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Puerto Rico

Solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico

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We express our solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico in their struggle against the corrupt government of Governor Ricardo Rosselló. Friday [19 July] marked seven days of massive protests demanding the resignation of the governor and his associates. Despite tear gas attacks, rubber bullets, beatings and police arrests, the protests have grown in the capital San Juan and have spread to all corners of the island. On Wednesday, 17 July more than 350,000 people marched through the streets of the capital, an unprecedented rally.

The protests began after accusations and arrests of several heads of government agencies in the Rossello administration, including former Education Secretary Julia Keleher. Keleher, in addition to awarding contracts to his relatives, was distinguished by implementing the policy of privatization of the public education system and the closure of more than 400 schools. Teachers' organizations and affected communities have been fighting these policies since 2017. Now the whole town joins the denunciation of Keleher and what it represents, neoliberalism and its sister corruption...

In addition to the accusations against Keleher and other government officials, there was the publication of a chat in which Governor Rosselló, officials of his administration and some close associates shared their comments. The more than 800 pages published reveal or suggest a large number of crimes such as obstructing justice, firing people for political reasons, giving "lessons" to opposition leaders such as Manuel Natal of the Movimiento Victoria Ciudadana, using public funds for private purposes. But, above all, the chat exposes the sexist, homophobic and racist attitudes of the participants. It is a living portrait of the mentality of a privileged class that governs the country as its former private estate, with total disdain for the population, although they publicly present themselves as the opposite. In the chat, the death of government critics, the corpses stored after Hurricane Maria and the grassroots activists of the same government party were mocked.

The people of Puerto Rico have decided that such a person can no longer be governor and have been demanding his resignation for the past week.

We know that Rossello is only part of the problem. Puerto Rico is experiencing an economic crisis that has already lasted a decade. Twenty per cent of the jobs that existed in 2007 have been lost. The economic crisis has resulted in a public debt crisis of \$70 billion. To pay it, a Fiscal Control Board imposed by the U.S. Congress is enacting austerity measures that impoverish the country and prolong the crisis. That is why the call for resignation is accompanied by the rejection of the Board and the demand for an audit of the debt. We do not doubt that the victory against Rossello will lay the best foundations to continue the struggle in those areas.

We express our admiration for the persistent struggle of the people of Puerto Rico, an example for the struggles of the world. We demand the release of those arrested or accused as a result of participating in this resistance. We join the call for the immediate resignation of Governor Ricardo Roselló.

22 July 2019

Signed by:

Guillermo Almeyra

Solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico

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