

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 25th Session

Agenda item #3 - Discussion on the theme "Ensuring Indigenous Peoples' Health, including in the context of conflict"

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Hahom, Madame Chair

Environmental Violence is a violation to human rights, including our human rights to health and water. Indigenous Peoples in colonial situations, including those in incorporated and unincorporated territories face unique circumstances that need to be addressed. .

For example, adverse health consequences as a result of the colonial relationship between the United States and the archipelago of Boriken, also known as Puerto Rico, has continued for 128 years.

Past military activities on our island municipalities left these islands with military waste that has been tied to high cancer rates. The current U.S military operations on and around Borikén as well as a mountain of toxic coal ashes are also a cause for great concern. Health defenders were criminalized. community members living close to the plant or near landfills face high rates of cancer, respiratory illnesses with very little action by the local government as well as local and federal agencies.

Under the pretense of Economic Development, and by processes that are being manipulated, what was designated as Protected Areas, are being reclassified as urban area, and passed onto private interests and corporations. The accelerated expedition of permits increases the risk to our already fragile environment; land and coastal degradation; the use of pesticides and leachates that impact our flora, fauna, marine life and human health. This is juxtaposed with our vulnerable economic conditions, livelihood and sustenance. The lack of respect to our ancestors sacred spaces contributes to the physical and spiritual aggressions against our well being, and against our health.

Finally, while Proyecto Esencia in the town of Cabo Rojo, its not the only one, it is exemplary of how our already troubled water system and access is at risk and will sacrifice the health and needs of the nearby communities, in order to accommodate the wealthy and their luxurious living. Our situation is a result of colonialism. There are many other Indigenous Peoples around the world facing similar issues because of their colonial situations.

We there recommend that:

- 1) The Forum conduct a study on the health of Indigenous Peoples in colonial situations including those of incorporated and unincorporated territories.

Hahom.