown in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee, and Congress more broadly to advance our nation's interests in Lebanon.

Please permit me to acknowledge my parents and brother, without whose steadfast support I would not be here today. I am deeply grateful for their encouragement, as well as that of mentors, colleagues, and dear friends during my more than 32 years serving the American people at home and abroad.

If confirmed, I would be honored to return to Lebanon, where I had the privilege of serving from 2002 to 2004. During that time, I gained a deep admiration for the vibrancy of the Lebanese people and a sobering appreciation of the challenges they face, including endemic corruption, poor governance, and Hizballah's threat to their country's sovereignty and security.

Unfortunately, Lebanon today stands on the brink of collapse, battling what the World Bank has described as one of the world's three worst economic crises in the past 150 years. In this, the Lebanese people bear the costs of their leaders' inaction. Lebanon's leaders have failed to implement critical economic reforms required for an IMF program, the country's only realistic path to recovery. They also have yet to elect a president and form a government, depriving the Lebanese people of leadership when they need it most.

The way forward is clear: Lebanon must elect a president, form an empowered government, and implement long overdue reforms. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing U.S. efforts to support the Lebanese government and people every step of the way.

I am deeply grateful for bipartisan congressional support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces as trusted partners in maintaining Lebanon's stability and security. Since 2006, we have provided more than \$3 billion in assistance, enabling these forces to strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty, mitigate instability, disrupt terrorists, and counter Hizballah's false narrative that its illicit weapons and fighters are necessary to defend Lebanon. At the same time, we remain committed to UNIFIL's mission and the safety of UN peacekeepers, who play a critical role in diffusing tensions in southern Lebanon.

I am heartened, too, by the substantial development assistance the United States provides to the Lebanese people. Last year, we provided over \$100 million to support the private sector, enhance service delivery, and improve access to education. We also provided over \$400 million in humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable, including Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese.

The way ahead for Lebanon will not be easy. I am all too aware there are entities that stand in the way of progress in pursuit of self-interest. As demonstrated by our recent sanctions designations, the United States remains committed to fighting corruption in Lebanon, which I will continue to prioritize, if confirmed. I also am clear-eyed about the threat Hizballah poses to Lebanon's sovereignty and stability, as well as to the United States, Israel, and the region. Recent U.S. sanctions against financiers, drug traffickers, and a sanctions evasion network demonstrate the United States is committed to targeting those with Hizballah ties. If confirmed, I will continue to pursue all tools to advance U.S. counterterrorism objectives.

There is reason for optimism. Lebanon's conclusion of a historic maritime boundary agreement with Israel – brokered by the United States –

demonstrates what the county's leaders can achieve if they set aside partisan and personal interests and put those of the country and people first. If confirmed, I look forward to invoking that same sense of unity and purpose to press Lebanon's leaders along the path to political and economic recovery.

As a former ambassador, I know well that advancing U.S. interests is a team effort. If confirmed, I would be honored to lead Embassy Beirut's dedicated, talented, diverse team of American and Lebanese staff, whose safety and security – along with that of the more than 40,000 U.S. citizens residing in Lebanon – will always be my top priority.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.