

At least 15 killed in latest Ecuador prison riot

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**Family members wait anxiously outside the Cotopaxi No 1 prison for news of those inside
[Karen Toro/Reuters]**

Quito, October 4 (RHC)-- At least 15 prisoners have been killed and many wounded in the latest riot to hit Ecuador's troubled prison system. The rioting at the Cotopaxi No 1 jail in Latacunga left "15 people dead and 20 injured," said a spokesperson for SNAI, the agency that manages Ecuador's prisons.

More than 400 inmates have died in prison violence since February 2021, which the government of conservative President Guillermo Lasso has attributed to gang warfare over control of territory and drug

trafficking routes.

Authorities are working on identifying the bodies, officials said, while Oswaldo Coronel, governor of Cotopaxi province, which includes Latacunga, told reporters security had been restored. Coronel said 14 of the injured had been taken to hospital.

Latacunga lies about 80 km (50 miles) south of the Ecuadorean capital Quito.

In July, 12 prisoners were killed at a prison in Santa Domingo, just two months after violence at the same institution killed 43 in May. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has said Ecuador has no comprehensive policy for its prison system, and inmates endure crowded and dangerous conditions.

Families believe the number of those who have died in prison unrest is far higher and have been calling for the system's reform. Together they have established the Committee of Families for Justice in Prisons to demand that the state be held accountable for decades of negligence.

There are about 33,500 people in Ecuador's prisons, which are 11.3 percent beyond maximum capacity, according to official figures.

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