

Ecuador *Events of 2024*

An older woman looks at an Ecuadorean police member taking part in a security joint operation with armed forces in Duran, Ecuador on October 24, 2024.

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In a context of fragile democratic institutions, Ecuador has seen a sharp increase in violence by organized crime, which took homicide rates to unprecedented levels.

Following President Daniel Noboa's announcement that the country is in an "internal armed conflict," security forces engaged in serious human rights violations.

Longstanding structural problems, related, among other things, to access to health, education, and employment, remain unaddressed, limiting the enjoyment of economic and social rights.

Violence and Crime

Homicides rose 429 percent from the first half of 2019 to 2024, when 3,036 were [recorded](#). A 16 percent drop compared to the same period in 2023 but still higher than the 2,128 in 2022, according to the Ecuadorian Observatory on Organized Crime. As of September, police

Since January, following a [surge in violence](#), President Noboa has [decreed](#) long-lasting states of emergency and an “internal armed conflict” against criminal groups, without providing “sufficient information to justify the existence of one or more non-international armed conflicts,” according to the Constitutional Court.

Ecuador’s militarization of its streets and prisons since January has led to [serious human rights violations](#) by security forces, including [extrajudicial killings](#), arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment.

Prison Conditions

The lack of state control, overcrowding, and poor prison conditions have enabled organized crime to dominate prisons.

Since January, the military has held many detainees incommunicado for long periods, obstructing access to lawyers and medical care. Other [documented](#) abuses against detainees include beatings, the improper use of tear gas, electric shocks, sexual violence, and killings.

In February, a judge [ruled](#) that the military endangered detainees and prison authorities failed in their duties, ordering medical care and an investigation into torture. [Human rights groups, detainees’ families](#), and the [United Nations Committee against Torture](#) also raised concerns about inhumane prison conditions, including food shortages.

Democratic Institutions and the Rule of Law

Democratic institutions, particularly the judicial system, remained fragile, plagued by allegations of corruption and weak capacity to combat impunity and organized crime.

The Attorney General’s Office has [opened](#) several investigations against judges, prosecutors and authorities from the Judiciary Council for alleged organized crime, bribery, money laundering, influence peddling, and obstruction of justice.

Judges and prosecutors are at risk and lack adequate protection. At least 15 have been killed since 2022.

Allegations of lack of due process in judicial proceedings and improper pressures on courts and judges continued. In February, President Noboa labeled a judge “unpatriotic” after the

Reports continued of problematic selection and appointment procedures for senior officials. [The UN Human Rights Committee](#) and [civil society groups](#) voiced concerns about the selection process for judges, including of the National Court of Justice, claiming that the processes lacked transparency and citizen involvement, raising questions about its impartiality. [Concerns](#) have also been raised regarding the delays and rules for the selection process for the next attorney general.

In November, the Ministry of Labor [suspended](#) vice president Verónica Abad for “unjustified abandonment” of her duties just weeks before she was supposed to replace President Noboa during the electoral campaign. The Ministry failed to provide a legal basis for its decision. The same month, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal [barred](#) Jan Topic from running for president in the 2025 election, based on “confidential evidence,” raising concerns over respect for due process and political rights.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

As of June, close to 26 percent of Ecuadorians were living below the national [poverty line](#), with figures climbing to around 43 percent in rural areas. Additionally, 10.6 percent lived in “extreme poverty,” reaching 24.1 percent in rural areas, meaning their per capita family income was below US\$51.60 per month.

Despite a slight decrease in [unemployment rates](#) compared to the second semester of 2023, the national unemployment rate stood at 3.5 percent, with 52.5 percent of those employed working in the informal sector.

Ecuador follows Bolivia and Venezuela as the third country with the highest prevalence of hunger in South America, impacting 2.5 million people, according to [the UN Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition](#).

Millions of people have been impacted by nationwide [power outages](#) due to a drought disturbing hydroelectricity power generation, affecting their rights to education, work and health.

Freedom of Expression

In November, the organization Fundamedios [reported](#) over 160 “attacks” on freedom of expression and freedom of the press, including stigmatizing speech, verbal assaults against

In June, the TV program “Los Irreverentes” was [cancelled](#), reportedly after pressure from the government, according to Fundamedios. In the same month, the Foreign Minister’s Office [cancelled](#) Cuban journalist Alondra Santiago’s visa for “threatening public safety and the structure of the State” after she criticized the government with a song based on the national anthem.

Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees

Despite a progressive constitutional and legal framework, many migrants and asylum seekers in Ecuador [struggle](#) to obtain regular status and integrate. Despite having over [77,900 refugees](#) in the country, Ecuador’s application of the Cartagena Declaration’s expanded refugee definition is inconsistent.

A 2022 regularization process [granted](#) over 95,000 foreign nationals, mainly Venezuelans, a two-year legal status, but the process is currently closed. In August, the government [extended](#) the regularization process to legalize Venezuelans who had registered within the established deadlines but had not obtained visas.

While just a few hundred Ecuadorians crossed the Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama in 2021, the number spiked in 2023, spurred by economic factors and general insecurity, reaching 57,250. Over 14,700 crossed the gap between January and August 2024.

Children’s Rights

Sexual violence remains endemic in Ecuador’s schools and finding justice is elusive for many survivors. Between January 2014 and August 2024, authorities [registered](#) over 6,700 cases of sexual violence against students committed by teachers, school staff, other students or bus drivers.

Government measures to respond to sexual violence in schools have [not progressed](#) at the scale and pace needed to ensure that all children are safe.

In August, President Noboa [signed](#) a policy to eradicate sexual violence in schools by 2030, following the 2020 Inter-American Court ruling in *Paola Guzmán Albarracín v. Ecuador*. Civil society groups [voiced](#) concerns over lack of adequate funding for its implementation.

to the Ecuadorian Observatory on Organized Crime. It has also led to increased child [recruitment](#) and compromised the [right to a safe learning environment](#).

In April, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child [cancelled](#) its upcoming session due to lack of funds, reducing scrutiny of developments in Ecuador.

Women's and Girls' Rights

Abortion is criminalized in Ecuador, except when a pregnancy threatens a person's health or life or results from rape. In April, Justa Libertad, an Ecuadorian coalition of eight civil society organizations, [filed](#) a lawsuit before the Constitutional Court of Ecuador seeking to decriminalize abortion in all circumstances.

There remain significant barriers to this essential service, including stigmatization, mistreatment by healthcare providers, fear of criminal prosecution, and a narrow interpretation of legal exceptions for abortion. Women and girls who face prosecution under restrictive laws are often living in poverty and come from Indigenous or Afro-descendant communities.

The Ministry of Women and Human Rights [reported](#) 222 violent deaths (murders, homicides and femicides) of women and girls as of late June. The Attorney General's Office [reported](#) 59 femicides—murders deemed gender-related—between January and September.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In June, the government [issued a regulation](#) implementing a legal gender recognition procedure for transgender people based on self-determination, to comply with a 2017 ruling by the Constitutional Court.

The legislature has not complied with other court orders to revise [civil marriage](#) provisions to include same-sex couples, regulate assisted reproduction, and allow same-sex couples to [register](#) children with their surnames.

The constitution excludes same-sex couples from adoption.

Environmental Protection and Indigenous Peoples' Rights

Tambococha, and Tiputini (ITT) area of Yasuní National Park. The park is a UN World Biosphere Reserve and the ancestral territory of the Waorani, the Tagaeri and the Taromenane Indigenous peoples, of which the latter two are uncontacted. The government did not comply with the [one-year deadline](#) established by the Constitutional Court to suspend the activities and [affirmed](#) this will be done “progressively.”

Indigenous girls [kept advocating](#)—despite [reported](#) acts of intimidation—for the government to end gas flares impacting their communities in the Amazon region, as required by a 2021 ruling. By May, the government had [quenched](#) 145 of the 424 registered gas flares.

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