

The Virgin Islands Consortium

'It's As If They're Waiting On Them To Die': Medical Evacuee Deaths Climb To 48

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	NMAs	0	0	0
Florida	Total	1	1	0
	Classic	1	1	0
	Dialysis	0	0	0
	NMAs	0	0	0
Other States	Total	9	9	0
	Classic	8	8	0
	Dialysis	0	0	0
	NMAs	1	1	0
Inactive	Total	580	577	+3
	Discharged	532	529	+3
	Deceased	48	48	0

"It's as if they're waiting on them to die. The federal government no longer wants them and the local government doesn't seem to care."

Those were the words of someone in Atlanta who is intimately involved in advocacy for U.S. Virgin Islands medical evacuees sent to the state following Hurricanes Irma and Maria. This person, along with others, has been working on behalf of the evacuees, many of whom are at the mercy of the local and federal governments.

This person requested anonymity to speak freely, and also shared a document revealing the amount of evacuees that have died after being airlifted to various states for care.

The document, seen [here](#), shows that of the total 782 evacuees sent away for medical needs, 532 had been discharged, 202 remain, and 48 had died as of Friday. The numbers change on almost a daily basis.

The effort to airlift hundreds of medical patients out of their homes, in this case the Virgin Islands, to locations across the U.S. for medical care, was carried out through a program called the [National Disaster Medical System](#), which has been used for years to transport hospital patients out of disaster zones for treatment to unaffected hospitals.

But many evacuees feel abandoned by the Government of the Virgin Islands -- a sentiment dating back to last year -- which continues to struggle with providing adequate medical care in the territory following the storms. The local government does not have the financial resources to meet the demanding needs of the evacuees, including food, housing, transportation and medical care. The G.V.I. has therefore relied on the federal government to foot the bill under the National Disaster Medical System federal program.

Senators have visited the evacuees, but not has changed as a result of the visits, according to some evacuees. Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly is said to be traveling to Atlanta soon. Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly chairs the Senate Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services. She will be the first St. Croix senator to visit the evacuees, according to this person.

And while this person said Department of Health Commissioner Michelle Davis has been doing her best to help, the real problem lies with funding and the territory's lack of adequate medical facilities.