

Dizzying glimpse of gloom in Puerto Rico

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By Roberto Morejón

In a whirlwind visit, U.S. President Joseph Biden promised to manage aid to Puerto Rico, afflicted by the damage caused a fortnight ago by Hurricane Fiona, five years after the scourge of another of those phenomena, Hurricane Maria.

Before a stay of only three hours in which the president proposed to collect reports of the deterioration caused by both hurricanes, Puerto Ricans asked if in such a short period of time it was possible to transfer the magnitude of the hardships.

The islanders expressed irritation for the damages not compensated by hurricanes Fiona and Maria, the first one with category 1 and the last one with rank four.

Two weeks after Fiona's impact, more than 101,000 electric service customers were still in the dark and more than 26,000 without water, enough reasons for the popular outcry.

After Fiona, there was a generalized feeling of discontent with the support of the United States, the governing power of the Commonwealth.

Many Puerto Ricans also blame the delays in recovering from the hurricanes on the island's state apparatus, noted for its bureaucracy and ineptitude.

In addition, a study revealed that FEMA, the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, mismanaged a budget of up to \$65 million earmarked for disasters and implemented in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017.

The revelation is part of a context in which progressive politicians and union and social activists denounce what they call the deterioration and obsolescence of the electric power infrastructure, as a result of the lack of priorities of local governments.

These authorities allocate resources only in the short term for works that benefit the island for electoral purposes, and once these phases are over, nobody remembers to continue them.

In Puerto Rico, many remember that the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority took about 11 months to restore the supply of that energy to all its customers after the catastrophe of Maria in 2017.

When the so-called Island of Enchantment is still mired in the misfortunes left by Maria and now aggravated by Fiona, the lack of a medium- and long-term schedule for reconstruction comes to the fore.

To make matters worse, the promises of aid from the federal government have never arrived, hence the skepticism that now prevails after Biden's offers.

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