

# Ecuador's president meets Trump amid martial law elections and plans to deploy US troops

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Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa held what his office portrayed as a "friendly and private" meeting Saturday with Donald Trump at the US President's Mar-a-Lago mansion in Florida.

The meeting came in advance of an April 13 runoff election being held in Ecuador under conditions of martial law and amid preparations for the deployment of US troops to the country. Noboa, a far-right heir to a banana industry fortune, is polling behind Luisa González, a nominally "leftist" stand-in for former President Rafael Correa.

Facing an uphill contest amid an economic crisis and growing opposition to austerity policies imposed to meet IMF dictates and afford a buildup of the repressive state apparatus, Noboa's "private" meeting with Trump should sound an alarm over a threat to use a state of exception and US military intervention to overturn an election and establish an openly fascistic dictatorship.

Noboa has acted as a dictator since he was installed after defeating González in the 2023 vote. This followed the resignation of Guillermo Lasso, who dissolved Congress amid embezzlement charges and is exiled in the US. In open violation of the Ecuadorian constitution, Noboa has refused to abide by a requirement that an incumbent step down from the presidency until after the completion of an election.

The current state of exception has been renewed since January 3, 2025 in seven provinces and the capital of Quito, suspends the right to "inviolability of correspondence" and the inviolability of the home, allowing the police and armed forces to conduct warrantless inspections, raids, and searches. In addition, a 10:00 p.m.-to-5:00 a.m. curfew has been imposed in 22 municipalities.

However, despite the suspension of democratic rights

and the presence of the Army in cities, crimes such as extortion and kidnapping continue to multiply. Meanwhile, thousands have been swept up in militarized repression. Popular outrage swept the country after four children disappeared after being picked up by a military patrol in the coastal city of Guayaquil at the end of last year, their burned and mutilated corpses found on Christmas Day.

Under the pretext of fighting gangs, Noboa has invited foreign troops to be stationed indefinitely in Ecuador and established a "strategic alliance" with Erik Prince, the founder of the notorious private military contractor formerly known as Blackwater, to deploy a "mercenary army" to assist the Ecuadorian military.

Noboa has tried to downplay the Blackwater ties by saying that his main hope is for military support from the US, Europe, Brazil, and other regional countries. The involvement of South American militaries in Ecuador adds a new dimension to the continent's class struggle.

Noboa suggests that far-right leaders like Milei in Argentina, Bolsonaro in Brazil, and right-wing parties in Colombia should unite against what they see as the common enemy: the international working class.

Ahead of the meeting with Trump, a top Ecuadorian official revealed to CNN plans for building a naval base in the coastal city of Manta for US military personnel. "These facilities are expected to house US soldiers," the official said.

The basing agreement was signed under the Biden administration, and new deals have been reached under Trump for a port and base associated with the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), as well as significant aid.

Manta was the site of the last US military base in the country, which was closed in 2009 under Correa.

Recently, Noboa also approved the presence of a US military base in the Galapagos Islands, an environmentally sensitive treasure of biological diversity.

Noboa has raised the value-added tax from 12 to 15 percent to pay for new prisons, drawing inspiration from the far-right policies of President Nayib Bukele in El Salvador. Bukele has reached an agreement with Trump to detain deportees from the US in a new maximum-security prison.

Among Noboa's most notable affronts to democratic rights was the April 5, 2024 assault by Ecuadorian police and military forces on the Mexican embassy in Quito to capture former Vice President Jorge Glas, who was sentenced for corruption.

Replicating Trump's attack on immigrant families, on March 11, Noboa signed a decree ending the immigration amnesty that allowed legal residency and visas for Venezuelans who arrived without documents. Such measures will serve to terrorize the nearly half a million Venezuelans residing in Ecuador.

After the final debate on March 23, Luisa González, the *Correista* candidate of the Citizen Revolution Movement (MRC), widened her lead over the incumbent Noboa of the National Democratic Action (ADN) party—52.9 percent to 44.1 percent—with 7.4 percent undecided, according to the Argentine consulting firm TresPuntoZero.

In the first round of voting on February 9, Noboa and González were nearly tied, with Noboa receiving 44.17 percent and González 43.97 percent—less than a 20,000-vote difference. Indigenous leader Leónidas Iza came in third, securing about 540,000 votes, or 5.25 percent.

On Sunday the Ecuadorian Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE) led by Iza officially endorsed González following promises by the MRC to halt the geographic expansion of oil production and cut the regressive value-added tax back to 12 percent.

Demonstrating the abject corruption of the indigenous bourgeois leadership, a section of which had previously endorsed Noboa, the CONAIE has accepted these promises at face value even after Correa repeatedly broke similar promises and used the military to crack down on indigenous protests.

The Trump regime is placing its weight behind Noboa as a more pliant option for furthering US imperialism's drive to assert its hegemony in Latin America in preparation for war against China. The Asian giant has displaced the US as South America's number one trading

partner and foreign direct investor in what Washington had long regarded contemptuously as its "own backyard."

Support for Gonzalez stems from the rising discontent among the public regarding the austerity policies that Noboa and his predecessors—Moreno (2017-2021) and Lasso (2021-2023)—implemented during their time in office. After years of protests over social inequality and worsening poverty, Noboa took power amid a deepening economic crisis.

By 2023, six million of the country's millions of residents were expected to live on less than \$3 a day, and nearly 90 percent of workers earned less than \$780 a month.

In the face of these conditions, González offers populist rhetoric akin to that of the discredited "21st Century Socialism" or "Pink Tide" used by the ruling class to maintain control over the working class and poor and negotiate better conditions with imperialism. This has been combined with her promises to strengthen the state apparatus and assurances to US imperialism of pro-business policies and security collaboration.

Reflecting the MNR's class character, González has criticized Noboa from the right to defend the Ecuadorian Armed Forces, which have a long record of repressing every protest and strike by Ecuadorian workers. In a video clip on Radio Pichincha, González said: "He's [Noboa] mocking the Ecuadorian public forces by wanting to bring in mercenaries and assassins when what we have here are trained individuals who know how to provide security but aren't given the proper equipment."

No matter which of the two candidates is elected, the next government will remain subordinate to the dictates of the IMF and Trump's policies of aggression toward Latin America. Ecuador's financial crisis, high unemployment, recent massive strikes, and other struggles of the impoverished majority will inevitably lead the working class into a direct conflict with the new administration and the capitalist system that it defends.



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