U.S. Out of Puerto Rico! Make Our Americas a Zone of Peace!

Off the southern coast of Puerto Rico, U.S. Navy sailors and Marines rehearse tomorrow's invasions and destabilizing missions. Nearby, a fleet of fighter jets, surveillance aircraft, and reaper drones are deployed across a chain of U.S. military installations occupying more than 78,000 acres across the archipelago. These maneuvers are made possible by the total subversion of Puerto Rico's national sovereignty and nearly 130 years of covert operations and open warfare against the independence movement seeking to liberate the nation from U.S. colonial rule.

Today, Puerto Rico remains occupied by armed forces, financial institutions, and political parties aligned with U.S. objectives in the Western Hemisphere and abroad. What does this mean for working class Puerto Ricans?

- Chronic blackouts, steep increases in the cost of electricity, and an electrical grid under private ownership by the U.S.-Canadian corporation, LUMA Energy;
- Water shortages and rationing due to the neglect and mismanagement of public infrastructure;
- Disappearing access to affordable housing, dignified work, university education, and medical care;
- Deforestation and displacement for luxury tourism;
- Budget cuts, staff layoffs, and other austerity measures imposed by an unelected Fiscal Control Board under the authority of the United States Congress;
- The use of our land, water, and airspace by the U.S. military to wage war across the Americas.

The crisis in Puerto Rico is a crisis of imperialism, a process which has driven millions of Puerto Ricans from our homeland. The Diaspora Pa'lante Collective recognizes the urgent need for a popular response to this crisis.

Puerto Rico: “An Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier”

Puerto Rico’s land and waters have long been exploited by the U.S. military to further its agenda across the world, serving as a training and staging ground to launch armed interventions into Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Panama, and elsewhere across the Americas.

In the midst of the Second World War, the Pentagon seized nearly eighty percent of the island of Vieques to use as a practice range for war exercises and weapons testing. Occupied by the U.S. Navy for more than sixty years, the island was systematically subjected to what Puerto Rican psychologist Monisha Ríos describes as “the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations of exploding bombs, gunfire, deployment of chemical weapons, aerial attacks, and ship-to-shore bombardment.”

While the courageous people of Vieques successfully evicted the Navy in 2003, the toxic legacy of its presence has left Viequenses with elevated rates of cancer and unexploded ordnance scattered throughout the island. Today, opposition to the remilitarization of the archipelago is growing, citing noise pollution, sexual violence, and other factors which accompany the presence of the U.S. military around the world.

Defining and Building Peace

The Black Radical Peace Tradition reminds us that **peace is not the absence of conflict, but the achievement by popular struggle and self-defense of a world liberated from the interlocking systems of imperialism, colonialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy.** Our vision of a Zone of Peace draws on the vision of Ramón Emeterio Betances, Jose Martí, and Maurice Bishop, a vision reaffirmed at the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in Havana, Cuba.

But the realization of a just future for humanity relies not on the desires and prescriptions of charismatic leaders, nor on state-centered approaches which leave the masses of people as spectators. The work of building, growing, and defending a Zone of Peace in Puerto Rico must be undertaken by the broadest sectors of our people on all sides of our divided nation, our vast creative energy channeled toward decolonization, demilitarization, and the liberation of our nation from all that burdens and disrupts our survival and development.

This initiative localizes the regional campaign launched in 2023 by the Black Alliance for Peace and organizations throughout the Americas to demilitarize our hemisphere. Given the expansive reach of the structures upholding the militarization of our region, our resistance must take root across the entirety of Our Americas. From Canada to Chile, Our Americas must be respected as a Zone of Peace, with alternative institutions and centers of power shaped by and for the masses of people.

For the Puerto Rican diaspora, our historic mission is to organize our people to achieve the withdrawal of the United States, and to defeat fascism within its claimed borders.

- In the U.S. and Puerto Rico, immigration enforcement relies on the systematic violation of human rights;
- Across the U.S., law enforcement agencies participate in training and intelligence exchanges with the Israeli occupation, sharing methods and tactics to subdue popular resistance;
- The concentration of political and economic power into fewer and fewer hands (enforced by surveillance, control, and pacification) defines the shared trajectory of all oppressed and exploited people in the U.S. and abroad.

For peace to triumph over the profitability of permanent war, the institutions and structures of power responsible for this violence must be identified and expelled from our region.

The Path Forward

For Puerto Rico, the path toward peace begins with independence and self-determination: the immediate end of our status as a colony of the United States, including the removal of U.S. military bases, infrastructure, and personnel from the archipelago.

All agencies and industries committing violence within and against our communities must be removed from our neighborhoods, schools, and public institutions, including military recruiters and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Our economies must divest from war profiteering, including any and all financial support for the state of Israel; the discontinuation of partnerships between universities and corporations producing weapons and other technologies of war; and the elimination of the U.S. War Department's 1033 Program, which equips local police departments with military-grade weaponry.

Across the world, the rising cost of living and the deterioration of public goods and services are impediments to living in peace and with dignity. The Fiscal Control Board, an unelected body which has seized Puerto Rico's economy under the authority of the U.S. Congress, must be abolished. For more than ten years, this board has introduced and enforced austerity measures that diminish our quality of life and reward the theft of our public resources. The fruits of our labor and the collective wealth of our nation must be allocated toward the needs of our people.

Our task is to establish a comprehensive strategy developed and anchored by organizations and movements led by workers, women, youth, and the diversity of social and political forces opposing imperialist war and the destruction of our planet. This campaign is grounded in the active participation of the masses of people to guide this collective process and bring this vision to life. Together, and only together, can we build, grow, and defend a Zone of Peace, where the principles of national sovereignty, equal rights, and the self-determination of peoples are observed.

Through grassroots organizing, political education, and direct action, we resolve to fight for our right to peace.