

Puerto Rico: A Public Health Catastrophe

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

Global Research, October 03, 2017

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)
Theme: [Media Disinformation, Police State & Civil Rights, Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

VISIT MY NEW WEB SITE:

stephenlendman.org

([Home - Stephen Lendman](#)).

Contact at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

Acting Homeland Security **Secretary Elaine Duke** deplorably called the federal response to crisis conditions in Puerto Rico a “good news story,” adding she’s “very satisfied.”

San Juan **Mayor Yulin Cruz** emotionally responded, saying

“(w)ell, maybe from where she’s standing it’s a good-news story.”

“When you’re drinking from a creek, it’s not a good-news story. When you don’t have food for a baby, it’s not a good-news story.”

“When you have to pull people down from their buildings – I’m sorry, but that really upsets and frustrates me.”

“I would ask her to come down here and visit the towns and then make a statement like that, which frankly is an irresponsible statement and contrast with the statements of support that I have been getting since yesterday when I got that call from the White House.”

Cruz continued adding



Source: [Blunt Force Truth](#)

“(d)ammit, this is not a good-news story. This is a people-are-dying story. This is a life-or-death story.”

“This is ‘there’s a truckload of stuff that cannot be taken to people’ story. This is a story of devastation that continues to worsen because people are not getting food or water.”

“If I could scream it a lot more louder: It is not a good-news story when people are dying when they don’t have dialysis, when their generators aren’t working and their oxygen isn’t providing for them.”

“Where is there good news here? The good news is we’re getting heard. For heaven’s sake, somebody let them do their job. Let them get the food and water into the hands of people, and then we can talk about good news.”

Washington knows what to do.

“For heaven’s sake,” start doing it, Cruz stressed. “(W)hen you have people dying literally, scraping for food, where is the good news?”

Thousands remain in temporary shelters, many others stranded in the wreckage of their residences. Around 80% of Puerto Rican agriculture was destroyed. Nearly all power transmission lines were knocked out, over 95% of the island still without power, continuing for many months in isolated areas.

Around half the population has no access to drinking water. Hospitals can’t function normally, struggling to keep seriously ill patients alive. Many thousands of jobs were lost for impoverished islanders, many working in agriculture.

According to Agricultural Economics Professor Jayson Harper, Hurricane Maria destroyed high value crops. Some will take years to replace, he explained.

The coffee industry was hit at the worst time, just before beans are harvested, the crop largely destroyed.

Supplies delivered to ports are stuck in docks for lack of transportation. Nearly two weeks ago, the strongest hurricane in nearly 90 years devastated the Island, creating crisis conditions for its 3.4 million residents.

On Monday, Florida International University Dean [Tomas Guilarte](#) said conditions in Puerto Rico continue deteriorating. A public health catastrophe looms.

“When the sewer system stops working, wastewater – aka human feces and urine – and seaborne bacteria contaminate the water supply.”

“This leads to bacterial infections – such as cholera, dysentery, E. coli and typhoid – that can be disastrous. The typical treatments, like tetanus shots or powerful antibiotics, are not readily available on the island, where medical supplies are quickly running out.”

According to FEMA, 58 of the island’s 69 hospitals have no power or fuel for generators. Only one is operating normally. Water can’t be boiled to kill bacteria. Some toxins become concentrated by the boiling process.

It kills harmful organisms, not toxic chemicals, compounds, salts, and heavy metals.

Disease-causing pathogens contaminated areas affected by floodwaters.

Toxicity seeping from Puerto Rico's Battery Recycling Company in the Arecibo coastal area alone "could be off the charts," said Guilarte.

Immediate congressional action is vital, appropriating enough funds for food, medical supplies and medicines, along with other essentials to life.

Most islanders are impoverished. Residents evacuated by government aircraft and other means of transportation have to sign promissory notes to repay the cost, a disgraceful situation.

Public health and welfare are essential human rights. Trump disgracefully lied, tweeting

"(w)e have done a great job with the impossible situation in Puerto Rico."

Islanders are suffering under devastating conditions. The Trump administration failed to go all-out to help.

It serves privileged Americans exclusively, disdainful of others - notably millions of Puerto Ricans, Floridians and Texans devastated by hurricane damage, largely on their own to cope.

VISIT MY NEW WEB SITE: stephenlendman.org ([Home - Stephen Lendman](http://stephenlendman.org)). Contact at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

My newest book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html>

Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network.

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Stephen Lendman](http://stephenlendman.org), Global Research, 2017

[**Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page**](#)

[**Become a Member of Global Research**](#)

Articles by: [**Stephen Lendman**](#)

About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine:

US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html> Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca