

## **STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD BEFORE THE NATURAL RESOURCES HEARINGS OF THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Thursday, May 2, 2019  
Washington, D.C.

Once again, we come before you to ask that you do away with the PROMESA Act and the Puerto Rico Fiscal Oversight and Management Board. With the passing of the Act and the resulting establishment of the Board, a crime against humanity is being waged against Puerto Ricans. The only acceptable remedy is for the PROMESA Act and the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board to be repealed and done away with. Congress must provide a mechanism for bankruptcy independent of the PROMESA Act. Members of the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board are federal officials; as such, Puerto Rico is not responsible for paying their expenses. The US must return to the people of Puerto Rico the money paid illegally for the Board's expenses.

As we told this Committee during the public hearings in San Juan on March 15, the imposition of the PROMESA Act and the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board is an act of imperial power being exerted on a country that was invaded, occupied, and colonized in 1898. Puerto Rico is a colony dragged into bankruptcy which the administering power intends to subjugate and exploit in perpetuity for the continued benefit of its enterprises and financial interests.

The bankruptcy of the colony, for which Congress wants to lay sole blame on Puerto Ricans, was provoked and induced. The corrupt insular administrations to which you turn a blind eye are nothing more than the Congress' taskmasters in the colony. Their criminal actions and the ensuing consequences fall squarely on the shoulders of Congress, which deals the final blow through austerity measures designed to impoverish the colony and make it even more dependent. Its plan is and has always been maintaining a permanent colony. The PROMESA Act and the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board are just its latest tool for perpetuating the colonial status.

The United States' colonial power over Puerto Rico has resulted in five main outcomes:

- You destroyed our diverse agriculture to impose one that benefits you.
- You destroyed local enterprises through unfair competition, monopoly, and market control.
- You polluted and depleted our natural resources through destructive military and industrial activities.
- You tried to strip us of our language, culture, and history.

- You criminalized all attempts at resistance and rebellion against colonialism by torturing and assassinating our leaders through incarceration and disproportionate sentences.

PROMESA represents:

- the dismantling of the public education system with the closing and privatization of schools;
- the ripping apart the University of Puerto Rico to suppress the main source of academics and professionals at the service of the country;
- the stripping of acquired labor rights to impoverish and repress the working class;
- the reduction of the retirement pensions of workers to make them more vulnerable;
- the criminalization of protests by workers and students in order to get rid of them;
- the mortgaging of the country over the next forty years to pay off the bondholders and COFINA's vulture funds; and
- the imposition of a toxic labor environment characterized by despair and massive emigration.

Such is the legacy of colonialism, the PROMESA Act, and the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board.

PROMESA PROMISES NOTHING BUT POVERTY. If you think that you are helping the people of Puerto Rico tackle the fiscal crisis, THINK AGAIN. This is a humanitarian disaster. The PROMESA Act and the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board must be eliminated.

Members of Congress, colonialism is a crime against humanity. With every passing second that Puerto Rico is subjected to the indignity and inhumanity of the colonial condition, the United States is committing a crime against humanity. You, who have usurped our sovereignty, who deny us our right to our nationality, are accomplices to this crime. You are humanly, legally, morally, and ethically responsible for stopping this crime waged against the people of Puerto Rico. Step up.

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