

Ecuador's government declares state of war with support of Washington

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Only six weeks after his inauguration, Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa has suspended democratic rights and ordered tanks and thousands of troops to carry out military operations across the country.

On Monday, following a handful of prison riots and the jailbreak of drug lord Adolfo Macías, alias “Fito,” Noboa ordered a state of exception nationally for 60 days. The measure suspends freedom of assembly, speech and movement, imposes a nighttime curfew enforced through arrests, and “provides political and legal support” for the military to act with impunity.

In response to a manhunt with thousands of soldiers and police, on Tuesday gangs launched at least 30 attacks in nine different cities, targeting markets, malls, hospitals, university campuses, police stations, and briefly taking a television news set hostage on live air.

Videos on social media have shown scenes of chaos, with crowds of students and citizens running from attacks.

The government announced that the attacks and clashes on Tuesday left 13 dead, including three police officers, with prison guards and police taken hostage.

Noboa then escalated the conflict, declaring war on 22 gangs. “I have ordered the Armed Forces to execute military operations to neutralize these groups,” he stated.

The events on Monday were preceded by Noboa’s moves to implement a security plan involving the deployment of the military against gangs, building several new maximum-security jails and placing gang leaders on “prison boats.”

Five days earlier, Noboa proposed a referendum asking Ecuadorians to allow the Armed Forces to intervene in internal security and enjoy immunity for any crimes committed, but the ruling class decided to simply dispense with such “democratic” fig leaves.

The official narrative, as presented in a press conference Tuesday night by Adm. Jaime Vela, head of the General Command, is that the plan was working, which led to “unprecedented” gang reprisals. Standing next to ministers and masked soldiers, Vela said: “The future of our nation is at stake.”

Following this speech, speaking for the Biden administration, US Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Brian Nichols tweeted: “We are ready to provide assistance to the Ecuadorian government and will remain in close contact with President Daniel Noboa’s team regarding our support.”

The reality is that the Ecuadorian military already acts in close coordination with the Pentagon. In October, Biden and ex-president Guillermo Lasso had already agreed to US military deployments on Ecuadorian soil. Then, last month, the White House announced an aid package of \$200 million for arming the Ecuadorian military.

The “Pink Tide” governments of Lula da Silva in Brazil, Gustavo Petro in Colombia, Gabriel Boric in Chile and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela joined Washington in expressing their support for Noboa’s declaration of war.

Within Ecuador, the entire political establishment has fallen in line. On Tuesday, all parties in Congress announced an agreement granting the military and police a legal amnesty or pardons for any crimes they commit.

Former President Rafael Correa, who leads from exile the largest party in Congress, Citizen’s Revolution, tweeted: “Full support, Mr. President. Organized crime has declared war on the state and the state must emerge triumphant. It is time for national unity.” His party had already formed a legislative coalition to give Noboa a parliamentary majority.

All fronts led by the Stalinist Communist Party, including Popular Unity, the United Federation of Workers (FUT) and the Revolutionary Youth (JRE) have called for “unity” in supporting the military operations, with criticisms confined to its inefficiency.

For its part, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE) representing the indigenous bourgeoisie said: “We call for national unity to join efforts among all sectors of society.”

In its latest statement after the election of Noboa, the Revolutionary Movement of Workers (MRT) of the Pabloite United Secretariat had praised the CONAIE and FUT for their “radical opposition to the new government” and called

for their “remaking the unity of the popular camp.”

By calling for national unity behind the US-trained and bloodstained Ecuadorian military, all of these organizations have become entirely exposed as right-wing agencies of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

Washington is again attempting to harness drug cartel violence to justify a “wars on drugs.” Plan Colombia and Plan Merida in Mexico show that this can only result in hundreds of thousands of deaths without making a dent in drug trafficking, which is ultimately anchored in the armed forces, government officials and financial elites.

Before that, 20th-century Ecuador and Latin America were marked by US-backed military dictatorships used to suppress opposition from below, which in several cases were directly backed by the Stalinists.

As recently as June 2022 and October 2019, Ecuador witnessed the same scenes of troops marching and tanks rolling into cities, enforcing curfews, and carrying out unrestricted raids and checkpoints. But on those occasions soldiers killed and mutilated dozens of workers, peasants and youth at mass protests against social inequality, inflation, unemployment and the collapse of public education and healthcare. In both cases, the media and authorities criminalized protesters as “narcoterrorists.”

Today, US imperialism is escalating its efforts to use its military power to counteract the decline of its economic position in Latin America and globally, as reflected in its proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and its support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza, which itself is part of an unraveling conflict across the Middle East.

The Pentagon is openly stating its goal of recolonizing Latin America. During a December 2 US Senate hearing titled “Overlooking Monroe? Protecting our hemisphere and homeland?” several military and political leaders invoked the need to enforce the 1823 Monroe Doctrine opposing influence of any other powers in the Americas.

At the event, the Southern Command chief Gen. Laura J. Richardson, pointed to the “infinite and strategic natural resources” in the region and said “it is time to act now” against growing Chinese economic influence.

However, as demonstrated by mass social protests in recent years that in Ecuador and other countries blocked oil fields and mines, it is the revolutionary threat of the historically combative working class across Latin America that constitutes the main obstacle to, and cause for fear by, US imperialism and its local client elites. This is taking place amid a crisis of bourgeois rule across the region, where all sections of the political establishment have been fatally discredited.

On December 6, Fitch Ratings, the Wall Street agency, issued a special report on Chile, Peru, Colombia and

Ecuador, warning about a new “political and social upheaval,” pointing to the 2019 protests, “growing disillusionment with political leaders” and “growing calls for social expenditures amid a major economic slowdown after a short-lived post-pandemic rebound.” What has rebounded are COVID-19 cases amid the ongoing pandemic.

After Rafael Correa came to power in 2007, the boom in oil and mineral prices driven by Chinese growth allowed the increase of both social spending and corporate profits. He convened a Constituent Assembly and adopted the *Chavista* slogan of “21st Century Socialism” to exploit this brief economic surge in a bid to refashion the crisis-ridden capitalist state.

Once oil prices fell in 2014, Correa and his hand-picked successor Lenín Moreno moved to impose brutal social austerity and sanction IMF loans. Moreno handed WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to the British police and reached a “cooperation agreement” with the Pentagon in 2019.

Last October, Noboa pulled off an upset victory in snap elections triggered by the political downfall of the right-wing administration of Guillermo Lasso, who had dissolved Congress and his government by invoking a “mutual death” clause.

The local oligarchy and imperialism concluded that Lasso could not meet their pro-investor agenda because of his unpopularity. Instead, the ruling class opted for a clean break and the installation of a militarized police state aimed above all against working class opposition.

Noboa, the 36-year-old scion of one of Ecuador’s wealthiest families, has rammed through corporate tax cuts and announced a plan to cut public spending by \$1 billion and request a new loan from the IMF. “We wish to reset the economy,” he said in an interview last week.

The sharp increase in cartel violence and homicides in Ecuador in recent years has historical and international roots. They cannot be solved through national social reforms—which the ruling class rejects outright—and much less by means of war and a capitalist dictatorship.

The deepening public health and social crises across Latin America and in the final drug markets in the United States and Europe can only be addressed by the independent struggle of the international working class to overthrow capitalism and reorganize the global economy on a socialist basis.



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