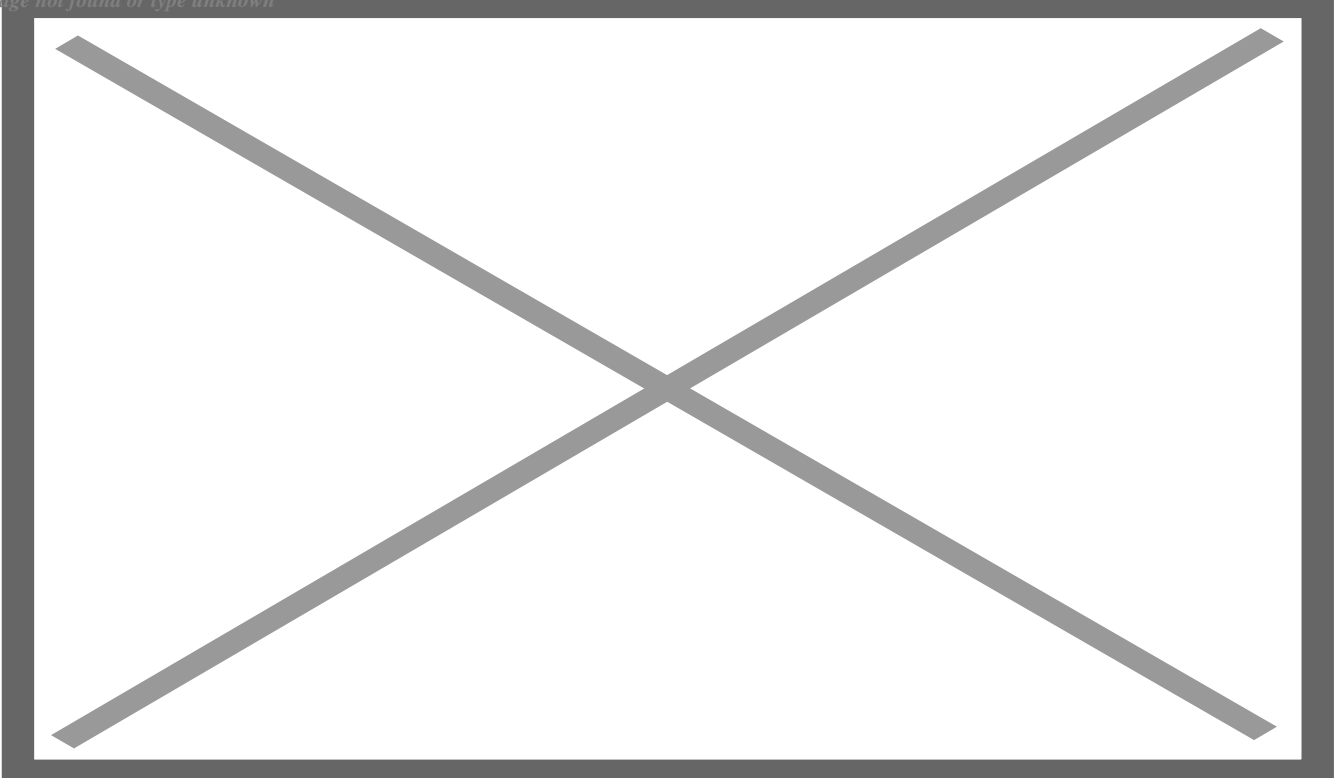


Tension in Ecuador

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By María Josefina Arce

As he had threatened, Ecuador's president, Guillermo Lasso, activated the cross death, a constitutional mechanism that leads to the dissolution of the National Assembly and the early calling of general elections.

This is the first time that this instrument, introduced in the 2008 Constitution, is applied in the Andean country and opens the way for the renewal of the authorities of the legislative and executive power, but it must be justified in one of the grounds provided by law.

The three reasons for resorting to this measure are: if the unicameral Parliament arrogates functions to itself, if it obstructs the National Development Plan, or due to a serious political crisis and internal commotion.

The President has shielded himself in the third of these reasons, but the truth is that he resorted to the so-called cross-death a day after the beginning of the impeachment trial against him in the National Assembly, accused of embezzlement of public funds.

According to the opposition, the president allowed the continuity of some contracts for the transportation of oil in favor of third parties, despite being aware that they represented a loss for the state.

This situation takes place in a context of popular rejection of the president, to whom the most recent polls attribute a disapproval of more than 80 percent, given the economic panorama of the country and above all, the prevailing crisis of insecurity and violence.

Many voices have been raised to qualify the measure as unconstitutional for not complying with the requirements to justify its application. For political analyst Mauro Andino, quoted by Prensa Latina news agency, the action is a strategy by Lasso to evade the impeachment trial that could have led to his removal from office.

From now on and for a maximum term of six months, the president will be able to govern by decree, but he must have the prior approval of the Constitutional Court of Ecuador.

Lasso will be able to run as a candidate in the early elections, risking losing power before the official end of his term in 2025, when general elections will have to be called again.

Let us not forget that he already suffered a great defeat in last February's elections, when he took possible reforms to the Constitution to a referendum, while the winner in the elections for local authorities was the Partido Revolución Ciudadana, of former president Rafael Correa.

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