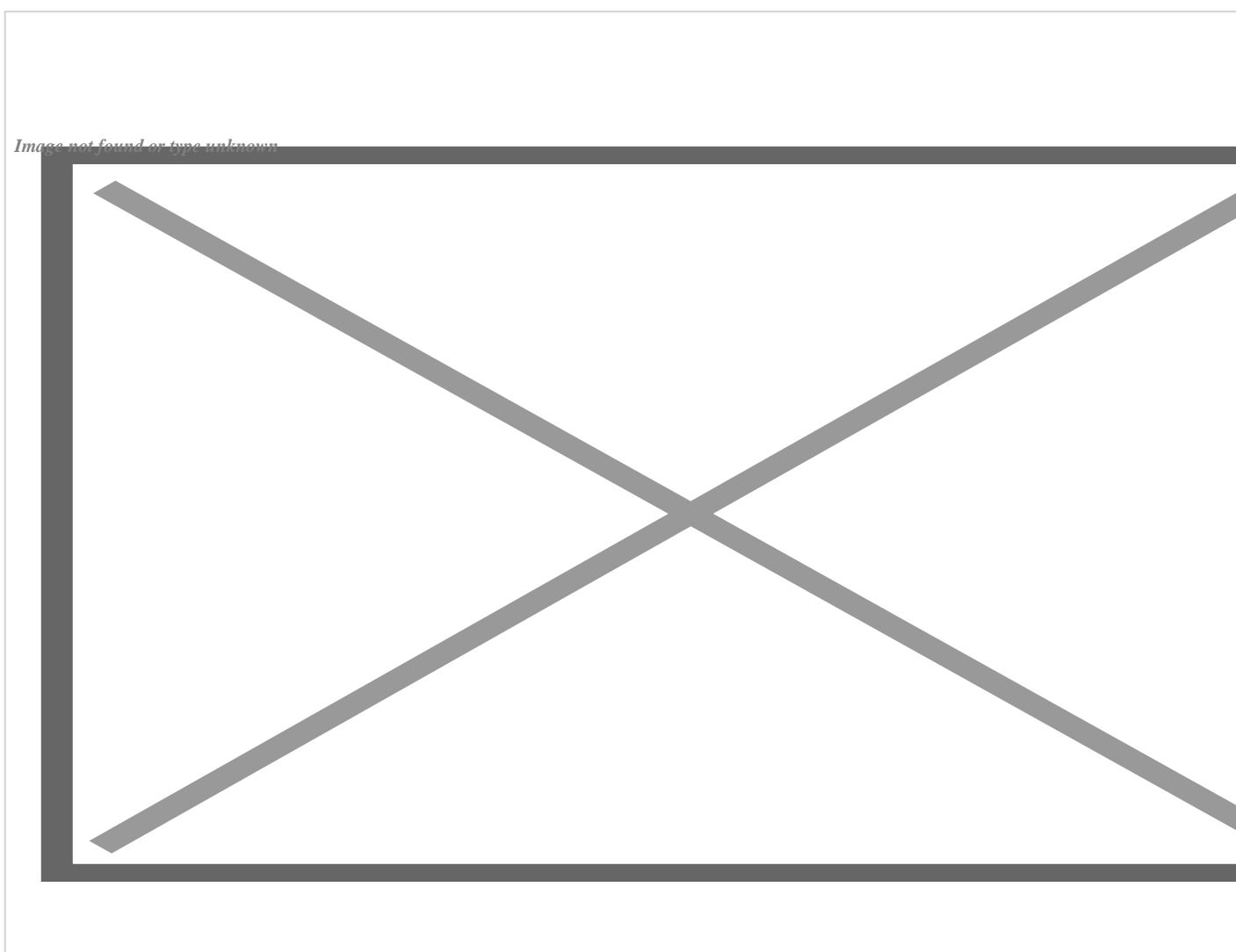


Ecuador's Electoral Debate: Luisa González urges Noboa not to lie to the people and keep his campaign promises



Quito, March 24 (RHC)-- Ecuador's presidential candidates, Luisa González, representative of the Citizen Revolution (RC), and Daniel Noboa, current president and candidate for the National Democratic Action (ADN), took part on Sunday in the mandatory debate prior to the second round.

Shortly before the debate, González -- whom several polls show has a lead over her rival -- told the media her satisfaction at sharing her government proposals with the Ecuadorian people.

While the RC candidate acknowledged that the country is facing a severe crisis and needs urgent transformations, Noboa—below the polls and with his administration marred by numerous scandals—did not make any statements to the press.

Education

González outlined her ideas for improving the quality of education and reducing dropout rates and the impact of crime on schools.

She specified that more than 92,000 children and young people dropped out of the education system and more than 120,000 did not enroll, according to official figures from the Ministry of Education. She called for the defense of the quality of public education and proposed rehiring teachers who were fired during Noboa's administration, among other ideas.

She insisted on removing barriers to access to education. Luisa Gonzalez noted that in Ecuador there are 7 million poor people who cannot send their children to school because they lack the money and denounced that the current government charges them for classroom maintenance.

Luisa Gonzalez asked Noboa to tour the country, verify the dilapidated state of many educational centers, and focus more on the needs of parents and students and less on his businesses.

On several occasions, she urged the president not to lie to the people and to fulfill the promises he made in previous debates, such as guaranteeing 100 percent of those who graduate from high school would have access to university. She noted that more than 300,000 young people enrolled in that program, but half were unable to enter.

Meanwhile, among other projections, the ADN candidate reiterated that they will launch more scholarships and expand language and technology courses. Noboa said they have provided opportunities to more than 180,000 young people, including single mothers.

He insisted on blaming the Citizen Revolution for the impact that drugs have on students and criticized González's proposal to de-dollarize the economy as harmful, a move that, in his opinion, would weaken the budget allocated to the sector. The RC candidate has emphatically denied that her government program includes this goal.

Health and Social Security

Noboa stated that his government will maintain pensions, will not increase the value of individual contributions, and will not raise the retirement age. She indicated that they will give 100,000 people \$1,000 bonuses to boost the economy. He attacked the RC candidate, arguing that mafias in the health sector and hospitals are financing her election campaign.

González, in turn, pointed out that during Noboa's administration, more than 200,000 jobs were lost and that the Social Security system lost more than 28,000 members. She stated that if he becomes president, he will create hundreds of thousands of jobs to strengthen social security.

She announced that he will declare a state of emergency in the health sector and build hospitals in several provinces. He alleged that people close to ADN and the president are linked to corruption and drug trafficking scandals.

Gonzalez noted that the party's president is under investigation by the Attorney General's Office and, in contrast, manages nine of the president's companies. She asked him what she has done in her 15 months in office to eliminate mafias in the health sector.

Furthermore, he pointed out that he also failed to fulfill his campaign promise to ensure a minimum pension of \$470 for retirees.

Crime and Security

González emphasized that Noboa lied when he said he would curb organized crime and make the country more secure by raising VAT, implementing the Phoenix Plan, holding a referendum, implementing a state of emergency, and taking other measures. He denounced that he now wants to bring in mercenaries, thereby humiliating the security forces.

He explained that his government will take a tough line against crime, but will intensify the fight against money laundering and corruption, and will improve the working conditions of police and military personnel.

He reported that a Noboa company -- called Noboa Trading -- exports drugs to European nations. He explained that his government will take a firm stance against crime, but will intensify the fight against money laundering and corruption, and will improve the working conditions of police and military personnel.

For his part, the president advocated for better equipping the public forces and establishing working relationships with other nations to combat transnational crime. He listed investments made for the purchase of drones, armored vehicles, scanners, and other equipment. He said he would provide an extra salary bonus to military personnel working against crime. He denied that Noboa Trading has ties to drug trafficking.

Daniel Noboa did not address the accusation of hiring mercenaries and humiliating the public forces, alluding to the American Erick Prince. He attacked González, accusing her of ties to Venezuela and Iran.

Afterward, the RC candidate insisted that Ecuador remains the most violent country in the region and that crime has even hindered foreign investment. "An Ecuadorian dies every hour," she emphasized.

She also demanded respect and that he put aside his nonsense. At the same time, she accused him of having representatives of other public powers working for his interests.

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA and NEWS AGENCIES]

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