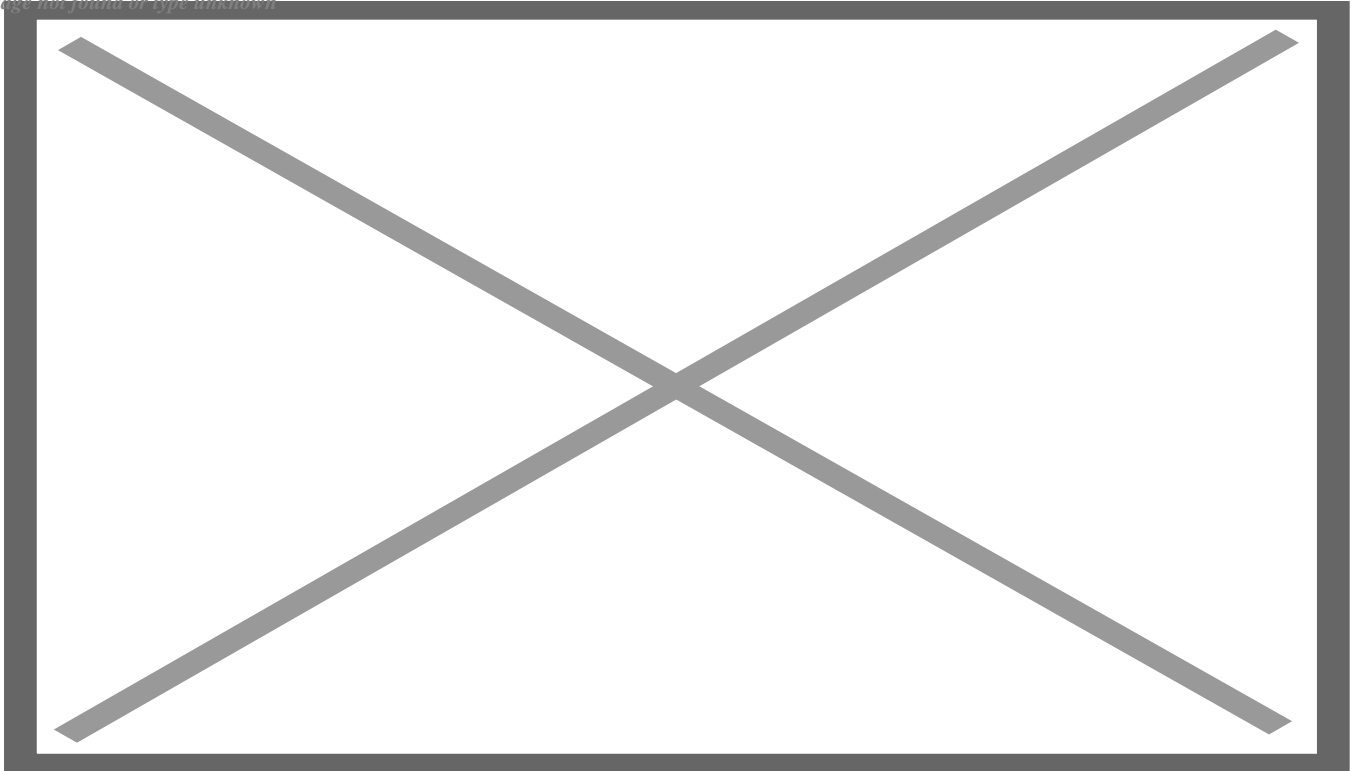


Criticism of President Noboa's popular consultation proposal

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By Maria Josefina Arce

With more than 7,000 murders, Ecuador ended 2023 as the most violent country in Latin America. In this context, the proposal of President Daniel Noboa is a popular consultation on security, which for the vast majority is useless and will not solve the growing problem of insecurity.

Social organizations, including political allies of the government and opponents question the holding of a referendum for the unnecessary waste of resources when the nation is going through a difficult economic situation.

In the opinion of many, the 60 million dollars to be used for the referendum should be used to improve the living conditions of the citizens of the country, where poverty reaches 27% of the population and extreme poverty reaches almost 11%.

This was stated by members of the National Union of Educators of Ecuador, who stressed that these resources would be better used in programs aimed at children and young people to prevent them from being recruited by criminal groups due to difficult family circumstances.

Currently, more than 200,000 minors remain out of school, many of them to help their families economically and others due to lack of resources.

Experts, including from the UN, have insisted that the violence and insecurity that plague Ecuador have one of their deepest roots in poverty.

Furthermore, it has been pointed out that several of the issues to be raised in the consultation are already being debated by the National Assembly. In this respect, the political movement Revolución Ciudadana detailed that the new Legislative, which took office last November, is dealing with reforms to the Organic Integral Penal Code.

According to the 11 questions proposed by the government, the consultation essentially seeks the intervention of the Armed Forces in the fight against crime, to toughen penalties for criminals and to promote casinos or gambling halls as an economic activity. Precisely the question on the activation of casinos and gambling houses has awakened great concern among citizens, as they are ideal places, as many have pointed out, for the laundering of money from organized crime.

The Constitutional Court is evaluating the questions and if they are validated, a popular consultation will be called, which has been received coldly and with numerous criticisms by the citizens, who already in February 2023 rejected at the polls the eight questions promoted by the then president Guillermo Lasso, referring to security, institutionality, political representation and environment.

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