

Puerto Ricans Are Still Without Food, Water, and Power One Month After Hurricane Maria



RICARDO ARDUENGO/AFP /Getty Images

Puerto Rico was hit by Hurricane Maria nearly a month ago, but recovery from the Category 5 storm is just beginning.

“People are dying in this country,” San Juan Mayor, Carmen Yulín Cruz Soto, pointed out on September 30 — prior to President Trump’s visit two weeks after the disaster. “I am begging, begging anyone that can hear us, to save us from dying. If anybody out there is listening to us, we are dying, and you are killing us with the inefficiency and the bureaucracy.”

There’s no food and no water

According to a news release published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), water safety in Puerto Rico is critical. All water, whether it’s being used for drinking, bathing, or brushing teeth, must still be boiled before use, as livestock waste, human sewage, and chemicals may have contaminated all major water supplies.

And many Puerto Ricans are relying on rations for food. Manuel Reyes, the vice president of Puerto Rico’s chamber of marketing, industry, and distribution of food told a local CNN affiliate that “resupplying [the food supply chain will] take some time.”

Until then, many grocery store shelves will remain barren.

Everyone’s living without power

Hurricane Maria knocked out all of Puerto Rico’s electric grid — and since then, not much has changed. Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló announced on Sunday, October 15 that he plans to restore power to 95 percent of the island by

December 15.

“This is an aggressive agenda, but we cannot be sort of passive in the face of Puerto Rico’s challenges,” Rosselló told CNN. “We are going to need all hands on deck.”

Some estimates suggest Puerto Ricans may still be without power in five or six months.

Generators are running on empty

According to *Vox*, leaving the island is almost impossible, with some airlines reporting waiting lists of more than 20,000 people. In most areas, private generators are the only power source, but fuel shortages mean they may not be running for much longer.

Even hospitals are affected. No generators mean patients with life sustaining devices like dialysis machines won’t be able to get the treatment they need. Miami-born performer, Pitbull, was so moved by the situation that he recently lent his private jet to to Puerto Rico to help evacuate Puerto Rican cancer patients to Fort Lauderdale, so they can resume treatment.

People can’t communicate

The restoration of cell service continues to be a slow process. On October 6, the FCC reported that 83 percent of Puerto Rico’s cell sites are still not working. “It is critical that we adopt a coordinated and comprehensive approach to support the rebuilding of communications infrastructure and restoration of communications services,” said U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman, Ajit Pai, when he announced his plan to create a Hurricane Recovery Task Force.

Google’s parent company, Alphabet, also has a plan to bring back service through giant floating balloons. Called “Project Loon,” the experimental effort will supposedly provide a network to the 3.4 million residents stranded in the area. The balloons are able to remain airborne for 100 days or more. It’s unclear exactly when the devices will arrive at the Caribbean island, but the FCC allowed Alphabet to drop 30 of them on October 7.

But people are coming together

On Saturday, October 14, celebrities including Jennifer Lopez, Demi Lovato, Gwen Stefani, and others came together for the One Voice: Somos Live, a hurricane relief concert that raised \$20 million. Even more impressive, a junior college student at Carnegie Mellon University crowdfunded more than \$82,000 to fill up a plane with supplies and deliver it to Puerto Ricans in need.

Source: <http://www.travelandleisure.com/travel-tips/weather/puerto-rico-hurricane-maria-aftermath-update>

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