



INSECURITY AND POLITICS, TWO SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN ECUADOR

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ABSTRACT

The scourge of organized crime and drug trafficking, combined with rampant crime and an unprecedented prison crisis, make Ecuador the country with the fastest growing homicide rate in the region, and this is a living example that reality outweighs fiction, since this serious problem goes further than all the failed attempts of the Government of Guillermo Lasso to maintain calm and security. The disturbance of the tranquility of the people has been so pronounced that the main avenue in the center of Guayaquil has seen a decrease in work activity, businesses that lament the lack of customers and the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, even remain deserted. Following the outbreak of unrest, according to a government statement, Ecuador is now a gateway for international drug trafficking to the United States and Europe due to gaps in its borders with Colombia and Peru, as well as repeated clashes between gangs and seizures in the country's prisons.

Keywords: Security; government; organized crime; drug dealing; prison crisis.

INTRODUCTION

According to Pontón (2022), dean of the School of Security and Defense of the Institute of Higher National Studies (IAEN): "Criminal violence in Ecuador is growing dangerously and seems to have no stop. After a decade of good harvest the homicide rate in 2021." Thus, in the month of January 2022, homicides tripled compared to January 2021. According to the Ecuadorian Police, 80 percent of the crimes are due to the dispute of criminal groups for the territorial dominance of drug trafficking on a micro and macro scale. The perception of citizen insecurity is defined as the fear that people suffer of being victims of direct and indirect crime: and the result of this produces the physical and psychological damage of people affecting their individual well-being, mental health, happiness and quality of life,

Crime and insecurity are therefore major problems for Ecuadorians. At the governmental level, the war on drugs has positioned itself as a key strategy to confront this problem. However, the government's achievements in the 2021 confiscations are offset by the high death toll resulting from this war. The government seems to be systematically losing the fight against crime and has great political topicality.

Given the political changes taking place in the region, Ecuador's future international landscape is complicated. Still, proposing a common agenda to fight crime may offer a golden opportunity to strengthen regional integration. International recommendations suggest that the issues of impunity and arms control are key factors in achieving significant reductions in crime. Cooperation efforts between countries should be established here.

The National Government's strategy has not yielded any effect or supply, and the probable cause of the increase in violence is known, especially in cases where people have died in a context typical of drug cartels. Impose the rule of law and conquer important and vast sectors of the city. Beheaded, hung from bridges, looted, dismembered, multiple casualties, impaled, targeted attacks, long-range automatic weapons and it is reasonable to imagine that the illicit economy behind people using

grenades and so on is made only for drugs, and the potential for assets to be collected and financed through human trafficking and money laundering.

The tentacles of organized crime also manifest themselves in the judicial system, and its decisions often generate public scrutiny, debate, and controversy. The authorities responsible for security use force every day. Primary and secondary prevention took a back seat and community-based prevention disappeared. The only means used is deterrence supported by the Bundeswehr. The scenarios described involve refocusing security plans, changing centralized models of national coverage, and undertaking comprehensive but local strategies, with legislative changes including auditable permanent prisons.

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out based on the qualitative modality, because a subjective phenomenon of reality and quantitative is studied through the analysis and processing of constant information in the crime figures reflected in the official website of the Ministry of Government.

According to the authors Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2010), the investigative scope was descriptive and not experimental, exposing the behavior that has had the increase in robberies and violent deaths in the country, and now currently the armed attack on the uniformed, thus leaving very tragic and painful results result of the violence used by these criminal gangs to murder people in cold blood. All this under the justification that the authorities do not give in to their whims, this analysis helps the rulers in part to urgently propose the reform of the current laws.

Thus, the quantitative analysis was carried out based on the figures obtained during the period 2019-2022, an increase that has not given truce to any authority in the country due to a number of factors, social, political and cultural.

RESULTS

A survey by the consulting firm CID Gallup, conducted between May 10 and 19, 2022, ranked Ecuador as the third country with the highest rate of robbery and assault during the first four months of the year.

Table 1. Annual robbery figures nationwide.

TYPE OF THEFT	2019	2020	2021	2022
Home robbery	11.099	7.369	8.176	3.413
Robbery of persons	31.001	20.126	25.389	12.548
Car theft	5.653	4.596	6.901	3.819
Theft of goods, accessories and auto parts	9.686	6.214	7.980	3.357


Source: Ministry of Government, 2022.

According to the Ministry of Government, 25,389 robberies were recorded nationwide in 2021, but that figure was almost halved to 12,548 in the five months from January to May 2022. In May alone there were 2562 incidents nationwide, 829 of them in Guayaquil, compared to 585 in May 2021.

Robberies already surpassed pre-pandemic levels in May of this year, with 2,513 robberies in this month of 2019. The same situation was repeated in the main ports, with 799 robberies in May 2019. Similarly, between January and May of this year, 3,819 vehicles were stolen nationwide, compared to 6,901 vehicle thefts in the 2021 total. In 2019, 5,653 vehicles were stolen. Guayaquil had 1,353 vehicle thefts from January to May 2022 this year.

Table 2. Robbery of people per month in Ecuador

MY	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	2.425	2.994	1836	2.247
February	2.392	2.614	1.901	2.334
March	2.623	1.237	2.042	2.744
April	2.518	331	1.836	2.661
May	2.513	738	1.871	2.562



June	2.496	1.274	2.139	
July	2.591	1.700	2.272	
August	2.562	1.586	2.196	
September	2.506	1.765	2.186	
October	2.766	1.977	2.167	
November	2.726	1.956	2.222	
December	2.883	1.954	2.721	

Source: Ministry of Government, 2022.

The increase in robberies per month has been increasing and only until the month of May the figures do not go below two thousand monthly robberies.

Table 3. Annual intentional homicide figures.

PLACE	2019	2020	2021	2022
National	1.187	1.372	2.496	2.116
Guayaquil	269	329	865	613
Quito	135	144	142	77

Source: Ministry of Government, 2022.

Table 4. Homicide figures per month in Ecuador.

MY	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	83	113	122	315
February	87	116	226	311
March	83	80	173	344
April	117	88	176	366
May	102	96	172	426
June	101	115	171	254
July	90	94	198	
August	89	122	203	
September	95	105	325	
October	115	138	225	
November	111	148	282	
December	114	157	223	

Source: Ministry of Government, 2022.

Meanwhile, nationwide, 2,496 premeditated homicides were recorded in 2021, up from 2,116 in June 2022.

In the canton of Guayaquil alone, there were 613 intentional homicides between January and June, compared to 865 in all of 2021. There were 99 cases in June 2022 alone, up from 49 in the same month in 2021.

DISCUSSION

Violent deaths are the main indicator of a country's level of insecurity and the greatest concern of Ecuadorians. The National Development Plan, which the Government presented in 2021, proposed a reduction in the rate of violent deaths of 0.6 per 100,000 inhabitants until 2025; that is, reach a rate of 10. A goal that is far from being met, when the current figure of 15.48 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Organized Crime (2022) establishes that the main measure of violence and insecurity in a country is violent deaths. Internationally, these are calculated based on a rate per 100,000 inhabitants.

The most dramatic factor in this situation is the prison crisis. Prison problems began in 2019, but this year reached the highest levels in the region's history. Ecuador's prisons had 32 violent deaths in 2019 and 51 in 2020. However, 323 cases have already been recorded in 2021. The numbers represent growth rates of 912% and 535.3%.



Numbers aside, the unprecedented increase in violence this year has been driven by events such as the appearance of bodies hanging from bridges in the state of Guayas, vehicle bombs in Esmeraldas after a major drug seizure and drone explosions in prison environments.

Like noxious weeds, the roots of crime are everywhere and threaten to suffocate the weak and weak. Around the world, crime is devastating people, communities and nations. Thousands die each year in drug-related violence and terrorism.

Much of that social mass that yearns for change, justice, prosperity, peace, turns out to be ungovernable, since they let themselves be carried away by pseudo letterhead politicians who are on the lookout for power to take advantage in their favor and very far from the common service that should prevail.

For these and several reasons, the Executive proposes legal reforms to six laws to strengthen citizen security: Law of Public Security and the State (2009), Organic Code of Entities of Citizen Security and Public Order (2017) (Coescop), Organic Integral Criminal Code (2014) (COIP), Law of Extinction of Domain (2021), Organic Code of the Judicial Function (COFJ), Organic Law of Public Service (2010) (Losep).

In addition, it states that the State requires, in exceptional situations, the legitimate use of force in a progressive manner to guarantee security. The entities empowered to use force with lethal potential would be; Armed Forces National Police Security Corps and Penitentiary Surveillance. Also, five levels of use of force are proposed: Police presence, verbalization, physical control, use of non-lethal techniques and use of force with lethal power. It clarifies that in situations that put the lives of third parties or the public force servant at risk, the uniformed may initiate the legitimate use of force at the level he deems reasonable and necessary to neutralize the threat. That includes force with lethal potential.

CONCLUSIONS

- It shows living in anarchy at all levels, chaos, irresponsibility, a judiciary that does not fulfill its duty, parliamentary mediocrity, careerism, extortion and the ambitions of organized political groups. It abdicates reason, consensus and dialogue that should exist in a civilized society.
- The most obvious sign of the deterioration in the country, which until five years ago was considered the second safest country in South America, is the increase in hitmen in ways that go beyond settling drug traffickers' scores.
- This practice creates real social arousal. Many are caught on surveillance cameras in broad daylight, even with children, and targets range from prosecutors, lawyers and businessmen to people who apparently have no connection to criminal activity.
- It is important to understand that insecurity not only affects governments and their institutions, but is also the responsibility of ordinary people, productive departments, churches and families, the latter disappearing every day. It is everyone's problem, the citizens who live in this country must share the responsibility and be able to respond to threats in all their actions. Everyone aspires to be in public office with the sole purpose of enriching themselves, you have to contribute to create an ideal society. If we really have the call to serve, we must present it to honest people, not charlatans and opportunists.

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