

ECUADOR 2022 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ecuador is a constitutional, multiparty republic with an elected president and unicameral legislature. In April 2021, voters elected President Guillermo Lasso Mendoza from a center-right alliance of the Creating Opportunities Movement, the Social Christian Party, and other selected members of the National Assembly in elections that observers deemed free and fair.

The National Police maintains internal security and law enforcement and is under the authority of the Ministry of Interior. The military is under the authority of the Ministry of Defense. Police and military forces share responsibility for border enforcement, with the military also having limited domestic security responsibilities. The military may complement police operations to maintain and control public order when expressly mandated. Migration officers are civilians and report to the Ministry of Interior. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces. There were reports that members of the security forces committed some abuses.

Social and Indigenous movements' opposition to government economic policies led to widespread street protests and a shutdown of major city roads and provincial highways that lasted for 18 days in June, the most protracted protests in the country's history. Protest leaders ended the demonstrations on June 30 after reaching a peace agreement with the government that addressed some of their demands and agreeing to a 90-day dialogue period to resolve remaining matters. The protests paralyzed the country, significantly disrupting economic activity and medical services. Attacks by nongovernmental armed groups against security forces during the protests, and police and military responses to those attacks and protests, resulted in deaths and injuries among security forces and civilians.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: torture and abuse by police officers and prison guards; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media, including violence against journalists and the existence of criminal libel laws; serious government corruption;

by public officials. The committee instructed public institutions to issue internal regulations to determine positions eligible for optional telework. The ministry prioritized telework for pregnant and nursing women, persons with disabilities, persons with catastrophic diseases and their caregivers, and senior workers.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement: The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcement of wage, hour, and OSH laws. The government did not effectively enforce the laws. Inspectors have the authority to make unannounced inspections. The ministry issues fines for wage and hour law and OSH violations. Penalties were commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud or negligence, but were rarely applied to violators. The government's 117 total reported labor inspectors in 2021 were fewer than ILO standards recommend for the country's population and labor force size. The ministry continued its enforcement reforms by increasing the number of workers protected by contracts and minimum wage standards and eligible for social security benefits.

Informal Sector: Wage, hour, and OSH regulations and standards were not applied to part-time workers or those in the informal sector, which employed 52 percent of the working population as of July. These workers were not registered in the social security system nor eligible to receive other legally mandated benefits.

OSH problems were more prevalent in the informal sector. The law singles out the health and safety of miners, but the government did not enforce safety rules in informal, often illegal, small-scale mines (frequently linked to local community leaders and organized criminal groups), which made up the vast majority of mining enterprises. Migrants and refugees were particularly vulnerable to hazardous and exploitative working conditions. According to media and labor associations, local organizations reported complaints of Venezuelans receiving below the minimum wage, particularly in the informal sector. Gig workers reported conditions that did not follow wage, hour, and safety laws.