

*Concern for human rights
situation in Ecuador's prisons*

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By María Josefina Arce

Prisons in Ecuador have not ceased to be news in recent years due to the occurrence of riots, massacres and the prevailing terrible conditions such as overcrowding, lack of medical care, lack of access to justice and human rights violations.

Since 2020, the situation in the penitentiary centers made headlines, where to date more than 450 inmates have been killed in a series of massacres.

Now it is once again the focus of public attention, as it is alleged that the Armed Forces have committed excesses against prisoners, under the state of emergency declared last January 9 by President Daniel Noboa to combat the growing wave of violence in the country.

According to the information, more than 7 thousand people have been detained, 200 of them considered as alleged terrorists. Let us remember that when Noboa declared the "internal armed conflict", 22 organized crime groups have been catalogued as terrorist organizations.

Concern has been generated by the fight against violence in Ecuadorian territory, which last year ended with more than 7,000 deaths and placed it as the most insecure and violent nation in Latin America.

Civil society groups warned about human rights violations. In fact, in the last hours an Ecuadorian judge determined that the Armed Forces violated the prerogatives of the prisoners in the jails, in the midst of the state of emergency.

The sentence, which responds to an appeal presented by the Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, declares the Ecuadorian state responsible "by action and omission", since, according to the magistrate, the Armed Forces incurred in actions against the integrity of the prisoners.

Civil organizations point out that this scenario does not favor the fight against violence and much less the recovery of the prisons, since they claim to have received reports of threats, beatings and deprivation of water and food to the detainees.

The Public Prosecutor's Office and the Police are already investigating the death of at least 5 prisoners in the Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas prison, in response to complaints from family members about human rights violations in the Andean country's prisons

But Ecuador also requires other actions in its fight against violence and crime, which experts say affects children and young people, who are recruited by criminal groups.

Therefore, they point out that a comprehensive response is required, that in addition to confronting these organizations, social programs are adopted in favor of the most vulnerable sectors, thus closing the door to crime.

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