

# Undermining Democracy in Ecuador

This April 2nd, 2017, Ecuadorians will go to the polls to elect a new president in historic elections that could change the course of the country and have ripple effects across Latin America. The choices are between the left wing, Lenin Moreno from PAIS Alliance and conservative Guillermo Lasso from the Creating Opportunities party.

Lenin Moreno one of the world's few disabled national leaders is well-known for his national and international activism for disability and human rights. In 2013 he was appointed UN Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Moreno promises to continue his parties' "alternative policies" which include investing in healthcare, education and wealth redistribution. Policies that have contributed to an unprecedented cut in the poverty rate with [extreme poverty down 47%](#) under PAIS Alliance over the past decade.

His opponent Guillermo Lasso is a conservative former banker and one of the largest shareholders in Banco de Guayaquil. He was economy Minister during the 1999 financial crisis and critics denounce his links to [49 tax haven companies](#). Lasso's campaign promises to implement "[fiscal austerity](#)" including large scale privatization. His neoliberal policies include the privatization of the education system through a "[voucher](#)" system and firing some of the 300,000 public service employees in order to [reduce the size of the state](#).

On March 22<sup>nd</sup> Ecuadorian journalists uncovered an unprecedented scheme allegedly aimed at manipulating public opinion in the polls and influencing election results. Evidence [leaked by an employee](#) of CEDATOS, an official polling company demonstrated the company published misleading polls favoring Lasso and suppressing advantageous polls in Moreno favour during the first round of elections. It was demonstrated that Lasso has close ties with the company through his business ties with [Livercostas](#). CEDATOS for their part have denied any culpability and said it's an [attack on its good name, credibility and institutional image](#).

Following the revelations, Vice President of the National Assembly, Rosana Alvarado held a [press conference](#) detailing the evidence against CEDATOS and submitted a formal complaint to the Attorney General's office. There is also an [online petition](#) which refers to the incident as an attack on the democracy in Ecuador and calls for the suspension of CEDATOS as official pollster for the elections, and an immediate investigation by the prosecutor's office to determine any complicity by the company and its owner, Ángel Polibio Córdova.

Lasso and his allies consistently raised a false spectre of [election tampering](#) during the first round of elections, threatening destabilization if front-runner Moreno was pronounced the winner. Lasso attended protests outside the National Electoral Council (CNE) headquarters urging supporters to stay in the streets while his Vice -presidential candidate, Andrés Paez [led a protest that turned violent](#) in front of the CNE forcing employees to evacuate.

Despite the allegations no official complaints of fraud have been submitted to the CNE and the hundreds of electoral observers who partook in elections monitoring praised the elections as transparent.

The attacks against the democratic order in Ecuador are extremely dangerous and

unwarranted. The high level of rhetoric by Lasso's campaign, calling the government a "dictatorship" and un-substantiated claims of fraud are extremely concerning as they add fuel to an already tense political environment.

It is also extremely concerning the comments from Andrés Paez, Vice-presidential candidate indicating his party's intention to set up a parallel electoral centre that would [publish unofficial election results](#) the day of the elections, prior to the CNE.

We the undersigned condemn any attempts to illegally influence voters, electoral institutions or the public perception of the election.

We call on Lasso and his party to respect the democratic institutions, process and refrain from unsubstantiated allegations of fraud and calls for street protests that could lead social unrest.

We condemn any attempt to publish election results without the authorization of the National Electoral Council.

We call on individuals and organizations both national and international to refrain from any attempts to engage in manipulation or subvert the integrity of the democratic system and respect the democratic will of the Ecuadorian people.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Ecuador who seek peaceful elections and the ability to determine their political future free from political interference.

ALBA Canada  
America Latina Al Dia  
Blue Planet Project  
Canadian Union of Postal Workers  
BC Government and Service Employees'  
Casa Cultural Ecuatoriana  
Caribbean Solidarity Network  
Council of Canadians  
Common Frontiers  
Frente de Defensa de los Pueblos Hugo Chavez  
Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network  
Louis Riel Bolivarian Circle, Toronto  
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation  
Solidarity Halifax  
Socialist Project  
Students United in Representation of Latin America