

After Trump Downplays Puerto Rico Damage, Samuel Rodriguez Speaks Out With the Truth

President Donald Trump downplayed the damage in Puerto Rico earlier today, claiming relief work was wrecking his budget and the disaster wasn't a "real catastrophe" like Hurricane Katrina.

"I hate to tell you, Puerto Rico, but you are throwing our budget out of whack. We spent a lot of money on Puerto Rico, and that's fine. We saved a lot of lives. If you look at the—every death is a horror, but if you look at a real catastrophe like Katrina, and you look at the tremendous hundreds and hundreds of people that died, and what happened here with a storm that was just totally overbearing. No one has ever seen anything like that. What is your death count?" Trump said in a speech on the island.

Officially, Maria has claimed 16 lives in Puerto Rico, but death counts have not been updated in more than a week.

"Everything in the government has collapsed," investigative reporter Omayra Sosa Pascual says. "Some of the people who work in the government lost their homes themselves and aren't at work. So they can't do death certificates. The dead can't be documented because of all the logistics and legal aspects of declaring someone dead."

For evangelist Samuel Rodriguez, who was born to Puerto Rican parents, the president's comments are far from helpful.

"We are grateful that the federal government is on the ground in Puerto Rico; we are likewise grateful that FEMA is mobilized and for all of the various organizations that are actively engaged in meeting the enormous challenges left in

the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. Just this morning, we received reports from partners on the ground that the president's presence, going door to door in various neighborhoods, is lifting the spirits of the people on the island," Rodriguez, the president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, says.

"What's taking place in Puerto Rico is an unprecedented U.S. aid relief effort. That being said, now is not the time to compare Puerto Rico to any other natural disaster. Now is not the time to politicize this catastrophe in any way. What is needed is our collective focus on meeting any and all immediate needs and then moving forward with rebuilding Puerto Rico 2.0, better and more prosperous than ever before. We will continue to work closely with the federal government and all others who are willing and able to be a part of this effort. Let's not allow politics to distract us from the urgent and pressing needs of the people of Puerto Rico," he continues.

Televangelist Paula White-Cain, who has sent ministry volunteers, agrees that relief effort has nothing to do with politics.

"Everyone is working together," White-Cain says. "When it comes to what I know, one thing I know is about our president and one thing I know is about ministries. In times like these, this is non-partisan, not political. This is the church and what it does best. That to me has always [been] my lane that I serve in. I can facilitate. When it comes to helping people out of trauma and making a call to the White House, you can do that because you have a seat there. Really, thank God for incredible ministries, incredible humanitarian efforts, businesses, organizations, governments. No one is going into this asking if you're a Democrat or a Republican. This is a human need."