

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 19, 2024

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
The U.S. Department of State 2201
C Street N.W.
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to raise concerns regarding recent developments in Ecuador that we believe may threaten democracy, human rights, the impartial administration of justice, and international norms. We believe the United States and Ecuador should have a strong bilateral relationship. Still, recent developments raise serious doubts and questions concerning U.S. policy, some of which have previously been raised by members of Congress. In light of the continuing deterioration of Ecuador's economic and security situation, which has resulted in the mass departure of [unprecedented numbers](#) of Ecuadorians, the U.S. should review its policy towards the country and its relationship with key institutional actors there.

Rule of Law and Judicial Impartiality in Jeopardy

The rule of law and judicial impartiality are cornerstones of free and democratic societies, yet both are under threat in Ecuador. The most recent attacks on the rule of law have come from President Noboa, who has suspended and effectively replaced his Vice President in a move that legal experts widely consider to be a flagrant [violation](#) of the constitution and Inter-American [judicial precedent](#). Last year, members of Congress [expressed](#) concern over investigative reports linking Danilo Carrera, brother-in-law and close associate of former President Guillermo Lasso, to corruption. Subsequent accusations have implicated Carrera in connections with a transnational organized crime group known as the "Albanian Mafia." Former President Lasso is alleged to have [obstructed](#) a criminal investigation into Carrera. Although no charges have been filed against Lasso, Carrera's fixer, and the key witness in this case, Rubén Cherres, was murdered in March 2023. On November 20, a court [sentenced](#) Carrera to ten years in prison for involvement in organized crime.

Of immediate concern are [allegations](#) stemming from over 1,500 leaked text messages between Ecuador's Attorney General Diana Salazar and former National Assembly member Ronny Aleaga. These messages suggest that Salazar, who has been praised by the US State Department as an "anti-corruption champion, used her office for political purposes, and that she delayed investigations into Lasso and Carrera because pursuing them at that time would have benefitted the leftwing opposition in the 2023 elections. The leaks also indicate that Salazar may have disseminated a false narrative implicating supporters of former President Rafael Correa in the murder of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio. Further allegations include Salazar warning Aleaga of his imminent arrest and her apparent mistrust of the FBI's role in investigating Villavicencio's assassination. If these messages are authentic, they reveal a

troubling pattern of unlawful conduct and politicization of justice. Salazar also appears to have shown gross indiscretion concerning information exchanged with US authorities. This raises pressing questions regarding U.S. collaboration with Salazar and the role of U.S. authorities in supporting her actions.

Attacks on Press Freedom

Freedom of the press, a fundamental pillar of democracy, is under siege in Ecuador. Independent journalists critical of senior officials or investigating government corruption face violent threats and politically motivated actions.

An [April 2023 letter](#) addressed to President Biden by members of Congress noted that an Ecuadorian journalist, Andersson Boscán, published the initial revelations concerning the alleged illegal activities of Danilo Carrera and presented evidence that suggested that the Lasso government had shut down an anti-narcotics investigation. Andersson Boscán of La Posta, who exposed corruption linked to Carrera, fled to Canada with his wife after receiving [threats](#) and being surveilled. Their decision followed a seven-month struggle with the Attorney General's Office to obtain a [police intelligence report](#) that detailed surveillance of them and their family. Boscán also [claims](#) that a European intelligence agency warned him about a “plan of attack” against him.

Similarly, Cuban-born journalist Alondra Santiago was deported after criticizing government figures, despite residing in Ecuador for nearly two decades. The foreign ministry justified its decision by claiming that she posed a [threat to public safety](#). Santiago is known for having voiced strong criticisms of both Noboa and Salazar. These incidents highlight a growing climate of fear for journalists and demand immediate attention to safeguard press freedom.

Violations of International Norms

On April 5, Ecuadorian authorities stormed the Mexican Embassy in Quito, violating the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. This breach of international law elicited condemnation from the [State Department](#) and the [White House](#). Despite global outcry, President Daniel Noboa's administration has refused to apologize or take accountability. President Noboa has cited his fight against corruption and the growing security crisis as validation for his actions, though he [acknowledged](#) in a recent interview that his decision was part of an effort to secure more votes ahead of a referendum. Given the dangerous precedent set by the Ecuadorian government's actions, we ask that the United States maintain a strong response to this grave injustice while exploring other avenues to facilitate a diplomatic solution and ensure accountability for involved parties.

Human Rights Violations and Democratic Erosion under Noboa

In recent years, Ecuador has seen a worrying expansion of organized crime and violence, making it one of the countries with the highest homicide rate in Latin America. This escalating violence has prompted [severe security measures](#) under President Noboa, including the declaration of an “internal armed conflict” against criminal groups. These measures have led to widespread human rights abuses as reported by [human rights organizations](#), including arbitrary arrests and mistreatment of detainees and also allegations of security forces carrying out extrajudicial killings, with the Attorney General's Office telling [Amnesty International](#) it was investigating [12 possible cases](#) of this nature. The Constitutional Court has [repeatedly ruled](#) that the Noboa government's justification for these emergency declarations is unconstitutional, yet they persist.

In this troubling context, the U.S. has operationalized security cooperation with Ecuador, including [anti-narcotics flights](#) from an airstrip on the Galapagos Islands and most recently, a [Status of Forces Agreement](#) (SOFA). This deepened engagement must be accompanied with a firm stance on human rights. We urge the administration to prioritize monitoring and reporting on these violations and to advocate for tangible improvements in governance, justice, and human rights.

We respectfully request that your administration:

- Increase human rights monitoring and reporting in Ecuador and call on its government to uphold its international human rights obligations and prevent further violations.
- Prioritize in its bilateral engagement with Ecuador concerns regarding human rights and access to justice.
- Insist on tangible improvements in human rights, democratic governance, and the rule of law.

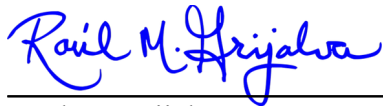
Copy to:

Attorney General Merrick Garland, U.S. Department of Justice

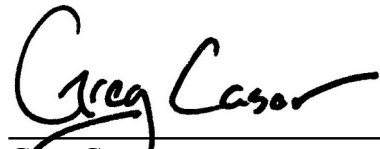
Secretary Lloyd Austin, U.S. Department of Defense

Secretary Janet Yellen, U.S. Department of the Treasury

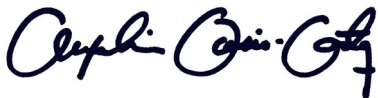
Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress