

Nashville 2001 delegate action: Vieques Resolution

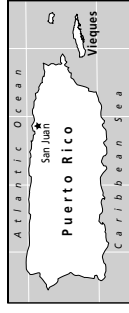
BACKGROUND: Vieques is a 4 by 19 mile island off the east coast of Puerto Rico. During the early 1940s, the U.S. Navy began training there for the war against Hitler. The military forced more than one-third of the 13,000 people living there to leave so the land could be used for a bombing range, restricting inhabitants to the center third of the island. When the war ended, the Navy did not leave as anticipated. Since then the military has practiced on Vieques for invasions into Panama and for the Persian Gulf War. Opposition to the Navy on Vieques has continued since WWII. The current government of Puerto Rico has used many legal and diplomatic means to try to bring an end to the military exercises on Vieques.

The residents, who live about ten miles from the bombing range, suffer from both economic and environmental damage after years of bombing. The military maneuvers greatly hinder farming and fishing—the residents' traditional livelihood. Toxic metals from bomb residue have been found in their fruits and vegetables, and many feel these have caused increased occurrences of cancer.



U.S. Navy Base area

In March of 2001, Puerto Rican Mennonite Church delegates took a bold stand and declared that their silence about the U.S. Navy's bombing of Vieques has supported the oppression of the island's people. On May 11, 2001 they asked MCC to urge congregations to ask their government representatives to stop military exercises on Vieques. The Nashville 2001 resolution was a response to this request from our sisters and brothers in Puerto Rico.



Oración por Vieques/A Prayer for Vieques

¡Oh Dios, Señor nuestro! Cuando hacemos memorias de lo que fue nuestra vida espiritual, emocional, social y ecológica sesenta años atrás, nos sentamos y lloramos.

Oh God, our Lord! When we think of our spiritual, emotional, social, and ecological lives here sixty years ago, we sit down and cry.

Nuestros hijos y nuestras hijas jugaban a la orilla del mar, construyendo sus castillos de arenas con la esperanza de que un día se harían realidad.

Our sons and daughters played at the edge of the ocean building sand castles with the hope that one day they would become real.

Nuestros hombres trabajaban surcando el mar para pescar el alimento de cada día, para el sostén de su familia.

Our men fished the ocean to draw daily nourishment for their family's sustenance.

Nuestras mujeres tejían sus sueños y esperanzas en la tranquilidad y el sosiego de sus hogares.

Our women wove their dreams and hopes in the peace and calm of their homes.

¡Pero, como en sesenta años han cambiado las cosas, ¡Señor! Los enemigos de la paz del mundo han llegado a Vieques, a nuestro mar y a nuestras tierras, y con sus prácticas balísticas, con el pretexto de una llamada seguridad nacional, han contaminado nuestro ambiente, han dañado nuestra vida marítima, y se han adueñado de nuestras tierras. ¿Hasta cuando, Señor Dios, tendremos que esperar mas?

But how things have changed in sixty years, Lord! The enemies of world peace have come to Vieques, to our ocean and to our land, with their ballistic exercises. With the excuse of so-called national security, they have contaminated our environment, have destroyed our marine life, and have taken possession of our land. How long, Lord God, will we have to wait?

Ya han pasado dos generaciones, y no se ha visto cambio. ¿Cuántas generaciones mas tendrán que pasar?

Two generations have gone by, and we have not seen any change. How many more generations will pass by?

Los castillos de nuestros hijos e hijas, se desvanecen, a nuestros hombres no les es permitido ejercer su vocación de pescador, en el mar que Tu le regalaste, y los sueños de nuestras mujeres se han ido esfumando.

Our sons' and daughters' sand castles are vanishing, our men have not been permitted to follow their vocations as fishermen in the ocean that you gave us, and the dreams of our women are disappearing.

Y Tu, ¿Hasta cuando permitirás esta aflicción? Tu sabes Señor, su poder, aunque nos juntáramos todos para combatirles, con una sola de sus bombas sofisticadas, sera suficiente para destruirnos.

And God, how long will you permit this affliction? Lord, you know their power; even if all of us would come together to oppose them, just one of their sophisticated bombs would be enough to destroy us.

Oh Dios, pero nosotros esperamos en ti, pero Vieques espera en ti, pero Puerto Rico confía en ti, y aunque con nuestras fuerzas no podamos sacarlos, tu tienes el PODER de dislodgearuitarlos, no solo de Vieques, sino de todo el mundo...

Oh God, we wait on you, and Vieques waits on you, and Puerto Rico trusts in you. Even though we cannot dislodge them through our strength, you have the POWER to remove them, not only from Vieques, but from the whole world...

¡Ojala y no tenga que pasar ni una generación mas, antes de que esto acontezca! Amen.

God grant that not one more generation pass by before this happens. Amen.

—Por: José Enrique Jiménez, Pastor/By: José Enrique Jiménez, Puerto Rican pastor
Shared by Ramón Bermudez, moderator, Puerto Rico Mennonite Conference



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