

**TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE
INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS,
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES**

**Petitioners' Merits Brief
Case NO. 14.962
Zaida Torres and others, United States of America**

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Table of Contents:

<i>I. Introduction: Factual Background</i>	3
A. Exposure to toxic chemicals have caused alarming rates of cancer and chronic illnesses affecting the life, health and well-being of Vieques' residents	4
<i>II. Supervening Events showing aggravating circumstances and emergent new human rights violations</i>	5
A. The Expansion of Military Operations in Puerto Rico and a New Authorization to use of Vieques as a Military Dumping Site	5
B. Military contamination and the absence of measures to address its long-term effects on the health and life of Vieques' residents	7
C. Petitioners: Changes in circumstances and continuing human rights violations	9
<i>III. United States violations to its obligations under the American Declaration of Human Rights</i>	14
<i>IV. Conclusion</i>	14
<i>V. Evidence</i>	15

I. Introduction: Factual Background

As indicated in our initial petition, for over 60 years the US Department of Defense (DoD) maintained a training base in the municipality island of Vieques, Puerto Rico. The base was primarily used by the US Navy as a training ground, firing range and ammunition storage. The island, which is only 4.5 miles wide by 20 miles long, in 1941 had a little over 10 thousand residents. The native population was forcibly displaced, abused and exposed to massive amounts of chemicals and toxic waste. Thousands have died from rare forms of cancer, and chronic diseases directly related to the long-term and unsafe exposure to toxic materials. Petitioners in this case are native Viequenses, requesting full reparations for the unlawful exposure to toxic chemicals, their forced displacement, the absence of adequate remedies and the denial of their right of access to justice. The following paragraphs contain only a summary of the facts of the case. For a more complete description of the historical data giving rise to this claim, please see our initial petition.

Vieques is an island municipality of Puerto Rico, a colonial territory of the United States since 1898. In 1942-1943, and 1947, the US Navy forcefully occupied 75% of the land for the use of military practices, evacuating and displacing entire families of approximately 10 thousand residents at gunpoint. Residents were forced to relocate to the middle of the island or leave the island completely, losing their communities and the land they either owned (collectively or individually) or worked on. The western 8,000 acres comprised the Naval Ammunition Facility and was used primarily to store munitions. The weapons were sometimes transported by truck across the civilian sector to the Navy's training area. The 15,000 acres on the eastern coast were part of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Area (FWTF). The "Inner Range" of AFWTF was comprised of 10,800 acres, and was used for amphibian landings, light artillery practice, aerial and sea bombings with both live and inert munitions, and an area for combat training minefields.

For decades, the Navy fired ships and aircraft, dropped live bullets, artillery rounds, rockets, missiles, and bombs. Nearly five million pounds of ordinance was dropped in Vieques annually during the duration of military training activity. The Navy had permission to bomb 180 days a year and has admitted to exploding up to 20 bombs and shells a minute at times. The Navy ultimately tested over 300 million pounds of explosives weaponry on the island.

In numerous instances, the Navy repeatedly missed its target while bombing, dropping bombs nearby land and sea, in close proximity to civilian areas. Unexploded ordinance and bombs still lie in the land and surrounding waters. In 1999, an aircraft erroneously missed its target and dropped a 500 lb. bomb that killed David Sanes Rodriguez, a civilian employee of the Navy who worked as a security guard at the AFWTF.

After the killing of David Sanes, local and international opposition to military activities in the Vieques island grew exponentially. Even the local government expressed its opposition and

requested a temporary restraining order to halt the continuation of military activity in the island. Massive and concerted actions of civil disobedience resulted in the arrest of thousands of persons who risked their lives, entering the Navy's training area to interrupt the training exercises. In 2000, the Navy was granted approval to continue bombing in Vieques, with an understanding that all activities would cease as of May 1, 2003.

In 2004, the Government Accountability Office released a report stating that the Department of Defense may have exposed civilians and military personnel to biochemical agents for Shipboard Hazard and Defense ("SHAD"), which was part of Project 112, including trioctyl phosphate, an agent known to cause cancer in animals.¹ Significant evidence exists linking the Navy's activities to long-term damage to the health of residents and the island environment, yet the Navy continues to refuse to admit liability or to fully disclose its activities.

A. Exposure to toxic chemicals have caused alarming rates of cancer and chronic illnesses affecting the life, health and well-being of Vieques' residents

This case argues that the environmental contamination that resulted from sixty years of military bombing exercises exposed Vieques residents to toxic chemicals that have an intergenerational effect to their health, lives and well-being. There is no other plausible explanation for the amount of cancer and chronic health conditions affecting the residents of Vieques, as is evident from many studies conducted in the island. As was indicated in our initial petition:

The cancer rate in Vieques is almost 30% higher than the mainland of Puerto Rico. A study published by the Puerto Rico Health Department in 2000 analyzing the incidence of cancer from 1960 – 1994 found that 609 cases were diagnosed during that period, with breast and uterine cancer being the most frequent among women (20.9% and 20.5% respectively) and prostate cancer being most frequent among men (22.6%). Beginning in the late 1970s and 1980, the cancer rate in Vieques became 27% higher than the rest of Puerto Rico. From 1985 -1989, the risk of developing cancer for children up to nine years old was double the risk for children of the same age in the rest of Puerto Rico, while children from 10 to 19 years old had 3.5 times the risk of developing cancer. Between 1995 – 1998, Vieques had a 34% higher rate of cancer than mainland Puerto Rico. The Navy cannot dismiss the stark difference in cancer rates between the mainland and Vieques as purely coincidental. [references omitted].²

¹ GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, REPORT TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE COMMITTEES ON ARMED SERVICES, CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL DEFENSE, DOD NEEDS TO CONTINUE TO COLLECT AND PROVIDE INFORMATION ON TESTS AND POTENTIALLY EXPOSED PERSONNEL 9 (May 2004) ("In the 1962-74 time period, the Department of Defense (DOD) conducted a classified chemical and biological warfare test program—Project 112—that might have exposed service members and civilian personnel to chemical or biological agents.") See also Tim Padgett, *Toxic Chemicals at Vieques: Is U.S. Accountable?*, Time Magazine, (Sept. 16, 2009), available at <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1924101,00.html#ixzz2dNB1j1eI>.

² Initial Petition to the IACHR, at page 25.

Viequenses also suffer from other health conditions, most long-term or serious, at an elevated rate compared to the rest of the mainland of Puerto Rico, including hypertension rates, which is among the leading causes of deaths; heart-related diseases; respiratory illnesses, including asthma and other lung-related conditions; diabetes; cirrhosis and liver-related failure. Vieques also experienced higher infant mortality rates than the rest of Puerto Rico.³

Finally, numerous contaminants and heavy metals have been detected in hair samples obtained from thousands of residents in Vieques, including:

- Toxic levels of mercury;
- Toxic levels of lead contamination;
- Arsenic contamination;
- Cadmium contamination;
- Aluminium contamination; and,
- Antimony contamination

According to a study conducted by Dr. Carmen Ortiz Roque and Yadiris Lopez-Rivera, over 45% of all Viequenses have toxic levels of mercury, and women of reproductive age have been exposed to mercury levels that are unsafe to them and developing fetuses.⁴

There are many other harms related to the military activities by the US Navy in the island of Vieques, including the negative effects from exposure to loud noises, which includes structural and physical damage, ranging from cracked roofs and walls to severe emotional disturbance, affecting children in a particular way.

II. Supervening Events showing aggravating circumstances and emergent new human rights violations

A. The Expansion of Military Operations in Puerto Rico and a New Authorization to use of Vieques as a Military Dumping Site

In the year 2025, the US government increased its military presence in the Caribbean region. By early August, there were reports that the military presence was rapidly growing, with over 15,000 US Navy and Marine US troops being deployed to the region, along with high level equipment,

³ See: Initial Petition to the IACHR, at page 27.

⁴ Dr. Carmen Ortiz Roque and Yadiris Lopez-Rivera, *Mercury contamination in reproductive age women in a Caribbean island: Vieques* (“*Mercury contamination*”), J. EPIDEMIOL COMMUNITY HEALTH 2004; 58:756–757 (“Mercury is among the 102 violations to effluent water quality parameters committed by the US Navy in the coast of Vieques. No other source of mercury contamination has been identified in that island.”); An earlier 2001 study by the College of Physicians of Surgeons of Puerto Rico showed that 33% of Viequenses have unsafe levels of mercury in their bodies, and 56 % have unsafe levels of aluminum. Studies also show toxic levels of arsenic, cadmium and lead.

including guided-missile destroyers, combat helicopters and submarine assault vessels.⁵ This presence is heavily concentrated in Puerto Rico, with active military exercises taking place along the coastal areas of the archipelago. Between August and September, heavy military equipment, including F-35 fighter jets arrived in Puerto Rico and were stationed at a naval base Roosevelt Roads, in Ceiba, which was re-opened after decades of inactivity. This base is located at less than 16 miles (26 km) from the western side of the Vieques Island. The military warships and aircraft exercises are being launched in the area, producing fear on the local population, who now hear the rumbling noise of flying military jets at a low distance from their ceilings and feel the earth movements produced by the aircrafts and reaper drones (MQ-9). The US Navy and Marines also launched amphibious landing exercises and flight operations in other areas of the archipelago, particularly in the southern coast, impeding access to public beaches without prior public announcements, as was reported in the municipality of Arroyo.

All this military build-up is part of a unilaterally imposed U.S policy to reactivate Puerto Rico as a main military hub in the Caribbean and the Western Hemisphere. Military bases that were once shut down due to local opposition over the environmental and health effects from exposure to contaminants, are now being re-opened and heavily filled with artillery and warcraft hardware.⁶ While Puerto Rico's illegal colonial status impedes it from halting the use of its territory for military purposes, the US Government is expanding its military occupation of the land without prior consultation with the communities affected and in complete disregard of its international human rights obligations and the right to self-determination. It is unknown at this point when the military expansion will end, and more worrisome, what will be the compounded effects of these exercises on the environment and the health of the residents in the archipelago.

In the specific case of Vieques, the current context poses many questions. The U.S. Navy not only has failed to fully comply with the legally mandated cleanup process of the contaminated land in Vieques, but as part of the US military expansion in Puerto Rico, it is now authorizing the use of the island as a **military dumping ground**. According to local reports, since January 13, 2025, military personnel have been authorized to dump military waste (inoperable ammunition) in Vieques.⁷ This information was revealed by a local newspaper and not as an official announcement to the communities affected.⁸ When the news of this authorization came out, it revived deep wounds in the Vieques community, who felt betrayed once again by the local government, the US

⁵ Paola Nagovitch, "US militarization of Puerto Rico amid Venezuela tensions reopens historical wounds", (Nov.25, 2025). El Pais. Available at: <https://english.elpais.com/usa/2025-11-25/us-militarization-of-puerto-rico-amid-venezuela-tensions-reopens-historical-wounds.html>

⁶ Id.

⁷ Gloria Ruiz Kuilan, "Estados Unidos puede disponer de municiones en el antiguo poligono de Vieques desde enero de este año".(Nov 20, 2025). El Nuevo Dia. Available at: <https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/gobierno/notas/estados-unidos-puede-disponer-de-municiones-en-el-antiguo-poligono-de-vieques-desde-enero-de-este-ano/?templatelD=OTB2HAZL1TSY&templateVariantId=OTVG58JHKTYQZ&experienceID=EXOVVHYGHH10>

⁸ *Ibid.*

military and the federal agencies responsible for the cleanup process. Following the reports, Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez sent a letter to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, requiring clarification on the decision to use Vieques to destroy inoperable ammunition that is unrelated to cleanup efforts.⁹ In her letter she indicates that this “is of great concern due to the nature of Vieques’ history with the U.S. military and the risk of halting cleanup activities mandated by law.”¹⁰

As of today, no clarification has been made on the Vieques question. What we do know is what the US Defense Secretary, Pete Hegseth, has stated that “Puerto Rico plays a crucial geostrategic and geopolitical role in that national security policy”¹¹. Since August 2025, amid growing political tensions with Venezuela, the US military has launched deadly attacks against alleged drug trafficking boats, killing at least 115 people; and on January 3, 2026, the US military launched a military operation against Venezuela, resulting in the abduction of President Maduro and his wife, who are now facing criminal charges in New York. Both operations were launched from Puerto Rico.

B. Military contamination and the absence of measures to address its long-term effects on the health and life of Vieques’ residents

According to US governments own records, and information published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the US government recognizes that hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants continue to be present in Vieques and “pose an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment.”¹² A list of such Contaminants of Concern (COC) identified by EPA, is posted on its website and is under continuing review.

The EPA also recognizes that this is not a definitive list and that there is “insufficient information to determine the site-wide human exposure status” of the AFWTA-Vieques Superfund Site. Although the US Navy has been conducting a cleanup plan for more than a decade, it has not launched a comprehensive study to determine what is the baseline level of contamination in all areas, particularly residential areas, assess human health impacts caused by the contamination and engage the affected community in the development of mitigation measures.

⁹ Office of Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez. “Velazquez Sounds Alarm Over Reports of Potential Ammunition Destruction in Vieques, Demands Answers from Dod”.(Nov 24, 2025). Available at: <https://velazquez.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/velazquez-sounds-alarm-over-reports-potential-ammunition-destruction>

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Nicole Acevedo, “Puerto Rico’s forgotten military bases become crucial in Trump’s plan for American dominance”. (Jan 9, 2026). NBC News. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/attack-venezuela-puerto-ricos-military-bases-become-crucial-trumps-pla-rcna253051>

¹² See: EPA. Superfund Site: Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Area Vieques, PR. Contaminants List. Available at: <https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/SiteProfiles/index.cfm?fuseaction=second.contams&id=0204694>

To address these concerns, the EPA launched several Research Grant Opportunities called “Addressing Environmental concerns in Vieques, Puerto Rico through Community Participatory Research”.¹³ The call for proposals identified two main objectives: (1) “fill an **information void** at this site and serve as the baseline study for all potential future mitigation efforts; (2) **help communities achieve their own objective of living in a healthier environment.**”¹⁴ The scope of research was described as the following:

Pertinent research includes approaches leading to the development of effective sampling and analytical methods to detect and characterize environmental pollution including **contamination caused by surface and underwater munitions and/or its potential degradation byproducts, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), toxic metals, and chlorinated chemicals.** Pertinent research also includes characterization of contaminant transport, environmental transformation, routes of ecosystem **and human exposure**, development of approaches and models to characterize contaminant bioavailability, bioaccumulation, and prediction of impacts on ecosystem and human health. In addition, innovative approaches to mitigate contamination and remediate the impacted site in Vieques need to be developed. Applicants should partner with a community or a community-based organization in Vieques and document an active partnership with a community or community-based organization, as well as the partner’s intent to participate in the proposed research.¹⁵

This call for proposals reveals that the “cleaning” process conducted by the US Navy since 2003, lacked fundamental information on the contamination baseline and the multiple sources of human exposure to toxic chemicals. This is precisely the type of research that should have been conducted since the beginning of the clean-up process. One that puts human exposure and environmental degradation at the epicenter of all decisions on contaminated lands, and where the affected community are actively included in the determination of remedial actions.

Unfortunately, under President Trump’s direction, nearly 800 environmental justice grants have been cancelled this year, affecting important research grants including this one, which was addressing the human impact related to the contamination of the Vieques island. “Vieques Ambiente, Salud y Accion Comunitaria (VASAC)” was one of the projects affected. According to a report from 9millones, VASAC was conducting a “health and ecosystem research in Vieques”, with a “long-term goal of returning power to the community by providing Isla Nena [Vieques] residents with the information necessary to make decisions to improve their health and

¹³ EPA. Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-G2019-ORD-A1, Solicitation Opening Date: February 20, 2019, and Closing Date: April 23, 2019. Available for reference purposes at: <https://www.epa.gov/research-grants/addressing-environmental-concerns-vieques-puerto-rico-through-community#:~:text=To%20implement%20the%20congressional%20direction,mitigation%20options%20at%20the%20Vieques%2C>

¹⁴ Id.

¹⁵ Id.

livelihoods.”¹⁶ After conducting important data analysis, including “heavy metal analysis of soil samples, toxicology studies of fauna samples, microbial DNA sequencing, and experimental phytoremediation efforts, a technology that uses plants to decontaminate soil”, the funding was rescinded.¹⁷

These actions demonstrate that there is no real intention on the part of the US government to remediate the critical contamination levels that exist in Vieques nor identify and repair the human exposure to hazardous substances currently present at toxic levels in the island.

C. Petitioners: Changes in circumstances and continuing human rights violations

There were 10 petitioners who originally submitted the initial human rights claim to the IACHR. However, this legal representation has always sustained that their stories are not unique, instead are a representation of the stories of a larger community: the native residents of Vieques. The Vieques community as a whole, have endured the systematic violation of their human rights as a direct result of US Navy contamination of the island and the lack of an effective remedial response on the part of the US and local governments. None of the individual petitioners wish for this case to be only about their specific harm, as they identify as a community affected, which includes not only them, but their children and later generations who will continue to suffer the effects of the environmental contamination in Vieques, unless collective remedial actions and specific reparations are swiftly adopted to fully address them.

This claim was originally submitted by petitioners: Zaida Torres, Wanda Bermudez, Ivis Cintron Diaz, Ida Vodofsky Colon, Norma Torres Sanes, Cacimar Zenon, Asuncion Rivera, Ismael Guadalupe, Ilsa Ortiz Ortiz and Nilo Adams. We wish to provide the IACHR with updated information on the health conditions and harms that petitioners have endured since the submission of our initial petition in 2013.

1. **Zaida Torres** was born on June 20, 1954. Her daughter, Liza Torres, was diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia (type of cancer) at the age of 15. After being hospitalized and treated with radiation and then chemotherapy every three weeks for two years, she died from cancer at the young **age of 17 years**. Zaida and her family have suffered immense emotional distress due to the loss of her only daughter at such young age. Zaida believes her daughter’s cancer was caused by the high exposure to toxic chemicals from the US Navy bombing practices in Vieques and the lack of a remedial action. This is not the only family member that Zaida lost due to cancer conditions. Other three relatives who died

¹⁶ Lucia Alexeyev. “Vieques’ health investigator seeks funding after EPA’s cancellation: “This is just a rock on the road””. (July 30, 2025). 9 millones. Available at: <https://www.9millones.com/en/story/investigadora-de-la-salud-en-vieques-busca-fondos-tras-cancelarse-subservencion-de-la-epa>

¹⁷ Id.

from cancer conditions: Zaida's uncle died from pancreatic cancer, her aunt died from breast cancer and her aunt's son died from cerebral cancer.¹⁸

Zaida's husband, **Miguel A. Rosa Brache**, who is 72 years old, used to work as a plumber on the Naval base for 27 years and developed high blood pressure and a prostate cyst. In January 2017, he was evaluated by urologist Dr. Lionel Guerrero due to elevated PSA levels. Digital rectal examination revealed an **enlarged and hardened prostate**. A prostate biopsy was performed on January 18, 2017. He was referred to urologic oncologist Dr. Ronald Cadillo. In May 2017, he underwent prostatectomy. The tumor was larger than anticipated and had invaded the bladder. **Complete tumor resection was achieved**. No chemotherapy was administered.

In 2019, **Zaida Torres** was also diagnosed with cancer. A fixed, hardened mass approximately the size of an egg was detected in the right breast near the axillary region. On November 19, 2019, mammography was performed by Dr. Magda Acosta, Radiologist, followed by additional imaging. A biopsy confirmed **metastatic adenocarcinoma in situ**. The patient was referred to the Oncology Hospital and evaluated by surgeon Dr. Edna Mora. Surgical intervention was recommended, and tumor marker studies were obtained. On January 9, 2020, the patient underwent a right mastectomy. Postoperatively, she was referred to oncology for further management. On March 9, 2020, a second surgical procedure was required due to postoperative bleeding complications. Chemotherapy was initiated in April 2020. Pathology revealed metastatic disease with an enlarged sentinel lymph node, consistent with **Stage II breast cancer**. The patient completed six cycles of chemotherapy and subsequently underwent radiation therapy consisting of 32 treatments at the Comprehensive Cancer Center, completed in November 2020. She was prescribed Arimidex (anastrozole) 1 mg orally once daily for five years, with continued oncology follow-up every three months. More recently, in March 2025, mammography of the left breast revealed recurrent findings. After evaluation by Dr. Miguel Echenique at the Comprehensive Cancer Center, and despite negative findings, the patient elected to proceed with **prophylactic mastectomy**. On April 27, 2025, the procedure was performed. Genetic testing was conducted to assess hereditary cancer risk for her descendants. **Lab results show no genetic pre-condition for cancer**. The patient continues regular follow-up care with her oncologist.¹⁹

2. **Wanda Bermúdez** was born on August 13, 1962, and is fourth generation Viequense. From approximately age 15, she began having pain in her right ear with occasional nasal bleeding. She was diagnosed at age 23 with nasopharyngeal cancer with masses in her

¹⁸ See: Zaida Torres sworn statement, dated March 3, 2018. Annex A.

¹⁹ See: Zaida Torres Medical Narrative, Diagnosis and Medical Records. Annex B

nasal passage and throat. Treatment with radiation to her face and neck started in June 1986 and ended in August that year.²⁰

As a result of the radiation and surgeries, she started having swallowing problems due to lack of saliva; frequent sinus infections that lead to more surgeries; dental problems because of the low saliva that resulted in crowns in all of her teeth and root canals in about half of them. Most of those dental procedures were out of pocket expenses. Her teeth are in really bad shape and the Endodontists and Prostodontists fear she needs hyperbaric medicine to prevent osteoradionecrosis in case they have to remove one of her teeth, especially from the lower mandible.

Since 2012, Wanda has also been diagnosed with bronchiectasis, a deteriorating condition of the upper parts of her lungs, but more on the right side, due to the low radiation fields to disintegrate the tumor on her neck. Bronchiectasis causes frequent lung infections that over time deteriorate lung function. It is **an incurable, degenerative disease**. Her current condition is considered moderate but bad enough to qualify her as **disabled**.

Wanda still suffers from low salivary output, although it did improve with time, and has increasing problems swallowing due to damage to the muscles involved. She currently lives in Vieques and travel routinely to PR to see her specialists: Pneumologist, ENT, Allergist/Immunologist, Prostodontist, Endodontist. Those services are not offered in the island of Vieques.

She continues to suffer from respiratory illnesses that require periodic hospitalization. Her cousin who grew up next to her was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer of the nervous system and subsequently died three years later.

3. **Ibis Cintrón Díaz** was born in Vieques, on November 27, 1964. She lived in the town of Isabel II up until 2018. Throughout her life she was exposed to pollution from the US Navy military exercises. Around the age of 23, in 1978, she had hair tests sponsored at the time by the municipality. “The results for most of us who took the tests came back positive for many metal contaminants.” In 1992, I was 38 years old and began to feel pain in my left breast. I went to my gynecologist, who found a lump in my breast and sent it for a biopsy. The results came back negative because it was detected at an early stage of development.

Her mother, also suffered the effects of pollution and died of a heart attack and Alzheimer’s disease in 2007. Her father, suffered similar health consequences, dying of diabetes and Alzheimer’s disease with severe prostate inflammation. He died in the summer of 2007.

²⁰ See: Wanda Bermudez sworn statement, dated March 2, 2018.

Ibis has three siblings, and all of them have been diagnosed with cancer. Her sister, Milagros Cintron Diaz, born on January 13, 1956, was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's retroperitoneal lymphoma (behind the abdomen). By December 2025, she was in remission. She is currently undergoing mild chemotherapy treatment every two months as a preventative measure. Her brother, Nelson A. Cintron Diaz, born on July 7, 1957, had prostate cancer. He completed his treatment and is now in remission. Her youngest brother, Hector F. Cintron Diaz, was born on November 7, 1958. A positive laparoscopic prostatectomy was performed in August 2012, and the tumor was removed on April 10, 2014. He is now in remission.

Ibis currently suffer from heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. She also suffered a heart attack and is taking medications to treat all these conditions.

Ibis decided to leave the island in February 2018, after the devastation caused by hurricane Maria. She made this difficult decision due to the absence of a hospital and adequate medical facilities. She currently lives in Trujillo Alto, in the main island of Puerto Rico. She is trying to improve her health conditions but laments the fact that she had to leave her community to receive the medical care she needs.

Ibis has three daughters, two of whom suffered from chronic asthma since they were newborns. They continue to be asthmatic. Her youngest daughter is legally blind in her left eye as a result of a rare ophthalmological disease.²¹

4. **Ida Vodofsky Colón** was born on June 11, 1962. She was raised in Vieques and still has memories of having her house shake from the impact of nearby bombing. She was diagnosed with cancer at 25 years old when she was eight months pregnant with her fourth child. In 2005, she was diagnosed with heavy chemicals in her lungs.
5. **Norma Torres Sanes** was born on March 1, 1947. Her family's land was expropriated by the Navy and they were forced to move to Luquillo, Puerto Rico on the mainland island. She returned to Vieques to live with her husband Ismael Guadalupe and to raise a family there. Norma engaged in civil disobedience and organized a group of women in this fight. She was arrested and charged for her civil disobedience actions. Norma is a cancer survivor. In 2003 she was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent chemotherapy and radiation.²²

²¹ See: Ibis Cintron, Declaration. ANNEX B.

²² See: Norma Torres Sanes, declaration. ANNEX A; See also an interview with Norma Torres Sanes, "Inside Story Americas – Special interview with Norma Torres Sanes. Al Jazeera English. Available at: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xzwc2g>

6. **Cacimar Zenon** was born on September 1, 1979. He is a scuba-diver and fisherman, as was his father, Carlos Anastacio Zenon Rodriguez, known as “Tazo Zenon”. He has seen the reduction in sea life in the surrounding waters of Vieques which he attributes to the military’s practices. His father, other fishermen and he have had their livelihoods affected by the Navy’s practices which have often included closing off safer and closer water zones where fishermen routinely fish in order to carry out military practices, or more recently to clean up environmental damage as a result of such practices. Tazo Zenon (Cacimar’s father), was a fisherman and environmental activist, recognized as one of the most prominent voices in Vieques demanding the closure of the US Navy base and the end of military practices. He was the author of “Memorias de un pueblo en lucha”, recounting the historical community fight against the US Navy in Vieques. Tazo suffered from diabetes and died on November 2020, as the result of a stroke.²³
7. **Asuncion Rivera** was born on August 11, 1955. She was born and raised in Vieques and was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2005. Her father suffered and died from lung cancer and her sister was diagnosed with gastrointestinal cancer and also subsequently died. Her daughter, age 33, was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2012.
8. **Ismael Guadalupe** was born on July 23, 1944. He was born and raised in Vieques. He participated actively in civil disobedience and protest activities against the Navy’s presence for forty years. In 2000, he was diagnosed with kidney failure and in 2005, approximately, was found to have high concentrations of mercury in his system. Ismael received dialysis treatment and a kidney transplant. He also suffers from hypertension and diabetes and in 2023, he was diagnosed with skin and prostate cancer, and is currently undergoing treatment.
9. **Ilsa Ortiz Ortiz** was born on June 8, 1958. She was born and raised in Vieques. Isla has two children who are now adults, both of whom continue to suffer from chronic asthma that has plagued them since they were newborns, as well as from skin conditions including frequent rashes.
10. **Nilo Adams Colon** was born on November 13, 1947. He was born and raised in Vieques. He suffered from diabetes and high blood pressure. In 2010, he was diagnosed with abdominal lymphoma cancer. He received chemotherapy and radiation, largely covering off pocket his own health expenses and medications. Unfortunately, on February 22, 2022, **Nilo Adams Colon died of cancer**. He left behind his wife, Lydia E. Corcino, and three children, Yaridia Adams Corcino, Yasmar Adams Corcino and Yeneris Adams Corcino.

²³ See: Cacimar Zenon, Declaration ANNEX A; and also, Certificate of Death of Carlos Anastacio Zenon Rodriguez. ANNEX C.

III. United States violations to its obligations under the American Declaration of Human Rights

The evidence in this case overwhelmingly show that the United States Navy has violated the fundamental human rights of the people of Vieques. As a result of the U.S. Navy's occupation of the island of Vieques, its environmental contamination, and lack of adequate reparative measures, it has violated the petitioners' human rights to life (Art. I), health and well-being (Art. XI), access to information (Art. IV), judicial remedies (Art. XVIII), residence and freedom of movement (Art. VIII), work under proper conditions and fair remuneration (Art.XIV).

Petitioners reiterate and incorporate to this section, the complete analysis and legal arguments on substantive violations to the American Declaration, as were submitted in our initial petition and additional admissibility briefs.

IV. Conclusion

The petitioners, their families and the native residents of the island municipality of Vieques have suffered the immediate and long-term health and environmental consequences of the military practices of the United States Navy in Vieques. The intentional and negligent use of toxic chemicals and warfare have resulted in death, pain, rare cancer conditions and life-threatening chronic illnesses that make living circumstances very difficult for all of Vieques's native residents and their families. Moreover, the absolute lack of remedial action and measures that take into consideration the needs of Vieques' residents is also a form of continuing human rights violation.

Today, albeit the obvious need for medical care, there is no specialized hospital or pre-natal clinic in Vieques, affordable housing opportunities are almost inexistent, and working conditions are exploitative. The government have moved to prioritize foreign investment and private ownership over communal territorial ownership of the land, igniting speculation over property value and forcing a new wave of displacement off the island. This is having an intergenerational effect in Vieques, affecting the younger generations possibility to stay and make a decent living in their beloved community and land. This needs to stop. Accountability and full reparations are urgently needed. For these reasons, Petitioners ask this Commission to:

- (a) Analyze and investigate the human rights violations as outlined, and hold a hearing during its next period of sessions, to discuss the merits of this case;
- (b) Declare the United States government's international responsibility for the human rights violations committed against the residents of Vieques.
- (c) Grant all relief deemed appropriate and necessary upon adjudication of the merits of this case.

- (d) Make recommendations concerning appropriate and adequate compensation for the harms caused and to prevent the continuance of further violations throughout the clean-up process.

V. Evidence

Petitioners submit the following additional documentation as supporting evidence:

- (a) ANNEX A: Translations to English of all the declarations submitted during the admissibility procedure;
- (b) ANNEX B: Additional declarations from Zaida Torres, Wanda Bermudez, Ibis Cintrón Díaz and Ida Vodosfsky Colon;
- (c) ANNEX C: Zaida Torres' Medical Records and Diagnosis.
- (d) ANNEX D: Certificate of Death of Carlos Anastacio Zenon Rodriguez (Tazo Zenon), father of Cacimar Zenon.

The Petitioners thank the Commission for its careful attention to this pressing matter.

Dated: January 11, 2026



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