

Opposition leader Luisa González arrested in Ecuador

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Ecuadorian police arrested Luisa González, the twice-defeated presidential candidate of former President Rafael Correa's Citizen Revolution (Revolución Ciudadana—RC), in a pre-dawn raid on her home in the coastal province of Manabí on Thursday, October 22. A judge ordered her held in pretrial detention the next day.

The arrest comes five weeks before the November 29 regional elections, from which her party has already been barred.

In the so-called *Labyrinth* case, prosecutors accuse González of laundering about \$500,000 spent on undeclared advertising in her 2023 campaign. Prosecutors say the funds came from fuel companies linked to Guayaquil Mayor Aquiles Alvarez, including Ternape, a shipping and fuel firm owned by his family. Alvarez, elected on the RC ticket in 2023, has been jailed since February on several charges, including one over alleged illegal sale of subsidized fuel.

Government spokesman José Julio Neira said he expected prosecutors and judges to act “with rigor and speed.” González called the charge absurd and her arrest political persecution.

The *World Socialist Web Site* gives no political support to *Correísmo*, a bourgeois nationalist political tendency linked to the Pink Tide, and has no independent information on the charges. But the record of the past ten months leaves no doubt about what is taking place. The Noboa government is using the courts and electoral bodies to remove the main opposition party from political life just as opposition to its austerity program grows in the streets.

On January 27, prosecutors opened a separate investigation, known as Caja Chica (Petty Cash), alleging that Venezuelan cash financed the same 2023 campaign. It draws heavily on the testimony of former RC lawmaker Santiago Díaz, who handled campaign finances and was then on trial for raping a 12-year-old girl. He was

convicted in May and sentenced to 29 years.

In early March, on the strength of that preliminary investigation and without any verdict, an electoral judge suspended the RC for nine months at the request of the acting attorney general. On March 27, the National Electoral Council (CNE) moved the elections forward 77 days, from February 14, 2027 to November 29, 2026, citing forecasts of El Niño rains. The new date falls inside the suspension.

When *Correísta* candidates registered with the Amigo movement, the Contentious Electoral Tribunal (TCE) suspended that party too, on July 17. Noboa then declared that *Correístas* could choose “any other party that hasn't lent itself to money laundering.” When González sought to run for prefect of Manabí with the Pachakutik movement, the TCE disqualified her for not having been a member long enough.

On April 26, the CNE also struck Unidad Popular, a party tied to the FUT union leadership, from the electoral register. And the day before González's arrest, prosecutors raided Quito's city hall, whose RC mayor, Pabel Muñoz, is seeking reelection and faces criminal complaints. The elected mayors of Ecuador's two largest cities are now either jailed or under investigation.

Governing from 2007 to 2017, Correa used the commodity boom to fund limited social programs with oil revenues. When prices collapsed, he imposed cuts and sent police against workers and Indigenous protesters. His chosen successor, Lenín Moreno, turned to Washington and ended the asylum of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, handing him over to London police. Moreno then signed a \$4.2 billion IMF loan in 2019 and decreed the end of fuel subsidies. The October 2019 uprising that followed forced Moreno to move the government seat temporarily to Guayaquil. The repression left 11 dead and 1,340 wounded, according to the national Ombudsman.

When his right-wing successor, the banker Guillermo

Lasso dissolved the Assembly in May 2023 to escape impeachment, Noboa, heir to the country's largest banana fortune, won the snap election. In January 2024 he declared an "internal armed conflict," putting troops on the streets. He raised the value-added tax from 12 to 15 percent, had police storm the Mexican embassy to seize Correa's former vice president, Jorge Glas, and signed an IMF agreement later raised to \$5 billion.

In September 2025, Noboa abolished the diesel subsidy, raising the price from \$1.80 to \$2.80 a gallon. A 31-day national strike was met with states of emergency, terrorism charges and lethal force that left three protesters dead, according to the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE). On November 16, 2025, voters rejected his referendum proposals, including a constituent assembly and the return of foreign military bases. Ten weeks later, the Caja Chica case was opened.

In April, the IMF completed its fifth review of the Ecuador program, releasing \$394 million. Ecuador had missed its fiscal targets, which the staff report blames in part on payments extended to cushion the diesel price hike. Noboa enacted "corrective" measures to return to a radical fiscal adjustment equal to 6.6 percent of GDP. Public spending is to fall from 38.4 percent of GDP in 2025 to 35.6 percent in 2027.

The same report treats the population's ability to reject this program as a danger. Among the factors it says reduce the risks of lending, it lists Noboa's larger majority in the Assembly. Among the risks, it lists a loss of the public support needed to complete the government's agenda, warning that "social unrest and uncertainty regarding future macroeconomic policies could lead to increase in interest spreads."

For the bondholders who lent Ecuador \$4 billion in January at nearly 9 percent interest, the mere prospect that voters might develop expectations of a different course is a risk to be eliminated in advance.

Growing protests, deepening crisis

On October 8, the United Workers Front (FUT), the National Union of Educators (UNE) and other organizations marched in 19 provinces against social cuts, job insecurity and the threat to the Ecuadorian Social Security Institute (IESS), whose properties Noboa has ordered sold. In Cuenca, police used pepper spray against

students protesting a visit by the president.

The country also faces blackouts. Days after Noboa promised that no family would lose power, coastal households suffered outages of up to 12 hours, and since October 12 many high- and medium-voltage industrial users have been ordered off the grid three days a week.

Governments across Latin America have answered the international upsurge of workers and youth, from Colombia's October 14 national strike to the mass marches in France, by adopting the "Bukele model" of emergency rule to suspend democratic rights and deploy the military.

Ecuador has been the laboratory of the Shield of the Americas, the military alliance Trump launched with Noboa and other allies in March against both geopolitical rivals and the working class in the hemisphere.

The RC has responded by seeking precautionary measures from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and calling supporters into the streets to demand González's release.

The defense of democratic rights, including the right of any party to stand in elections and of workers to protest and strike, cannot be entrusted to any faction of the Ecuadorian ruling class, including that represented by *Correísmo*. In the 2025 campaign, González met with the IMF to give assurances of continued austerity, courted the mining and oil companies and competed with Noboa in demanding a buildup of the repressive apparatus. After her defeat, prominent figures in her party urged acceptance of the result, and the CONAIE leadership, which had endorsed her, welcomed Noboa's victory. The FUT and UNE leaders, for their part, reduce the protests to a plea for dialogue.

The struggle against dictatorship is the same as the struggle against social inequality and the profit system that engenders both. This requires the independent political mobilization of the working class on a revolutionary socialist program and united with workers throughout the Americas and Europe.



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