

# USA: Open Letter to Editors of Jacobin and Monthly Review

Wednesday 3 March 2021, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 2 March 2021).

**New Politics editor's note:** Last month, grassroots Indigenous and youth-led movements helped the ecosocialist Indigenous candidate Yaku Pérez and his Pachakutik party make surprising gains in Ecuador's election. Pérez finished in 3<sup>rd</sup> place, narrowly missing the chance to participate in a runoff against the Pink Tide leader Rafael Corea's protégé Adres Arauz. In this context, the U.S. socialist magazines *Jacobin* and *Monthly Review* published spirited attacks on Yaku Pérez and the anti-extractivist views of his supporters. The *Monthly Review* article, republished from the website *Grayzone*, has since been removed but can be read through [an archived version](#). In response to these articles, nearly 200 people have signed the following open letter to *Jacobin* and *Monthly Review*'s editors. Signatories include many prominent scholars and activists with expertise in Latin American, Indigenous, and ecosocialist politics. We invite you to add your thoughts and comments below.

## Open Letter

- Stop Racist and Misogynist Attacks on the Emergent Indigenous, Eco-Feminist Left in Latin America
- Address the Crisis in Today's Ecuador

**Dear Editors of Jacobin Magazine and Monthly Review,**  
March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

We, the signatories of this letter, have to come together to demand the retraction or clarification of two recent articles that smear political movements and leaders in Ecuador. The gains of Yaku Pérez and the coalition around the Pachakutik party in the 7 February 2021 elections represent an exciting and emergent new left comprised of Indigenous organizations, eco-socialist politics, feminist and LGBTQ+ activists, anti-racist movements, and anti-extractivist causes. On 24 February 2021, these movements came together in the streets of Ecuador, to demand that every vote be counted. Silencing and discrediting Ecuadoran voices as well as new popular movements—while demanding fealty to state capitalist leaders associated with the extractivist “left” in Ecuador and across the region—must end. Ben Norton’s “How Ecuador’s US-backed, coup-supporting ‘ecosocialist’ candidate Yaku Pérez aids the right-wing,” (republished by the Monthly Review on 8 February 2021) [1] and Denis Rogatyuk’s “Ecuador’s Election Was a Massive Repudiation of Neoliberalism” (published in Jacobin Magazine on 18 February) [2] do not reflect the traditions of Monthly Review—the “longest continuously published socialist magazine in the United States.” [3] Both articles contradict Jacobin’s founders’ goal to develop a “product of a younger generation not quite as tied to the Cold War paradigms that sustained the old leftist intellectual milieu.” [4] The editors’ openness to new generations is at odds with the sustained offensive against a new Indigenous eco-socialist and feminist political left in Latin America.

Rogatyuk's article in Jacobin condemns the eco-socialist candidate Pérez and his partner, Manuela Picq, pointing out they "have for years attempted to portray Correa as an anti-Indigenous, anti-environment leader that pursues an 'extractivist' model of development." Yes, they have, as have most independent social scientists who have looked at the wreckage of the Correa legacy. [5] There is a vibrant, Indigenous, and youth-led coalition of leftists who have critiqued Correa's misuse of "el buen vivir" principles in his policies. These policies nourished new extractive industries. Under Correa, the state criminalized Indigenous groups, [6] LGBTQ+ populations, and exploited new mining resources and areas such as Yasuní. [7] Rogatyuk mocks the new left in Ecuador as a "ragbag" and "surreal" group who "absurdly" make claims about the partiality of electoral commissions. Rogatyuk overlooks the extensive and historic struggles of Indigenous identity, genocide and sovereignty, as well as the multiple battles against extractivism and ecological devastation, gendered injustices, political/social misogyny, [8] and homophobia. The article willfully ignores the organizational and social momentum and innovation that fueled Pérez's electoral success. It ignores these movements' critiques of extractivist statism and monolithic personalism. Rogatyuk suggested that "Pérez's political record suggests he is a Trojan horse for the left's most bitter enemies."

Similarly, Norton's Monthly Review article disdainfully dismisses environmentalists, whose critiques of extractivism or racist policies of the statist left he portrayed as "opening up space for the right." The author singles out "Extinction Rebellion" as a right-wing tool. He rages against the language of "decoloniality" and the eco-socialist left's critique of statist leaders' complicity with whiteness and colonial-economic and social legacies. In a typically authoritarian thrust, the article demonizes anyone who allies themselves with NGOs, branding them as supporters of imperialism.

Norton's widely circulated Monthly Review article aimed at fracturing the left and eroding social movement support for Pérez as an alternative. The piece was published at a crucial moment in the Ecuadorian presidential election. Conventional media outlets have used it to discredit and damage a candidate of the eco-socialist/Indigenous/feminist left. Norton's article wove together a series of Pérez's tweets critiquing the statist and extractivist left. Of course, many members of the progressive left, including some of us writing this letter, disagreed with these proclamations as well as Pérez's support of neoliberal candidates as a strategy to defeat authoritarian elements. But we contextualize these positions. The Monthly Review article spotlights Manuela Picq, Pérez's partner, in a misogynist and homophobic diatribe that mocks and attacks her feminist, queer studies, and eco-social politics. Generating absurd conspiracy narratives, this article designates her body as evidence of Pérez's imperialist complicity. It stinks of rumor-mongering, noting that she took classes at Princeton in a building named after Ronald Reagan, as if this would prove that she was a stooge of the Reagan administration. At age 25, Picq was part of a civil society dialogue in the FTAA negotiation process where she organized critics of the FTAA. Instead of mentioning this history of radical praxis, she is accused of being a "CIA cutout" and an agent of "billionaire George Soros," a familiar anti-Semitic accusation. She is also incriminated for teaching classes in queer studies and feminist theory. The author claims that because Picq teaches "Latinx Studies" and "Queering Notions of Modernity," she is an enemy of global class struggle and complicit with imperialism. Norton does not acknowledge the long list of Picq's other publications on queer theory, international relations, social movement struggles, or resistance to authoritarianism. Most tellingly, the author does not mention that Picq was arrested and deported from Ecuador by the Correa government for having participated in united Indigenous, feminist, and anti-extractivist protests. [9]

These two articles do not explore in detail the context of Pérez's political momentum in the organization and revitalization of CONAIE—the Indigenous confederation that led the largest set of protests in Ecuadorian history in October 2019, uniting Indigenous groups, feminists, students, and workers movements to fight back against the imposition of a wrenching IMF accord and to demand

the end to ecocidal plunder and land dispossession. This moment consolidated the leadership of a younger generation. CONAIE's legacy, of uniting movements in October 2019, lent popular and movement support to Pérez's candidacy and might bring him perhaps to second place in the polling. The article does not mention the historic October 2019 uprising or CONAIE and Pérez's roles in it.

We are concerned that a significant number of today's left-wing actors, across the Americas and the world, align themselves with extractivism, agrobusiness, authoritarian statism, [10] and stand against Indigenous, anti-racist, and anti-patriarchal movements, ideas, and leaders. We worry that the former is acting to eject the latter from the conversation by labeling them as right-wingers and allies of imperialism. We should not be distracted from the wave of violent, ultra-racist "populism," and military and parliamentary coups that have swept the region in the past years. It is exactly these authoritarian developments that make it irresponsible and dangerous to brand those who critique the extractivist left as allies of Yankee imperialists or sympathetic to Bolsonaro-type populists who are encouraging genocide, femicide, racial exterminations, and homophobic assassinations. We stand against authoritarian statism focusing on individual male populist figures and armed, militarized "machocratic" patriarchy. Against this model, a new progressive alternative for the left has been emerging—led by Indigenous, Black, and feminist as well as class and worker-identified justice movements—to advocate redistribution of wealth, land, and autonomies to forge new modes of collective, bodily, and eco-social participation and rights.

After Ecuador's 7 February 2021 election, civil society groups across Ecuador raised concerns that an effort was underway to "find votes" needed to bring Lasso's totals above Pérez's. This would serve both sides of what Chilean writer Andrés Kogan Valderrama has labeled the "binary" political equation [11] of extractivist left and neoliberal right. Both sides saw Pérez as the most threatening opponent, for he might win and, more than that, dismantle the binary political equation that has been making true redistribution and eco-social justice unimaginable. The Ecosocialist Feminist Network stated, "We reject the role that 'Correismo' [Rafael Correa's regime] has played in this moment, exacerbating racism and delegitimizing social struggle through media campaigns... We know that the struggle continues and what will be the mobilization and unity of the popular field will permit us to sustain the gains accumulated in October [2019] and resistance against this system of death." [12] We deplore the demonization of both Pérez and movements that brought him so close to the run-off election. A left-wing global community deserves better, and we call on the editors of Monthly Review and Jacobin to reject these simplistic and dangerous analyses which feed right wing structures of hate in Latin America

Signed,

Paul Amar, Professor, Director of Orfalea Center, University of California, Santa Barbara

Sonia Correa, Co-Chair, Sexuality Policy Watch

Ghaitai Paul Males Castañeda, Comunidad Indígena de Compañía, Líder Espiritual Cristiano-Andino de Jóvenes

Macarena Gómez-Barris, Professor, Pratt Institute

Mara Viveros Vigoya, Profesora Titular, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, LASA President (2019-2020)

Lisa Duggan, Professor, New York University

Cristina Yépez Arroyo, McGill University

J. Kehaulani Kauanui, Professor, Wesleyan University

William C. Smith, Professor Emeritus, University of Miami

Rita Laura Segato, Professor, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina

Pamela Martin, Professor, Coastal Carolina University

Mario Pecheny, Professor, University of Buenos Aires

Cruz Caridad Bueno, Assistant Professor of Black Studies, SUNY-New Paltz

Javiera Barandiaran, Associate Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara  
 Michelle Artieda, Florida International University  
 Mieke Verloo, Professor, Radboud University, The Netherlands  
 Lena Lavinias, Professor, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro  
 Sherene R Seikaly, Associate Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara  
 Gita Sen, DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), Fiji  
 Gloria Careaga, Facultad de Psicología, UNAM, Mexico  
 Rosalind Petchesky, Distinguished Professor Emerita, Hunter College & The Graduate Center, City University of New York  
 Rina Pakari Marcillo, Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador  
 Steve Stein, Senior Professor, University of Miami  
 Markus Thiel, Associate Professor, Florida International University  
 Dominique Chiriboga, Activista Feminista y LGBT, Ecuador  
 Flavio Carrera V., Project Coordinator, Universidad San Francisco de Quito  
 Daniela Cabascango, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Ecuador  
 Kiran Asher, University of Massachusetts Amherst  
 Carolina Benalcázar, Concordia University  
 Fernando Luz Brancoli, Associate Professor, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro  
 Diana Coryat, Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar, Ecuador  
 Bila Sorj, Professor, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro  
 Pablo Ospina Peralta, Docente de la Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Quito, Ecuador  
 Antonia Carcelen-Estrada, Profesora investigadora, Universidad San Francisco de Quito/Northumbria University  
 Jennyfer Masaquiza, Universidad San Francisco de Quito  
 Claudia Sofía Garriga-López, California State University, Chico  
 David Paternotte, Université Libre de Bruxelles  
 Carlos de la Torre, Director, Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida  
 Miriam Lang, Professor, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Ecuador  
 Carmen Diana Deere, Distinguished Professor Emerita, University of Florida; LASA President (1992-1994)  
 Arturo Escobar, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill  
 Guilherme Leite Gonçalves, Professor, Rio de Janeiro State University  
 Johannes Waldmüller, Research Professor, Universidad de Las Américas, EPN  
 Sylvia Cifuentes, University of California, Santa Barbara  
 Larry Lohmann, The Corner House (Environmental and Social Justice), UK  
 Gareth Dale, Brunel University, UK  
 Alvaro Jarrin, Associate Professor, College of the Holy Cross  
 Alberto J. Olvera, Profesor Titular, Instituto de Investigaciones Histórico-Sociales, Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico  
 Benjamin Arditi, Professor of Politics, UNAM, Mexico  
 Margarita López Maya, CENDES-UCV, Venezuela  
 Les Levidow, Senior Research Fellow, Open University, UK  
 Javier Corrales, Professor, Amherst College  
 Patrick Bond, Professor, University of the Western Cape, South Africa  
 Joan Martinez-Alier, ICTA, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Catalonia (Spain)  
 Zillah Eisenstein, writer, Prof. Emerita, Ithaca College  
 Iokiñe Rodriguez, Senior Lecturer, University of East Anglia, UK  
 Rehad Desai, University of Johannesburg, South Africa  
 Cristina Vega, Profesora Investigadora, FLACSO Ecuador  
 Muhammad Reza Sahib, KRuHA - people's coalition for the right to water, Indonesia  
 Monroe Edwin Jeffrey, International Tribal Association, United States

Francesco Martone, Senatore della Repubblica, Italia  
Barry Gills, University of Helsinki, Finland  
Pedro Gutiérrez Guevara, Researcher, Kaleidos Center of Interdisciplinary Ethnography, Ecuador

Rosemary E. Galli, independent researcher, Observatório das Nacionalidades, UK  
Elisa Van Waeyenberge, SOAS University of London, UK  
Markus Kröger, Associate Professor, University of Helsinki, Finland  
Gabriel Roldos, ROLPRO SAS Publishing House, Ecuador  
Tom Kucharz, Ecologistas en Acción, Spain  
Lisa Rofel, Professor Emeritus and Research Professor, Co-Director, Center for Emerging Worlds, UC Santa Cruz  
Marcelo Coelho, Journalist, Folha de São Paulo, Brasil  
Alejandro Bendaña, Activist, Nicaragua  
John Francis Foran, Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara  
Melissa Weiner, Associate Professor, College of the Holy Cross  
Ashish Kothari, Global Tapestry of Alternatives, India  
Elisabeth de Souza Lobo, Psychologue, Université Paris 7, France  
Noah Zweig, Investigador Independiente, Ecuador  
Devin Beaulieu, University of California, San Diego  
Bárbara Sepúlveda Hales, Asociación de Abogadas Feministas, Chile  
Eng-Beng Lim, Director of Dartmouth Consortium of Studies in Race, Migration, and Sexuality; Assoc Professor WGSS, Dartmouth College  
Pallav Das, Editor, Radical Ecological Democracy  
Roxana Erazo, University of Toronto  
Santiago Acosta, Lecturer of Spanish, University of California, Davis  
Andrea Sempértegui, Lafayette College, USA  
Najwa Mayer, Postdoctoral Fellow, Dartmouth  
Judith Butler, Professor, University of California, Berkeley  
Marisol de la Cadena, Professor, University of California-Davis  
Benjamin Ardití, Professor of Politics, UNAM, Mexico  
Rosa Jijón Co-founder, A4C Arts for the Commons, Italy  
Donald E. Pease, Professor, Dartmouth College, USA  
Grace Delgado, Data Analyst, Dagan Inc., Estados Unidos  
Tamra L. Gilbertson, Professor, University of Tennessee and Indigenous Environmental Network  
Danid Barkin, Distinguished Professor, Metropolitan Autonomous University, Mexico  
Jai Sen, Researcher and listserve curator  
Catherine Szpant, Occupational Therapist, BOE, USA  
Fabio Luis Barbosa dos Santos, Professor, Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Brasil  
Hugo Ceron-Anaya, Associate Professor, Lehigh University, United States  
Salvador Schavelzon, Professor, Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Brasil  
André Luiz de Oliveira Domingues, farm worker, DSA IC Americas, USA  
Mia Yee, alumni, College of the Holy Cross  
Juan Wahren, Investigador y Profesor, Universidad de Buenos Aires/ CONICET  
Pablo Solón, Fundación Solón, Bolivia  
Gina Vargas, Feminista, Peru  
Sandra Macedo, Socióloga e artista visual, Brasil  
Eduardo Erazo Acosta, Professor, University Nariño, Colombia  
Judith Dellheim, Researcher, Zukunftskonvent Germany, Deutschland  
Silvia Spitta, Dartmouth College, USA  
Carolyn D'Cruz, La Trobe University, Australia  
Dr MK Dorsey, Club of Rome, Spain

Didice Godinho Delgado, Activist, Germany  
 S A Hamed Hosseini, Alternative Futures Research Network, Common Alternatives, University of Newcastle, Australia  
 Céline Veríssimo, Associate Professor, Federal University of Latin American Integration, Brazil  
 Nina Isabella Moeller, Associate Professor, Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University, England, UK  
 Kevin Bruyneel, Professor, Babson College, United States  
 JM Pedersen, Honorary Research Fellow, Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University  
 Julien-François Gerber, Researcher and Teacher, Institute of Social Studies, The Netherlands  
 Mirella Pretell Gomero, Syracuse University  
 Pamela Calla, Profesor, New York University  
 A. Naomi Paik, Associate Professor, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign  
 Carla Rodrigues, UFRJ, Brasil  
 Gayatri Gopinath, Professor, New York University  
 Teresa Armijos Burneo, Lecturer, University of East Anglia, UK  
 Trevor Hirsche, Instructor, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Bolivia  
 Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, Professor, New York University  
 Stefania Barca, Zennström Professor of Climate Change Leadership, Uppsala Universitet, Sweden  
 Éric Fassin, Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies, Paris 8 University (Vincennes – Saint-Denis)  
 Suzana Sawyer, Associate Professor, University of California, Davis  
 Cristina Rojas, Professor, Carleton University, Canada  
 Nadine Lefaucheur, CNRS Retraitée, Martinique France  
 Helena Hirata, Directrice de Recherche Emérito, CNRS, France  
 Angela Freitas, Coletivo Feminista 4D, Brasil  
 Dennis Altman Professor, LaTrobe University, Australia  
 Isabelle Stengers, Prof. emerita, Université Libre de Bruxelles  
 Emmanuelle Picard, Assistant Professor, Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon, France  
 Valentine Olivera, Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne  
  
 Picard Elodie, OpenEdition, France  
 Daniel Fischer, Food Not Bombs, USA  
 Margaret Wiener, Associate Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
 Ana María Goldani, Brazil LAB, Princeton University  
 Paola Minoia, University Lecturer, University of Helsinki, Finland  
 Lucas Savino, Associate Professor, Western University, Past-Chair of Ethnicity, Race and Indigenous Peoples Section (LASA)  
 Marco Aurelio Maximo Prado, Professor, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil  
 Breno Bringel, Professor, State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
 Tristan Partridge, Research Fellow, University of California, Santa Barbara  
 Geoff Goodwin, London School of Economics, UK  
 Aida Matilde Marcillo Perugachi, Concejala del Canton Otavalo, Ecuador  
 Stalin Herrera, Instituto de Estudios Ecuatorianos, Ecuador  
 George Yudice, Professor, University of Miami  
 Malvika Gupta, University of Oxford, UK  
 Aida Luz Lopez, Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de Mexico  
 Enrique Leff, Senior Researcher/Professor, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México  
 Giorgos Kallis, Professor, ICTA-UAB, Spain  
 Mariana Walter, Phd. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain  
 Angus McNelly, Queen Mary University of London, UK  
 Dalena Tran, Institut de Ciència i Tecnologia Ambientals (ICTA-UAB), Spain

Isabelle Darmon, Lecturer in Sociology and Sustainable Development, University of Edinburgh  
Bárbara Sepúlveda Hales, Asociación de Abogadas Feministas, Chile  
John Cavanagh, Director, Institute for Policy Studies, USA  
Anna Storti, Dartmouth College, USA  
Robin Broad, Professor, American University, USA  
Alberto Acosta, Expresidente de la Asamblea Constituyente (2007-2008), Ecuador  
Marinalva de Sousa Conserva/ Profa. Dra., Universidade Federal da Paraíba, Brasil  
Maria aparecida Ramos, Assembleia Legislativa da Paraíba, Brasil  
Bryan Winston, Dartmouth College, USA  
Margherita Scazza, University of Edinburgh, UK  
Anne Petermann, Executive Director, Global Justice Ecology Project  
Mateo Martínez Abarca, National Autonomous University of México, Ecuador  
Kristina Lyons, Assistant Professor, University of Pennsylvania, USA  
Clara Keane, Occidental College, USA  
Edgardo Lander, Citizen's Platform in Defense of the Constitution, Venezuela  
Julio César Díaz Calderón, University of Florida, México  
Christian Gros, Professeur Honoraire, Institut des hautes études de l'Amérique latine, Paris  
Paula Castells Carrión, FARO (Foundation for the Advance of Reforms and Opportunities), Ecuador  
Ximena Francisca Andrade Jorquera, docente e investigadora, UEM FLCS, Mozambique

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## P.S.

New Politics

<https://newpol.org/open-letter-to-editors-of-jacobin-and-monthly-review/>

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## Footnotes

[1] <https://mronline.org/2021/02/10/how-ecuadors-u-s-backed-coup-supporting-ecosocialist-candidate-yaku-perez-aids-the-right-wing/>

[2] <https://jacobinmag.com/2021/02/ecuador-election-arauc-hervas-perez-neoliberalism>

[3] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monthly\\_Review#:~:text=The%20Monthly%20Review%2C%20established%20in,magazine%20in%20the%20United%20States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monthly_Review#:~:text=The%20Monthly%20Review%2C%20established%20in,magazine%20in%20the%20United%20States)

[4] <https://web.archive.org/web/20190711101435/http://idiommag.com/2011/03/no-short-cuts-interview-with-the-jacobin/>

[5] There is extensive literature that examines how the period of Rafael Correa's government as a time of impunity and human rights violations.



See: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-8675.12117>

[6] In 2017, CONAIE fought to get amnesty for all activists of the indigenous movement who had been prosecuted and sentenced for protesting Correa's government and Chinese mining companies, and defending water resources. The government misused anti-terrorism laws dating from the 1970s military dictatorship to incarcerate indigenous leaders protesting extractivism. At that time, 98 individuals faced criminal prosecutions for resistance to authority, terrorism, sabotage, etc. See: <https://www.planv.com.ec/historias/politica/conaie-la-lucha-la-amnistia> and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-22656374>

[7] See: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/andes-to-the-amazon/2013/oct/15/ecuador-president-misleading-yasuni>

[8] Correa's sabatinas, weekly speeches televised in different locations around the country on Saturdays, were spaces which could last up to three hours. There he presented his visions and proposals, and attacked citizens, journalists, human rights activists, academics, and environmentalists.

The Media Observatory of Ecuador (OME) has counted 95 grievances against women and for sexist language in the 152 Correa's weekly speeches between 2013 and 2016.

See: [https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/05/23/planeta\\_futuro/1495560980\\_079621.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/05/23/planeta_futuro/1495560980_079621.html)

On Saturday December 28, 2013, one of the last during Correa's first administration, the former president criticized "gender ideology." On the same occasion, Correa affirmed "defending the traditional family" and declared opposition to abortion "has nothing to do with the left or the right," but are simple "moral issues." See full video here: <https://youtu.be/ODXFdqtGsy0?t=6341>

[9] See: <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-manuela-picq>

[10] In 2013, Rafael Correa issued Executive Decree No. 16 to control NGOs and establish limitations on the independent and autonomous functioning of unions and social organizations. The decree was harshly criticized by local and international organizations.

<https://sobrevivientes.planv.com.ec/decreto-16-y-las-amenazas-a-las-ong/> Correa arbitrarily punished journalists who did not agree with him and actively attacked indigenous environmental activists who opposed oil and gas extraction or open-pit mining on their lands.

<https://rsf.org/en/news/what-future-free-speech-ecuador-after-presidential-election>

<https://amazonwatch.org/news/2018/0418-new-report-shines-light-on-dark-days-for-amazon-earth-defenders-in-ecuador>

[11] <https://oplas.org/sitio/2021/02/14/andres-kogan-valderrama-yaku-perez-y-el-fin-de-los-binarios/>

[12] <https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7033>