

Noboa unleashes murderous repression against mass protests in Ecuador

Cesar Uco

17 October 2025

Military-backed police have killed at least three protesters over the past week in Ecuador, the first fatalities in a nationwide general strike that began on September 22 and is now in its fourth week with no signs of resolution.

The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE, in Spanish) is one of the organizations that called the strike in protest against a significant increase in fuel prices, rising inflation, power outages and violence from drug trafficking gangs. It issued a statement denouncing the government for having “turned our communities into war zones, using tear gas, bullets, and indiscriminate violence against a people exercising their constitutional right to protest.”

After unleashing lethal violence against protesters in the northern highlands canton of Otavalo, Ecuador’s right-wing government of President Daniel Noboa claimed Thursday to have reached an agreement with local indigenous leaders to end the strike. This was denied by CONAIE as well as by Otavalo’s mayor, who said the strike was continuing against high fuel prices and other national issues. Officials admitted that protesters continue to blockade roads in at least four provinces.

The government has justified its intensification of repression based on an incident that occurred on October 7, when a convoy carrying President Noboa to Cañar came under attack from protesters.

Initial media reports parroted government allegations, calling it a “shooting”; however, the official version rapidly fell apart.

Over 500 protesters surrounded the convoy, and some threw stones. Seven vehicles were damaged, four security officials were injured and five people detained and subsequently released. Noboa himself was unscathed.

The government claimed without providing evidence that the president’s vehicle had been struck with bullets, and that the attack was an “attempted magnicide.”

According to video and photo evidence analyzed by BBC Verify Lupa Media, none include sounds or images consistent with gunfire. Finally, a police report cited by *El Mercurio* concluded that there was “no ballistic evidence” that the president’s convoy had come under fire.

This has not stopped the government from using the event to tighten repression. It declared a state of emergency, expanding troop deployments and suspending democratic rights in 10 provinces, with Noboa branding participants in overwhelmingly peaceful protests as “terrorists.”

In addition to the three dead, military repression has left dozens injured and 120 arrested.

Foreign governments, whether nominally “left” or openly right-wing, expressed their complete support for Noboa’s maneuver, making clear that they are all aligned when it comes to crushing opposition from below.

Through its embassy in Quito, the Trump administration denounced the attack on Noboa: “The United States condemns the attack on President Daniel Noboa’s motorcade. We stand with Ecuador as authorities investigate and ensure accountability, and stand against all forms of political violence.”

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, criticized for his support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza, hypocritically called for “de-escalation and dialogue” in Ecuador. This isn’t the first instance of reactionary collusion between the UK and Ecuador. In 2019, President Lenín Moreno collaborated in the expulsion of Julian Assange from the Ecuadorian embassy in London, leading to his imprisonment and the threat of an espionage trial in the US.

Right-wing and purportedly left-wing governments in Latin America have expressed solidarity with Noboa, deeming recent events “an attack on democracy.”

Colombia’s Gustavo Petro and Brazil’s Lula da Silva, representatives of the so-called “Pink Tide,” joined condemnations of the attack, sending a message of support to Noboa.

China, concerned about Noboa’s alignment with Washington, described his stance as “unacceptable” and urged Ecuador to “restore peace and stability.”

Ecuador’s mass protests began last month after the elimination of fuel subsidies. They were called by the United Workers’ Front (FUT) and the National Union of Educators (UNE), with additional support from the indigenous organizations.

A “national shutdown,” or *paro*, was called by these organizations on September 21 under the demands of restoring the fuel subsidies and lowering of the regressive value-added tax back from 15 percent to 12 percent.

The unrest in Ecuador is part of a broader trend in Latin America of resistance to the aggressive social austerity policies and attacks on democratic rights by far-right leaders, including Noboa, Nayib Bukele in El Salvador, Javier Milei in Argentina and the right-wing government now headed by José Jerí in Peru.

Significantly, even as the security forces were killing protesters in Ecuador, in neighboring Peru, a plainclothes agent of the Peruvian National Police (PNP) shot and killed 32-year-old

Eduardo Ruiz Sanz Wednesday during a march by students, transport workers and civil organizations against Jerí, who was installed by the right-wing Congress after it ousted Peru's hated and unelected president Dina Boluarte, and against the Congress itself. The government has indicated it will exploit the violence for which it itself is responsible to impose a state of emergency and concentrate power in a presidential dictatorship.

In Ecuador, Noboa comes from one of the country's richest families. During his campaign for reelection earlier this year, he found himself trailing his rival, the *Correista* candidate Luisa González (a supporter of the "center-left" nationalist former president Rafael Correa), by several percentage points in the polls (. In response, he decided to travel to Washington D.C. to meet with Donald Trump, reaching an agreement to use the issue of drug trafficking as a pretext for US military deployments in Ecuador and other countries.

However, the underlying reason of such deployments would be to lay US claim to Latin America's resources and to suppress the emerging mass movement, which appears to be gaining momentum, posing a significant threat to the capitalist order.

Since Noboa began his second term, amid opposition charges of electoral fraud, the value-added tax (VAT) increased from 12 percent to 15 percent between March and April 2024. A gallon of gasoline rose from US\$2.40 to US\$2.465 in May of this year and reached US\$2.751 in August. Premium gasoline, with the VAT increase, rose from US\$3.89 to US\$3.99 per gallon. In April 2024, automotive diesel increased to US\$1.80 per gallon, and with the elimination of subsidies in September 2025, the price rose to US\$2.80.

Since 2023, the economic crisis has worsened, marked by reduced foreign investment, business closures, high food inflation, and increasing informal employment. As the World Bank reported:

Economic activity experienced a contraction of approximately 2 percent in 2024, amidst an environment marked by energy shortages, high levels of violence, and political uncertainty. The worst drought in 60 years caused nationwide blackouts and power rationing.

Major cities in Ecuador, particularly Guayaquil and Quito, have seen a surge in homicides. According to *El Universo*, intentional homicides reached 4,619 between January and June, a 47 percent increase over the same period in 2024.

The high body count is driven largely by violent competition between criminal organizations. Ecuador is a major hub for narcotics trafficking, which is largely ignored as the Trump administration directs military aggression against Venezuela, which accounts for a minuscule share of drugs bound for the US.

The Ecuadorian people have faced numerous crises over the past 25 years, starting with the 1999 "bank holiday" crisis, which led to a financial collapse, a 7.3 percent GDP drop, widespread poverty, and mass migration to countries like the United States. According to a study by the University of Buenos Aires:

On January 9, 2000, Ecuador officially adopted the US dollar as its currency in an attempt to stabilize an economy plagued by rampant inflation, which at the time reached 96.6 percent.

The study indicates that Ecuador's adoption of the dollar as its national currency has effectively made it a colony of US imperialism.

In 2019, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) insisted on eliminating subsidies, causing fuel prices to soar by 120 percent. This led to violent protests and increased societal polarization, a situation worsened by the pandemic, which heightened unemployment and poverty.

Ecuador is now facing an energy crisis due to droughts affecting hydroelectric plants, resulting in daily power outages of about eight hours.

The Amazonian indigenous population is particularly affected, facing economic challenges such as high transportation costs and limited access to essential services. In Orellana province, poverty has soared by 76.2 percent, with adequate employment rates at only 11 percent. Bolívar province in the Andes has a poverty rate of around 40.7 percent, with permanent employment of about 20 percent.

Noboa, who personifies the subordination of the Ecuadorian ruling class to US imperialism, is in talks with Trump ally Erik Prince, the billionaire mercenary recruiter, to develop specialized repressive forces. Quito is also discussing with the Pentagon the reopening of the Manta military base, and is exploring the possibility of establishing a new base in the Galapagos Islands, a significant wildlife sanctuary whose unique species were observed by Charles Darwin during an 1835 visit, contributing to his theory of evolution.

However, all factions of the capitalist class, including the *Correistas*, have repeatedly kowtowed to Wall Street and have their own record of repressing working class and indigenous protests.

Meanwhile, organizations like the FUT, UNE and CONAIE seek reforms through the bankrupt strategy of pressuring the government and have repeatedly sold out mass protest movements.

The Ecuadorian working class must challenge Noboa's dictatorial ambitions. But it can only do so by breaking from all pro-capitalist and nationalist organizations and political parties, including the union bureaucracy and the leaderships that speak for the indigenous bourgeoisie.

This requires the building of a revolutionary party of the working class, leading behind it the oppressed layers of peasants, indigenous people and youth, as an Ecuadorian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact