

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement**

[Docket No. ICEB–2023–0017]

RIN 1653–ZA45

Employment Authorization for Syrian F–1 Nonimmigrant Students Experiencing Severe Economic Hardship as a Direct Result of the Current Armed Conflict and Current Humanitarian Crisis in Syria**AGENCY:** U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Department of Homeland Security.**ACTION:** Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice announces that the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary) is suspending certain regulatory requirements for F–1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Syria, regardless of country of birth (or individuals having no nationality who last habitually resided in Syria), and who are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria. The Secretary is taking action to provide relief to these Syrian students who are in lawful F–1 nonimmigrant student status, so the students may request employment authorization, work an increased number of hours while school is in session, and reduce their course load while continuing to maintain their F–1 nonimmigrant student status. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will deem an F–1 nonimmigrant student granted employment authorization by means of this notice to be engaged in a “full course of study” for the duration of the employment authorization, if the nonimmigrant student satisfies the minimum course load requirement described in this notice.

DATES: This action is effective April 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sharon Snyder, Unit Chief, Policy and Response Unit, Student and Exchange Visitor Program, MS 5600, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 500 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20536–5600; email: sevp@ice.dhs.gov, telephone: (703) 603–3400. This is not a toll-free number. Program information can be found at <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**What action is DHS taking under this notice?**

The Secretary is exercising authority under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9) to temporarily suspend the applicability of certain requirements governing on-campus and off-campus employment for F–1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Syria regardless of country of birth (or individuals having no nationality who last habitually resided in Syria), who are present in the United States in lawful F–1 nonimmigrant student status on the date of publication of this notice, and who are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria. The original notice, which applied to F–1 nonimmigrant students who met certain criteria, including having been lawfully present in the United States in F–1 nonimmigrant status on April 3, 2012, was effective from April 3, 2012, through October 3, 2013. *See* 77 FR 20038 (Apr. 3, 2012). A subsequent notice provided for an extension, effective from October 3, 2013, through March 31, 2015. *See* 78 FR 36211 (June 17, 2013). A third notice provided another extension, effective from March 31, 2015, through September 30, 2016. *See* 80 FR 232 (Jan. 5, 2015). A fourth notice provided another extension, effective from September 30, 2016, through March 31, 2018, and expanded the applicability of such suspension to Syrian F–1 nonimmigrant students who were in lawful F–1 nonimmigrant student status between April 3, 2012, and September 9, 2016. *See* 81 FR 62520 (Sept. 9, 2016). A fifth notice provided another extension, effective from March 31, 2018, through September 30, 2019. *See* 83 FR 11553 (Mar. 15, 2018). A sixth notice was provided, effective from April 22, 2021, through September 30, 2022. *See* 86 FR 21333 (Apr. 22, 2021). A seventh notice was provided, effective from October 1, 2022, through April 1, 2024. *See* 87 FR 46975 (Aug. 1, 2022). Effective with this publication, suspension of the employment limitations is available through September 30, 2025, for those who are in lawful F–1 nonimmigrant status on the date of publication of this notice. DHS will deem an F–1 nonimmigrant student granted employment authorization through this notice to be engaged in a “full course of study” for the duration of the employment authorization, if the student satisfies the

minimum course load set forth in this notice.¹ *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(F).

Who is covered by this notice?

This notice applies exclusively to F–1 nonimmigrant students who meet all of the following conditions:

- (1) Are a citizen of Syria regardless of country of birth (or an individual having no nationality who last habitually resided in Syria);
- (2) Were lawfully present in the United States on the date of publication of this notice in F–1 nonimmigrant status under section 101(a)(15)(F)(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(F)(i);
- (3) Are enrolled in an academic institution that is Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified for enrollment for F–1 nonimmigrant students;
- (4) Are currently maintaining F–1 nonimmigrant status; and
- (5) Are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria.

This notice applies to F–1 nonimmigrant students in an approved private school in kindergarten through grade 12, public school grades 9 through 12, and undergraduate and graduate education. An F–1 nonimmigrant student covered by this notice who transfers to another SEVP-certified academic institution remains eligible for the relief provided by means of this notice.

Why is DHS taking this action?

DHS is taking action to provide relief to Syrian F–1 nonimmigrant students experiencing severe economic hardship due to the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria. Based on its review of country conditions in Syria and input received from the U.S. Department of State (DOS), DHS is taking action to allow eligible F–1 nonimmigrant students from Syria to request employment authorization, work an increased number of hours while school is in session, and reduce their course load while continuing to maintain F–1 nonimmigrant student status.

Increased violent conflict poses substantial risk to Syrians throughout

¹ Because the suspension of requirements under this notice applies throughout an academic term during which the suspension is in effect, DHS considers an F–1 nonimmigrant student who engages in a reduced course load or employment (or both) after this notice is effective to be engaging in a “full course of study,” *see* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6), and eligible for employment authorization, through the end of any academic term for which such student is matriculated as of September 30, 2025, provided the student satisfies the minimum course load requirements in this notice.

the country. The Syrian people remain subjected to conflict with no end in sight. Roughly 550,000 people have been killed as a result of the violence since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011.² From January to December of 2022, 1,057 civilians, including 251 children and at least 158 women, died due to continued conflict.³ Syria is the third least peaceful country according to the 2023 Global Peace Index.⁴ Concerns for health and safety have led to massive civilian displacement within Syria as well as large-scale migration to neighboring countries and Europe, creating the largest influx of refugees into Europe since World War II.⁵ Continued economic concerns, internal conflict, and humanitarian concerns have created a severe, and worsening, humanitarian crisis that includes large scale population displacement.⁶

Economic Concerns

The Syrian economy has been devastated by years of conflict, the February 6, 2023 earthquake, the financial crisis in Lebanon, and government corruption.⁷ The devaluation of the currency has put the value of the Syrian pound at an all-time low.⁸ The effects of the currency devaluation has greatly impacted ordinary citizens' access to basic needs such as food, fuel and medication.⁹ The outlook for the future of the Syrian economy has been grim, even before the Kahramanmaraş earthquake on February 6, 2023. Additionally, the World Bank

² 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Syria, U.S. Dept. of State, 2022, available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/syria/> (last visited Dec. 7, 2023).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Global Peace Index 2023, The Institute for Economics and Peace, June 2023, available at <https://www.economicandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/GPI-2023-Web.pdf> (last visited Oct. 10, 2023).

⁵ A visual guide to 75 years of major refugee crises around the world, The Washington Post, Dec. 21, 2015, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/historical-migrant-crisis/> (last visited Sept. 27, 2023).

⁶ 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic, UNOCHA, Dec. 2022, available at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/hno_2023-rev-1.12_1.pdf (last visited Oct. 10, 2023).

⁷ Syria Economic Monitor Winter 2022/2023, The World Bank, March 17, 2023, available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/syria/publication/syria-economic-monitor-winter-2022-2023#:~:text=Subject%20to%20high%20uncertainty%2C%20real,3.5%20percent%20decline%20in%202022> (last visited Sept. 27, 2023).

⁸ Danny Makki, Syria's economic freefall continues despite Arab League return, The Middle East Institute, Aug. 16, 2023, available at <https://www.mei.edu/publications/syrias-economic-freefall-continues-despite-arab-league-return> (last visited Sept. 27, 2023).

⁹ *Id.*

predicted that Syria's real GDP would contract by 5.5 percent in 2023,¹⁰ based on rising costs of food and fuel, combined with myriad uncertainties including domestic conflict, damaged healthcare infrastructure, and a declining agricultural sector.¹¹

Internal Conflict

Security conditions remain dire for civilians in Syria and “[i]n 2022, Syria remain[ed] the third least peaceful country in the world according to the Global Peace Index (GPI). Ongoing hostilities, including artillery shelling, air strikes and land mines, continue to threaten the lives of civilians and hamper humanitarian activities.”

Northwest Syria continues to see an uptick in conflict with recent ongoing regime and Russian airstrikes and retaliatory attacks. Civilians and civilian infrastructure are commonly the subjects of artillery shelling, especially in Idlib governorate. Additionally, civilians in the northwest Syria continue to face harm, especially those who run afoul of armed groups like U.S.-designated terrorist organization Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in Idlib.

Continued conflict persists in government-controlled regions of Syria, with the Syrian Arab Air Force conducting frequent airstrikes. Central Syria also suffers from a power vacuum despite being nominally under government control. ISIS has exploited the minimal government presence in the area, conducting multiple attacks against civilians in the spring of 2023, including a massacre of 53 people on February 17, 2023.¹²

Humanitarian Concerns

As the civil conflict in Syria continues into its 13th year, the number of people in Syria in need of

¹⁰ Earthquake undermines Syria's Economic Outlook, Compounding Dire Socio-Economic Conditions, and Internal Displacement, The World Bank, March 17, 2023 Syria Economic Monitor Winter 2022/2023, The World Bank, March 17, 2023, available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/03/17/earthquake-undermines-syria-s-economic-outlook-compounding-dire-socio-economic-conditions-and-internal-displacement> (last visited Sept. 27, 2023).

¹¹ Syria Economic Monitor Winter 2022/2023, The World Bank, March 17, 2023 available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/syria/publication/syria-economic-monitor-winter-2022-2023#:~:text=Subject%20to%20high%20uncertainty%2C%20real,3.5%20percent%20decline%20in%202022> (last visited Sept. 27, 2023).

¹² Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council, Aug. 14, 2023, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G23/155/49/PDF/G2315549.pdf?OpenElement> (last visited Sept. 27, 2023).

humanitarian assistance has increased from 14.6 to 15.3 million since 2022.^{13 14}

Additionally, northern Syria was subject to a deadly earthquake in February 2023, in which 8,476 people lost their lives.¹⁵ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports 5,183,140 Syrian refugees in neighboring countries,¹⁶ and 6.8 million people internally displaced (IDPs) within Syria.¹⁷ The conflict has resulted in high levels of food insecurity, limited access to water and medical care, and large-scale destruction of Syria's infrastructure, which was only exacerbated by the earthquake in February 2023.¹⁸ Additionally, credible reports of indiscriminate killing and deliberate targeting of civilians, as well as forced conscription and use of child soldiers has intensified the humanitarian crisis in Syria since the start of 2022.¹⁹

As of December 8, 2023, approximately 349 F-1 nonimmigrant students from Syria are enrolled at SEVP-certified academic institutions in the United States. Given the extent of the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria, affected students whose primary means of financial support comes from Syria may need to be exempt from the normal student employment requirements to

¹³ 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic, UNOCHA, Feb. 22, 2022, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/2022-humanitarian-needs-overview-syrian-arab-republic-february-2022> (last visited Sept. 27, 2023).

¹⁴ Syria—Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #8, Fiscal Year 2023, USAID, Aug. 16, 2023, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-complex-emergency-fact-sheet-8-fiscal-year-fy-2023> (last visited Sept. 27, 2023).

¹⁵ Devastating Earthquakes in Southern Türkiye and Northern Syria, Situation Report 20, International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation, May 19, 2023, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/devastating-earthquakes-southern-turkiye-and-northern-syria-18-may-2023-situation-report-23-entr>.

¹⁶ Situation Syria Regional Refugee Response, UNHCR, available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>, Oct. 5, 2023, (last visited Sept. 27, 2023).

¹⁷ Syria—Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #8, Fiscal Year 2023, Aug. 16, 2023, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-complex-emergency-fact-sheet-8-fiscal-year-fy-2023> (last visited Sept. 27, 2023).

¹⁸ Syria Earthquake 2023 Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA), The World Bank, March 1, 2023, available at <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099093003162314369/p171710e2b4a60b40a5940f0793f8a0d24> (last visited Sept. 27, 2023).

¹⁹ 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic, UNOCHA, Dec. 2022, available at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/hno_2023-rev-1.12_1.pdf (humanitarianresponse.info) (last visited Oct. 10, 2023).

continue their studies in the United States. The current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis has made it unfeasible for many students to safely return to Syria for the foreseeable future. Without employment authorization, these students may lack the means to meet basic living expenses.

What is the minimum course load requirement to maintain valid F-1 nonimmigrant status under this notice?

Undergraduate F-1 nonimmigrant students who receive on-campus or off-campus employment authorization under this notice must remain registered for a minimum of six semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term. Undergraduate F-1 nonimmigrant students enrolled in a term of different duration must register for at least one half of the credit hours normally required under a “full course of study.” See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(B) and (F). A graduate-level F-1 nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus or off-campus employment authorization under this notice must remain registered for a minimum of three semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term. See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v). Nothing in this notice affects the applicability of other minimum course load requirements set by the academic institution.

In addition, an F-1 nonimmigrant student (either undergraduate or graduate) granted on-campus or off-campus employment authorization under this notice may count up to the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter of online or distance education toward satisfying this minimum course load requirement, unless their course of study is in an English language study program. See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(G). An F-1 nonimmigrant student attending an approved private school in kindergarten through grade 12 or public school in grades 9 through 12 must maintain “class attendance for not less than the minimum number of hours a week prescribed by the school for normal progress toward graduation,” as required under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(E). Nothing in this notice affects the applicability of federal and state labor laws limiting the employment of minors.

May an eligible F-1 nonimmigrant student who already has on-campus or off-campus employment authorization benefit from the suspension of regulatory requirements under this notice?

Yes. An F-1 nonimmigrant student who is a Syrian citizen, regardless of

country of birth (or an individual having no nationality who last habitually resided in Syria), who already has on-campus or off-campus employment authorization and is otherwise eligible may benefit under this notice, which suspends certain regulatory requirements relating to the minimum course load requirement under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i) and certain employment eligibility requirements under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9). Such an eligible F-1 nonimmigrant student may benefit without having to apply for a new Form I-766, Employment Authorization Document (EAD). To benefit from this notice, the F-1 nonimmigrant student must request that their designated school official (DSO) enter the following statement in the remarks field of the student’s Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record, which the student’s Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status, will reflect:

Approved for more than 20 hours per week of [DSO must insert “on-campus” or “off-campus,” depending upon the type of employment authorization the student already has] employment authorization and reduced course load under the Special Student Relief authorization from [DSO must insert the beginning date of the notice or the beginning date of the student’s employment, whichever date is later] until [DSO must insert either the student’s program end date, the current EAD expiration date (if the student is currently authorized for off-campus employment), or the end date of this notice, whichever date comes first].²⁰

Must the F-1 nonimmigrant student apply for reinstatement after expiration of this special employment authorization if the student reduces his or her “full course of study”?

No. DHS will deem an F-1 nonimmigrant student who receives and comports with the employment authorization permitted under this notice to be engaged in a “full course of study”²¹ for the duration of the student’s employment authorization, provided that a qualifying undergraduate level F-1 nonimmigrant student remains registered for a minimum of six semester or quarter

²⁰ Because the suspension of requirements under this notice applies throughout an academic term during which the suspension is in effect, DHS considers an F-1 nonimmigrant student who engages in a reduced course load or employment (or both) after this notice is effective to be engaging in a “full course of study,” see 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6), and eligible for employment authorization, through the end of any academic term for which such student is matriculated as of Sept. 30, 2025, provided the student satisfies the minimum course load requirements in this notice.

²¹ See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

hours of instruction per academic term, and a qualifying graduate level F-1 nonimmigrant student remains registered for a minimum of three semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term. See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v) and (f)(6)(i)(F). Undergraduate F-1 nonimmigrant students enrolled in a term of different duration must register for at least one half of the credit hours normally required under a “full course of study.” See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(B) and (F). DHS will not require such students to apply for reinstatement under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(16) if they are otherwise maintaining F-1 nonimmigrant status.

Will an F-2 dependent (spouse or minor child) of an F-1 nonimmigrant student covered by this notice be eligible for employment authorization?

No. An F-2 spouse or minor child of an F-1 nonimmigrant student is not authorized to work in the United States and, therefore, may not accept employment under the F-2 nonimmigrant status, consistent with 8 CFR 214.2(f)(15)(i).

Will the suspension of the applicability of the standard student employment requirements apply to an individual who receives an initial F-1 visa and makes an initial entry into the United States after the effective date of this notice in the Federal Register?

No. The suspension of the applicability of the standard regulatory requirements only applies to certain F-1 nonimmigrant students who meet the following conditions:

- (1) Are a citizen of Syria regardless of country of birth (or an individual having no nationality who last habitually resided in Syria);
- (2) Were lawfully present in the United States on the date of publication of this notice in F-1 nonimmigrant status, under section 101(a)(15)(F)(i) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(F)(i);
- (3) Are enrolled in an academic institution that is SEVP-certified for enrollment of F-1 nonimmigrant students;
- (4) Are maintaining F-1 nonimmigrant status; and
- (5) Are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria.

An F-1 nonimmigrant student who does not meet all these requirements is ineligible for the suspension of the applicability of the standard regulatory requirements (even if experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria).

An F-1 nonimmigrant student who does not meet all these requirements is ineligible for the suspension of the applicability of the standard regulatory requirements (even if experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria).

Does this notice apply to a continuing F–1 nonimmigrant student who departs the United States after the effective date of this notice in the Federal Register and who needs to obtain a new F–1 visa before returning to the United States to continue an educational program?

Yes. This notice applies to such an F–1 nonimmigrant student, but only if the DSO has properly notated the student's SEVIS record, which will then appear on the student's Form I–20. The normal rules for visa issuance remain applicable to a nonimmigrant who needs to apply for a new F–1 visa to continue an educational program in the United States.

Does this notice apply to elementary school, middle school, and high school students in F–1 status?

Yes. However, this notice does not by itself reduce the required course load for F–1 nonimmigrant students from Syria enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 at a private school, or grades 9 through 12 at a public high school. Such students must maintain the minimum number of hours of class attendance per week prescribed by the academic institution for normal progress toward graduation, as required under 8CFR214.2(f)(6)(i)(E). The suspension of certain regulatory requirements related to employment through this notice is applicable to all eligible F–1 nonimmigrant students regardless of educational level. Eligible F–1 nonimmigrant students from Syria enrolled in an elementary school, middle school, or high school may benefit from the suspension of the requirement in 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i) that limits on-campus employment to 20 hours per week while school is in session.

On-Campus Employment Authorization
Will an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus employment authorization under this notice be authorized to work more than 20 hours per week while school is in session?

Yes. For an F–1 nonimmigrant student covered in this notice, the Secretary is suspending the applicability of the requirement in 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i) that limits an F–1 nonimmigrant student's on-campus employment to 20 hours per week while school is in session. An eligible F–1 nonimmigrant student has authorization to work more than 20 hours per week while school is in session if the DSO has entered the following statement in the remarks field of the student's SEVIS record, which will be reflected on the student's Form I–20:

Approved for more than 20 hours per week of on-campus employment and reduced course load, under the Special Student Relief authorization from [DSO must insert the beginning date of this notice or the beginning date of the student's employment, whichever date is later] until [DSO must insert the student's program end date or the end date of this notice, whichever date comes first].²²

To obtain on-campus employment authorization, the F–1 nonimmigrant student must demonstrate to the DSO that the employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship directly resulting from the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria. An F–1 nonimmigrant student authorized by the DSO to engage in on-campus employment by means of this notice does not need to file any applications with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The standard rules permitting full-time on-campus employment when school is not in session or during school vacations apply, as described in 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i).

Will an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus employment authorization under this notice have authorization to reduce the normal course load and still maintain his or her F–1 nonimmigrant student status?

Yes. DHS will deem an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus employment authorization under this notice to be engaged in a "full course of study"²³ for the purpose of maintaining their F–1 nonimmigrant student status for the duration of the on-campus employment, if the student satisfies the minimum course load requirement described in this notice, consistent with 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(F). However, the authorization to reduce the normal course load is solely for DHS purposes of determining valid F–1 nonimmigrant student status. Nothing in this notice mandates that school officials allow an F–1 nonimmigrant student to take a reduced course load if the reduction would not meet the academic institution's minimum course load requirement for continued enrollment.²⁴

²² Because the suspension of requirements under this notice applies throughout an academic term during which the suspension is in effect, DHS considers an F–1 nonimmigrant student who engages in a reduced course load or employment (or both) after this notice is effective to be engaging in a "full course of study," see 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6), and eligible for employment authorization, through the end of any academic term for which such student is matriculated as of Sept. 30, 2025, provided the student satisfies the minimum course load requirements in this notice.

²³ See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

²⁴ Minimum course load requirement for enrollment in a school must be established in a

Off-Campus Employment Authorization
What regulatory requirements does this notice temporarily suspend relating to off-campus employment?

For an F–1 nonimmigrant student covered by this notice, as provided under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(ii)(A), the Secretary is suspending the following regulatory requirements relating to off-campus employment:

(a) The requirement that a student must have been in F–1 nonimmigrant student status for one full academic year to be eligible for off-campus employment;

(b) The requirement that an F–1 nonimmigrant student must demonstrate that acceptance of employment will not interfere with the student's carrying a full course of study;

(c) The requirement that limits an F–1 nonimmigrant student's employment authorization to no more than 20 hours per week of off-campus employment while the school is in session; and

(d) The requirement that the student demonstrate that employment under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i) is unavailable or otherwise insufficient to meet the needs that have arisen as a result of the unforeseen circumstances.

Will an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives off-campus employment authorization under this notice have authorization to reduce the normal course load and still maintain F–1 nonimmigrant status?

Yes. DHS will deem an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives off-campus employment authorization by means of this notice to be engaged in a "full course of study"²⁵ for the purpose of maintaining F–1 nonimmigrant student status for the duration of the student's employment authorization if the student satisfies the minimum course load requirement described in this notice, consistent with 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(F). The authorization for a reduced course load is solely for DHS purposes of determining valid F–1 nonimmigrant student status. Nothing in this notice mandates that school officials allow an F–1 nonimmigrant student to take a reduced course load if such reduced course load would not meet the school's minimum course load requirement.²⁶

publicly available document (e.g., catalog, website, or operating procedure), and it must be a standard applicable to all students (U.S. citizens and foreign students) enrolled at the school.

²⁵ See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

²⁶ Minimum course load requirement for enrollment in a school must be established in a publicly available document (e.g., catalog, website, or operating procedure), and it must be a standard

How may an eligible F-1 nonimmigrant student obtain employment authorization for off-campus employment with a reduced course load under this notice?

An F-1 nonimmigrant student must file a Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, with USCIS to apply for off-campus employment authorization based on severe economic hardship directly resulting from the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria.²⁷ Filing instructions are located at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>.

Fee considerations. Submission of a Form I-765 currently requires payment of a \$410 fee. An applicant who is unable to pay the fee may submit a completed Form I-912, Request for Fee Waiver, along with the Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization. See <https://www.uscis.gov/forms/filing-fees/additional-information-on-filing-a-fee-waiver>. The submission must include an explanation about why USCIS should grant the fee waiver and the reason(s) for the inability to pay, and any evidence to support the reason(s). See 8 CFR 103.7(c) (Oct. 1, 2020).

Supporting documentation. An F-1 nonimmigrant student seeking off-campus employment authorization due to severe economic hardship must demonstrate the following to their DSO:

- (1) This employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship; and
- (2) The hardship is a direct result of the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria.

If the DSO agrees that the F-1 nonimmigrant student is entitled to receive such employment authorization, the DSO must recommend application approval to USCIS by entering the following statement in the remarks field of the student's SEVIS record, which will then appear on that student's Form I-20:

Recommended for off-campus employment authorization in excess of 20 hours per week and reduced course load under the Special Student Relief authorization from the date of the USCIS authorization noted on Form I-766 until [DSO must insert the program end date or the end date of this notice, whichever date comes first].²⁸

applicable to all students (U.S. citizens and foreign students) enrolled at the school.

²⁷ See 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(3)(iii).

²⁸ Because the suspension of requirements under this notice applies throughout an academic term during which the suspension is in effect, DHS considers an F-1 nonimmigrant student who engages in a reduced course load or employment (or both) after this notice is effective to be engaging in a "full course of study," see 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6), and eligible for employment authorization, through the end of any academic term for which such student

The F-1 nonimmigrant student must then file the properly endorsed Form I-20 and Form I-765 according to the instructions for the Form I-765. The F-1 nonimmigrant student may begin working off campus only upon receipt of the EAD from USCIS.

DSO recommendation. In making a recommendation that an F-1 nonimmigrant student be approved for Special Student Relief, the DSO certifies that:

(a) The F-1 nonimmigrant student is in good academic standing and is carrying a "full course of study"²⁹ at the time of the request for employment authorization;

(b) The F-1 nonimmigrant student is a citizen of Syria, regardless of country of birth (or an individual having no nationality who last habitually resided in Syria), and is experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria, as documented on the Form I-20;

(c) The F-1 nonimmigrant student has confirmed that the student will comply with the reduced course load requirements of this notice and register for the duration of the authorized employment for a minimum of six semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term if at the undergraduate level, or for a minimum of three semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term if the student is at the graduate level;³⁰ and

(d) The off-campus employment is necessary to alleviate severe economic hardship to the individual as a direct result of the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria.

Processing. To facilitate prompt adjudication of the student's application for off-campus employment authorization under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(ii)(C), the F-1 nonimmigrant student should do both of the following:

(a) Ensure that the application package includes the following documents:

- (1) A completed Form I-765 with all applicable supporting evidence;
 - (2) The required fee or properly documented fee waiver request as defined in 8 CFR 103.7(c) (Oct. 1, 2020); and
 - (3) A signed and dated copy of the student's Form I-20 with the appropriate DSO recommendation, as previously described in this notice; and
- (b) Send the application in an envelope which is clearly marked on the

is matriculated as of Sept. 30, 2025, provided the student satisfies the minimum course load requirements in this notice.

²⁹ See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

³⁰ 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v).

front of the envelope, bottom right-hand side, with the phrase "SPECIAL STUDENT RELIEF."³¹ Failure to include this notation may result in significant processing delays.

If USCIS approves the student's Form I-765, USCIS will send the student a Form I-766 EAD as evidence of employment authorization. The EAD will contain an expiration date that does not exceed the end of the granted temporary relief.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Considerations

Can an F-1 nonimmigrant student apply for TPS and for benefits under this notice at the same time?

Yes. An F-1 nonimmigrant student who has not yet applied for TPS or for other relief that reduces the student's course load per term and permits an increased number of work hours per week, such as Special Student Relief,³² under this notice has two options.

Under the first option, the F-1 nonimmigrant student may apply for TPS according to the instructions in the USCIS notice designating Syria for TPS elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**. All TPS applicants must file a Form I-821, Application for Temporary Protected Status, with the appropriate fee (or request a fee waiver). Although not required to do so, if F-1 nonimmigrant students want to obtain a new TPS-related EAD that is valid through September 30, 2025, and to be eligible for automatic EAD extensions that may be available to certain EADs with an A-12 or C-19 category code, they must file Form I-765 and pay the Form I-765 fee (or request a fee waiver). After receiving the TPS-related EAD, an F-1 nonimmigrant student may request that their DSO make the required entry in SEVIS and issue an updated Form I-20, which notates that the nonimmigrant student has been authorized to carry a reduced course load, as described in this notice. As long as the F-1 nonimmigrant student maintains the minimum course load described in this notice, does not otherwise violate their nonimmigrant status, including as provided under 8 CFR 214.1(g), and maintains TPS, then the student maintains F-1 status and TPS concurrently.

Under the second option, the F-1 nonimmigrant student may apply for an EAD under Special Student Relief by filing Form I-765 with the location

³¹ Guidance for direct filing addresses can be found here: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses>.

³² See DHS Study in the States, Special Student Relief, <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/special-student-relief> (last visited Oct. 10, 2023).

specified in the filing instructions. At the same time, the F-1 nonimmigrant student may file a separate TPS application but must submit the Form I-821 according to the instructions provided in the **Federal Register** notice designating Syria for TPS. If the F-1 nonimmigrant student has already applied for employment authorization under Special Student Relief, they are not required to submit the Form I-765 as part of the TPS application. However, some nonimmigrant students may wish to obtain a TPS-related EAD in light of certain extensions that may be available to EADs with an A-12 or C-19 category code that are not available to the C-3 category under which Special Student Relief falls. The F-1 nonimmigrant student should check the appropriate box when filling out Form I-821 to indicate whether a TPS-related EAD is being requested. Again, as long as the F-1 nonimmigrant student maintains the minimum course load described in this notice and does not otherwise violate the student's nonimmigrant status, included as provided under 8 CFR 214.1(g), the nonimmigrant will be able to maintain compliance requirements for F-1 nonimmigrant student status while having TPS.

When a student applies simultaneously for TPS and benefits under this notice, what is the minimum course load requirement while an application for employment authorization is pending?

The F-1 nonimmigrant student must maintain normal course load requirements for a "full course of study"³³ unless or until the nonimmigrant student receives employment authorization under this notice. TPS-related employment authorization, by itself, does not authorize a nonimmigrant student to drop below twelve credit hours, or otherwise applicable minimum requirements (e.g., clock hours for non-traditional academic programs). Once approved for a TPS-related EAD and Special Student Relief employment authorization, as indicated by the DSO's required entry in SEVIS and issuance of an updated Form I-20, the F-1 nonimmigrant student may drop below twelve credit hours, or otherwise applicable minimum requirements (with a minimum of six semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term if at the undergraduate level, or for a minimum of three semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term if at the graduate level). See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v), (f)(6), and (f)(9)(i) and (ii).

³³ See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

How does a student who has received a TPS-related EAD then apply for authorization to take a reduced course load under this notice?

There is no further application process with USCIS if a student has been approved for a TPS-related EAD. The F-1 nonimmigrant student must demonstrate and provide documentation to the DSO of the direct economic hardship resulting from the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis in Syria. The DSO will then verify and update the student's record in SEVIS to enable the F-1 nonimmigrant student with TPS to reduce the course load without any further action or application. No other EAD needs to be issued for the F-1 nonimmigrant student to have employment authorization.

Can a noncitizen who has been granted TPS apply for reinstatement of F-1 nonimmigrant student status after the noncitizen's F-1 nonimmigrant student status has lapsed?

Yes. Regulations permit certain students who fall out of F-1 nonimmigrant student status to apply for reinstatement. See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(16). This provision may apply to students who worked on a TPS-related EAD or dropped their course load before publication of this notice, and therefore fell out of student status. These students must satisfy the criteria set forth in the F-1 nonimmigrant student status reinstatement regulations.

How long will this notice remain in effect?

This notice grants temporary relief until September 30, 2025,³⁴ to eligible F-1 nonimmigrant students. DHS will continue to monitor the situation in Syria. Should the special provisions authorized by this notice need modification or extension, DHS will announce such changes in the **Federal Register**.

Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA)

An F-1 nonimmigrant student seeking off-campus employment authorization due to severe economic hardship resulting from the current armed conflict and current humanitarian crisis

³⁴ Because the suspension of requirements under this notice applies throughout an academic term during which the suspension is in effect, DHS considers an F-1 nonimmigrant student who engages in a reduced course load or employment (or both) after this notice is effective to be engaging in a "full course of study," see 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6), and eligible for employment authorization, through the end of any academic term for which such student is matriculated as of Sept. 30, 2025, provided the student satisfies the minimum course load requirements in this notice.

in Syria must demonstrate to the DSO that this employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship. A DSO who agrees that a nonimmigrant student should receive such employment authorization must recommend an application approval to USCIS by entering information in the remarks field of the student's SEVIS record. The authority to collect this information is in the SEVIS collection of information currently approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under OMB Control Number 1653-0038.

This notice also allows an eligible F-1 nonimmigrant student to request employment authorization, work an increased number of hours while the academic institution is in session, and reduce their course load while continuing to maintain F-1 nonimmigrant student status.

To apply for employment authorization, certain F-1 nonimmigrant students must complete and submit a currently approved Form I-765 according to the instructions on the form. OMB has previously approved the collection of information contained on the current Form I-765, consistent with the PRA (OMB Control Number 1615-0040). Although there will be a slight increase in the number of Form I-765 filings because of this notice, the number of filings currently contained in the OMB annual inventory for Form I-765 is sufficient to cover the additional filings. Accordingly, there is no further action required under the PRA.

Alejandro Mayorkas,

Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

[CIS No. 2763-24; DHS Docket No. USCIS-2013-0001]

RIN 1615-ZB72

Extension and Redesignation of Syria for Temporary Protected Status

AGENCY: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

ACTION: Notice of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) extension and redesignation.

SUMMARY: Through this notice, the Department of Homeland Security