

Ecuador's Three-Front Assault on Civil Society

How Law, Streets, and Media Are Strangling Democracy



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What's happening

On 13 September 2025, Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa eliminated the diesel subsidy by decree, raising prices 55%. Indigenous movements and transport unions called a national strike. The government responded with states of emergency, military deployment, and systematic violence.

Civic-space conditions in Ecuador are rapidly deteriorating, and it isn't a single flashpoint. It's a coordinated, three-front squeeze on civil society: the law is being weaponised, the streets militarised, and the media controlled – three sieges that reinforce one another and close in at once.

The Crackdown, By the Numbers

- 385 human rights violation reports documented
- 206 detained in 30 days
- 163 injured in just 48 hours (13-14 Oct, Imbabura province)
- 3 deaths confirmed in protest context
- 55 journalists attacked; community radios closed

The Three-Front War

1

Legal Siege

Six laws in two years. Bank accounts frozen based on secret intelligence reports organisations never see. No due process, no appeal.

2

Streets Under Siege

Heaviest use of force across three national strikes. States of exception normalised. The message: don't protest, it's too costly.

3

Media Under Siege

Community radios have been closed. International media silence enables escalation. 163 injured in 48 hours receives no international coverage.

The Regional Risk

Civil society groups fear Ecuador may become a model testing whether coordinated legal, physical, and media repression works. Right now, it's working. If it succeeds, the model replicates across the region.

The International Response – Compromised

According to multiple accounts, the UN Resident Coordinator and European ambassadors joined a government convoy shortly after a protester was killed. While motives are contested, the episode sat uneasily alongside limited international responses to the scale of injuries reported.

What Comes Next

Civil society has done its part. What's missing is international attention that creates real costs for repression.

Breaking the media siege is the first step. International silence doesn't just fail to report violence – it enables it. When 163 people injured in 48 hours receives no coverage, there's no cost for escalation.

The Inter-American Commission hearing on 17 November 2025 creates an opening. Ecuador's state representatives must answer publicly. International organisations should attend virtually, arrange media coverage, and coordinate diplomatic pressure – asking foreign ministries "what is your position on Ecuador?"

The pattern repeats because it works: three fuel crises, three crackdowns, zero accountability. If international solidarity makes repression more expensive than dialogue, the model becomes less attractive elsewhere.

Based on 22 October 2025 solidarity call | Vuka Coalition | CIVICUS
Full report: [\[link\]](#)