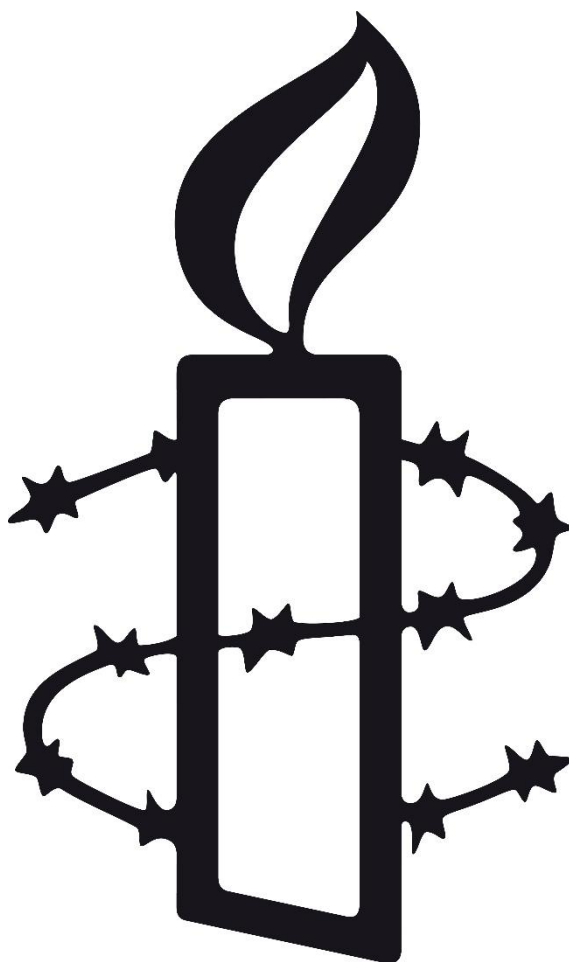


ECUADOR

SUBMISSION TO THE UN COMMITTEE ON ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES
30TH PERIOD OF SESSIONS, 9-27 MARCH 2026, ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION



AMNESTY
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CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	3
2.	PREVENTION OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES	3
3.	INVESTIGATION AND SEARCH EFFORTS	5
4.	REPARATIONS	6
5.	RECOMMENDATIONS	7

Amnesty International submits this information ahead of the review of the report on additional information by the Committee of Enforced Disappearances (CED) on Ecuador. The document highlights the organization's main concerns relating enforces disappearances in the context of the country's current administration (2023-present). The briefing serves as an update to the submission that Amnesty International presented to the Committee in June 2025. Both documents should ideally be read together.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amnesty International submits this information ahead of the review of the report on additional information by the Committee of Enforced Disappearances (CED) on Ecuador, to be held in Geneva from 9-26 March 2026, during the CED's 30th period of sessions. The submission provides information based on the list of priority issues established by the CED, including with respect to the prevention of enforced disappearances in Ecuador, the ongoing criminal investigations of possible enforced disappearances, the search for missing persons, and reparations.¹ This document does not present an exhaustive review of the situation of enforced disappearances in the country. Instead, it highlights the organization's main concerns relating to this issue in the context of the country's current administration (2023-present). This briefing serves as an update to the submission that Amnesty International presented to the CED in June 2025.² The two documents should be read together.

Since its last update, Amnesty International has launched a full-length report, titled "It was the military, I saw them," documenting the enforced disappearance of 10 individuals at the hands of the armed forces during security operations carried out in provinces in the Ecuadorian coast in 2024.³ The organization has also conducted a field mission to the country in September 2025, where it met with relevant stakeholders, including authorities (the Prosecutor's Office), the families of victims of enforced disappearances, and their legal representatives. This briefing summarizes the findings of the report and the visit.

Based on the information included in its most recent research, Amnesty International reiterates its concern for the multiple reports that have arisen in relation to alleged enforced disappearances during operations carried out by the military in 2024, as part of the militarized security policy of President Daniel Noboa. According to information provided by the Prosecutor's Office, there are 43 individuals who are the possible victims of enforced disappearances since 2023 and the whereabouts of the majority of them remains unknown.⁴ Amnesty International has independently verified evidence pertaining to the disappearance of 10 of these individuals and concluded that, for all cases, the constitutive elements for the crime of enforced disappearance are present.

The organization also wishes to highlight the serious obstacles that the Prosecutor's Office has faced to carry out prompt, impartial and independent investigations, particularly given the lack of cooperation by the armed forces. Amnesty International is further concerned about the inefficiency of search efforts, and the lack of protection measures for the families of victims. Amnesty is recommending Ecuador to completely reverse the militarized approach to public security, to conduct prompt and independent investigations, and to take all necessary measures to ensure that the military collaborates with ongoing criminal investigations.

2. PREVENTION OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

In recent years, the Ecuadorian authorities have decided to address public security challenges through a massive deployment of their armed forces. In January 2024, the government redoubled its commitment to a militarized strategy by declaring a state of emergency (Executive Decree 110) and an alleged "internal armed conflict" (Executive Decree 111).⁵ Since then, the President's Office has issued

¹ Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Lists of Priority themes under article 29(3) and (4) of the Convention, CED/C/EQU/Q/AI/1, 14 October 2025.

² Amnesty International, "Ecuador: Submission To The UN Committee On Enforced Disappearances. 29th Period Of Sessions, 22 September – 3 October 2025", Index Number: AMR 28/9493/2025, 1 June 2025. Available in: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr28/9493/2025/en/>

³ Amnesty International, "It was the military, I saw them: Enforced disappearances in Ecuador at the hands of the Armed Forces," Index Number: AMR 28/0258/2025, 23 September 2025. Available in: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr28/0258/2025/en/>

⁴ Information shared to Amnesty International by the Public Prosecutor's Office via email on 13 September 2025.

⁵ Ecuador, Presidency of the Republic, Executive Decree 110 of 8 January 2024 and Executive Decree 111 of 9 January 2024.

at least 13 other executive decrees suspending constitutional guarantees, such as freedom of movement and assembly, in different parts of the country, including the coastal region.⁶

The suspension of guarantees and the deployment of the military to carry out law enforcement duties are part of the “Plan Fenix”, which was announced by the president of the Republic in January 2024. This plan is the mainstay of the government’s security strategy and is regularly cited as justification for its actions, although the plan itself is not publicly available. It is therefore unknown whether the plan includes any provisions to explicitly protect human rights.

Amnesty International considers that, in practice, the “Plan Fenix” has had a serious impact on the respect and enjoyment of human rights in Ecuador. Under the existing security policy, public security duties carried out by the military have not adhered to the principles established by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of exceptionalism, subordination, and accountability; and have not been strictly regulated through the creation of protocols and trainings on the use of force. To the contrary, the armed forces have been deployed post the mandated time, and their operations have not been always subordinated to the National Police and have not necessarily followed clear protocols and mechanisms.⁷

The extensive and unchecked deployment of the armed forces has created an environment that has resulted in human rights violations. Since the start of Noboa’s administration and the declaration of an “internal armed conflict,” Amnesty International has received numerous reports of serious human rights violations and possible crimes under international law, particularly in the provinces of the Ecuadorian coast, including Guayas, Los Ríos, and Esmeraldas. Notably, these reports have included several cases of possible enforced disappearances. Those reported as missing are individuals from marginalized and racialized communities in Ecuador. The coastal region of the country is an area where a large Afro-Ecuadorian population lives, many of whom live in impoverished neighbourhoods and towns, in provinces currently experiencing high-levels of violence due to the presence of organized crime.

Amnesty International extensively reviewed evidence in relation to the disappearance of 10 individuals –six of whom are children– who went missing in the context of five security operations carried out throughout 2024 in Guayas, Esmeraldas, and Los Ríos. The evidence reviewed included: criminal investigation files from the Prosecutor’s Office; audiovisual evidence, which was verified by a specialized team; and interviews with the families of the victims and their legal representatives. The individuals are:

- Cirilo Leonardo Minota Nieves, 35, disappeared on 4 April 2024 in Quinindé, in the province of Esmeraldas, following his arrest by the military;
- Dave Robin Loor Roca, 20, and Juan Daniel Santillán Suárez, 27, disappeared on 26 August 2024, in Ventanas, Los Ríos province, after being arrested on the street by the military and taken to a house raid;
- Cousins Jostin Elian Álvarez Chávez, 17, and Jairo Damián Tapia Álvarez, 16, who were arrested by the military on 3 September during a raid on their family home. Jostin returned home on 17 September, recounting his arbitrary detention and torture and the possible killing of Jairo. He disappeared again on 28 November 2024;
- Dalton Oswaldo Ruiz Tapia, 34, disappeared on 20 October 2024 following his arrest by the military in Babahoyo, Los Ríos province, as he was leaving a popular festivity;
- Steven Gerald Medina Lajones, 11; Nehemías Saúl Arboleda Portocarrero, 15; and brothers Josué Didier Arroyo Bustos, 14 and Ismael Arroyo Bustos, 15, who went missing on 8 December 2024, in the Malvinas community in the south of Guayaquil, after being detained by the Ecuadorian Air Force.

⁶ These are executive decrees (ED) 135 of 23 January 2024; ED 193 of 8 March 2024; ED 218 of 7 April 2024; ED 229 of 19 April 2024; ED 230 20 April 2024; ED 250 of 30 April 2024; ED 275 of 22 May 2024; ED 318 of 2 July 2024; ED 351 of 8 August 2024; ED 377 of 30 August 2024; ED 410 of 3 October 2024; ED 493 of 2 January 2025; and ED 599 of 12 April 2025. As notified to the OAS General Secretariat. See Department of International Law of the Secretariat for Legal Affairs of the OAS, Recent Suspensions of Guarantees regarding Multilateral Treaties, accessed in July 2025.

⁷ Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Case of Alvarado Espinoza et al. v. Mexico. Merits, Reparations and Costs. Judgment of November 28, 2018. Series C No. 370, para. 182

On 24 December 2024, the four children of the Malvinas were found dead with signs of violence.⁸ The whereabouts of the other six individuals remains unknown to this date. For all 10 individuals, the CED has issued urgent actions.⁹

While the Ecuadorian constitution and criminal code explicitly prohibit the practice of enforced disappearance and establish it as an offence not subject to statutes of limitation, the country does not have a comprehensive public policy geared towards the prevention of this crime.¹⁰ The need for such a policy has become apparent in the context of the militarized security policy of the current administration and the credible evidence of the repeated commission of enforced disappearances in recent years.

3. INVESTIGATION AND SEARCH EFFORTS

Amnesty International is concerned about the slow progress of investigations into allegations of enforced disappearance and the inadequacy of search efforts for missing persons. During its research, the organization identified that authorities responsible for investigating and searching for disappeared persons in Ecuador are overwhelmed by the number of cases they have to deal with and by the lack of adequate resources at their disposal. Notably, until December 2025, the “Specialized unit for investigating the illegitimate use of force,” which is tasked with investigating serious human rights violations by security forces, only had seven prosecutors for dealing with cases throughout the whole country and only one prosecutor dedicated to cases occurring in the provinces of the Ecuadorian coastal region.¹¹ Thanks to local and international advocacy, as of January 2026, a new prosecutor joined the unit and is supporting investigations of possible enforced disappearances in the coastal region.

The lack of adequate resources and capacities is concerning in the context of the new peak of reports of possible enforced disappearances. According to information provided by the Prosecutor’s Office, since 2023, the starting year of the administration of President Daniel Noboa, 43 individuals have been the victims of possible enforced disappearances committed by the security forces (the National Police and the armed forces).¹² The 10 cases that Amnesty International analysed in its report are part of this group of 43 individuals.

The organization’s analysis found shortcomings in the investigations and in the search for victims that are incompatible with Ecuador’s international obligations.¹³ In addition, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted precautionary measures in favour of 26 disappeared persons and six women searchers in Ecuador, all of which are known to Amnesty, recognizing the risk of irreparable harm to their rights to life and personal integrity.¹⁴ One issue to note from Amnesty’s research findings is that the immediate search for victims was carried out ineffectively, as it classified the disappearances, in an unwarranted manner, as kidnapping or “involuntary disappearance”, that is, a disappearance not carried out by state agents according to the definition provided for in the Ecuadorian criminal code. Although prosecutors ordered the immediate start of the search, they did not provide guidelines for carrying it out. Police reports also showed that the initial investigations were limited to interviewing the relatives and neighbours of the disappeared persons and taking photographs of the alleged location where the deprivation of liberty took place.

In most of the cases analysed by the organization, no evidence was collected at the alleged location in the first days of the disappearance. On several occasions, the order to collect evidence was issued

⁸ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, “ACHR condemns the disappearance and subsequent murder of a child and three adolescents of African descent in Ecuador”, 22 January 2025.

⁹ UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Report on requests for urgent action submitted under article 30 of the Convention, Advance United Version, 4 April 2025, para. 32.

¹⁰ Constitución de la República de Ecuador, arts. 66, c) and 80; Asamblea Nacional de la República del Ecuador, Código Orgánico Integral Penal (COIP), 10 February 2014, Art. 80 –“Desaparición Forzada”.

¹¹ The Guayaquil headquarters of the specialized unit for investigating the illegitimate use of force hears cases from the provinces of Esmeraldas, Manabí, Guayas, Santa Elena, Los Ríos and El Oro, as provided in Article 2 of Resolution 063-FGE-2023, of the Public Prosecutor’s Office.

¹² Information shared to Amnesty International by the Public Prosecutor’s Office via email on 13 September 2025.

¹³ Amnesty International, “It was the military, I saw them: Enforced disappearances in Ecuador at the hands of the Armed Forces,” Index Number: AMR 28/0258/2025, 23 September 2025, pp. 20-22. Available in: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr28/0258/2025/en/>

¹⁴ Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, “CIDH otorga medidas cautelares a 26 personas desaparecidas y seis mujeres buscadoras durante el estado de excepción en Ecuador”, 30 December 2025

months after the disappearance had occurred, by which time it was too late to retrieve any evidence. This means that potential evidence, such as fingerprints, evidence from the scene and security camera footage, was lost. Amnesty International also identified signs of a worrying lack of investigative rigor in handling the reported to cases, as evidenced by, for example, omissions and errors when requesting information from the authorities and individuals; and a lack of care when processing evidence, for example with video footage of the detentions remaining for months in the files of the Prosecutor's Office without being analysed by an expert.

In recent interviews during its country visit, the organization further identified that justice operators had experienced undue pressure and fear of reprisals in relation to their work for these cases. Moreover, the families of victims reported having faced acts of intimidation and threats from unidentified actors during their search and justice efforts.

Amnesty International wishes to emphasize its particular concern about the lack of cooperation by the armed forces with the investigations, which it found to be a common pattern in all the cases analysed. The organization considers this to be the main obstacle to the progress of the cases. The military authorities typically claimed that the information required for the investigation was "secret", "classified" or "confidential", and could therefore not be provided to the Prosecutor's Office.

Only in one of the cases analysed by Amnesty International, victims and their families have been recently able to access their rights to truth, justice and reparations. On 22 December 2025, the Guayas Criminal Court found 16 members of the military guilty for the enforced disappearance of Steven Gerald Medina Lajones, Nehemías Saúl Arboleda Portocarrero, and brothers Josué Didier Arroyo Bustos, and Ismael Arroyo Bustos, known as "the four children of the Malvinas."¹⁵ One colonel, against whom charges had also been brought, was found not guilty. The suspects had been held in pre-trial detention for most of 2025. The hearings experienced several delays because the defence of the military was intentionally unprepared or requested additional time, according to the legal representatives of the victims. In spite of the challenges this case faced, Amnesty International considers the Court's decision to be a significant precedent for recent cases of enforced disappearances in the country.

In parallel, the Constitutional Court of Ecuador is reviewing the same case through an Extraordinary Protection Action. The Court is examining an appeal against a habeas corpus, and it is determining whether the military's conduct during states of exception violated constitutional rights. This is also the only case, out of those analysed by Amnesty International, in which the missing persons have been found. Tragically, they were not found alive.

In contrast, the whereabouts of all other victims, including Cirilo Leonardo Minota Nieves, Dave Robin Loor Roca, Juan Daniel Santillán Suárez, Jostin Elian Álvarez Chávez, Jairo Damián Tapia Álvarez, and Dalton Oswaldo Ruiz Tapia, remains unknown. Further, criminal investigations have remained in the preliminary stage, largely due to the lack of cooperation by the armed forces to identify possible suspects.

4. REPARATIONS

In its recent ruling in relation to the enforced disappearance of the four children of las Malvinas, the Guayas Criminal Court ordered comprehensive reparations measures for the victims and their families, including compensation and satisfaction measures.¹⁶ In specific, as a form of compensation, the Court has ordered that each of the 16 convicted members of the military pays 10,000 USD to the families of the victims.

In terms of satisfaction measures, the Court ordered that the head of the Ministry of Defence and the convicted members of the military issue public apologies to the victims during a ceremony at the Taura military base, near where the bodies of the children were found. The ceremony must be broadcasted through radio, television and digital media, and must include the instalment of a commemorative plate

¹⁵ Fiscalía General del Estado, "Caso Malvinas: 16 militares son sentenciados por desaparición forzada", BOLETÍN DE PRENSA FGE N° 1326-DC-2025, 22 December 2025. Available in: <https://www.fiscalia.gob.ec/caso-malvinas-16-militares-son-sentenciados-por-desaparicion-forzada/>

¹⁶ Ibidem.

with the name of the victims. Notably, in its apologies, the Ministry of Defence has been ordered to acknowledge that it shared erroneous information about the victims, which led to their stigmatisation.

Amnesty International considers that this is a significant step towards guaranteeing the right to reparation of the victims of enforced disappearances in Ecuador. As such, it will closely monitor compliance with these measures. Notwithstanding this positive development, the organization notes that the families of all other victims of enforced disappearance committed during security operations by the military in 2024 are still far from having this right fulfilled, as the criminal proceedings relating to their cases remain pending. Families interviewed for the report “It was the military, I saw them” did not report receiving any form of reparation measure. Against this backdrop, the organization will continue pressuring the Ecuadorian authorities to ensure that they comply with their intentional obligations with respect to the right to reparation of victims of enforced disappearance.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Amnesty International recommends the CED to urge that the State party to:

- Completely reverse the militarized approach to law enforcement, placing human rights at the centre of all security policies. The presidency of the Republic should repeal the “Plan Fenix.”
- Promptly, independently, impartially and effectively investigate, through the ordinary criminal justice system, including the Public Prosecutor’s Office, all cases of disappeared persons in Ecuador and, where sufficient evidence exists, prosecute those suspected of criminal responsibility in proceedings that fully respect the right to a fair trial.
- Take all necessary measures, including through legislative provisions and executive orders, to ensure that the armed forces fully cooperate with investigations and do not impede them by classifying state information or in any other way.

Amnesty International further recommends the CED to urge that the State party to:

- Carry out ex officio and without delay the search for disappeared persons in accordance with international human rights standards, in particular the Guiding Principles for the Search for Disappeared Persons, through the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the National Police and other authorities with search powers.
- Provide the Specialized unit for investigating the illegitimate use of force of the Public Prosecutor’s Office, particularly that of Guayaquil, with the financial and human resources necessary to carry out prompt and effective investigations.
- Establish by law that public officials suspected of involvement in an enforced disappearance be removed from any position in which they could influence the investigations or exert pressure, intimidation or retaliation against those conducting such investigations.
- Ensure that prosecutors and judges can carry out their duties independently and professionally and free from pressure or reprisals for doing so.
- Guarantee the rights of victims and their families, allowing their participation in searches and investigations, and providing protection and comprehensive reparation measures, including access to psychosocial care.
- Adopt, within the framework of the National System to Search for Disappeared and Missing Persons and Respond to Indirect Victims, a comprehensive policy on enforced disappearances, with a differentiated approach that take into account the particular vulnerability faced by certain groups, such as children and adolescents.
- Provide consent for international human rights mechanisms to provide technical assistance to the Public Prosecutor’s Office for the investigation of enforced disappearances.
- Take all necessary measures to comply with the recommendations provided to Ecuador in the urgent actions of the CED.

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