

The State of the World's Human Rights; Ecuador 2025

Background

Daniel Noboa was re-elected president in April, and the militarization of public security continued. As of 19 December, a total of 8,847 homicides were recorded, the highest annual rate in the country's recent history.

In June, the National Assembly passed a series of security-centred laws proposed by the government that posed a threat to human rights. In September, the Constitutional Court declared the new Public Integrity and National Solidarity laws null and void and provisionally suspended some sections of the Intelligence Law.

In November, Ecuadorians voted against the call for a constituent assembly.

Enforced disappearances

The Public Prosecutor's Office opened investigations into the possible enforced disappearance of 43 individuals following security operations carried out by the armed forces in 2024. However, progress in the criminal investigations was slow, with no cooperation from the armed forces.¹ In December, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted urgent protection measures to 26 of those people and six *mujeres buscadoras* (women searchers).

Also in December, 16 members of the armed forces were convicted for the enforced disappearance of four Afro-descendant children in 2024 after their detention in the city of Guayaquil. The sentence also confirmed that they had been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment during their detention.

Freedom of expression, association and assembly

In August, the National Assembly passed a law that put freedom of association at risk, with the corresponding regulations being published in October.

The authorities carried out mass arrests and used unlawful force against protests led by Indigenous, social and trade union organizations, and opened abusive criminal proceedings against and froze the bank accounts of social leaders and protesters.² Civil society

organizations reported at least two people killed, 473 injured and 206 arrests during the protests that took place in September and October.

Journalist Patricio Aguilar was murdered on 4 March while reporting from the canton of Quinindé, Esmeraldas province. At the end of the year, the investigation into his murder remained open.

Detainees' rights

Detainees continued to suffer from overcrowding and lack of adequate food and healthcare, as well as torture and other ill-treatment. According to the National Service for Comprehensive Care for Adults Deprived of Liberty and Adolescent Offenders, between January and September, 760 prisoners had died in the country's prisons, 105 of them violently.

Right to a healthy environment

The government continued to allow gas flaring in the Amazon region, despite a 2021 court ruling ordering the removal of flares. In January, the Constitutional Court rejected an appeal filed by the same group of girls who had brought the original lawsuit, which sought to ensure full compliance with the initial ruling.³

By year's end, the government had not yet ordered the closure of the hundreds of oil wells in Yasuní National Park in the Amazon rainforest, ignoring the result of the 2023 referendum held on the issue.

The exploitation of natural resources continued to violate individual and collective rights, in particular the right to free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights condemned Ecuador for violating the right to collective property of Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon region by authorizing mining projects in their territory.

Human rights defenders

Human rights defenders, especially land, territory and environmental defenders, reported harassment, stigmatization, persecution and criminalization, including an attempt on the life of a community leader.

Sexual and reproductive rights

Access to abortion, which was legally allowed in three cases, continued to be limited by institutional barriers, lack of official data, medical precariousness and stigma. The UN Human

Rights Committee condemned Ecuador for violating the rights of a 13-year-old girl survivor of sexual violence who had been forced to carry her pregnancy to term.

Children's rights

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child urged Ecuador to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children and to address the issue of child deaths, especially in security operations carried out by the military.

Right to a fair trial

The UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and the IACHR expressed concern regarding the discrediting of the judiciary by the executive branch through harassment and public stigmatization, threats and a march led by President Noboa against the Constitutional Court, among other actions.

Right to truth, justice and reparation

The government publicly apologized to the more than 300 victims of practices akin to slavery by a foreign company, pursuant to a 2024 ruling. The victims were still awaiting comprehensive reparation. Ecuador had still not signed or ratified the Ljubljana-Hague Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance.

Impunity

Impunity persisted for human rights violations committed by security forces during the 2019 and 2022 protests.

