

Buffalo Forum



**Local Publication of the
U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization**

Workers of all countries, unite!

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October 20, 2017

Vol. 21 #10

Support Lafayette's Boys Soccer Team

Lafayette's boys soccer team, with a 9-3-2 record, was recently forced to forfeit all its games and five players were banned from playing. The team is ranked fourth in Class C soccer statewide. The team and its young players, mostly immigrants, were penalized not for any unsportsmanlike conduct or action on their part, but rather because Lafayette now houses

Support Lafayette's Soccer Team • 2

Hands Off Iran! Demand Political Not Military Solutions

President Trump took action against Iran, saying he would not certify Iran's compliance with the 2015 nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA. The certification is required by law, every 90 days and October 15 was the deadline. Trump has twice certified Iran as being in compliance with the JCPOA but has now decided not to do so. He is also urging Congress to

The people of Puerto Rico are showing their resilience and determination to rebuild their country in their image, despite the refusal of the U.S. government to fully fund relief and cancel the debt. Collective actions of all kinds are taking place, as collectives of medics, engineers, agricultural

pass legislation within 60 days to re-impose sanctions, an action directly against the agreement. Both actions are seen as steps towards war with Iran and are being widely opposed, across the country and around the world.

Trump is refusing to certify even though the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed that Iran is in compliance. Secretary of Defense

Hands Off Iran • 11

BUFFALO SUPPORTS RELIEF EFFORTS

Cancel the Debt Now! Eliminate Control Board and Fund Reconstruction By and For Puerto Ricans

workers and more get organized and take initiative to provide relief and rebuild. Those with expertise in the energy field are also demanding that the outdated electric grid not be rebuilt and instead new renewable sources of energy, like solar, be

Self-Determination for Puerto Rico • 3

Nurses, Truck Drivers, Teachers, Unions Join Puerto Rico Relief Efforts

"I put out the call for help, and who listened? The unions," said Carmen Yulín Cruz, the mayor of San Juan. As President Donald Trump continues to refuse to deliver full funding to Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria

Nurses, Teachers Join Relief Efforts • 4

BUFFALO JOINS IN NATIONAL DAYS OF ACTION

Actions Across the Country Oppose U.S. Wars and Aggression

On October 6 Buffalonians joined hundreds across the country in demanding an end to the criminal war in Afghanistan and opposing all U.S. wars and threats against Korea. From October 2-8, 2017, dozens of actions took place marking the 16th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Forums, film showings and many demonstrations were united in

demanding *All U.S. Troops Home Now!* as the path forward.

It is clear that more troops are no solution and only contribute further to the violence, anarchy, death and destruction imposed wherever the U.S. invades. Under the Obama administration, increased U.S. troop strength was increased to 100,000. At the same time,

there were 40,000 troops from other NATO countries in Afghanistan as well as 88,000 U.S. paid mercenaries. Despite this buildup of occupation forces, the U.S. was not able to stop the broad and determined resistance of the people of Afghanistan, as is also the case in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. The wars are solving

Buffalo Joins Anti-War Actions • 15

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I • SUPPORT LAFAYETTE'S SOCCER TEAM

three "schools" in a single building. The co-location of Lafayette, Newcomer Academy and International School requires the team to ask state authorities for combined team status, so all students can join the team. Last year Lafayette was still listed as a single school. This year that changed, but district officials failed to submit the request to combine the schools. The absence of the request was not raised until the team moved up from Class D to Class C.

It is the team and young players that are being punished. Certainly a waiver by state officials is in order. And while the team is considered the Buffalo Public Schools league champion and is competing back in the Class D tournament, five players from the Newcomer Academy will not be allowed to play. This is unfair to these young players and the team as a whole. The strength of the team is such that even with the loss of five players, they have won two games in the tournament so far.

Students at Lafayette share the same gym and have single teams, as any school would. The reality of the forced co-location and its problems are apparent in this situation, where

students work and play together yet are branded as coming from separate "schools." There is no necessity to divide the building and students in this manner.

The division was done in part to target the teachers of Lafayette. Many were forced to leave as the old Lafayette is phased out and the new International School arbitrarily decided its teacher would be bi-lingual. While bi-lingual teachers are needed, the action was taken without regard to the collective wisdom and strength of the existing teachers at Lafayette. Removing them impacts the overall quality while also eliminating more experienced teachers known to the community. The entire plan put in place by the district was not what teachers, parents, students and community members called and organized for. Rather it was imposed by the Superintendent, with the negative consequences to the soccer team and teachers and community as a whole.

The community stands behind the team and *Buffalo Forum* urges all to support them. They should not be punished for the arbitrary actions of the Superintendent to impose three schools in one building with one gym.



I • SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PUERTO RICO

developed. Many in Buffalo and New York City are joining in these efforts, gathering supplies, organizing volunteer brigades, joining efforts by the unions to send nurses, truck drivers, engineers, building trades workers and more.

All are contending with the colonial dictate of the U.S., which is insisting that the Wall Street financiers get their payments. The just demand of the people is to *Cancel the Debt Now! Stop Paying the Rich and Fully Fund Recovery!*

In the typical colonialist fashion of “white man’s burden,” President Trump has repeatedly blamed Puerto Ricans, portraying them as unable to govern or decide what is needed. Puerto Ricans on the island, in New York State and throughout the country are responding by organizing themselves and demanding their rights, as a nation and as human beings. It is their right to decide and self-determination is the way forward, as the peoples themselves are showing.

The problem is not simply a lack of funding, which must be provided in full now! The problem is and has been U.S.

colonialism, which has long distorted the Puerto Rican economy and long imposed genocide against her people, including using Vieques as a bombing range and forced sterilization of a large portion of women. It is this colonialism that is behind the Control Board imposed so as to guarantee debt payments to the financiers. It is this colonialism that is behind the U.S. blocking aid from many countries of the world, including Venezuela and Cuba. It is this colonialism that must end so that rebuilding can be by and for Puerto Ricans.

The facts of this government-made disaster are evident, including:

- More than 80 percent of the population remain without electricity more than a month after Maria hit.
- About 28 percent of the population has no running water and those that do have been told it is unsafe and must be boiled, even though there is no electricity to do so.
- Twenty out of 51 sewage-treatment plants are not functioning.
- Close to half of the hospitals are

without electricity. And while a floating state-of-the-art hospital, the USNS Comfort is just offshore, only 33 of the 250 beds are being used, nearly two weeks after the ship arrived.

- About 80 percent of agricultural lands were destroyed
- At least 50 are dead and more than 100 missing and likely dead
- More than 100 bridges in Puerto Rico were damaged by Maria and 18 have been closed indefinitely leaving entire communities stranded. Only initiative by the people themselves is overcoming this problem.

Colonialism is a crime. Instruments like the Control Board dictating debt payments are a crime — it is the U.S. that owes Puerto Rico for the hundreds of billions it has stolen over the years. Now is the time to strengthen the independent organizing in defense of rights, here in Buffalo, across the state and in Puerto Rico. By relying on the people’s efforts and developing recovery in the image and interests of Puerto Rican’s themselves, this crisis can be resolved in the people’s favor.

Visit our website: **usmlo.org**

Hurricanes Expose Destructive Force of U.S. Colonialism

Interview, José E. López

Excerpted below is an October 12 interview with José E. López of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago, conducted by Molly Osberg of Splinternews.com, regarding the current situation in Puerto Rico and its colonial relationship to the U.S. López is the brother of well-known Puerto Rican independence fighter and former political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, and also part of the Puerto Rican independence movement.

Molly Osberg: What were some of the major issues for the [Puerto Rican independence] movement right before Maria hit?

José E. López: What we — and I mean the sort of radical sector of the Puerto Rican community — were doing in Puerto Rico was mostly a lot of work against the oversight board, and against the imposition of the PROMESA law [which imposed a Control

Board mandating massive cuts to pensions and social services while guaranteeing that debt be paid — VOR Ed. Note].

But as for the community in the United States, we have been doing work for years around the connection between the colonial situation of Puerto Ricans and the marginalization of Puerto Ricans in the United States. So in particular I can speak to the work that we have been doing in Chicago for the past 50 years, creating a series of parallel institutions to serve the needs of our community.

That includes issues of housing, education, health, employment — all of the things that fall by the wayside when you are not considered an integral part of the society and are not allowed to fully partake as a full citizen.

And the hurricane as a natural phenomenon has unmasked the very unnatural

causes of the situation in Puerto Rico.

Hurricane Maria and its impact on the island have to be seen against the prism of the U.S. colonial enterprise in Puerto Rico. And what that has meant since 1898: Puerto Ricans have never been able to self-actualize, nor self-determine. And right now as we look at the contempt that President Trump holds for the Puerto Rican people, it is really unmasking that colonial reality. It has been a hidden struggle, and we are finally breaking through, and people who might not know much are talking about Puerto Rico and its unnatural relationship to the United States.

MO: What is the relationship between the work you do in Chicago and the broader Puerto Rican independence struggle?

JEL: Most people understand, or at least
Destructive Force of Colonialism • 6

I • NURSES, TEACHERS JOIN RELIEF EFFORTS

— which killed dozens and left millions without power and running water a month later — truck drivers, nurses, doctors, engineers, teachers and other workers, on their own initiative and with various unions have organized to assist with relief and recovery efforts.

In Buffalo the Buffalo Teachers Federation is working with the teachers' union in Puerto Rico to provide funds. Workers representing more than 20 unions traveled to Puerto Rico to join their fellow workers there in providing medical and humanitarian assistance, as well as contributing to the rebuilding effort. The nurses, doctors, electricians, engineers, carpenters and truck drivers engaged in various efforts, including helping clear road blockages, caring for hospital patients, delivering emergency supplies, and restoring power and communications. More than 10,000 containers of supplies, including food, water and medicine were sitting on the docks in San Juan. It was through these united efforts that these supplies are being delivered.

Teamsters Joint Council 16 sent hundreds of drivers. Union Community Funds

are being established to put funds directly in the hands of workers in Puerto Rico. New York City Firefighters, Construction Trades and Maritime workers are all participating. Nurses from New York City and all across the country have joined the effort as well. National Nurses United (NNU) alone sent a delegation of 50 volunteer registered nurses from throughout the U.S. to help provide urgent medical assistance.

At the national Convention for the Transport Workers Unions, representatives from around the country pledged financial support. About \$125,000 in pledges from 40 locals were collected in less than an hour. The locals included bus drivers in Philadelphia, airline workers in Miami, bus and subway workers from Westchester, New York.

Team of Storytellers Head to Puerto Rico to Put #PRontheMap

Puerto Rican activist and New Yorker Rosa Clemente, vice presidential candidate with Cynthia McKiney for the Green Party in 2008, organized a group of videographers and journalists to gather news and information about conditions and organizing efforts

in Puerto Rico. As #PRontheMap explains: "Puerto Rico is experiencing a devastating humanitarian crisis. However, the mainstream news media has all but neglected the story, with data from Media Cloud, a database that collects news published on the Internet every day, showing that the devastation in Puerto Rico is getting relatively little attention from digital and cable news outlets compared to coverage on Hurricanes Irma and Harvey.

"We, a group of mostly Puerto Rican journalists, videographers and media professionals aim to fill this void. We are ready and capable of providing independent reporting on the ground. Together, we will be heading to Puerto Rico to interact with the people," report on their efforts and investigate slow and questionable federal relief efforts.

"As people with family and friends living on the island, we have direct access to those who have been impacted. As Puerto Ricans who are personally and academically schooled in the politics, history and colonization of Puerto Rico, we will bring an important, and currently unseen, lens to our reporting."

The United States Has a Responsibility It Has Not Been Fulfilling

Digna Sánchez Jiménez, National Hostos Movement for the Independence of Puerto Rico

(Presentation to the Coordinating Bureau of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) by Digna Sánchez Jiménez, member of the Executive Committee, National Hostos Movement for the Independence of Puerto Rico, September 29, 2017, United Nations.)

Dear Members of the Coordinating Bureau of the NAM,

My name is Digna Sánchez Jiménez. I am a member of the Executive Committee of the National Hostos Movement for the Independence of Puerto Rico (MINH). We are grateful for this opportunity to bring here the voice of my people who are going through a catastrophic crisis brought on not just by Hurricane María or Hurricane Irma the week before.

When the United States invaded Puerto Rico in 1898 with the excuse of the Spanish American War, it initiated the history of United States colonial domination of Puerto Rico. Since that ominous beginning, our country has been used for the plans of savage capitalism, which has sought only to benefit the capitalists in the metropolis. We have thus been used for diverse plans which have destroyed our agriculture to the point where we now import 85 per cent of what we consume thus making our food supply greatly precarious, especially since we are an island.

Meanwhile, regarding the economy, the United States projects the image that its federal government is benevolent towards us, but in reality they extract billions of dollars from Puerto Rico. The economic policy they have promoted in the colony has resulted in a situation where our economy has been shrinking for more than a decade. As a result, in 2016 they imposed a Fiscal Control Board to ensure payment of the debt to Wall Street and the hedge funds. They are not concerned about the future development of Puerto Rico for the benefit of Puerto Ricans. The three branches of the United States government finally recognized in 2016 that Puerto Rico “belongs



“Fiscal control board, colonial slavery”

to, but is not a part of” the United States. It is a colony, and despite the lies, even they have recognized that.

The Fiscal Control Board has refused to audit the \$70 billion debt. Their only purpose is payment of the bonds, many of them now in the hands of hedge funds. But much of this debt did not comply with legal requisites. Nonetheless, to ensure its payment, the Fiscal Control Board has imposed austerity measures that are drowning the already small local economy. The people have been struggling against this Board, but the situation has become extremely difficult and one of the results has been the massive migration of Puerto Ricans mainly to the United States where there are now more Puerto Ricans than in Puerto Rico!

Now we have been hit by Hurricanes María and Irma. The devastation is unbelievable. Our beautiful archipelago is wounded and our people are suffering. The United States has a responsibility it has not been fulfilling, and President Trump had the audacity to say that Puerto Rico is devastated, but it has to pay the debt. It was not until yesterday that Puerto Rico was temporarily exempted, for ten days, from United States maritime laws, imposed on Puerto Rico through the *Jones Act*, which mandate since 1917 that only ships built in the

United States and manned by United States crews may carry cargo into and out of Puerto Rico. These laws must be struck down permanently. In the face of Puerto Rico’s present humanitarian crisis we should be able to receive aid from other countries and to engage in commerce with other countries without having to use the United States merchant fleet, which is the most expensive in the world.

Criticism to the United States due to its slow pace in responding to its responsibility to aid has been answered with the statement that it was a problem of the Puerto Ricans. They have now assigned a general to coordinate the aid. We are greatly concerned about the militarization of Puerto Rico. Pro independence forces have historically been persecuted and this terror was part of the script that the armed forces used in Puerto Rico.

We ask that our friends help us. Solidarity is powerful. When Hurricane Irma struck the smaller countries of the Caribbean, ships of people from Puerto Rico went to the aid of our neighbors in the Caribbean before the U.S. and European governments brought help. Puerto Rico, my people, will rise and we are counting on your support.

Thank you.

4 • DESTRUCTIVE FORCE OF COLONIALISM

have a concept, of what a direct colony is. Colonialism as a system is pervasive all over the world: Most of the countries in the world are in a neo-colonial relationship to the United States. And then there are the internal colonies within the dominant colonies. For example, if I look at the conditions of Puerto Ricans in the South Bronx, the conditions of African Americans in the Mississippi Delta, the conditions of Native Americans that have lived in the occupied lands of New Mexico, so many of them would have the same lack of housing, lack of education, lack of quality of life. There is something systematically wrong with the U.S. in terms of its relationship to these peoples. It is not just a question of class, or of the relationship to people of color. For these populations it is a colonial question, as well.

MO: And what are you thinking about how recent events are going to shape this colonial relationship?

JEL: It is pretty clear one of the most important aspects of this moment, particularly for progressive people in this country, is realizing that Puerto Rico is a direct U.S. colony. And that in many ways much of the progressive movement in this country has totally ignored the question of Puerto Rico. It is time to really begin to analyze that, to say, "We have been complicit in this colonial enterprise, even on the left."

I think it is that people have a really difficult time, even progressive people, dealing with the U.S. as an imperial power. U.S. history is formulated against the backdrop of denial of a culture of empire. We never study the movement and the killing of Native Americans as a colonial enterprise. We do not see the U.S. taking over Hawaii as an imperial design. We do not see the U.S. taking over Alaska as an imperial design. So we do not see Puerto Rico as an imperial design. So when we do not acknowledge that, we also have a problem of trying to deal with it.

MO: Do you expect the U.S. government's disastrous response to the hurricane to reinvigorate, or change aspects of, the independence movement?

JEL: In Puerto Rico there has been a long history of resistance against U.S. colonial

rule. It began the very moment the U.S. established control of Puerto Rico in 1898. We have a list that shows over 2,000 people, historically, were incarcerated in Puerto Rico because of their activism in the Puerto Rican independence moment, and in their struggle for social justice. And if we add, for example, the incarceration rate in 1950, when Puerto Rico rose up against colonial rule in an armed uprising, we could make the list even longer.

But there is a long history of political incarceration, a long history of political persecution, that has been waged by the U.S. government, particularly through the FBI and its COINTELPRO, that has been around since the late '50s. But as a matter of fact, last year we were able to free my brother, Oscar López Rivera. He was in prison for 36 years of his life, for his activism, for his advocacy, for his work around Puerto Rican independence.

But I think the movement is already reinvigorated. The Puerto Rican people, many of them who were blind to the colonial reality, are awakening to the fact that the only thing they can count on right now in Puerto Rico are the efforts of the Puerto Rican people themselves.

President Trump talks as if FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency, of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security] was there, and had done this great job. But how can you say that on an island that was just devastated, where people are very ill, where people were ill before the hurricane, where so few people have been helped?

I mean, right now you have a bunch of supplies in the port of San Juan that have not been delivered to people. There is nothing in place. Because in Florida and in Texas, FEMA and the government already had a plan of how you were going to deal with this catastrophe. Here there was no planning.

MO: What do you think needs to be done, policy-wise?

JEL: You have to eliminate the debt. That is the first thing that we must demand. Because this debt can never be repaid, this debt was never incurred by the Puerto Rican people, this debt has never been audited. We do not really know how much is owed, and this debt will only fill the coffers of the hedge



funds and the bankers. It will do nothing for Puerto Rico.

I think we have got to figure out the *Jones Act*, which limits any shipping to and from Puerto Rico [to U.S. flagged ships]. Puerto Rico should be able to receive ships and food and supplies from any part of the world. Right now it means that Puerto Ricans are paying at least 15 to 20 percent more on any goods that are shipped to Puerto Rico. And the other thing is: We must undo this oversight board. And in addition to that there should be a process that guarantees Puerto Rico equity in terms of Medicare and Medicaid.

MO: And what do you expect to see in this movement, going forward?

JEL: In all the Puerto Rican communities there has been a lot of organizing efforts, and it must lead to something that is long-term, that has a commitment to rebuilding Puerto Rico, to rebuilding the kind of infrastructure that guarantees a process that will continue to ultimately invest in a future Puerto Rico.

I think [San Juan Mayor] Carmen Yulín Cruz is probably the only effective voice in Puerto Rico today — she has become a symbol, obviously, a voice that has taken on the imperial voice of the United States as expressed by President Trump. I think she has a keen sense of where Puerto Rico is at, and where it is going.

But there are 3.5 million Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico, 5.5 million in the diaspora. And I think the diaspora is going to play a key role in the future of Puerto Rico and in developing and carrying out an agenda that guarantees that a new Puerto Rico emerges out of this horrible situation.

Open Letter to the People of the United States from Puerto Rico, a Month After Hurricane María

Rafael Bernabe and Manuel Rodríguez Banchs

Dear Friends:

By now you have surely heard about the catastrophic impact of Hurricane María in Puerto Rico, as well as the slow and still inadequate response by U.S. federal agencies, such as FEMA.

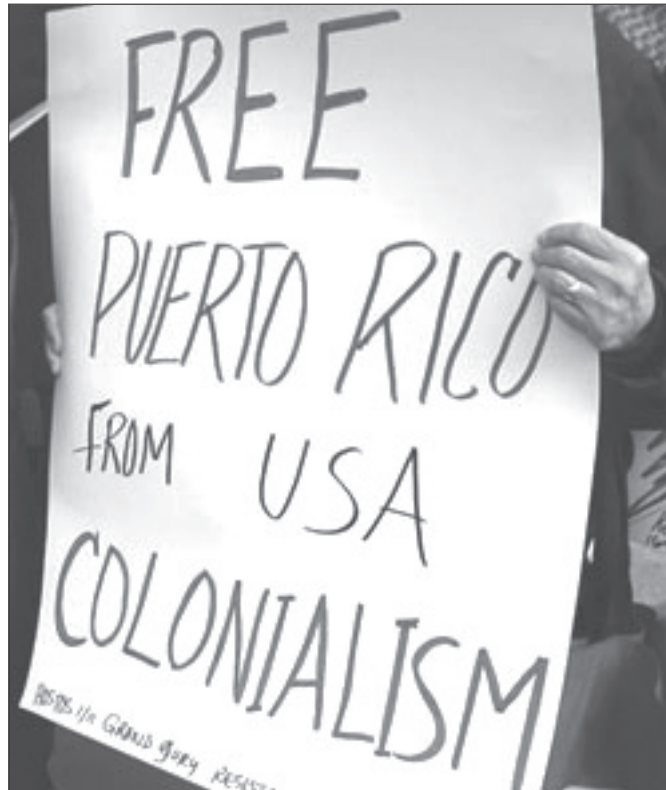
A month after María, dozens of communities are still inaccessible by car or truck. More than 80 percent of all homes lack electricity. A third of the island lacks running water. Many of Puerto Rico's 3.2 million residents have difficulties obtaining drinking water. The death toll continues to rise due to lack of medical attention or materials (oxygen, dialysis) or from poisoning caused by unsafe water.

The failures of U.S. agencies might come as no surprise, since the federal response (including FEMA's) to other disasters, such as for Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, was as slow and inadequate.

You may have also heard President Trump state that Puerto Rico was dealing with a debt crisis before the hurricane and that its electric grid had been allowed to deteriorate. As far as they go, these statements are true.

But President Trump also tweeted suggestions that Puerto Rican workers are lazy and that FEMA and other agencies cannot remain in Puerto Rico forever. This spins the notion that Puerto Ricans are themselves to blame and should not expect any more handouts. Trump aims to build a wall between us, which doesn't come as much of a surprise either, by portraying us as a burden, as illegitimately claiming resources to which we have no right.

Through the media you may have also heard that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens as well as a nation, a people with its own identity and culture, under U.S. colonial rule since 1898. Sometimes these facts generate confusion regarding Puerto Rico's relation



with the United States.

Workers in U.S. and Puerto Rico Have Common Interests

Dear friends, contrary to what the President would have you believe, Puerto Rican workers are neither lazy, nor do they want everything done for them (as he also tweeted). They wish for the same things that most working people want: jobs and adequate income; appropriate housing, education, health services and pensions; dependable infrastructure and livable neighborhoods, along with protection of the environment. Working people in the United States and Puerto Rico share the same interests. We have common needs. The effort to rebuild Puerto Rico should help us understand this fully, regardless of the political path Puerto Rico eventually follows, be it toward independence, statehood or some form of sovereign association with the United States. To better understand this joint agenda, we would like to share a few historical facts.

Puerto Rico has been a colony of the United States since the Spanish-American War of 1898. Puerto Rico was legally defined as unincorporated territory, a possession but not part of the United States, under the plenary powers of Congress. Although Congress has reorganized the territorial government over the years, up to the 1952 creation of the present Commonwealth status, the colonial nature of the relationship has remained unchanged. Puerto Ricans elect their governor and legislature, but they only attend to insular matters. We remain subject to both federal legislation and executive decisions, even though we have no participation or representation in their elaboration. Since 1898, Congress has never, we repeat, never consulted the Puerto Rican people in a binding plebiscite or referendum on whether to retain the present

status, become independent or a state of the Union. Having retained its plenary powers, Congress should assume responsibility for a territory it claims as a possession: yet it has often skirted that responsibility. This again should come as no surprise, as Congress has often ignored and overlooked many unjust situations in the United States (affecting workers, women, African-Americans, Native Americans, immigrants, among others), unless activism and mobilizations forced it to do otherwise.

But colonialism has an economic, as well as a political, dimension. After 1898, Puerto Rico's economy came under the control of U.S. corporations. Puerto Rico then specialized in producing a few goods for the U.S. market. One consequence has been the constant outflow of a significant portion of the income generated in Puerto Rico. At present, around \$35 billion leave annually. This is around 35 percent of Puerto Rico's Gross Domestic Product.

End U.S. Colonialism • 8

7 • END U.S. COLONIALISM

This capital is not reinvested and does not create employment here in Puerto Rico. Thus, Puerto Rico's one-sided, externally controlled and largely export-oriented economy has never been able to provide enough employment for its workforce: not when sugar production was the main industry; not in the 1950s and 1960s with light-manufacturing that came and often went; not today, through capital intensive operations, among which pharmaceuticals are the most important.

Colonialism Lies at Root of Problems

This dependent and colonial nature of Puerto Rico's economy lies at the root of the high levels of unemployment, not the alleged laziness of Puerto Rico's workers, an old racist stereotype now taken up by President Trump.

At present, Puerto Rico has a 40 percent labor participation rate. That is to say, 60 percent of its working-age population is out of the formal labor market; they have abandoned all hope of finding a job. Of the 40 percent that are still in the labor market, around 10 percent are officially unemployed.

Mass unemployment depresses wages, which deepens inequality, and creates high levels of poverty. This helps explain the persistence of the wide gap in living standards with the U.S. mainland. After more than a century of U.S. rule, Puerto Rico's per capita income is half that of the poorest state, Mississippi. Around 45 percent of the people in Puerto Rico live under the poverty level.

Lack of employment has resulted in considerable migration to the United States, with the Puerto Rican population stateside now at 5 million. Historically, Puerto Ricans have been incorporated into the U.S. working class as one of its discriminated and over-exploited sectors, along with African-Americans and other fellow Latinos. Deeply connected and concerned with the situation of their homeland, they are also part of a multiracial and multinational U.S. working class.

Given the levels of poverty, it is not surprising that many in Puerto Rico participate in federally funded welfare programs. That is to say: considerable public funds are spent

to partially mitigate the dire consequences of a dysfunctional colonial economy. To put it otherwise: the present situation, while profitable for a few corporations, is a disaster for both Puerto Rico and U.S. working people. Therefore, it is in the interest of both that Puerto Rico acquires an economy capable of providing for its inhabitants without requiring such compensations.

Since 1947, certain exemptions from federal and island taxes was one of the means of attracting foreign investors. Yet, in 1996 Congress began phasing out the federal tax exemption, which was completed in 2006. Make no mistake: tax exemption was never able to guarantee development or employment... Manufacturing jobs have fallen by more than half since 1996. Puerto Rico's economy has shrunk since 2006. More than 250,000 jobs have been lost; 20 percent of the jobs that existed a decade ago have vanished.

But Congress does not bear all the blame. As Puerto Rico's economy collapsed, its government did not re-evaluate its priorities. It did not seek, for example, to recuperate a larger portion of the profits leaving the island through taxation or other means. Instead, it took on massive debt. Meanwhile, electrical and other infrastructure was allowed to deteriorate, often to generate support for privatization. The situation could not be sustained: by June 2015 the government had to admit that its debt is unsustainable and would have to be renegotiated.

Anti-Democratic Control Board Imposed

Congress then adopted the Puerto Rico Oversight Management and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA). It created a non-elected, federally-appointed control board, with broad powers over Puerto Rico's state finances. It provides no funds or measures for economic recovery. It enables austerity policies that deepen poverty while perpetuating the present depression. In other words, it is anti-democratic, colonial, socially unjust and economically counterproductive.



Under the fiscal plan it certified, no growth is foreseen until 2024! Again, this may not come as a surprise: this has been the formula (layoffs and cutbacks) applied against working people in dozens of budget crises, from New York City in the mid-1970s to Detroit in the recent past.

Proposed government cuts come after other austerity measures such as new sales taxes (IVU, 2006); mass government layoffs (Law 7, 2009); attacks on public sector labor rights (Law 66, 2014); reduced public employment through attrition (90,000 jobs eliminated since 2006) and rescinding labor rights in the private sector (2017).

Self Determination for Puerto Rico

What does Puerto Rico need? We need an adequately funded program of economic reconstruction (including the transition to renewable energy), the powers to carry it out and a true process of political self-determination. Congress can and should provide funds for reconstruction, which also requires the cancellation of Puerto Rico's public debt. This debt was already unsustainable; to collect it now would be criminal.

You might rightfully ask: why should Congress allot billions for reconstruction in Puerto Rico, when it does not do so in the states? Our answer: it should do so in the states as well! After all, working and poor people in the United States are suffering the social and environmental consequences of decades of neoliberal economic policies.

End U.S. Colonialism • 9

Puerto Rican Energy Researchers Excluded From Island's Energy Transition Deliberations

Catalina de Onís, Willamette University, Salem, Oregon, October 16, 2017

For years, professors at the University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez have been leading the way in deliberating and taking action on energy controversies and challenges in Puerto Rico. However, members of the National Institute of Island Energy and Sustainability (Instituto Nacional de Energía y Sostenibilidad Isleña, or INESI) claim they are being excluded from key conversations and decisions about the island's energy future in this post-Hurricane María period. INESI is directed by an interdisciplinary team of professors, who are committed to creating a sustainable energy ethic to guide deliberation, decision-making, and implementation of community-based renewable energy projects in Puerto Rico.

Last week, INESI members composed letters to Puerto Rican Governor Ricardo Rosselló and Lieutenant General Jeffrey Buchanan, who is leading Puerto Rico's electric system reconstruction. INESI's steering committee, Dr. Lionel Orama

Exclusa, Dr. Cecilio Ortíz García, and Dr. Marla Pérez Lugo, co-signed the document. In our October 16 phone conversation, Pérez-Lugo expressed that members felt compelled to write the letters, based on the discourses they were hearing about rebuilding, rather than dramatically transforming, the energy grid. She said: "We got worried, as the system as it was is what brought us here."

In its letter to the governor, INESI members contend: "La sostenibilidad de nuestro sistema eléctrico depende del uso descentralizado de nuestros recursos locales (como la conservación, la eficiencia, los sistemas solares en los techos y almacenamiento en casas y edificios) y de una nueva gobernanza justa, descentrada, colaborativa, participativa, y democrática." "The sustainability of our electric system depends on the decentralized use of our local natural resources (like conservation, efficiency, solar systems on roofs and placed on houses and buildings)

and a new just, deconcentrated, collaborative, participative, and democratic government."

Following procedures, INESI members visited the University of Puerto's Central Administration to discuss energy concerns with the interim president, whose office oversees INESI. Members knew that they needed his approval before the letters could be shared with the governor and Buchanan. Pérez-Lugo says she and other members were scolded by university personnel for writing the letters.

Although the president was present, INESI members were told he was unable to see them. Members left their letters at the Central Administration.

Determined to have their concerns heard and letters received, Pérez and colleagues then visited the Center of Emergency Operations in San Juan, which is located at the upscale Puerto Rico Convention Center. INESI members

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As much as we do, American working people need a vast program of economic reconstruction, geared toward creating jobs and addressing social needs.

We draw inspiration from the many movements with similar objectives in the United States: to tax corporate profits, for jobs programs, urban reconstruction, expanded social services, universal health insurance and free higher public education, renewable energy, student debt cancellation and relief for indebted families, reduced military in favor of social spending, to organize workers and revitalize the labor movement, to end all forms of racist, sexist, homophobic or xenophobic discrimination. We in Puerto Rico need these movements as much as you do. We count on you to build and expand them. And we ask that you include Puerto Rico's needs for economic reconstruction, debt cancellation and self-determination in your demands and proposals.

The limitations of one-sided dependent development are not the result of restrictions on movement of capital between Puerto Rico and the United States. They are, if anything, the result of the unfettered action of private interests. In other words, the dogmas of privatization, deregulation and free trade fundamentalism are part of the problem, not the solution. We need a planned reconstruction of our economy, with broadened public and cooperative sectors. Such plans must be elaborated in Puerto Rico, not by federal programs or agencies beyond our control or supervision.

The same holds true in the United States, where budget deficits are not the result of over-generous social programs, but of low corporate taxes, and, after the crisis of 2008, of government debt to bail out the banks from their own speculative excesses.

Over the years, much of the product of our labor has left the island, not unlike much of the wealth created by U.S. workers

is taken by a fabulously rich corporate caste. This harsh reality demands that the fight against these ills—colonial and class exploitation—advance jointly. To those who threaten "No bailout for Puerto Rico" we respond: it is high time we invest in the people of Puerto Rico and of the United States—and stop protecting the privileges of banks and large corporations!

Let us work together then work for justice: justice for working people in the United States and for immediate and adequate hurricane relief, as well as lasting economic reconstruction, debt cancellation and self-determination in Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,
Rafael Bernabe
Manuel Rodríguez Banchs

Rafael Bernabe is a researcher and professor at the University of Puerto Rico. Manuel Rodríguez Banchs is a labor lawyer and social justice advocate.

GOVERNMENT FAILING TO PROVIDE AID TO PUERTO RICO

People Taking Collective Action to Meet Their Needs

Dennis J Bernstein, Consortium News

Some three weeks after Hurricane Maria shredded Puerto Rico, the situation on the U.S. island territory remains grave with only about 10 percent of Puerto Rico's residents having electricity, according to the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority. Meanwhile, thousands of people remain in packed shelters in San Juan.

Health and public officials now worry about a developing public health crisis with outbreaks of several deadly water and airborne diseases that have not plagued the island for years, including four confirmed cases of Leptospirosis, a rat urine-borne disease that can be deadly. The death toll has risen to about 50 although a precise count is difficult given the lack of telephone service in remote areas.

On October 11, I spoke with Attorney and Human Rights Activist Judith Berkan about the ongoing rescue and recovery, and the major failures on the part of the Trump Administration to deal with a very serious ongoing life and death situation.

Dennis Bernstein: Tell us about your day today. You were delivering generators?

Judith Berkan: People are organizing here like crazy, given the absence of effective official relief. We went out into the countryside today to deliver a generator, flashlights and batteries.

Dennis Bernstein: Tell us something about the people's reaction to this devastating crisis.

Judith Berkan: People are taking collective actions, which are real models for what Puerto Rico may look like in the future, as a self-sustaining country rather than a dependant colony. You see it in casual ways, with neighbors coming with machetes to help other neighbors, people checking up on each other, on the elderly.

But you also see a lot of new organizational activity. It is collective activity to make sure that people's needs are met: delivering generators, delivering water, doing censuses of people's needs, taking people out of dangerous situations, making sure they get medical care. It is a very egalitarian and democratic way of doing things.

There are some agricultural collectives who are trying to figure out how to get fresh

food out to people. There are medical collectives offering free medical services. There is a marvelous sense of community. You walk around the streets and talk to strangers, you figure out what people's needs are, you share experiences.

Before this there had been a gradual process of more alienation, more dependence on electronic devices, on fossil fuels. All that served to break with what was remarkable about Puerto Rican society, which was its sense of collective well being.

We know we cannot rely on the government anymore. We used to demand things of the government but at this point we don't expect anything. In Washington, we currently have a particularly racist government in power. But there is a long history of colonial relationship in which all economic structure was developed to meet the needs of imperial power. It has been exacerbated with the current administration and there is clearly no interest in making sure the most basic needs are met.

Dennis Bernstein: Tell us about the **Collective Action to Meet Needs • 14**

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encountered countless police officers and Army personnel, as they tried to gain access to attend First Lady of Puerto Rico Beatriz Areizaga Rosselló's press conference. The first, second, and third floors of the convention center were reserved for local press, state emergency managers and local press, and FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers, respectively.

According to INESI members, to reach the first and second first floors, one could take a functioning escalator, despite widespread power outages elsewhere, which has left 90 percent of residents without electricity. A buffet was available, and the building was air conditioned. "It was a complete disconnection between what's going on in the island and what's going on there [in the convention center,]" Pérez-Lugo reported.

INESI members also posted an additional letter to the INESI Facebook page on October 10, addressed to both Governor Rosselló and Tesla co-founder and CEO Elon Musk, who is looking to invest. It said in part: "Now, with restoration money, is the time to make investments in new energy innovation. Later, money will be far more scarce. Do not waste time and money on poorly rebuilding outdated infrastructure. Build from the bottom up, across the island, a new, bright future. The western parts of the island, especially, need an infusion of hope that their lives can be restored on a timescale less than years."

The letter urges the governor and Musk to consult them on energy decisions, as the two discuss plans to rebuild Puerto Rico's energy system. The authors note the substantial resources and insights

that the INESI team has accumulated while studying and contributing to energy conversations and decisions in Puerto Rico over the years. They explain: "We stand ready to help... With over 90 contributing faculty covering 23 disciplines, across the 11 campuses of the UPR [University of Puerto Rico], INESI offers unparalleled expertise in the technical, economic, and social dimensions of energy transitions."

An additional co-signee of the letter is Dr. Clark Miller, associate director of the School for the Future of Innovation in Society at the University of Arizona. To date, INESI members have not been contacted by Rosselló about their offer.

(Catalina de Onís is an assistant professor in the Department of Civic Communication and Media at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon.)



General Mattis has also said maintaining the JCPOA is in the U.S. "national security interests." The division on the matter within the executive is indicative of the crisis U.S. ruling circles are contending with. Their mechanisms for resolving differences, such as a functioning Congress, political parties and elections, are no longer serving to do so. The factions within the executive and within and between the executive, the military and the intelligence agencies contend and collude, like mafia cartels. And the contention and collusion are such that the president, as Commander in Chief, is openly contradicted by the military. All of which creates a dangerous situation, increasing the potential for broader war.

The same holds true on an international level. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was negotiated and signed by the five permanent UN Security Council members (U.S., Britain, China, France, Russia,) plus Germany (P5+1) and Iran. The response from the

European Union to Trump's action was to say he alone cannot eliminate the agreement and that the EU would uphold it. France and Germany in particular have their own interests in Iran, as they do in Syria and have long contended with the U.S. That this contention is heating up is evident in the EU response and their readiness to contend with Trump on the matter. As High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini said minutes after Trump said he would not certify Iran's compliance, "It is not a bilateral agreement, it does not belong to any single country and it is not up to any single country to terminate it." She added, "We cannot afford, as international community — as EU for sure — to dismantle a nuclear agreement that is working and delivering, especially now."

In attempting to justify his actions, Trump continued the U.S. approach of "you are with us or you are with the terrorists." This is notable in that it is the U.S. that determines who is and is not a terrorist. In his speech October 13 Trump said Iran "remains the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, and provides assistance to al Qaeda, the Taliban, Hezbollah, Hamas, and other terrorist networks." He added, "This regime has fueled sectarian violence in Iraq, and vicious civil wars in Yemen and Syria." In this manner, Iran is branded the terrorist while the U.S., the world's biggest terrorist with its drone attacks, assassinations, bombings and use of chemical weapons like white phosphorous and depleted uranium, is supposedly the world's protector.

As well organizations like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine are branded terrorist, while Israel, which with U.S. backing repeatedly carries out massacres and genocide, is not. Iran is blamed for wars in Yemen and Syria, when it is the U.S. that is responsible, including funding and arming terrorist groups in Syria. Trump is not concerned here with whether he is believed on these issues. Rather that the dictate of the U.S. deciding is accepted. All must submit, including the EU, to the U.S. deciding who is and is not terrorist or face the U.S. wrath, as is occurring with Iran and Korea.

Trump's actions also show that the U.S. has no solutions other than use of force. Diplomacy and political solutions are eliminated in a situation where rule of law has been eliminated and a government of police powers imposed. Police powers by definition are the arbitrary use of force with impunity against any and all who do not submit to U.S. dictate.

As the wars and U.S aggression have all shown, use of force is no solution and only further intensifies difficulties. For political solutions to prevail the people must advance their own independent politics and anti-war stands. Iran, for example, has called for a nuclear-free Middle East and supports the recent UN treaty banning nuclear weapons and criminalizing having them and using them. Let all join Iran in supporting a nuclear-free Middle East! Let all also join effort to organize for an anti-war government in the U.S. and a political process that opens the way for an anti-war government. Diplomacy and political solutions are needed and it is the people's own organizing efforts that are



EU's Mogherini: No Country Able to Terminate Iran Deal

Islamic Republic News Agency

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini made the remarks Friday minutes after the US President Donald Trump outlined new strategy of his administration towards Iran and its policies in the region after months of rhetoric against the Iran Nuclear Deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Reacting to Trump's announcement, Mogherini said, "It is not a bilateral agreement, it does not belong to any single country and it is not up to any single country to terminate it," European External Action Service (EEAS) website reported.

"More than 2 years ago, in July 2015, the international community welcomed the result of 12 years of intense negotiations

on the Iranian nuclear program: 104 pages, full of technical details, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the JCPOA.

"It is a multilateral agreement that was unanimously endorsed by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. It is a robust deal that provides guarantees and a strong monitoring mechanism that Iran nuclear program is and will remain exclusively for civilian purposes only.

"We cannot afford, as international community – as EU for sure — to dismantle a nuclear agreement that is working and delivering, especially now. The International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA, has verified 8 times that Iran is implementing all its nuclear-related commitments following a comprehensive and strict monitoring system.

"We believe we have a collective

responsibility to preserve it for our own collective security.

"The United States' domestic process – and I underline domestic – following today's announcement of President Trump is now in the hands of the United States' Congress. The JCPOA is not a domestic issue but a United Nations Security Council Resolution.

"The international community, and the European Union with it, has clearly indicated that the deal is and will continue to be in place. The European Union continues to fully support the Iran nuclear deal, and the full and strict implementation of all its provisions by all parties.

"The European Union, together with the rest of the international community, is committed to preserve it, to the benefit of all, including the Iranian people."

IRAN

Trump Has No Strategy, Only a Wish List and No Way to Achieve It

Moon of Alabama

Trump hates the international nuclear deal with Iran. The agreement put temporary restrictions on Iran's nuclear program and opened it up to deeper inspections. The other sides of the deal committed to lifting sanctions and to further economic cooperation. Trump wants to get rid of the deal; but he is unwilling to pay the political price.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was negotiated and signed by the five permanent UN Security Council members (U.S., China, Russia, Britain, France) plus Germany and Iran. If the U.S. defaults on the deal it will be in a lone position. The diplomatic isolation would limit its abilities to use its influence on other issues.

Trump has little knowledge of Iran, the nuclear deal, the Middle East or anything else. What he knows comes from Fox News and from Netanyahu and other Zionist whisperers who get to his ear. All he heard is that the deal with Iran is bad. Therefore, he concluded, it must end.

The White House handed a paper to

the media which is supposed to describe President Donald J. Trump's New Strategy on Iran. But there is no strategy in that paper. It lists a number of goals Trump wants to achieve. But it does not explain how he plans to do that. It is a wish list, not a program to follow.

The "Core Elements of the Presidents New Iran Strategy" are:

- The United States new Iran strategy focuses on neutralizing the Government of Iran's destabilizing influence and constraining its aggression, particularly its support for terrorism and militants.

- We will revitalize our traditional alliances and regional partnerships as bulwarks against Iranian subversion and restore a more stable balance of power in the region.

- We will work to deny the Iranian regime and especially the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) funding for its malign activities, and oppose IRGC activities that extort the wealth of the Iranian people.

- We will counter threats to the United

States and our allies from ballistic missiles and other asymmetric weapons.

- We will rally the international community to condemn the IRGC's gross violations of human rights and its unjust detention of American citizens and other foreigners on specious charges.

- Most importantly, we will deny the Iranian regime all paths to a nuclear weapon.

The list is full of factual mistakes:

Iran stabilized Iraq when the Islamic State was only days away from taking over Baghdad. Iran also helps to stabilize Syria and to defeat the Islamic State.

Ballistic missiles are not "asymmetric weapons." Iran's neighbors Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have such missiles. Iran's missiles are no threat to the United States.

The IRGC is the equivalent of the U.S. Special Forces. It is funded by the state. It does not "extort the wealth of the Iranian people." (The IRGC's pension funds hold significant industrial assets. But they are

Trump Has No Strategy • 14

Iran's Rouhani: Any Action Against Nuclear Agreement Would Undermine Global Peace

Press TV, October 14, 2017

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has warned that any action against the historic nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 [U.S., China, Russia, France, Britain plus Germany] group of countries — known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — would undermine regional and international security and stability.

“Harming the JCPOA is [tantamount to] harming the security and stability of the region and the world,” Rouhani said during a Saturday meeting with the Swiss ambassador to Tehran, Markus Leitner, who submitted his credentials to the Iranian president.

He said “breaking the negotiation table in no skill” and expressed hope that the European Union would block “erroneous moves” aimed at disturbing international peace and cooperation. “Today, we are in a very sensitive and important situation and this critical situation does not concern only Iran and the P5+1 countries,” he said.

He added that the consequences of the ongoing sensitive situation would affect the entire region and the world, saying, “The JCPOA has brought more peace to the region and the world.”

The Iranian president stressed the importance of resolving international conflicts through dialogue.

Iran has cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and is determined to continue such cooperation, he further said.

Rouhani reaffirmed the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear activities and emphasized that Tehran would not violate the JCPOA so long as the other signatories to the deal remained committed to their obligations.

The Swiss ambassador, for his part, said his country supports the landmark nuclear deal and urged all sides to fully implement their commitments under the JCPOA.

The Iranian president's remarks came a day after U.S. President Donald Trump refused to certify the 2015 international

nuclear agreement and warned he might ultimately terminate it, in defiance of other world powers and undermining a landmark victory of multilateral diplomacy.

Trump said he chose not to certify that Tehran was complying with the JCPOA and added that his goal was to ensure Iran would never obtain a nuclear weapon.

While the U.S. president did not pull Washington out of the nuclear deal, he gave Congress 60 days to decide whether to re-impose economic sanctions against Tehran that were lifted under the pact. Rolling back sanctions would put the US at odds with other signatories to the accord and the European Union.

JCPOA proves effectiveness of dialogue in crisis settlement

In a meeting with the Greek ambassador to Tehran, Dimitri Alexandrakis, Rouhani said the European Union (EU) countries have played a constructive role in implementing the JCPOA.

“The JCPOA has proved that dialogue and cooperation are the best way to solve international differences and they are in the interest of the international community, including Europe and the United States,” the Iranian president added.

The Greek ambassador, who submitted his credentials to the Iranian president, said all parties to the international nuclear accord must implement it.

It is imperative that any side refraining from fulfilling its commitments be explicitly told that they are making a mistake, Alexandrakis said.

Shortly after Trump officially announced that he would not certify the JCPOA, European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said the U.S. president was not in a position to terminate Iran's nuclear deal with world powers.

“To my knowledge there is not one single country in the world that can terminate a UN Security Council resolution that has been adopted, and adopted unanimously, and implemented, and verified,” she said.

EU should safeguard JCPOA, use chance of cooperation

The Iranian president also on Saturday said the JCPOA had opened doors to negotiations on various regional and international issues. He made the remarks in a meeting with the new ambassador of Norway to Tehran, Lars Nordrum, who submitted his credentials to the Iranian president.

Rouhani expressed hope that all member countries of the EU, including Norway, would play their constructive role in safeguarding the JCPOA and making use of the opportunities created after implementation of the deal to boost cooperation.

Nordrum, for his part, said many Norwegian companies believed that the nuclear deal had created great opportunities to enhance cooperation with Iran. He added that his country supported full implementation of the JCPOA and called on all sides to remain committed to their promises under the deal.

Meanwhile, in a meeting with the new ambassador of the Czech Republic to Tehran, Svatopluk Cumba, the Iranian president said the JCPOA had created a better atmosphere for cooperation between Iran and European countries.

“We believe that the nuclear agreement contributes to sustainable peace, security and stability in the region and across the world,” Rouhani added. The Czech diplomat, for his part, said issues would be settled only through negotiations and mutual respect.

Trump's threat to terminate the nuclear deal comes as the U.S. has a history of quitting international pacts and organizations. This is not the first time that the international community witnesses efforts by the Trump administration to renege on a multilateral agreement. Trump withdrew the US from the Paris Climate Agreement in June and has ordered the U.S. to withdraw from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) next year.

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situation on the ground and the other kinds of actions taken by people who obviously realize that there is racism at play and the federal government is out of town.

Judith Berkan: In some ways it has gotten a little worse than when we spoke last week. The electrical power, which was beginning to come on at a very slow rate, has now basically collapsed again. Virtually no one has power.

The other thing that has changed is that we are beginning to see in concrete ways a public health crisis developing. We have four confirmed cases of Leptospirosis, a rat urine-borne disease you get from being exposed to water or mud and which must be treated very early or it is fatal. About seven other cases have been identified in four island towns. We also have mosquito-borne diseases and stagnant waters are breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

We are experiencing major problems with our hospitals. A lot of them no longer have electrical power. Everything we anticipated happening is beginning to happen. People cannot get fresh food. Asthma and other respiratory diseases are rampant. People are dying in nursery homes with limited access to power. They are rationing dialysis at most hospitals.

Apparently there is some kind of official narrative being heard in the United States that things are vastly improved, that the federal and state response has been good. This is not at all the case. The long-term

effects of this storm are going to be worse than the storm itself. It is a lot worse in the countryside than it is here in San Juan, and it has been from the beginning. About half the island now has water, but the water is unsafe for drinking. Health officials are telling people to boil the water before drinking it, but no one has electricity!

There is no strategic planning and there is a sense of total chaos in coordination of services, whether it is the Red Cross or FEMA or the Coast Guard. Nobody seems to know who is supposed to do what. It is a devastating situation and I believe it is going to get worse before it gets better. Right now the official death count is 44 and there are 113 people still missing. There has been a spike in suicides. The situation is dire, people are suffering.

Dennis Bernstein: On the island of Vieques, people are concerned that toxins there are being scattered around by the storms.

Judith Berkan: Yes, on the offshore islands the situation is even worse. In 1942 and 1943 the US expropriated the islands and continued to bomb Vieques until 2003. There is so much toxic material still in the ground water and one of the problems with the lack of sanitation is that the toxins tend to propagate.

Another issue is that we have had extraordinarily heavy rains in the last three days, which has caused flooding because the



waterways are full of debris. There hasn't been a cleanup since Irma.

Dennis Bernstein: For a brief moment there seemed to be some hope with the suspension of the *Jones Act*.

Judith Berkan: The *Jones Act* was a 1920's statute that was passed largely to benefit the US shipping industry. What it says is that, if you are going to ship anything from US ports to Puerto Rico, you have to do it on US flag ships staffed by US crews. This makes everything much more expensive in Puerto Rico. There are some relief groups in the States who made contact with foreign flagged ships to send supplies down here but cannot anymore.

Today it was reported that Trump has proposed to Congress a \$4.9 billion loan to Puerto Rico. This is quite remarkable because Puerto Rico is in a desperate situation with our debt and all we need now is to get more into debt! [...]

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different entities.)

The IRGC does not detain American citizens.

Iran has repeatedly declared that it rejects all nuclear weapons out of religious reasons. It signed several international agreements that prohibit and prevent it from seeking such weapons.

The White House list, "the strategy," is followed by "background" information on Iran and its alleged behavior. Some White House intern must have copied it from a neoconservative version of Wikipedia. It is a conglomeration of general talking points that lack a factual basis.

When the JCOPA deal was closed, Congress legislated that the White House must certify every 90 days that Iran sticks to the deal. Trump will now stop certifying Iran's compliance even as everyone, including the White House, acknowledges that Iran is fulfilling all its parts. The White House claims that non-certification is not a breach of the agreement. The issue now falls back to Congress, which might re-introduce the sanctions on Iran that the agreement had lifted. If it does that Trump will say that Congress is responsible for all consequences.

It is not clear if or what Congress will do. Senators Corker and Cotton are pushing for legislation that amounts to a unilateral change of the nuclear deal. It would introduce new sanctions if Iran does not accept their demands. Trump seems to support that.

But it is not going to work. It is a unilateral breach of the contract and no other country involved in the deal will support it. Trump may introduce new economic sanctions on Iran but why would Iran care? Unless all other countries follow Trump's lead, it can simply buy and sell elsewhere. [...]



I • BUFFALO JOINS ANTI-WAR ACTIONS

no problem. The many actions stood with the peoples worldwide in resisting U.S. aggression and calling for political solutions, without use of force.

When Trump took office, the U.S. bombed Afghanistan with the largest non-nuclear bomb ever used. Now again more troops and Special Forces are being sent

in and more bombings unleashed.

Military might is not the solution. Ending the wars contributes to peace, as demonstrators in city after city demanded, representing the anti-war stand of the majority of people, here and abroad.

In Buffalo, a firm stand was also taken against war on Korea and to Fund

Hurricane Relief, Not War! Those passing by expressed their support, as did the cars that honked. There was appreciation for the demands raised and the public expression of the call for an anti-war government, which is a pro-worker government

Not a Dollar More for War!

Bring All U.S. Troops Home Now!

NATIONAL DAYS OF ACTION AGAINST U.S. WARS: BUFFALO

