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II: Situation in Ecuador

Introduction

Since 2020, the Republic of Ecuador has been experiencing a security crisis with rising gang warfare after the assassination of the Jorge Luis Zambrano, the leader of the Los Chone Killers; who was the oldest and strongest crime syndicate in Ecuador.¹ These factors have accumulated into several riots and the assassination of several State officials since October 2022.² Insecurity brought upon by political corruption, climate disasters, and economic instability has also contributed to Ecuador experiencing an increase in violence and homicides by at least five-fold within the past decade.³ Amid the turmoil, State officials have been ineffective in addressing the public's needs and concerns with the recent 2023 Ecuadorian Political Crisis, further leaving officials under heavy scrutiny.⁴ In addition, the rising poverty levels amongst citizens within the Member State have further contributed to the surge of violence with the 2023 report, from the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, reporting how 38 percent of Ecuadorians, roughly seven million, are living within multidimensional poverty.⁵ The report further explains how the majority of Ecuadorian living in poverty are young adults, between 16-25 years old, who are more prone to accepting the incentives by local gangs through lack of access to necessary resources.⁶ Finally, the frequency and intensity of natural disasters are taking a heavy toll on Ecuador's economy; with the latest reoccurrence of El Nino and the ash eruption of the Sangay Volcano forcing Ecuador to seek a one billion USD loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).⁷ The simultaneous occurrence of these factors have led to the growing instability within Ecuador. Thus, it is vital for the Security Council to intervene to restore the political order within Ecuador and prevent the further spread of unethical violence.

2023 Ecuadorian Political Crisis

The political instability within the Republic of Ecuador intensified with the impeachment trials of former Ecuadorian president, Guillermo Lasso, on May 17, 2023.⁸ The former president was under trial for illegal tax cuts,

¹ Yalile Loaiza, "Choneros vs. Lobos: how are the two mega-gangs with 20,000 prisoners who are causing a bloodbath in the prisons of Ecuador," *Infobae*, September 30, 2021, accessed September 10, 2023.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20211001030820/https://www.infobae.com/americas/america-latina/2021/09/30/choneros-vs-lobos-como-son-las-dos-megabandas-con-20000-presos-que-est-an-provocando-un-bano-de-sangre-en-las-carceles-de-ecuador/>.

² "Ecuador declares state of emergency amid violent clashes," *Reuters*, July 24, 2023, accessed September 10, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/ecuador-declares-state-emergency-amid-violent-clashes-2023-07-24/>.

³ "The Guardian view on Murder in Ecuador: a tide of violence reaches new heights," *The Guardian*, August 11, 2023, accessed September 10, 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/aug/11/the-guardian-view-on-in-ecuador-a-tide-of-violence-reaches-new-heights>.

⁴ Willie Freeman, "A Surge in Crime and Violence has Ecuador Reeling," *Council on Foreign Relations*, June 14, 2023, accessed September 13, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/surge-crime-and-violence-has-ecuador-reeling>.

⁵ "Ecuador: Surging Violence must be wake-up call to urgently addressing poverty, says UN Experts," *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, September 8, 2023, accessed September 10, 2023.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/09/ecuador-surging-violence-must-be-wake-call-urgently-address-poverty-says-un>

⁶ "Ecuador: Surging Violence must be wake-up call to urgently addressing poverty, says UN Experts," *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*.

⁷ "Ecuador Seeks \$1 Billion Credit Line After Series of Natural Disasters," *The Bloomberg. Markets*, April 13, 2023, accessed September 10, 2023. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-04-13/ecuador-seeks-1-billion-imf-credit-line-after-series-of-natural-disasters#xj4y7vzkg>.

⁸ Regina Garcia Cano, "Ecuador's President dismisses legislature as it tries to oust him, in a move that promises turmoil," *Associated Press*, May 18, 2023, accessed September 10, 2023. <https://apnews.com/article/ecuador-president-dissolves-national-assembly-impeachment-ec47b677d44a7e0105959ecde8963ec0>.

drug trafficking, and corruption facilitated by his cabinet members, several organized criminal organizations, and several state-owned oil companies.⁹ With the vast majority of the Ecuadorian National Assembly leaning in favor of former President Lasso's impeachment, the former president invoked a clause within the *Ecuadorian Constitution* titled "Muerte cruzada" (crossed death) where both the current National Assembly is dissolved and a new general election must occur to fill both the vacant presidency and assembly seats.¹⁰ Former President Guillermo Lasso became the first Ecuadorian president to utilize this clause which had plunge the republic back into the same political turmoil as the 2023 Ecuadorian local elections.¹¹ The clause has left Ecuador without solid political leadership and threatens to promote further political violence, as seen during the 2023 Ecuadorian local elections where the public witnessed both several attacks on political candidates and two assassinations by State and non-State actors.¹² Since the start of the new 2023 Ecuadorian general elections, two Ecuadorian politicians and political candidates have been assassinated by organized criminal organizations; signifying the future violence ahead of the elections.¹³

Recent Development and Conclusion

Further civil unrest and violence plague the Republic of Ecuador amid the 2023 Ecuadorian general election with the recent assassination of presidential candidate, Fernando Villavicencio, on August 23, 2023.¹⁴ The presidential candidate one of several politicians, who were assassinated due to their vocal political stances and promises to crackdown on corruption and organized crime.¹⁵ Since the assassination, Ecuadorian politicians have been designated the Republic of Ecuador as a "failed state" without any ability to govern itself.¹⁶ In January 2024, it was reported that over 125 prison guards, and 14 administrative prison staffers were held hostage in Ecuador.¹⁷ This comes as a response to the state of emergency declared by the current President of Ecuador, Daniel Noboa, after "two jailed gang leaders escaped," and riots broke out throughout the Member State.¹⁸ Violence continues to plague the streets of Ecuador. As this crisis threatens the peace and safety of Ecuador's citizens and tests the political stability of the Member State, it is imperative that the Security Council collaborate on sustainable solutions to bring stability back to Ecuador.

⁹ "The murder of Dritan Gjika's partner in Ecuador, the identities of the other victims are revealed, among them the guard and Cheres' partner," *Vox Albania*, April 2, 2023, accessed September 15, 2023.

<https://www.voxnews.al/english/kosovabota/vrasja-e-ortakut-te-dritan-gjikes-ne-ekuator-zbulohen-identitetet-e-v-136320>.

¹⁰ Regina Garcia Cano, "Ecuador's President dismisses legislature as it tries to oust him, in a move that promises turmoil," *Associated Press*.

¹¹ Regina Garcia Cano, "Ecuador's President dismisses legislature as it tries to oust him, in a move that promises turmoil," *Associated Press*.

¹² "Town elects man mayor day after he's assassinated amid violent crime wave in Ecuador," *CBS News*, February 7, 2023, accessed September 13, 2023. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ecuator-mayor-elected-day-after-assassinated-omar-menendez-puerto-lopez/>.

¹³ "Second Ecuador politician killed in less than a week," *BBC News*, August 15, 2023, accessed September 13, 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-66508546>.

¹⁴ "Ecuador: Surging Violence must be wake-up call to urgently addressing poverty, says UN Experts," *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*.

¹⁵ Town elects man mayor day after he's assassinated amid violent crime wave in Ecuador," *CBS News*.

¹⁶ "Who was Fernando Villavicencio, presidential hopeful shot dead in Ecuador," *Aljazeera*, August 10, 2023, accessed September 15, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/10/who-was-fernando-villavicencio-presidential-hopeful-shot-dead-in-ecuador>.

¹⁷ Aicha El Hammer Castano and Kevin Shalvey, "More than 100 prison guards held hostage in Ecuador amid state of emergency," *ABC News*, January 11, 2024, accessed January 25, 2024. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/100-prison-guards-held-hostage-ecuador-amid-state/story?id=106284129>

¹⁸ Ivan Ulchur-Rota, "When Chaos Erupted in Ecuador, Disinformation Followed," *New York Times*, January 25, 2024, accessed January 27, 2024. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/100-prison-guards-held-hostage-ecuador-amid-state/story?id=106284129>