

Ecuador: Indigenous peoples fight back

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Statement by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) on the revolt triggered by austerity measures demanded by the IMF.

In recent days, an uprising of revolutionary dimensions has broken out in Ecuador. A mass strike by transport workers and a huge mobilisation of Indigenous peoples have together brought much of the country to a standstill. Government buildings across the capital, Quito, and many other cities and provincial towns have been taken over by the protesters and are being used to hold open assemblies. The President, Lenín Moreno, has fled Quito to the coastal city of Guayaquil and introduced a raft of repressive 'state of emergency' measures. A number of demonstrators have been killed by police and military repression, but the security forces appear overwhelmed by the scale and persistence of the rebellion.

The immediate spark for the protest was the announcement of a hike in the price of fuel, by way of the removal of state subsidies. The fuel price hike is the most visible and hated measure in a package of reforms announced by Moreno's right-wing administration in line with the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The fuel price hike should not be mistaken for an environmentalist measure: this is not the argument with which the government has presented it, and it is highly unlikely that the measure would have any impact in reducing consumption of oil, rather than simply intensifying the burden on working-class Ecuadorians attempting to reach their places of work. The hike would also affect public transport, and fresh rises in bus prices in Quito were announced by the government in response to the breaking-out of the protest movement.

Indeed, the anger of the country's Indigenous peoples, which has gestated for many years under successive governments before breaking out in the current protest, has been fomented in large part by extractivist policies and the continual repression of Indigenous resistance to oil production. Protesters in the current rebellion have also targeted and shut down a number of oilfields - as of two days ago, the government estimated that it had already lost out on 231,000 barrels of oil exports as a result.

We reproduce below a statement from the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), setting out its position and its view of the next steps.

We have lived through days of great upheaval, have surprised ourselves with our own capacity to fight and to resist, and have shown the world that we, the Indigenous movement and the Ecuadorian people, are an undivided whole. Taking our rightful place in history, we have shaken the established powers to their core. Our word is final: we will not cease until the IMF gets out of Ecuador.

Like any other weak and discredited government, Lenín Moreno's administration has no answer but for violence and repression. Lacking the slightest regard for basic norms of respect for human rights, the government has treated the people as its enemy. The authorities have disregarded our designated safe zones, hurling tear gas cannisters into the places sheltering our children and our

elderly people. They have prevented us from forming humanitarian corridors to allow the wounded to get to hospitals. And they have massacred our fallen comrades, who have died from bullets, from tear gas cannisters, from beatings, or from being crushed under horses or thrown from bridges. What we have been living through in this country is indescribable; we have no recent parallel for such atrocities and acts of violent repression aimed at a people demanding its rights.

Who now will rally to the support of this government, emboldening it to continue its war against the people? The very same elements that we saw recently come to the aid of the government in the streets of Guayaquil: the pro-imperialist business class, which seeks only further loans from the IMF so that their own debts, their own crisis, can continue to be paid for by the working class, the Indigenous peoples, and the general populace.

This is not a fight solely over a rise in the price of fuel in the here and now - it is also a fight to prevent our rulers from selling off our future, and forcing us to pay with two or three generations of hunger and poverty for our failure to stop this plan in its tracks today.

We have many tears of anger, but we have learnt from our forebears that the way in which to honour those slain in the struggle is to bring ever more of us into the fight. The 'dialogue' that Lenín Moreno puts forward is a farce. That is why, brothers and sisters, we must now radicalise our actions. No 'dialogue' with a murderous government until it meets our minimal demands: the dismissal of [Minister of the Interior] María Paula Romo and of [Minister of Defence] Oswaldo Jarrín, and the withdrawal of Executive Order 883 [enabling the raising of the price of fuel].

In the meantime, our task is to fight, to renew our forces and to sustain the blockades of the roads and the taking-over of government facilities and public buildings, to continue organising assemblies in all communities across the country and forming alliances with all sections of the populace.

Nobody can speak on behalf of the Indigenous movement with this murderous government, until our demands are met. Our sole authorised voice is the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE); this being said, leaders who violate the popular mandate will be subject to Indigenous and popular justice.

*Not one step back!
IMF out of Ecuador!
The strike goes on!*

CONAIE

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P.S.

Original available [here](#). Translation and introduction by **Max Leak**.

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