

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

As Ecuador prepares for the second round of its presidential election, we write to express our deep concern regarding the escalating security crisis, human rights abuses, and threats to democracy that could undermine the integrity of the country's electoral process. The incumbent candidate, President Daniel Noboa, has violated Ecuador's electoral law by failing to temporarily step down from the presidency during the official campaign period. He has also claimed, without evidence, that the first round of the election was marred by irregularities.<sup>1</sup>

These are troubling developments, which have generated tension and uncertainty ahead of the April 13 runoff election.<sup>2</sup> We urge you and other senior State Department officials to support the democratic process in Ecuador, and oppose all efforts to undermine the upcoming election. In the event of a non-democratic transfer of power following the election, we expect all bilateral assistance to Ecuador will remain compliant with U.S. statutes related to the peaceful and democratic transfer of power. Finally, we urge a review of all security assistance to Ecuador to ensure that it complies with Leahy Law restrictions.

## Escalating Security Crisis and Human Rights Concerns

Ecuador is currently experiencing the worst security crisis of its contemporary history.<sup>3</sup> Organized crime networks have established major drug-trafficking operations in the country, particularly in its coastal region, and have reportedly infiltrated many government institutions and the state security apparatus. Violence has reached an all-time high. Until recently, Ecuador was one of the most peaceful countries in the region with a rate of 5.8 homicides per 100,000 between 2016 and 2018. Ecuador is now one of the most violent countries, reaching a rate of 46.2 homicides per 100,000 in 2023.<sup>4</sup>

President Noboa's response to the increase in violence has been to declare a state of "internal armed conflict" and to deploy thousands of military troops — primarily in low income neighborhoods — to take on crime. In response, the Constitutional Court has ruled that the government has "not provided sufficient information to

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<sup>1</sup> "Statement from the OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Ecuador," Organization of American States, February 11, 2025, [https://www.oas.org/en/media\\_center/press\\_release.asp?sCodigo=E-005/25](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-005/25).

<sup>2</sup> "Preliminary Report of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Ecuador," Organization of American States, February 11, 2025, [https://www.oas.org/fpdb/press/2025\\_MOE\\_Ecuador\\_Generales\\_Preliminar\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.oas.org/fpdb/press/2025_MOE_Ecuador_Generales_Preliminar_ENG.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> "Guayaquil Massacre a Harsh Reminder of Ecuador's Security Reality," *InSight Crime*, March 11, 2025, <https://insightcrime.org/news/guayaquil-massacre-harsh-reminder-ecuadors-security-reality/>.

<sup>4</sup> "Ecuador cerró 2024 con la segunda peor tasa de muertes violentas de su historia, pese a una importante reducción," *Primicias*, March 26, 2025, <https://www.primicias.ec/seguridad/ecuador-2024-tasa-muertes-violentas-segunda-peor-historia-87118/>.

justify the existence” of an internal armed conflict.<sup>5</sup> Reports<sup>6</sup> of human rights abuses<sup>7</sup> at the hands of military personnel soon followed, including extrajudicial executions and at least 27 forced disappearances.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, the discovery late last year of the burnt remains of four Afro-Ecuadorian children who had been abducted by soldiers sparked outrage in Ecuador and internationally.<sup>9</sup> Though 16 soldiers suspected of involvement in this crime have been apprehended, Noboa has stated that military and police personnel should not be charged for violent crimes. In early March, following a gun battle that killed 22 people in a low income neighborhood of Guayaquil, Noboa announced preemptive pardons to all security officials deployed there.<sup>10</sup>

The escalating violence and human rights abuses in Ecuador may create a climate of fear and uncertainty ahead of the second round of elections.

### **Violations of Electoral Law and Threats to the Democratic Process**

In addition to Noboa’s alarming record on human rights, there is now growing concern about Noboa’s violations of electoral law. Prior to the first round of this year’s presidential election, Noboa refused to take a month-long leave of absence during the presidential campaign, as required under Ecuador’s constitution. As a result, during the campaign period, Noboa was able to deploy public resources and participate in government events despite being legally prohibited from engaging in these activities for the duration of the campaign.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, having failed to win the election outright in the first round of the election, Noboa alleged that serious electoral irregularities had taken place, without presenting evidence to support these allegations.<sup>12</sup> Yet, international observers from the Organization of American States (OAS)<sup>13</sup> and European Union (EU)<sup>14</sup> reported that no significant irregularities had been observed. Civil society organizations are now concerned that Noboa may undermine the second round electoral process in some way.

The U.S. has invested tens of millions of taxpayer dollars in security assistance to Ecuador. According to U.S. law, those funds cannot support security forces involved in alleged egregious human rights abuses.<sup>15</sup> Attacks on democratic institutions, left unchecked, are likely to generate greater political instability and create an environment in which organized crime will spread further within the country.

5 “Letter to President Noboa on “internal armed conflict” and human rights violations in Ecuador,” Human Rights Watch, May 22, 2024, [https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/22/letter-president-noboa-internal-armed-conflict-and-human-rights-violations-ecuador#\\_ftn10](https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/22/letter-president-noboa-internal-armed-conflict-and-human-rights-violations-ecuador#_ftn10).

6 “Ecuador: Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee: 142nd session, 14 October - 8 November 2024,” Amnesty International, September 16, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr28/8531/2024/en/>.

7 “Ecuador: Unchecked Abuses Since ‘Armed Conflict’ Announcement,” Human Rights Watch, May 22, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/22/ecuador-unchecked-abuses-armed-conflict-announcement>.

8 “REPORTE DE DESAPARICIONES FORZADAS EN EL ECUADOR 26.02.2025,” Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, January 31, 2025, <https://www.cdh.org.ec/informes/653-reporte-de-desapariciones-forzadas-en-el-ecuador-31-01-2025.html>.

9 “‘We are shattered’: Afro-Ecuadorians mourn four boys found dead after encounter with military,” *The Guardian*, January 12, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/12/we-are-shattered-afro-ecuadorians-mourn-four-boys-found-dead-after-encounter-with-military>.

10 “Ecuadorian president offers carte blanche to police and military after attack kills 22 in Guayaquil,” *CNN World*, March 7, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/07/americas/ecuador-noboa-pardons-attack-latam-intl/index.html>.

11 “Entre la campaña y la gestión, el presidente candidato Daniel Noboa intenta mover el tablero electoral,” *Primicias*, March 26, 2025, <https://www.primicias.ec/politica/campana-gestion-presidente-candidato-daniel-noboa-decretos-88042/>.

12 “Ecuador’s president questions first-round election results in a claim ruled out by election observers,” *CNN World*, February 12, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/12/americas/ecuador-election-irregular-latam-intl/index.html>.

13 “Statement from the OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Ecuador,” Organization of American States, February 11, 2025, [https://www.oas.org/en/media\\_center/press\\_release.asp?sCodigo=E-005/25](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-005/25).

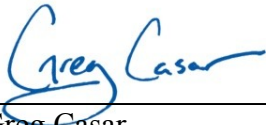
14 “EU Observers Say No Evidence of Ecuador Vote Fraud,” *Barron’s*, February 11, 2025, <https://www.barrons.com/news/eu-observers-say-no-evidence-of-ecuador-vote-fraud-eb939de1>.

15 “Reporte de desapariciones forzadas en el Ecuador 26.02.2025,” January 31, 2025, <https://www.cdh.org.ec/informes/653-reporte-de-desapariciones-forzadas-en-el-ecuador-31-01-2025.html>.

In turn, these conditions will almost certainly fuel a further increase in the rate of out-migration. Over the last two years, more than 200,000 Ecuadorians have already left their country and, in the majority of cases, headed to the U.S. Increased political instability in Ecuador will cause those numbers to rise.

It's therefore imperative that you send a clear message to the government of Ecuador and other Ecuadorian leaders emphasizing the need for a free, fair and transparent electoral process and noting that, if electoral observers determine these conditions to be met, that the outcome of the election be respected. The future of U.S. assistance to Ecuador must be conditioned on democratic and constitutional continuity. Finally, in light of reports of forced disappearances and other abuses allegedly involving state security agents, we urge you to support a thorough review of all security assistance to Ecuador to ensure that it complies with Leahy Law restrictions.

Sincerely,



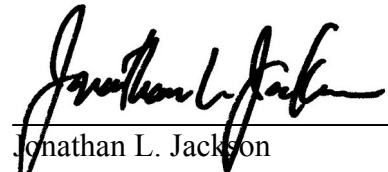
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Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



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Jonathan L. Jackson  
Member of Congress



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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



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Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



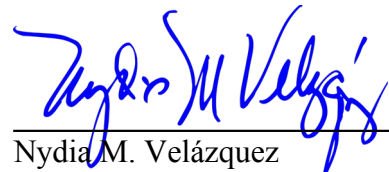
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



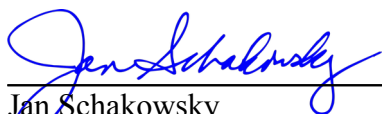
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



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Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



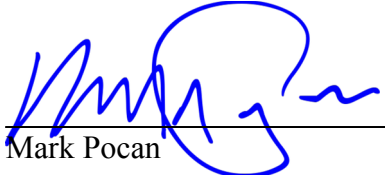
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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



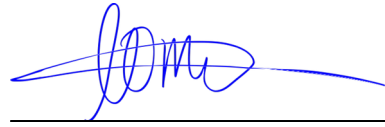
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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



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Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



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Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



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Andre Carson  
Member of Congress