

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

Angèle Savino

12.03.2024

## **Rafael Correa: "Neoliberalism destroyed our country."**

As the country goes through an unprecedented security crisis, former President Correa recalls the policies that favored the infiltration of drug trafficking. And it points to Washington's interference.



Former President Rafael Correa, political refugee in Belgium, during the European Union-CELAC summit in Brussels (July 2023). Photography : Sonia Mendoza.

At the helm of Ecuador between 2007 and 2017, the former president of Ecuador Rafael Correa – today a victim of judicial persecution orchestrated by the conservative bloc, and a refugee in Belgium – had managed to turn his country into the second safest in Latin America. Ecuador is currently experiencing an explosion of violence, and its new president, Daniel Noboa, in power since November 2023, intends to wage "a war on drugs", promoted by the United States. The latter intend to take advantage of the deteriorating security situation to gain a military position in this strategic country. On January 19, the Argentine government arrested and expelled the family of the leader of the

Ecuadorian gang "Los Choneros," Adolfo Macias alias Fito, whose escape triggered the current wave of violence.

Angéle Savino: After declaring a state of emergency and the country in a situation of "internal armed conflict" in Ecuador, President Rafael Noboa mobilizes the Armed Forces against criminal gangs, groups linked to drug trafficking. Isn't it dangerous to give so much power to the military?

Rafael Correa: The danger exists. That is why the state and civilian control must prevent certain red lines from being crossed, although some criticize the fact that these criminal groups are given belligerent status. The reality is that the police are infiltrated by drug traffickers, while the military is much less so, and they are much more professional. They have much more war power. In the face of these gangs equipped with heavy weapons, the soldiers have a firepower that allows them to stand up.

AS: With the arrival of high-ranking U.S. anti-narcotics officials in Ecuador, do you think the country's sovereignty is in danger?

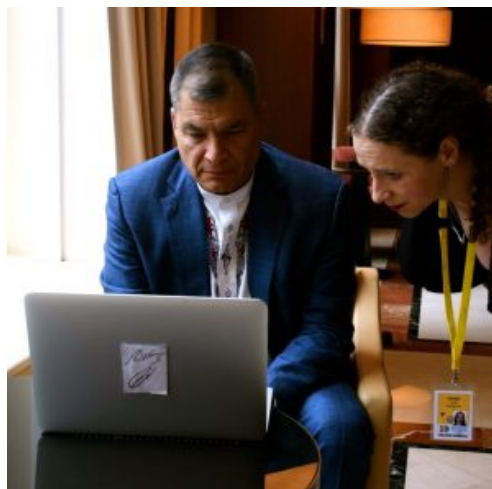
RC: Yes. Because they want to fish in troubled waters. With the right, they want to impose a Plan Ecuador on us (a reference to Plan Colombia, a security cooperation agreement that serves as a Trojan horse for US agencies – NDR). Our country is in a key position at the regional level. The United States would like to take advantage of the situation to justify a military presence – under the pretext of the fight against drug trafficking – free of criminal responsibility. This is unacceptable. Especially when the United States has already demonstrated in the past that its presence on our territory allows it to exercise control over the entire region, far beyond drug-related issues.

AS: Between the end of your term, in 2017, and today, the homicide rate went from 5.8 intentional homicides to 43 per 100,000 inhabitants. How can we explain this explosion of insecurity in Ecuador?

RC: When we left the government, the country was an energy exporter. Now we are importing energy again and suffering power cuts. Per capita income is at 2011 levels. I have not seen such rapid and profound destruction of a country in peacetime, without blockades, without sanctions. What is the cause? Neoliberalism. They dismantled the state and favored corruption, exhausting the public service in favor of the private sector, in the key sectors of health, education, etc. For the right, the main danger is not crime, or drug trafficking, but the citizens' revolution (a political movement inherited from Correísmo – NDR). It was the only political project that truly challenged the neoliberal system successfully.

So, there are causes internal to the current situation: neoliberalism, the weakening of the state, deinstitutionalization. In 2018, they staged a coup d'état, an unconstitutional referendum to prohibit my re-election. They took over the National Court, the Constitutional Court, the Prosecutor's Office. They vandalized the Ministry of Security. They eliminated the Ministry of Justice in charge of prisons, as well as the Ministry of the Interior, for ideological reasons, but also to give a bad image of our politics, which had supposedly generated an obese state. And now we cry tears of blood.

In 2010, Mexican cartels had tried to enter the country, but this could be controlled. However, with the weakening of the state, they did not control anything. Today we have tens of thousands of very powerful organized groups infiltrating the state. They manage the prison system, are part of the judicial system, are present in the Armed Forces, the National Police and even had relays in the previous government of Guillermo Lasso (2021-2023).



*Former President Rafael Correa, a political refugee in Belgium, during the European Union-CELAC summit in Brussels, with journalist and documentary filmmaker Angèle Savino. Photography : Sonia Mendoza*

AS: Why has it been so easy for Mexican cartels to make deals with Ecuadorian gangs?

RC: This infiltration is only possible because of the absence of the state. Until 2016 we were nowhere near the main importers of drugs (we are not a producing country). We are now one of the world's leading exporters of cocaine to Europe that leaves through the port of Guayaquil, and with the financing of the Mexican Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels. Now we have to respond immediately with force, but to fight organized crime, more than a Rambo, we need a Sherlock Holmes. You need state intelligence (which was dismantled by the right) and also technology to follow the money trail... International

coordination is required. That's what we did with the Coordinating Ministry of Security. We even had binational border commissions to coordinate our work with Colombia and Peru. Everything was dismantled.

AS: During the time of Hugo Chávez (1999-2013), Venezuela had installed a satellite that could also be useful in the fight against drug trafficking...

RC: It's clear what needs to be done, but there is a problem of lack of decisiveness and ignorance at the state level. It is necessary to understand the problem of insecurity. We can divide it into two segments. Common crime, which is closely related to social issues, the lack of opportunities, the lack of education, the lack of health and decent employment... Organized crime is fought with human development. But in any case, it has to do with the economic situation, in the sense that it is easier to recruit young people who have no future, who believe they have nothing to lose and are easily "captured" by these gangs. But organized crime also exists on other scales, with links to countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands.

And then, there's the problem of corruption. Everyone knows who Ecuador's drug lords are: big businessmen with foreign surnames. I arrested four or five big mafia leaders during my government. Former presidents Lenin Moreno (2017-2021) and Guillermo Lasso released them. The current President is not prepared for this. And if you don't have experience, you need a team of experts. The effective recipe to fight this scourge exists, we have established it from 2007 to 2017, with a balance that no one can deny: we made Ecuador the second safest country in Latin America and today we are one of the five most violent countries in the world.

AS: Since this is a problem with international ramifications, what role could UNASUR and CELAC play at the regional level in the fight against drug trafficking?

RC: A great role. Transnational crime is combated with international articulation. But, for example, in Unasur we had a space to deal with the scourge of organized crime. Articulate actions. They smashed everything. The right destroyed everything. But here, too, there is a new hypocrisy. Most money laundering is done in tax havens. They want to fight corruption, organized crime, drug trafficking. Let's fight these tax havens. But they don't want to because it's business for them. The tax havens are in Nevada, in Florida, in Delaware, they are in the Commonwealth Caribbean, Bahamas. They are in Europe, in Andorra, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein.

AS: El hecho de que la economía ecuatoriana esté dolarizada ha facilitado también el lavado de dinero de la droga...

RC: Los controles deben ser muy estrictos en las economías dolarizadas, y existen formalmente, pero no se aplican porque hay corrupción generalizada, o porque el Estado ya no puede hacerlas cumplir debido a su debilitamiento, o hay formas de eludir esos controles. Entonces hay que reforzarlos. Funcionaban muy bien durante mi gobierno. Entre otras medidas también en el 2011, eliminamos los juegos de azar, los casinos, porque es otra forma de blanqueo de dinero. El actual gobierno quería volver a autorizar este tipo de establecimientos, lo cual significa que no entienden nada al problema que enfrentan.

AS: Usted dice que en su vida no verá a Ecuador desarrollarse tanto como lo hizo durante su gobierno. ¿Por qué es que tan pesimista?

RC: I am an expert in development and know that the fastest late development processes have lasted between 25 and 30 years. We have advanced 50 years, but the neoliberal governments that have succeeded us, with their mismanagement, have set our country back at least twenty years in the last seven years. I am certain that sooner rather than later the citizens' revolution will return to rule and that Ecuador will return to the path of development. Despite this, I know that my life will not be long enough to see my country out of underdevelopment.

*Angela Savino*

*Bruxelles (Belgium). Special Correspondent. Interview by Angèle Savino*

*Published by [REACCIÓN](#), February 27, 2024*

*Edited by [Maria Piedad Ossaba](#)*

*La Pluma. Net 10.03.2024*