

World Report 2026



Ecuador

Events of 2025

A military truck patrol the streets during a demonstration in Quito, Ecuador on October 12, 2025, during a national strike convened by the CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) after the government of Daniel Noboa announced cutting subsidies for diesel.

© 2025 Veronica Lombeida/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

Ecuador continues to face high levels of violence, driven by organized crime. President Daniel Noboa's security response has failed to curb violence and has led to increased reports of human rights violations.

The government has advanced laws and measures that endanger rights, undermine the independence and security of Constitutional Court judges, and threaten constitutional safeguards.

Longstanding structural problems, including limited access to health care and employment, remain largely unaddressed.

Ecuador [was elected](#) to the UN Human Rights Council for the 2026-2028 term.

Violence and Organized Crime

After declining in 2024, homicides increased sharply in 2025, by about 40 percent by September according to the [Ministry of Interior](#), bringing Ecuador close to its [highest homicide rate](#) ever.

Between January and July 2025, the Attorney General's Office [recorded](#) 9,522 extortion complaints, down 40 percent from 2024. Kidnapping reports declined slightly compared to 2024 but remained at high levels.

[Organized crime groups have fragmented](#), giving rise to new groups. According to the [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data](#) monitor, the number of identifiable gangs increased 54 percent between 2023 and 2024.

“Internal Armed Conflict” and Human Rights Violations

Since January 2024, the government [has repeatedly invoked](#) the existence of an “internal armed conflict” in the country, which the Constitutional Court has [called into question](#), to justify loosening human rights protections in its fight against crime.

The government's response to organized crime has led to [serious human rights violations](#) by security forces, including [extrajudicial killings](#), [enforced disappearances](#), arbitrary arrests, and ill-treatment. On October 8, a judge [sent](#) 17 military officers to trial for the alleged enforced disappearance of four children unlawfully detained in December 2024 in Guayaquil and later found dead.

In June 2025, the Assembly passed laws granting the president broad powers to [declare](#) an “armed conflict,” [dispense](#) with crucial human rights protections, and expand [intelligence gathering](#). The Constitutional Court [struck](#) some of them down.

Democratic Institutions and the Rule of Law

Democratic institutions remained fragile, plagued by impunity for abuses and by allegations of corruption.

Judges and prosecutors often [lack](#) basic tools and security to investigate organized crime groups. As of October, the Observatory of Rights and Justice had [registered](#) 10 attacks against the judiciary in 2025, including assassination attempts and killings of judges and prosecutors.

The government organized [demonstrations](#) against the Constitutional Court and senior officials called its judges “[enemies of the people](#).” The [UN special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers](#), the [UN high commissioner for human rights](#), and the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) expressed concern regarding threats to the independence and security of the judges.

In September, President Noboa [issued](#) a decree establishing a referendum to convene a Constituent Assembly to draft a new Constitution. He attempted to bypass the Constitutional Court's review of the decree, as required under the Constitution, but electoral authorities ultimately referred the situation to the court. The court [approved](#) the referendum.

On November 16, Ecuadorians [voted down](#) the referendum proposals that included allowing the government to sign agreements to host foreign military bases and beginning a process to draft a new constitution.

Prison Conditions

Since January 2024, the military has overseen several prisons. As of August 2025, soldiers reportedly [remained](#) in 11 of the country's 34 facilities. Since the deployment of soldiers to prisons, monitors have reported instances of corruption, incommunicado detention, physical abuse, and obstruction of medical care.

[Media outlets](#) and [human rights groups](#) reported that tuberculosis killed dozens of detainees during 2025, notably during an outbreak in a Guayaquil prison.

More than 500 detainees [have been killed](#) in violent confrontations inside prisons since 2021. As of November, prison massacres in [Machala and Esmeraldas](#) left around 60 dead and others injured.

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

As of June, 24 percent of Ecuadorians earned incomes below the nationally defined [poverty](#) line (US\$92 per month) and 10.4 percent were experiencing "extreme poverty" (monthly income below \$52), with rates much higher in rural areas (42 and 25 percent, respectively). The [unemployment rate](#) was just 3.9 percent, but 52.6 percent of workers were in the informal sector.

Almost [14 percent](#) of Ecuadorians face undernourishment due to insufficient food consumption, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

The public healthcare system faces a [severe crisis](#), including chronic shortages of medicines and food. In September, a patient advocacy group for people requiring dialysis [warned](#) that a clinic in Quito serving hundreds of patients would soon stop providing dialysis "due to the failure of the State to pay."

Children's Rights

Between 2014 and April 2025, the Ministry of Education [received reports](#) that 8,378 children suffered school-related sexual violence committed by teachers, students, and other school staff. Government measures to address these abuses have [not progressed](#) at the scale and pace needed.

Rising violence by organized crime groups has affected children, with 504 [homicides of children](#) aged 10 to 19 between January and June 2025, a 68 percent rise from 2024. Organized crime groups [recruit](#) children to engage in various [roles](#); some are sexually exploited.

In June, President Noboa officially [declared](#) that preventing and eradicating the recruitment and use of children by non-state actors was a “national priority.” He ordered the creation of an interinstitutional committee tasked with formulating and implementing public policies to achieve this goal.

Later that month, the National Assembly [passed amendments](#) to the Child and Adolescent Code, [raising sentences](#) for children sentenced for crimes tied to the “internal armed conflict” from 8 to 15 years and prohibiting the use of any measures other than incarceration for children sentenced to five years or more. In February, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child had [urged](#) Ecuador to allow the detention of children only as a last resort and for the shortest time necessary. The Constitutional Court [struck down](#) the amendments in September.

Environmental Protection and Indigenous People’s Rights

The government has [not complied with a 2023 nationwide referendum](#) establishing a moratorium on oil drilling in the Ishpingo, Tambococha, and Tiputini (ITT) area of Yasuní National Park. The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that the government should end the drilling by 2024 but the government has dragged its feet, at [times citing the country’s security crisis](#). As of September, most of the block’s 240 wells remained active.

In September, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, joined by other Indigenous and social movements, conducted [protests](#) on cuts to diesel subsidies and the expansion of oil extraction in Indigenous territories.

Women’s and Girls’ Rights

Abortion is criminalized in Ecuador except in cases of risk to health or life, or rape, and even then access remains limited due to stigma, mistreatment, fear of prosecution, and restrictive interpretations of the law. Ecuadorian law [fails](#) to protect women and girls from violence and discrimination, undermining their autonomy and perpetuating gender inequality.

The Ministry of Women and Human Rights [reported](#) 429 violent deaths of women and girls as of late June, almost doubling the number [reported](#) during the same period in 2024.

That ministry is one of six that President Noboa [merged](#) in July, incorporating it into the Ministry of Government.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In January, the Constitutional Court [ruled in favor](#) of a transgender girl whose school failed to respect her gender identity (preferred name, uniform, bathroom access). The court ordered authorities to adopt a mandatory protocol for addressing sexual orientation and gender identity diversity in schools.

At time of writing the legislature had not taken action to align the law 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 prohibits same-sex couples from adopting children.

Internal Displacement and Migration

According to the [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre](#), the data analysis center of the Norwegian Refugee Council, in 2024 Ecuador had the region's third-highest number of people displaced by violence, after Haiti and Colombia. The Ombudsperson's Office [estimates](#) that 316,000 were displaced internally between 2022 and 2024.

Many migrants and asylum seekers in Ecuador [struggle](#) to obtain regular status and [integrate](#). In August, Ecuador [ended](#) an agreement that simplified the procedure for Venezuelan citizens to obtain visas and residency in the country.

During a visit by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Ecuador [said](#) it would accept third-country nationals deported from the United States.

Freedom of Expression and Association

[Journalists](#) and civil society organizations have [reported](#) growing stigmatization, harassment, and [attacks](#) by organized crime groups and authorities.

In August, the National Assembly passed a [law](#) that allows authorities to shut down organizations that commit "grave" infractions, such as carrying out "unauthorized" activities. The law also allows authorities to freeze the bank accounts of groups without a court order.

Authorities restricted freedom of assembly and at times [used excessive force](#) in their response to anti-government protests that started in mid-September. They [froze the bank](#) accounts of environmental and Indigenous groups and leaders, claiming they had [funded](#) violent protests, and [suspended community media outlets](#). Protesters were involved in some [violent incidents](#).

