

<https://www.wwltv.com/article/tech/science/environment/united-nations-environmental-racism-in-cancer-alley-must-end/289-7bf5abad-9915-4328-a167-654fb4803291>

## UN: Environmental racism in Louisiana's "Cancer Alley" must end

WWL-TV has extensively covered the fight over environmental protections for residents in the stretch between Baton Rouge and metro New Orleans.

NEW ORLEANS — Here is the full statement from the United Nations about Cancer Alley:

GENEVA (2 March 2021) – UN human rights experts today raised serious concerns about further industrialisation of the so-called Cancer Alley in the southern US state of Louisiana, saying the development of petrochemical complexes is a form of environmental racism.

Originally called Plantation Country where enslaved Africans were forced to labour, the petrochemical corridor along the lower Mississippi River has not only polluted the surrounding water and air, but also subjected its mostly African American residents to cancer, respiratory diseases and other adverse health effects, the experts said.

**RELATED:** [Activists say rapidly growing petrochemical industry leaves them 2 choices: Leave or fight](#)

"This form of environmental racism poses serious and disproportionate threats to the enjoyment of several human rights of its largely African American residents, including the right to equality and non-discrimination, the right to life, the right to health, right to an adequate standard of living and cultural rights," they said.

Federal environmental regulations have failed to protect people residing in "Cancer Alley", the experts said.

**RELATED:** [The Toxic Truth: An Eyewitness Investigation](#)

In 2018, St. James Parish Council approved the "Sunshine Project", which would be one of the largest plastics facilities in the world to be developed by FG LA LLC, a subsidiary company of Formosa Plastics Group. The Parish Council also approved plans to build methanol complexes by YCI Methanol One and South Louisiana Methanol.

Formosa Plastics' petrochemical complex alone will more than double the cancer risks in St. James Parish affecting disproportionately African American residents, they said. According to data from the Environmental Protection Agency's National Air Toxic Assessment map, the cancer risks in predominantly African American Districts in St James Parish could be at 104 and 105 cases per million, while other districts with predominantly white population, could have a cancer risk ranging from 60 to 75 per million.

The construction of the new petrochemical complexes will exacerbate the environmental pollution and the disproportionate adverse effect on the rights to life, to an adequate standard of living and the right to health of African American communities. The combined emissions of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) per year in a single parish could exceed those of 113 countries, the experts said.

They expressed concerns at possible violations of the cultural rights of the affected African American communities in the area, where at least four ancestral burial grounds of enslaved Africans are at serious risk of destruction by the construction of the Sunshine Project.

"The African American descendants of the enslaved people who once worked the land are today the primary victims of deadly environmental pollution that these petrochemical plants in their neighbourhoods have caused," they said. "We call on the United States and St. James Parish to recognise and pay reparations for the centuries of harm to Afro-descendants rooted in slavery and colonialism."

The experts welcome on this occasion the January 20 Executive Order on Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis and the pledge of the US Government to listen to science, strengthen clean air and water protections, and hold polluters accountable for their actions. The experts call on the US Government to deliver environmental justice in communities all across America, starting with St James Parish.

Corporations also bear responsibility and should conduct environmental and human rights impact assessments as part of the due diligence process, the experts added