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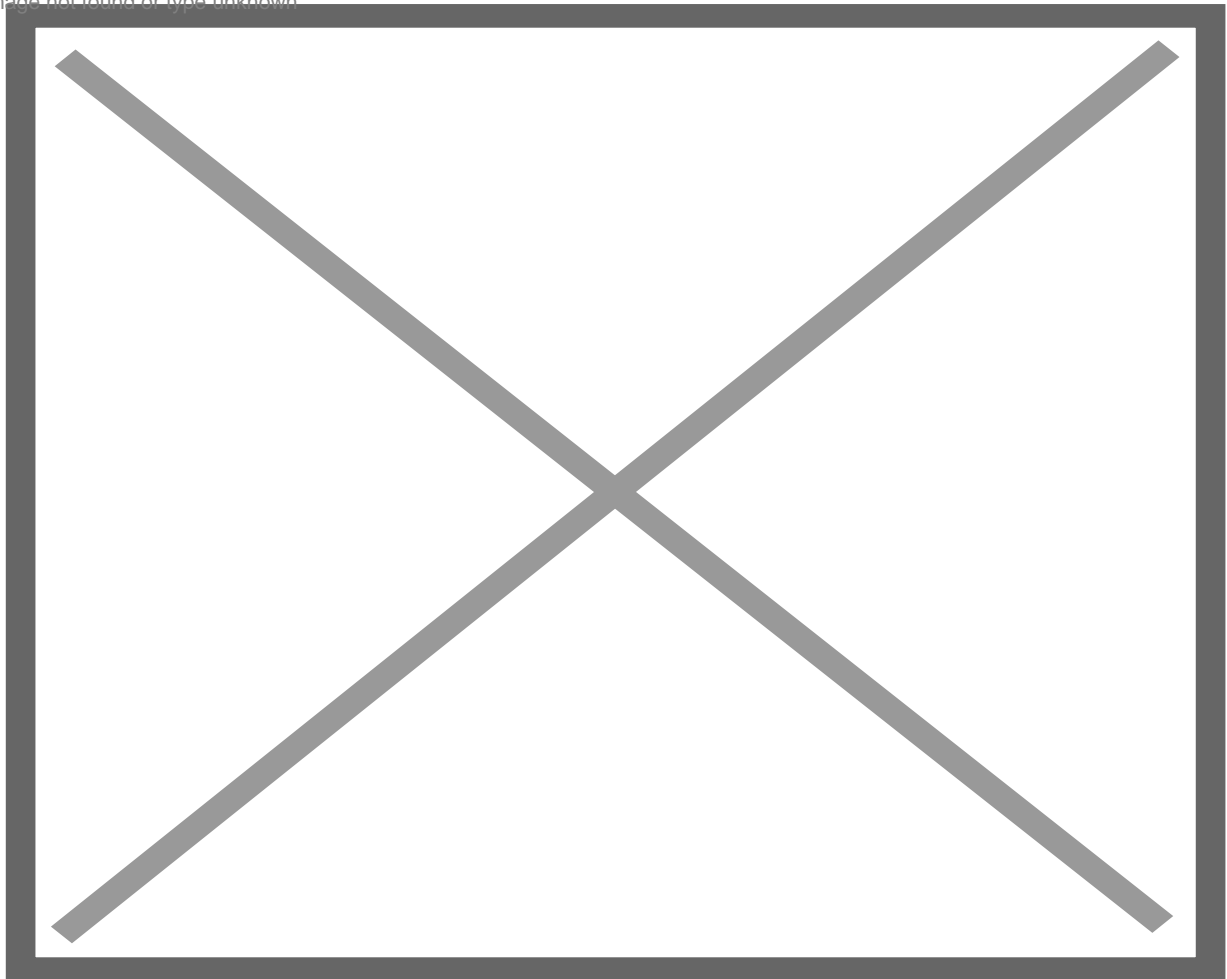
Protest Erupts During Vice President Harris's First Visit to Puerto Rico

Demonstrators voice opposition to territorial status, international conflicts

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Vice President Kamala Harris

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris's inaugural visit to Puerto Rico was marked by both official engagements and public dissent. The vice president's trip on Friday aimed to highlight the significant federal aid allocated to the territory following devastating hurricanes and included a Democratic fundraiser.

This visit occurs in the context of President Joe Biden's recent campaign efforts to engage Latino voters for the upcoming November general elections. While Puerto Ricans, as U.S. citizens,

cannot vote in presidential elections, their substantial population of over 5 million on the mainland remains a crucial demographic.

Harris, accompanied by U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm and Housing and Urban Development Deputy Secretary Adrienne Todman, was received by Governor Pedro Pierluisi. The vice president's itinerary began with a visit to a newly reconstructed home in Canovanas, destroyed by Hurricane Maria in 2017, according to the Associated Press. Harris reflected on the progress made and acknowledged the ongoing challenges, particularly in stabilizing the island's energy infrastructure. The federal government's contribution includes \$3 billion towards reliable energy solutions, among them rooftop solar panels.

However, Harris's presence ignited protests in San Juan, where demonstrators expressed dissatisfaction with Puerto Rico's territorial status and the Israel-Hamas conflict. The protest underscored a palpable division, with some participants resorting to burning U.S. flags and others voicing their unwelcome directly to the vice president, labeling her a "war criminal."

Despite the protests, Harris continued her scheduled engagements, speaking at a campaign reception hosted by developer Nicholas Prouty. She commended Governor Pierluisi's advocacy for Puerto Rico's needs and underscored the high stakes of the forthcoming election. Harris criticized Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, positioning the election as a critical choice for the country's future.

The vice president's visit underscored the ongoing reconstruction efforts in Puerto Rico and the complex political dynamics involving the territory's relationship with the mainland.