

# *In the midst of a difficult situation, Ecuador goes to a referendum and popular consultation*

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By María Josefina Arce

Six months after electing Daniel Noboa as the new president of Ecuador, in early elections, Ecuadorians returned to the polls in a referendum and popular consultation on security, justice, employment and international arbitration for investments and commercial matters, questioned by various sectors of society and in the midst of a difficult situation.

The meeting, at the proposal of the president, was described as erratic and unnecessary by union, peasant, indigenous and environmental organizations for covering issues that can be examined in the National Assembly. They also pointed out the expenditure of resources that should be put to better use, such as resolving existing inequalities in the country.

Ecuadorians spoke on 11 questions, and although 9 of them, according to the first results that seem irreversible, received the approval of a large part of the voters, several generated controversy, such as the proposal of military support for the police. in the confrontation with organized crime. For many it is a mistake and raises concern from a human rights perspective.

According to analysts, since the armed conflict was declared in Ecuador in January, complaints against military and police agents for the use of force and violence have multiplied.

One of the questions of the popular consultation, which raised doubts and was finally rejected by Ecuadorians, was the question of legalizing the fixed-term and hourly employment contract, which some believe could lead to job insecurity.

Likewise, citizens opposed international arbitration, which has been described as a popular victory and an example of the determination not to cede sovereignty to international institutions that do not take into account the rights of peoples.

This Sunday's day has been marked by the persistent violence prevailing in Ecuadorian territory, despite the state of emergency declared last January by the government and the deployment of the military in prisons and streets.

In fact, during the referendum and popular consultation, the director of the El Rodeo prison was murdered, a fact that was added to the crime in the last days of two mayors of mining towns in the south of the nation.

Furthermore, the country is immersed in other crises. One is energy and led Noboa to suspend the working day for two days and declare a state of exception in the electricity sector.

Another is at the diplomatic level due to the questioned invasion of Ecuadorian troops into the Mexican embassy in Quito, the capital, to arrest former vice president Jorge Glas, who had received political asylum from the Mexican authorities.

Many experts have described the referendum and popular consultation as an electoral springboard in Noboa's aspirations to remain in the Carondelet Palace, since his presidential mandate extends only until May 2025 to conclude that of his predecessor Guillermo Lasso, who called for elections. anticipated when the National Assembly was debating a political trial against him.

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