

Ecuadorian prisons: No man's land



By Roberto Morejon

With more than 230 deaths this year, prison riots in Ecuador show signs of the fatal deterioration of a system that, as in any self-respecting society, should lead to the possible social treatment of the accused and order in prisons.

The most recent clash between powerful gangs in one of the prisons culminated in 116 deaths, many of them mutilated, reflecting the degree of violence applied.

According to reports, disputes between drug cartels have an impact on prisons, as no one forgets that Ecuador is a neighbor of Colombia.

Colombia is a major producer of hallucinogens and a transit channel for the merchandise to the United States, the main consumer.

It should be noted that a report by the investigative portal 'Código Vidrio' detailed that 25,000 people deprived of liberty in Ecuador belong to a criminal gang.

The Ecuadorian police admitted the existence of mafias that control the prison wards.

But while the proximity to Colombia, where violence and massacres are also prevalent, is a negative component, Ecuador also has serious infrastructure problems and a shortage of technical personnel to supervise inmates.

The prisons are overcrowded, since according to the National Service of Integral Attention to Adults Deprived of Liberty and Young Offenders, the country has 53 prisons with the capacity to hold almost 29,000 individuals, but they housed 10,000 more in January 2021.

NO few experts also attribute the saturation to the high rates of insecurity, because between January and August of this year in the city of Guayaquil 430 passers-by were murdered.

The government of former president Lenín Moreno only addressed the crises with the enactment of states of emergency in response to outbreaks of violence. It did nothing to create basic services, reform the penitentiary system and address it as a matter of social probity, instead of addressing it solely from the security side.

The recurrent riots in Ecuador's correctional facilities, frequent in other Latin American countries, are far from being solved only with the recruitment of more police, fencing with electrified fences or greater repression.



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