

URGENT

International call for solidarity with the people's struggle in Ecuador

It is paramount for the people in Ecuador that their struggle receives massive international support now, in order to urge the government to meet their demands and avoid further victims. (For more information, see below)

Please send this urgent call massively to president Moreno's twitter (@Lenin) and to his Minister of Interior (@mariapaularomo) and help to spread it further worldwide:

President Moreno, Minister Romo,

I am very concerned about the current situation in Ecuador and urge you to

- stop the repression against the legitimate protests in your country and free all persons who were arrested in this context
 - revert the decree that liberalizes fuel prices and withdraws labor rights
 - stop the expansion of extractivism (oil, mining and industrial monocultures) in one of the world's most biodiverse countries
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We also hope to get donations AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (**PLEASE DONATE HERE**): <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-indigenous-resistance-imf-reforms-ecuador>), so we can then send them to the different organizations and indigenous representatives. The crowdfunding site will be open until the national State of Emergency is over. Any contribution, whether 5 or 100 EUR/USD, will go directly to benefiting indigenous peoples who are struggling against neoliberal reforms and the extraction of fossil fuels.

***Nina Pacari**, former leader of the confederation of indigenous peoples CONAIE,
former parliamentary, former Foreign Minister, former Magistrate of the
Constitutional Court of Ecuador*

***Blanca Chancoso**, former leader of the indigenous organization of the highlands
ECUARUNARI*

***Floresmilo Simbaña**, former leader of CONAIE*

***Gina Benavides**, former Ombudswoman of Ecuador*

***Esperanza Martínez**, Acción Ecológica Ecuador, Oilwatch*

Background information:

Ecuador is living through the biggest popular uprising since 2005, when former President Lucio Gutiérrez was ousted. The current protests began on October 3rd, 2019, after President Lenin Moreno decreed to apply a structural adjustment package demanded as a condition by the International Monetary Fund to give the country a credit. In the first two days, transport workers and taxi drivers were the most visible force of the protests, but soon the indigenous movement and trade unions took over. The adjustment package mainly includes the liberalization of former subsidized fuel and diesel prices as well as the withdrawal of several worker's rights. The massive protests have now lasted for a week, confronting unseen levels of repression both from police and military, including attacks on hospitals and universities. By the time of releasing this call, the Ecuadorian Ombudsman reported five deaths nationwide, nearly one thousand arrests and over five hundred wounded.

What is at stake in Ecuador today is not just forcing a government to reverse another neoliberal package of austerity measures imposed by the IMF, like it had happened several times during the 1990s. For the first time in 12 years, the people of Ecuador are raising their heads again and drawing a red line towards the powerful and the oligarchy. "Once again, the indigenous movement gives us back our dignity," says intellectual Jaime Breilh about the situation.



Indigenous women leading a manifestation in Quito

Contrary to what some foreign media claim, the protests by no means express the people's desire to bring ex-President Correa back to the government. Its party lost much of its representation and only won two of 23 prefectures in the regional elections in March 2019. What happened is that a tough core of Correa supporters and the ex-president himself, who is still in exile in Belgium and cannot return to Ecuador because of several court cases against him, quickly tried to instrumentalize the protests politically. While their criticism of the

Moreno government's deepening of neoliberal policies is correct, they systematically cover up the way they themselves have paved the way for those policies and already implemented their first stadia, for example by signing the Free Trade Agreement with the European Union and inviting the IMF back in. The indigenous umbrella organization CONAIE distanced itself clearly from the attempts of political takeover by the supporters of Correa. The latter also allows the Moreno government to hide behind the excuse of a conspiracy orchestrated by Correa and the Venezuelan government.

While the Correa government (2007-2017) during the first months of its tenure had expelled the World Bank and IMF from Ecuador in an unseen act of sovereignty and declared much of the foreign debt unlawful after an audit, it was this same government that declared war on indigenous peoples and trade unions, since it considered the state the only legitimate actor of social transformation and felt threatened by autonomous social organizations. Protest was systematically criminalized, criminal law tightened and street blockades classified as terrorism. Yellow unions were formed, social organizations aggressively split and an all-embracing propaganda apparatus built until the executive had no significant counterpart left in civil society. As of 2013, Correa's party also had a two-thirds majority in parliament and could implement whatever it pleased, with a policy that simply transformed the initially promised, profound and intercultural transformation into a process of capitalist modernization, which opened the country further for transnational capital. Yasuní National Park, one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, was cleared for oil exploitation, and for the first time large-scale industrial mining contracts were signed. After international oil prices went down from 2014, the Correa government also returned to the international financial markets and the IMF and began to increase the foreign debt, which is now at 38 billion dollars. Finally, after Correa's replacement in 2017, it became known that his government had operated corruption in historical dimensions. But most importantly, it left behind a country without significant social organization which could have stood in the way of the subsequent government of Lenin Moreno, who brought the oligarchy directly back into the ministries. Moreno also has radically changed the tone of foreign policies, aligning with the US and rightwing Latin American governments and supporting the idea of a military intervention in Venezuela.



Protests in front of the Parliament in Quito

The measures taken by the government do not respond to an environmentally friendly policy that aims to redirect people from private car use to public transport – as investments in clean public transport to create a real alternative would be a precondition for this. Rather, inequality is deepening further in a country where the economy is already highly monopolized. For this reason, also the ecology movement has joined the protests. As the NGO Acción Ecológica states, a consistent environmental and climate policy would require to withdraw the multiple subsidies and tax exemptions for oil companies, mining and palm oil companies, but those are increasingly expanding their destructive activities in the country with the government's support.

It is important to emphasize that the core issues indigenous people in Ecuador are concerned with are rather distant from the logics of electoral and party politics. In the forefront is not only the withdrawal of the IMF package, but also turning away from extractivism, which continues to advance into their territories and threatens their bare existence, both in material and cultural terms. Plurinationality, the central demand of the indigenous peoples since the 1990s, also includes territorial self-government with communitarian subsistence economies, applying their own judiciary, education and health systems as well as their own forms of assembly democracy. The right to a mode of living that is not dictated by global capitalism and takes from the modern world only what the community sovereignly decides, that is what Ecuador's Indigenous Movement basically fights for.