

## Civic Freedom Monitor: Ecuador

Last updated: **May 5, 2026**

### Recent Developments

On March 27, 2026, UN Special Procedures experts [stated](#) that they had received credible information about a “rapid deterioration of civic space” affecting Indigenous peoples and human rights defenders in Ecuador. Their statement highlights persecution, arbitrary detentions, accusations of terrorism, militarization of communities, and, highly relevant to freedom of association, the freezing of bank accounts belonging to indigenous people and CSOs. Although several CSOs and activists reported the freezing of their bank accounts in September 2025, it was not until November 2025 that a judge lifted the freeze and allowed the organizations to continue their work. Please see the News section below in this report for additional details.

*While we aim to maintain information that is as current as possible, we realize that situations can rapidly change. If you are aware of any additional information or inaccuracies on this page, please keep us informed; write to ICNL at [ngomonitor@icnl.org](mailto:ngomonitor@icnl.org).*

### Introduction

Civil society in Ecuador is diverse and active, encompassing foundations, corporations, professional and business associations, unions, and numerous informal organizations, such as church groups, sports clubs, and youth groups. Ecuador’s civil society operates within a civil law framework, which over the past 15 years has been shaped by frequent executive-level regulation, creating both formal and practical barriers to the formation, operation, and dissolution of CSOs. Although civic freedoms—including freedom of expression, association, and assembly—are constitutionally guaranteed, they are often constrained in practice by executive actions, legal ambiguity, and political pressures.

### Civic Freedoms at a Glance

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Organizational Forms</b> | Corporation, Foundations, National and Foreign Social Organizations, and Management or Social Organizations, which are founded by institutions or the state and may apply for inclusion within the registry system. |
| <b>Registration Body</b>    | State Ministries through the RUOS (Unique Registry of Social Organizations) and SUIOS (Unified System of Social Organizations Information) website.                                                                 |
| <b>Approximate Number</b>   | 66,979 (according to the social organizations unique registry - <a href="http://www.sociedadcivil.gob.ec">www.sociedadcivil.gob.ec</a> )                                                                            |

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Barriers to Formation</b>  | Second and third degree Corporations and Foundations may not attain legal status without possessing USD 4,000; Registration applicants must submit the nationality, general data and identity cards of all its members.                                             |
| <b>Barriers to Operations</b> | Limited political activity and and wide public discretion to control and dissolve CSOs.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Barriers to Resources</b>  | Required accreditation from RUOS (Unique Registry of Social Organizations) to access public resources.                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Barriers to Expression</b> | CSOs and media outlets that are critical of the government may be subject to disproportionately burdensome financial penalties, unfair court proceedings, and may be dissolved by an administrative procedure.                                                      |
| <b>Barriers to Assembly</b>   | Wide discretion for protesters to be penalized for any political act based on the vaguely written Organic Integral Penal Code, which has 29 articles about crimes against the constitutional state structure, such as sabotage and paralyzation of public services. |

## Legal Overview

This section provides a brief overview of Ecuador’s legal framework for the promotion and protection of civic freedoms. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

## RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

| Key International Agreements                                                                                          | Ratification* |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)                                                          | 1969          |
| Optional Protocol to ICCPR (ICCPR-OP1)                                                                                | 1969          |
| International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)                                              | 1969          |
| Optional Protocol to ICESCR (Op-ICESCR)                                                                               | 2009          |
| International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)                             | 1966          |
| Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)                                    | 1981          |
| Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women                                | 2002          |
| Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)                                                                           | 1990          |
| International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW) | 2002          |

| Key International Agreements                                 | Ratification* |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) | 2008          |

| Key Regional Agreements                                                                                                              | Ratification |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| American Convention on Human Rights                                                                                                  | 1977         |
| Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights "Protocol of San Salvador" | 1993         |

\* Category includes ratification, accession, or succession to the treaty

## CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador was approved by referendum on September 28, 2008 and published in the Official Registry number 449, on October 20, 2008. [Constitutional amendments](#), which eliminated term limits for political office, entered into force December 21, 2015. Other [constitutional amendments](#) went into force on January 25, 2021.

According to the Constitution, all organizations in society are recognized to be an expression of popular sovereignty and may therefore carry out processes of self-determination, influence decisions and public policy, and exercise social control of public bodies at all levels of government (Article 96). Organizations may be structured in any manner to enforce the popular power and its expression, although they must adhere to internal democratic practices and ensure the accountability of the organization (Article 96).

The Constitution creates the Council of Citizen Participation and Social Control as a fourth branch of the State that is in charge of designating authorities such as the General Attorney, the General Prosecutor, and the members of the Judicial Administrative Council, among others. The Constitution provides that all the candidates will be nominated by CSOs and the citizens.

The Constitution also contains a considerable number of articles relating to the protection of human rights, including:

- Article 66.13: Freedom of association – The State recognizes and guarantees the people the right to associate, meet, and speak freely and voluntarily.
- Article 66.11: The right to maintain the privacy about one's convictions- No one can be compelled to testify about himself. No one can require or use, without authorization of the holder of his legitimate representative, personal information on religious beliefs, affiliation, or political thinking or data concerning his health and sex life, except for medical needs.
- Article 66.19: The right to personal data protection- This includes access to and decision-making power over information and data, and its corresponding protection. Data gathering, filing, processing, distribution, and spreading shall require the owner's authorization or a legal mandate.
- Article 66.6: Freedom of expression – The State recognizes and guarantees the people the right to the free development of personality, with no more limitations than the rights of others, and the right to think and express one's thoughts freely and in all its forms and manifestations.

The Constitution guarantees the full exercise of these rights by stating the following:

- Article 11.1: Rights should be exercised, promoted and claimed either individually or collectively before the competent authorities, and these authorities shall ensure compliance.
- Article 11.3: The rights set out in the Constitution and international human rights instruments are self-executing by and before any public, administrative, or judicial, servant or server, either ex officio or at the request of a party.
- Article 10: The recognition of the rights and guarantees set out in the Constitution and international instruments on human rights shall not preclude other rights arising from the dignity of individuals, communities, peoples, and nationalities that are necessary for their full development.

Constitutional amendments that restructure the National Council of Citizen Participation and Social Control entered into force on February 14, 2018. They are available in the [Suplemento Registro Oficial No. 180](#) of February 14, 2018.

On August 1, 2018, the Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional the National Assembly's February 2015 constitutional amendments. As a result, the press is no longer considered a "public service" but rather a "right of the population."

## NATIONAL LAWS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

There is no comprehensive law in Ecuador regarding CSOs. The basis of the sector's legal treatment is the Civil Code, which has been in effect since 1861. The Civil Code provides the President of the Republic the authority under the *Regulation for Approval of the Statutes, Reforms and Codifications, Liquidation and Dissolution, and Registration of Members and Directives, of the Organizations under the Civil Code and Special Laws* ("The Regulations") to establish and dissolve CSOs. Thus, CSOs are governed by executive decrees, which have been promulgated to address issues of operations, organization, and oversight.

Other relevant national laws and regulations include the following:

- Ministerial Agreement No. MIES-2021-036 (May 21, 2021), which contains General Rules for the Attention of Procedures of Social Organizations and the Application of the Regulation for the Granting of Legal Personality to Social Organizations, issued by Executive Decree No. 193 of October 23, 2017.
- Código Civil (Civil Code).
- Delegación para aprobación de fundaciones y corporaciones (Delegation for the approval of Foundations and Corporations) November 30, 1998.
- Estatuto del Régimen Jurídico Administrativo de la Función Ejecutiva (Statute for the Juridical-Administrative Regime of the Executive Branch) March 18, 2002.
- Reglamento para la aprobación, control y extinción de personas jurídicas de derecho privado, con finalidad social y sin fines de lucro, que se constituyen al amparo de lo dispuesto en el Título XXIX del Libro I del Código Civil, aplicable a todos los Ministerios de Estado. (The Regulation for Approval of the Statutes, Reforms and Codification, Liquidation and Dissolution and Registration of Members and Directives of the Organizations under the Civil Code and Special Laws). Enacted on September 11, 2002 reformed on February 6, 2007, September 17, 2007, April 8, 2008, and on October 27, 2008.
- Reglamento a la Ley de Extranjería (Regulation of the Foreigners Law) July 7, 1986.
- Registro Electrónico de Fundaciones y Corporaciones (Electronic Registration of Foundations and Corporations) March 31, 2009.

- Instructivo para estandarizar los trámites y procedimientos para la aplicación del Reglamento para la aprobación, control y extinción de personas jurídicas de derecho privado, con finalidad social y sin fines de lucro, que se constituyen al amparo de lo dispuesto en el Título XXIX del Libro I del Código Civil, aplicable a todos los Ministerios de Estado. (Special administrative rules to standardize the procedures for the execution of the Regulation for Approval or the Statutes, Reforms and Codification, Liquidation and Dissolution and Registration of Members and Directives of the Organizations under the Civil Code and Special Law) May 4, 2009.
- Código Tributario (Tax Code) June 14, 2005.
- Ley reformativa para la Equidad Tributaria en el Ecuador (Reformatory Law for Tax Equity in Ecuador) December 29, 2007, amended on July 16, 2013.
- Ley de Régimen Tributario Interno (Law of Internal Regime of Taxation) November 17, 2004, amended on August 12, 2013.
- Ley de Control Tributario y Financiero (Law for Finance and Tax Control) December 29, 1988.
- Ley de Registro Único de Contribuyentes (Law for the Unique Contributor Registry) August 12, 2004.
- Reglamento para la aplicación de la Ley Orgánica de Régimen Tributario Interno (Regulation for the Application of the Law of Internal Regime of Taxation) June 8, 2010, amended on January 23, 2013.
- Ley Orgánica de la Contraloría General del Estado (Law of the Estate Control) June 12, 2002.
- Reglamento a la Ley Orgánica de la contraloría General del Estado (Regulation of the Law of the Estate Control) July 7, 2003.
- Control Externo de las Entidades de Derecho Privado (External Control of the Private Entities) January 13, 2003.
- Ley Orgánica del Sistema Nacional de Contratación Pública (Law for the Public National Contractual System) August 4, 2008, amended on October 14, 2013.
- Contratación de Asociaciones de Primero y Segundo Grado (Regulations for Contracts with Social Organizations of First and Second Degree) May 12, 2002.
- Ley de Modernización del Estado (Law for the Modernization of the State) December 31, 1993.
- Ley para la Reforma de las Finanzas Públicas (Law for the Reform of the Public Finances) April 30, 1999, amended on December 29, 2007.
- Ley que regula las declaraciones patrimoniales juramentadas (Law that Regulates the Patrimony Declaration) May 16, 2003
- Ley Orgánica de Transparencia y Acceso a la Información Pública (Law of Transparency and Access to Public Information) Segundo Suplemento del Registro Oficial No.245 , February 7, 2023.
- Ley Orgánica de la Función de Transparencia y Control Social (Law of the Transparency Branch and Social Control) August 7, 2013.
- Código del Trabajo (Labour Code) December 16, 2005.
- Reglamento De Transferencias De Recursos A Personas Naturales O Juridicas De Derecho Privado Sin Fines De Lucro Con Finalidad Social (Regulation Of Resources Transfers To Persons And Legal

Entities Of Non-Profit Private Law With Social Purpose) November 20, 2013. Instructivo Para La Regulacion De Los Observatorios De Justicia Que Se Encuentran Bajo El Control Del Ministerio De Justicia, Derechos Humanos Y Cultos (Instruction Notice to Regulate the Justice Observatories under the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Religious Sects) December 27, 2012.

- Instructivo Para La Acreditacion De Organizaciones De La Sociedad Civil Que Reciban Recursos Publicos (Instruction Notice to Accredit Civil Society Organizations that Receive Public Resources to Work in Agricultural Projects), September 19, 2012
- Decreto Ejecutivo 355 que reforma el reglamento del sistema unificado de información de organizaciones sociales dentro Decreto 16 (Executive Decree 355 that reforms the regulation that has to do with the Unique Registry of Social Organizations within Decree 16), July 3, 2014
- Instructivo para normar los trámites relacionados con el registro de Directiva, Acreditación, Inactividad, Reactivación, Disolución y Liquidación de Organizaciones Sociales que estén bajo el control del Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social MIES. (Instruction Notice to regulate the procedures associated with the registration of Directive, accreditation, downtime, reactivation, dissolution and liquidation of Social Organizations that are under the control of the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion MIES), July 24, 2014.
- Política sobre Organizaciones Sociales aprobadas por el Ministerio de Industrias y Productividad. (Policy on Social Organizations approved by the Ministry of Industries and Productivity), October 30, 2014.
- Instructivo para establecer procedimientos estandarizados en la transferencia de expedientes de organizaciones sociales en aplicación del Reglamento para el Funcionamiento del Sistema Unificado de Información de las Organizaciones Sociales –SUIOS (RUOS). (Instruction Notice to establish standardized procedures to transfer social organizations' files in order to implement the Regulation for the unified system of social and civic organizations information functioning), February 13, 2015.
- Administrative instruction to regulate the procedures of social organizations that are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transport and Public Works, March 7, 2016. Acuerdo Ministerial Número 12- 2016.
- Ministerial Agreement 12-2016.
- Instructivo de aplicación del Reglamento del Sistema Unificado de Información de Organizaciones Sociales y Ciudadanas.
- Administrative instruction for the application of the regulation of the Unified Information System of Social and Citizen Organizations (Executive Decree 739 published on August 21th, 2015) that are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion. This administrative instructive is in force since October 25, 2016.
- Decreto Ejecutivo 739 que contiene la codificación y reforma del decreto ejecutivo 16 de 20 de junio de 2013 (Executive Decree that contains codification and reform of the Executive Decree 16 of June 20th, 2013).
- Regulation 180 for the competition of merits for the selection and designation of the major and alternate directors and alternate representatives of civil society to the National Councils for Gender, Intergenerationals, People and Nationalities, Disabilities and Human Mobility (Registro Oficial 740 of April 25, 2016).

- Instruction for the Application of the Regulation of the Unified Information System of Social and Citizen Organizations (Executive Decree 739 published on August 21, 2015) that are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion. (October 25, 2016).
- Regulation for the Granting of Juridical Personality to Social Organizations (Executive Decree 193) (Registro Oficial Suplemento 109 of October 27, 2017).
- Ministerial Decision No. SDH-SDH-2022-0006-R, or The Regulation of Procedure for the selection, subscription and execution of Technical-Financial Cooperation Agreements with Non-Profit Social Organizations for the Strengthening of Comprehensive Care for Victims of Gender Violence in Ecuador (January 29, 2022).
- Ley Orgánica de Transparencia Social. Tercer Suplemento del Registro Oficial No. 112 el 28 de agosto de 2025.
- Reglamento General a la Ley Orgánica de Transparencia Social. Decreto Ejecutivo No. 191. Octavo Suplemento Registro Oficial No. 153 (October 28, 2025).

## PENDING REGULATORY INITIATIVES

### CSO Registry System

The Unified Information System of Social Organizations (SUIOS) and the Unified Registry of Social Organizations (RUOS) are still operating, but under the new Organic Law for Social Transparency, approved on August 28, 2025, will be replaced by a new Unified Information System for Social Nonprofit Organizations (SUIOSSFL). The government has sixty days to enact the relevant regulations.

*We are unaware of other current pending NGO regulatory initiatives. If you are aware of any additional information, please keep us informed; write to ICNL at [ngomonitor@icnl.org](mailto:ngomonitor@icnl.org).*

## Legal Analysis

This section provides an in-depth assessment of Ecuador's legal environment for civic freedoms, including the barriers to the exercise of the freedoms of association (formation, operations, resources), expression, and peaceful assembly. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

## ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS

General Regulations to the Organic Law on Social Transparency (Reglamento General de la Ley Orgánica de Transparencia Social) establishes three categories of civil society organizations: foundations, corporations, and national or foreign non-governmental organizations (Article 4). Foundations are defined as nonprofit organizations established by one or more persons for the pursuit of social or public-interest purposes (Article 5). Corporations are membership-based nonprofit organizations formed by a minimum number of individuals who associate to pursue common objectives (Article 6). There are three types of corporations:

1. First-degree corporations are organizations formed by individuals pursuing a common goal, including associations, clubs, committees, professional associations, and centers.
2. Second-degree corporations bring together multiple first-degree corporations and include federations, chambers, and unions.
3. Third-degree corporations are entities composed of second-degree corporations, such as confederations, national unions, and similar umbrella organizations.

National or foreign NGOs are nonprofit organizations that carry out activities aimed at promoting social development, cooperation, or other public-interest objectives, subject to the specific

## **PUBLIC BENEFIT STATUS**

Under Ecuadorian tax law and its regulations, certain CSOs are exempt from paying income tax. Eligible organizations include those dedicated to public benefit; religious activities; women, children, and family development; culture and the arts; education and research; health; sports; professional and labor unions; indigenous peoples; cooperatives; federations and confederations; and other peasants associations.

To receive this exemption, a CSO must meet the following requirements:

- i. At least 5 percent of annual income must come from donations or contributions;
- ii. The organization must operate on a nonprofit basis;
- iii. All income must be directed to the organization's stated objectives; and
- iv. Any excess income must be re-invested into the organization.

There is no preferential tax treatment for income from foreign sources.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Since 2008, Ecuador has recognized five branches of government: the executive, legislative, judicial, electoral, and transparency and social control. The transparency and social control branch oversees public-sector entities and organizations, as well as private-sector bodies that provide services or carry out activities in the public interest. Its mandate is to ensure that such activities are conducted responsibly, transparently, and equitably. In addition, it promotes citizen participation, protects the exercise and fulfillment of rights, and combats corruption.

This branch is composed of the Council of Citizen Participation and Social Control, the Ombudsman's Office, the State Comptroller General's Office, and the superintendencies. These bodies enjoy legal personality and administrative, financial, budgetary, and organizational autonomy under the law. According to the Ecuadorean Constitution, the Council of Citizen Participation and Social Control is tasked with promoting the exercise of participatory rights, organizing mechanisms of social oversight on matters of public interest, and appointing certain public authorities in accordance with the law. Despite its broad mandate, the Council has struggled to function effectively.

The Council consists of seven members and seven alternates. From among its members, the counselors elect a president, who serves as the Council's legal representative. Counselors must be Ecuadorian citizens with experience in social organizations, citizen participation, or anti-corruption efforts, or have a professional background that demonstrates civic commitment and defense of the public interest. They may not have been members, adherents, or leaders of political parties or political movements in the five years prior to their appointment.

## **BARRIERS TO FORMATION**

The legal framework governing the establishment and operation of CSOs in Ecuador is currently set forth in the Organic Law on Social Transparency and its General Regulations (Decree No. 191). Under this framework, CSOs seeking legal personality must comply with the applicable registration requirements, including the submission of their constitutive documents, bylaws, and information concerning their founders or members to the competent authority.

The current framework does not require CSOs to demonstrate a minimum amount of assets as a condition for obtaining legal personality. It also establishes procedural safeguards applicable to the dissolution of

organizations, including due process protections. These provisions represent the principal requirements currently applicable to the establishment and legal recognition of CSOs, replacing the regulatory regimes established under previous decrees.

## **Dissolution**

Article 19 of Decree No. 193 preserved two broad grounds for dissolving social organizations: “deviating from the purposes and objectives for which it was constituted” and “engaging in partisan politics activities,” which are legally reserved for registered political parties and movements.

These provisions grant authorities wide discretion to dissolve CSOs. In a notable example, in December 2013 the Ministry of Environment dissolved Foundation Pachamama, alleging that it had failed to fulfill its objectives and was “acting like a political party that affected the internal security of the state as well as public peace.” An appeal was denied in February 2014, with the Ministry ruling that no constitutional rights had been violated. The Foundation’s legal personality was reinstated in November 2017 by a ministerial resolution.

Another prominent case occurred in July 2016, when the Ministry of Education initiated legal proceedings to dissolve the National Education Union (UNE), one of Ecuador’s oldest and largest trade unions. The proceedings, widely considered unconstitutional, prompted UNE to seek direct intervention from the International Labour Organization (ILO). That same month, the Ministry also notified nine other CSOs of alleged violations related to the election of officers and compliance with organizational statutes.

## **BARRIERS TO OPERATIONS**

Decree No. 191 contains ambiguous and arbitrary provisions, such as Article 4, which states that “social organizations may not intervene, directly or indirectly, in activities aimed at hindering or interfering with legally authorized mining projects. Nevertheless, they may develop social plans or programs related to said projects, provided that these are duly approved, coordinated, and supervised by the competent Sectoral Ministry. In the event of non-compliance with this provision, the competent authority will order the suspension of the legal status of the offending organization for a period of four (4) years, without prejudice to any other applicable administrative or legal sanctions.”

The National Service of Ecuadorian Customs retains authority to monitor and control foreign transactions involving CSOs, which can hinder access to international funding and collaboration.

## **BARRIERS TO RESOURCES**

Ecuadorian law does not impose formal legal barriers on CSOs’ ability to seek or secure resources. However, corporations and foundations may be required to submit economic reports to the government upon request, giving authorities discretionary oversight of CSOs’ financial management.

## **BARRIERS TO EXPRESSION**

Between 2024 and 2026, freedom of expression in Ecuador has been shaped by an increasingly restrictive environment, marked by insecurity, political polarization, and the weakening of civic space. Stigmatizing government rhetoric has contributed to a hostile climate for journalists and CSOs engaged in monitoring, reporting, and public advocacy.

In 2025 and 2026, cases have been reported of bank account freezes affecting organizations, particularly those linked to indigenous peoples and human rights advocacy, which limits their operational capacity and generates a chilling effect on the exercise of freedom of expression and association. These actions, which in some cases are linked to criminal investigations under charges such as terrorism, raise concerns about the disproportionate use of legal tools to restrict the work of critical actors.

The situation has drawn international attention. In March 2026, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [warned](#) of a “rapid deterioration of civic space” in Ecuador, explicitly highlighting concerns about the targeting of social leaders, the misuse of criminal law, and restrictions on

the work of organizations. Taken together, these elements show that, while freedom of expression remains formally protected, its effective exercise faces growing obstacles, particularly for organized civil society.”

## **BARRIERS TO ASSEMBLY**

The Ecuadorian Constitution guarantees the right to assembly and association through several provisions:

- Article 66.13: The State recognizes and guarantees the right of people to associate, meet, and demonstrate or protest freely and voluntarily.
- Article 98: Individuals and groups may exercise the right of resistance against acts or omissions of public authorities, as well as against natural or legal persons that violate or may infringe their constitutional rights, and may claim or demand the recognition of new rights

There is no standalone law specifically regulating assembly or public gatherings; however, other laws affect this right:

- The Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy, and Decentralization grants municipal governments responsibility for the use of public spaces. Thus, organizers of public gatherings, demonstrations, or marches in public spaces must ask for municipal permission.
- The Penal Code requires police to guarantee civil and religious assemblies and authorizes them to prevent or dissolve gatherings that disturb the peace or commit an offense, applying measures deemed appropriate in each case.

Several key barriers affect the freedom of assembly:

### **Advance Permission**

Organizers of assemblies, protests, or public gatherings in public places must secure permission from both the municipality and the Police Superintendent within the Ministry of Interior. Regulations do not specify how far in advance notice must be submitted, what information must be provided, or when authorities must respond. However, authorities are generally required to respond to petitions within 15 business days, with a presumption of approval if no response is given.

Because advance notice is required, spontaneous demonstrations are effectively prohibited. Under Article 153 of the Penal Code, anyone who promotes, directs, or organizes a public demonstration without written permission may face imprisonment of one to three months and fines of USD 9 to 26.

### **Time, Place, and Manner Restrictions**

Under ordinary circumstances, assemblies may be held at any time or place. However, according to the Constitution, the President may declare a state of emergency in the entire country or certain areas during “severe external or internal conflicts,” which can impose restrictions on gatherings.

### **Criminal Penalties**

Articles 345 and 346 of the Penal Code classify acts that sabotage or paralyze public services as “crimes against the constitutional state structure,” which can apply to certain forms of protest.

## **Additional Resources**

This section contains links to external reports and news reports relevant to civic freedoms. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

## GLOBAL INDEX RANKINGS

| Ranking Body                                            | Rank                                                                      | Ranking Scale<br>(best - worst possible)      |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#">UN Human Development Index</a>              | 88 (2023)                                                                 | 1 - 193                                       |
| <a href="#">World Justice Project Rule of Law Index</a> | 97 (2024)                                                                 | 1 - 142                                       |
| <a href="#">Transparency International</a>              | 121 (2024)                                                                | 1 - 180                                       |
| <a href="#">Fund for Peace Fragile States Index</a>     | 90 (2024)                                                                 | 179 - 1                                       |
| <a href="#">Freedom House: Freedom in the World</a>     | Status: Partly Free<br>Political Rights: 28<br>Civil Liberties: 37 (2025) | Free/Partly Free/Not Free<br>40 - 0<br>60 - 0 |

## REPORTS

|                                                            |                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| UN Universal Periodic Review Reports                       | <a href="#">Ecuador UPR page</a>                                                                                                      |
| UN Human Rights Reports                                    | <a href="#">Ecuador</a>                                                                                                               |
| UN Human Rights Committee                                  | <a href="#">Concluding observations on the combined twenty-third and twenty-fourth periodic reports of Ecuador (2017)</a>             |
| U.S. State Department                                      | <a href="#">2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</a>                                                                        |
| Fund for Peace Fragile States Index Reports                | <a href="#">Ecuador</a>                                                                                                               |
| IMF Country Reports                                        | <a href="#">Ecuador and the IMF</a>                                                                                                   |
| Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos   | <a href="#">Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos) named: "Situation of Human Rights in Guayaquil. 2014 Report</a> |
| International Center for Not-for-Profit Law Online Library | <a href="#">Ecuador</a>                                                                                                               |

## NEWS

### [Government Freezes Groups' Bank Accounts](#) (December 2025)

Authorities in Ecuador have used secret intelligence reports to freeze the bank accounts of Ecuadorian Indigenous and environmental groups, Human Rights Watch said. Since September 19, 2025, the Financial and Economic Analysis Unit, the government agency responsible for preventing financial crimes, has ordered the banking regulatory authority to freeze the accounts of several Indigenous and environmental organizations along with their leaders and members. The decisions came as some indigenous and environmental groups were protesting the government's decision to scrap diesel subsidies and to greenlight a mining project in the southern province of Azuay. Judges lifted at least some of the bank freezes after authorities failed to disclose the evidence behind these decisions in court.

### [\*\*The 2025 Strike in Figures: Detainees, Deaths, Injuries, Protest Actions, and Economic Losses\*\*](#) (October 2025) (Spanish)

The 2025 strike did not have nationwide reach, but instead was concentrated in several provinces in the northern and central highlands, particularly Imbabura and Pichincha. The month-long unrest resulted in arrests, deaths, injuries, acts of protest, and significant economic losses. The demonstrations emerged in response to the elimination of diesel subsidies and reflected growing social and political tensions in Ecuador.

### [\*\*The right to defend rights at risk under President Daniel Noboa's government\*\*](#) (August 2025)

Front Line Defenders expresses its deep concern about the deterioration of conditions for the defence of human rights and nature in Ecuador, and its impact on defenders in this context. This is attributable to a series of institutional measures and new legislation proposed by the national government that open the door to the closure of fundamental rights spaces, the criminalisation of human rights defenders and civil society organisations, and impact access to justice and information.

### [\*\*Ecuador NGO report identifies 45 human rights violations by public officials under executive decree 111\*\*](#) (July 2024)

The Regional Human Rights Advisory Foundation (Inredh) of Ecuador presented its report on human rights violations under Executive Decree 111, in which it recorded 45 cases of violations perpetrated by public officials. The NGO's 28-page report documents and analyses complaints made by citizens from January 8 to April 8 of this year, which were collected through various social media platforms.

### [\*\*Business heir Daniel Noboa sworn in as Ecuador president\*\*](#) (February 2024)

Daniel Noboa has been sworn in as Ecuador's new president, promising to reduce violence and create jobs in the country gripped by a bloody drug war. The 35-year-old heir to a banana business empire won a run-off vote in October on promises to restore security and boost employment in the South American country, which has faced economic challenges since the coronavirus pandemic, pushing thousands to migrate.

### [\*\*Authorities must safeguard human rights amidst pre-electoral violence\*\*](#) (August 2023)

Amnesty International is extremely concerned at the current state of violence in Ecuador, which is facing a sharp increase in its homicide rate as well as a series of killings of candidates for public office in recent weeks, culminating with the seemingly politically motivated killing of Fernando Villavicencio last night. The victims of the current spate of political violence deserve truth, justice and reparation and authorities must take swift action to investigate these crimes. At the same time, the state of emergency declared in response to these events must not open the door to grave human rights violations that could undermine the security of Ecuador's population as a whole.

### [\*\*Ecuadorian Women March against Gender Violence\*\*](#) (October 2022)

Ecuadorian women took to the streets to protest against the 206 femicides already recorded in the country during 2022 in the aftermath of María Belén Bernal's murder. The 34-year-old lawyer went to visit her partner at the Police Academy in Quito and was not heard from for days until her body was found in a nearby bush. The man, a police lieutenant, is still at large. After sacking two police generals as well as Interior Minister Patricio Carrillo, President Guillermo Lasso announced the creation of a gender-violence unit in each state agency and pledged to increase the budget for the enforcement of the Law for the Eradication of Violence against Women.

## **ARCHIVED NEWS**

### [\*\*Representatives of Civil Society Propose Dialogue between Government and Protesters\*\*](#) (June 2022)

### [\*\*New Initiative to Strengthen Civil Society\*\*](#) (April 2022) (Spanish)

### [\*\*Launch of the Coalition for Freedom of Association\*\*](#) (April 2021) (Spanish)

### [\*\*IACHR Announces Observation Mission to Ecuador in Response to Protests\*\*](#) (October 2019)

[Massive Mobilisation of International Civil Society on Global Anti-Chevron Day](#) (May 2019)

[Dialogue with Civil Society: Halfway There](#) (May 2018) (*Spanish*)

[Campaign for Popular Consultation and Referendum Ends in Ecuador](#) (February 2018)

[Ecuador adopts a new approach towards foreign investment](#) (January 2018)

[Pachamama NGO will return to work](#) (November 2017) (*Spanish*)

[The repeal of decree 16-739 does not improve the situation of civil society](#) (November 2017) (*Spanish*)

[President Moreno has revoked two executive decrees](#) (October 2017) (*Spanish*)

[Civil society is organizing to demand a popular consultation](#) (September 2017) (*Spanish*)

[Code of Participation “Stabs” Civil Society](#) (August 2017) (*Spanish*)

[Decrees 16 and 739: Simple mechanisms to dissolve organizations?](#) (May 2017) (*Spanish*)

[Freedom of association in check](#) (May 2017) (*Spanish*)

[Draft Organic Code of Citizen Participation and Social Control](#) (April 2017) (*Spanish*)

[State of civil society](#) (April 2017) (*Spanish*)

[“We don’t want Ecuador to end up like Venezuela”](#) (March 2017) (*Spanish*)

[Ecuador: Universal Periodic Review, October 2016](#) (October 2016)

[How to register social organizations](#) (August 2016) (*Spanish*)

[The Two Readings of the UN Human Rights Report](#) (August 2016) (*Spanish*)

[Nine Organizations Face Dissolution](#) (July 2016) (*Spanish*)

[National Union of Educators \(UNE\) Faces Dissolution](#) (July 2016) (*Spanish*)

[Citizen group takes stock of the citizen participation ordinance](#) (February 2016)

[Condemning Denial-of-Service \(DDoS\) Attacks on Fundamedios](#) (January 2016)

[Constitutional Amendments Approved in Ecuador](#) (December 2015) (*Spanish*)

[Dissolution of Fundamedios Threatens All CSOs](#) (September 2015) (*Spanish*)

[CSOs Call for Repeal of Decree](#) (September 2015) (*Spanish*)

[Fundamedios Threatened with Dissolution](#) (June 2015) (*Spanish*)

[CSOs brief CEDAW on Situation of Women in Ecuador](#) (March 2015)

[Decree No. 16 keeps social organizations on the edge](#) (February 2015) (*Spanish*)

[Government enacts rule to have organized implementation of Decree No. 16](#) (February 2015) (*Spanish*)

[Facebook Pages of Government Critics Censored](#) (September 2014) (*Spanish*)

[Deadline to Complete the New Registry System](#) (July 2014) (*Spanish*)

[At odds with Ecuador, USAID moves to leave](#) (July 2014)

[Activistas son detenidos en distintos actos represivos](#) (July 2014) (Spanish)

[Participación Ciudadana \(PC\) that monitors elections is under Supervision of the Secretariat of Communications \(SECOM\)](#) (March 2014) (Spanish)

[Ministerio del Ambiente rechaza recurso de apelación interpuesto por Fundación Pachamama](#) (Febrero 2014)

[Ecuador Uses Presidential Decree Powers to Shut Down NGO](#) (December 2013)

[El Gobierno cierra la ONG Pachamama por protestas](#) (Diciembre 2013)

[Human Rights Watch calls on Correa to revoke Decree No. 16](#) (August 2013)

[Defenders of Pachamama Protest Breach of the Mining Mandate](#) (May 2013)

[Ecuador the latest 'XXIst Century Dictatorship'?](#) (February 2013)

[NGO petition yields results for Amazon](#) (January 2013)

[Ecuador's president proposes freedom of expression as a function of the State](#) (November 2012)

[UNHCR chief highlights role of CSOs on World Refugee Day](#) (June 2012)

[Ecuador's indigenous peoples reach Quito after 600km March for Water, Life and Dignity](#) (March 2012)

[Ecuadorean Court of National Justice accepts President Correa's pardons in libel cases involving the media](#) (February 2012)

[Civil society organizations respond to government regulations in Ecuador](#) (June 2011)

[According to Human Rights Watch the legal actions taken by President Correa represent a step backwards on freedom of expression](#) (March 2011)

[NGOs to publish manifesto on proposed draft regulations](#) (January 2011)

[Human Rights Watch calls for Ecuador to withdraw proposed Presidential Decree on civil society](#) (December 2010)

[Ecuador: Modify proposed Communications Law](#) (August 2010)

[Ecuador agrees to keep Amazon Eco-Treasure free of oil drilling](#) (August 2010)

[Civil society organisations in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Uruguay aim to strengthen their accountability practices](#) (May 2010)

[Ecuador holds big drive to register Colombian refugees](#) (March 2010)

## Key Events

On July 31, 2022, more than 50 representatives of social organizations from Ecuador [inaugurated](#) the Training School for Leaders.

## historical notes

Civil society in Ecuador originated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with charitable and voluntary organizations that provided services to the poor and vulnerable. By the 1950s, these organizations had evolved into CSOs offering support to people with disabilities, family planning services, and educational programs. During the 1960s and 1970s, CSOs expanded their focus to urban development, environmental protection, and women's issues. The simultaneous growth of public services—education, health, water,

and irrigation—led to the creation of parents', teachers', and students' associations, as well as housing, water, irrigation, and neighborhood associations.

In the 1980s and 1990s, new CSOs emerged dedicated to protecting civil, political, cultural, and indigenous rights, promoting gender equity, and advancing environmental causes. During this period, civil society actors actively engaged with government, playing a key role in drafting the 1998 and 2008 Constitutions.

Today, Ecuador has a diverse and active civil society comprising corporations, foundations, private and public sector unions, professional and business organizations, and numerous informal organizations, including church groups, sports clubs, and youth groups. Despite high levels of CSO membership, overall civic engagement and citizen participation remain low. Membership in professional associations and chambers of commerce has declined since the Constitutional Court declared mandatory affiliation unconstitutional in 2008.

## **Regulatory Environment**

Although several initiatives have been launched to enact an Organic Law guaranteeing freedom of association and the functioning of civil society organizations, these have not been successful.

In August 2025, amidst considerable debate and the promotion of stigmatizing rhetoric against organizations by authorities and politicians, the Organic Law of Social Transparency was passed. While this law is presented as an instrument to promote public trust and prevent the misuse of organizations, it has generated concern among sectors of civil society and international organizations due to the risk that its provisions may allow for excessive state control, affecting organizational autonomy and the exercise of rights such as freedom of association.

In October 2025, the Regulations to this law were enacted, which are essentially general regulations for civil society organizations. These regulations establish requirements for the establishment, operation, oversight, and eventual dissolution of civil society organizations, as well as obligations regarding registration, information reporting, and state oversight of these organizations, including aspects related to their financing and internal governance.

## **Recent Political Context**

In recent years, the political context surrounding civil society organizations (CSOs) in Ecuador has been shaped by a combination of institutional fragility, security challenges, and increasing polarization. Since 2024, the government's focus on addressing organized crime and internal security threats has led to the expansion of emergency powers and a broader use of legal and administrative tools. While these measures are framed as necessary to restore public order, they have also had spillover effects on civic space, raising concerns about the potential misuse of state authority in ways that may affect the operation and independence of CSOs.

At the same time, relations between political actors and civil society remain marked by distrust. Public discourse has continued to include narratives that question the legitimacy, funding sources, or political neutrality of certain organizations, particularly those engaged in human rights advocacy, environmental protection, or accountability efforts. This environment can contribute to stigmatization and increase the vulnerability of CSOs, especially when combined with heightened scrutiny or administrative controls over their activities.

Recent developments have further intensified these concerns. Between 2025 and 2026, reports of measures such as the freezing of bank accounts of some organizations and the use of criminal investigations in contexts involving social protest have underscored the risks faced by civil society actors. These dynamics have drawn attention from international human rights mechanisms, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which in March 2026 warned about a "rapid deterioration of civic space" in Ecuador. Together, these factors illustrate a political context in which CSOs continue to operate, but under growing pressure that may constrain their ability to participate freely

in public life.

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