

---

### Considerations in Flames

By: Vladia Rubio / CubaSí

15/01/2025



There are so many tragedies that accompany the devouring fires of California today, that there's hardly any spirit left to stop at a single image.

However, the photo that heads this text seems to summarize the urgency and calamity experienced in Los Angeles. The devastation is so that the sheriff of that county, Robert Luna, compared the consequences of the strong fires that have ravaged southern California since Tuesday with the impact of an atomic bomb, according to USA Today.

At the time of writing, at least 16 people (five in Palisades and 11 in Eaton) had died in the blazes, which have incinerated more than 40,000 acres, destroyed or damaged some 12,000 structures, including homes, schools, businesses and other buildings, and forced the evacuation of at least 130,000 people.

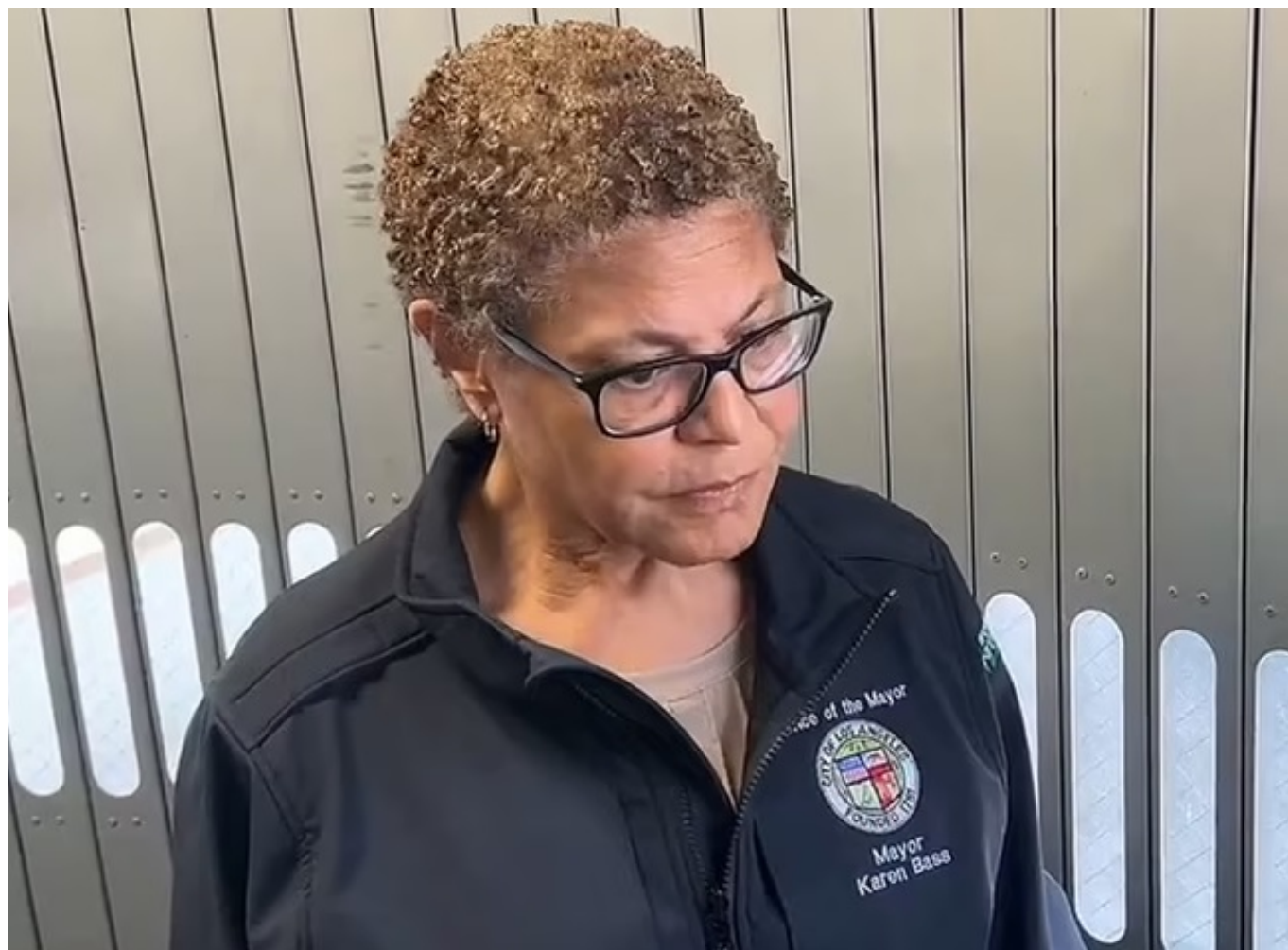


Even Pope Francis expressed shock last Saturday “at the loss of life and widespread destruction caused by the fires near L.A.”

It’s impossible to know what the firefighter in the photo is thinking about his urgency, but harsh realities such as a shortage of firefighting water and a lack of foresight in municipal management may be points to be considered.

According to experts, the rapid spread of flames does not seem to be due only to strong winds coming from Santa Ana.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, a Democrat, had decided to cut funding for the fire service by more than \$17 million for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, despite the fact that massive fires are very frequent there.



However, Bass decided to strengthen finances to help homeless people. Thus, LA Fire Department was allocated \$837 million for the period, in contrast to the \$1.3 billion allocated to the homeless. Now, unfortunately, there are many more people left homeless because of such a bad decision.

And to “top things up,” this mayor, turning a deaf ear to warnings about the dangerous weather conditions looming over that territory, traveled this week to Ghana to attend the inauguration of the new president of the African country, representing Joe Biden.



Added to the shortages that make fighting the flames more difficult is the disastrous decision of the governor of California, Gavin Newsom, who "refused to sign the water restoration declaration that was presented to him and that would have allowed millions of gallons of water, from excess rain and melting snow in the north, to flow daily to many parts of California, including areas that are currently burning in a practically apocalyptic way." "In addition to all this, there's no water for the hydrants or for the firefighting planes."

The text between quotations belongs to Donald Trump on his Truth Social account, where he categorically stated that Gavin Newsom should resign because "This is all his fault!" said the US president-elect.



The lack of water was also due to the poor planning of the city's water infrastructure and its poor condition. There are so many deficiencies in this order that the three water storage tanks on which the hydrants in that area depend on, each with a capacity of one million gallons, had "dried up" at 3:00 a.m. on Wednesday, just 24 hours after the fire started.

This was stated to the Los Angeles Times by Janisse Quiñones, general director and chief engineer of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Energy.

On top of the lack of water, there's also lack of firefighters as a result of the very poorly managed policies of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) deployed in Los Angeles.

Seeking to diversify its mostly white male workforce, the LAFD deliberately set out to exclude white men from joining the workforce, and now they do not have enough hands to deal with the fires, whose spread has been intensified by strong gusts of wind and very low humidity.

More than 8 million people are in critical risk areas while the quenching of the fire is not in sight in the immediate future and more tragedies are expected among flames.



**Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff**

---