

Code was enacted on 19 December and is supposed to enter into force within a year.<sup>5</sup>

## HOUSING RIGHTS - FORCED EVICTIONS

Local NGOs continued to report cases of forced evictions and excessive use of force by police in some instances.

The latest version of the proposed amendments to the Penal Code criminalized the occupation of private property, sparking concerns that, if adopted, these provisions could be used to legitimize forced evictions.

1. Dominican Republic: Killings at the hands of the police rise while reforms stall (Press release)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/dominican-republic-killings-hands-police-rise-while-reforms-stall-2014-08--0](http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/dominican-republic-killings-hands-police-rise-while-reforms-stall-2014-08--0)
2. Dominican Republic: Open letter to President Danilo Medina regarding Law 169/14 "establishing a special regime for people who were born in the national territory and irregularly registered in the Dominican Civil Registry and on naturalization" (AMR 27/008/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/amr27/008/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/amr27/008/2014/en)
3. Dominican Republic: Reaction to Court ruling shows shocking disregard for international law (Press release)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/dominican-republic-reaction-court-ruling-shows-shocking-disregard-internati](http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/dominican-republic-reaction-court-ruling-shows-shocking-disregard-internati)
4. Dominican Republic: Withdrawal from top regional human rights court would put rights of hundreds of thousands at risk (Press release)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/dominican-republic-withdrawal-top-regional-human-rights-court-would-put-rig](http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/dominican-republic-withdrawal-top-regional-human-rights-court-would-put-rig)
5. Dominican Republic: Proposed reform puts women and girls at risk (AMR 27/016/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR27/016/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR27/016/2014/en) Dominican Republic: Further information: President vetoes full ban on abortion (AMR 27/018/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR27/018/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR27/018/2014/en) Dominican Republic decriminalizes abortion (AMR 27/020/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR27/020/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR27/020/2014/en)

# ECUADOR

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## Republic of Ecuador

Head of state and government: **Rafael Vicente Correa Delgado**

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**Human rights defenders and government critics continued to be attacked and discredited. The right of Indigenous Peoples to consultation and to free, prior and informed consent was not fulfilled.**

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## BACKGROUND

Mass protests in opposition to government policies remained common. In July, Indigenous groups marched to the capital Quito to protest against the approval of a new law regulating water resources, which they claimed did not address all of their concerns.

In November 2013, the National Court upheld a ruling against US oil company Chevron for environmental damage. The court ruled that Chevron was liable to pay over US\$9.5 billion to the Amazon Indigenous communities affected. In March, following a lawsuit filed by Chevron in the USA, a federal court blocked US courts from being used to collect the amount granted for rainforest damage, stating that the Ecuadorean court judgment was obtained by corrupt means. In October, victims of Chevron's environmental damage sued the company's directors before the International Criminal Court.

Sixty people, including six police officers accused of attempting to kill the President, were convicted of involvement in police protests over pay cuts in 2010, which were regarded by the government as an attempted coup. Another 36 were acquitted.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders continued to be attacked and discredited.

The Indigenous and environmental rights organization Fundación Pachamama remained closed, having been shut down

by the authorities in December 2013 using an executive decree granting the authorities wide powers to monitor and dissolve NGOs. Days before the closure, members of Fundación Pachamama had participated in a demonstration outside the Ministry of Energy.

## **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

In October the government apologized to the Kichwa People of Sarayaku, accepting that the state had put their lives and livelihoods at risk when in 2002 and 2003 it allowed an oil company to conduct exploration work in their territory. The Kichwa People of Sarayaku had won a legal battle before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2012. However, at the end of 2014 Ecuador had not yet finalized the removal of 1.4 tons of explosives left in the Indigenous community's territory and had not regulated the right to consultation and free, prior and informed consent for all Indigenous Peoples as ordered by the Inter-American Court in 2012.

Government plans to exploit oil resources in Yasuni National Park, home to the Tagaeri and Taromenane Indigenous communities, continued to provoke public protests. In May, the Confederación Kichwa del Ecuador (Ecuarrunari), one of the country's main Indigenous organizations, presented a legal action before the Constitutional Court arguing that the government was not complying with precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2006 in favour of the Tagaeri and Taromenane Indigenous communities. At the end of 2014 the Constitutional Court had not ruled on the legal action.

## **REPRESSION OF DISSENT**

The authorities continued to clamp down on anti-government protests, in what appeared to be attempts to deter opposition.

In September over 100 protesters were detained for up to 15 days for taking part in anti-government demonstrations, amid reports of clashes between protesters and the police. Dozens of detainees complained of

ill-treatment during arrest and while in police custody. Medical reports stated that scores of those detained had bruising and other injuries caused by blunt instruments. At the end of the year no investigation into these allegations had begun and the President publicly rejected the allegations.

## **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

In January, *El Universo* newspaper and caricaturist Javier Bonilla (known as Bonil) were fined and forced to retract the content of a caricature, under a 2013 Communications Law. The caricature portrayed police officers abruptly raiding the house of journalist Fernando Villavicencio, an outspoken critic of the government. Fernando Villavicencio was one of three men convicted in 2013 for slander against the President and given prison sentences of between 18 months and six years, later reduced to between six and 12 months. At the end of 2014 Villavicencio and one of the other men remained at large.

## **IMPUNITY**

In December 2013, the National Assembly passed a law guaranteeing the right to reparation to relatives and victims of human rights violations between 1983 and 2008 documented by the Truth Commission established in 2007.

In January 2014, former Police Chief Edgar Vaca was arrested in the USA pending his extradition. Edgar Vaca was one of 10 former police and military officers accused of torture and enforced disappearances during Febres Cordero's presidency (1984 to 1988). This was the first case of members of the security forces being tried for crimes against humanity.

## **SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

The New Penal Code enacted in January maintained the criminalization of abortion in case of rape unless the victim has a mental disability. Attempts to decriminalize abortion for all rape victims met with strong opposition from the President, who threatened to resign

if such a proposal was even discussed in the National Assembly. The proposal was withdrawn and three Congress members of the ruling party were sanctioned.

# EGYPT

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## Arab Republic of Egypt

Head of state: **Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (replaced Adly Mansour in June)**

Head of government: **Ibrahim Mahlab (replaced Hazem Beblawi in March)**

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**The year saw a continued dramatic deterioration in human rights following the ousting of President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013. The government severely restricted freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Thousands were arrested and detained as part of a sweeping crackdown on dissent, with some detainees subjected to enforced disappearance. The Muslim Brotherhood remained banned and its leaders were detained and jailed. Torture and other ill-treatment of detainees remained routine and was committed with impunity. Hundreds were sentenced to prison terms or to death after grossly unfair trials. Security forces used excessive force against protesters and committed unlawful killings with impunity. Women faced discrimination and violence. Some refugees were forcibly returned. Forced evictions continued. Dozens of people faced arrest and prosecution for their sexual orientation or identity. Courts imposed hundreds of death sentences; the first executions since 2011 were carried out in June.**

## BACKGROUND

Presidential elections in May saw former army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi elected as President. He took office in June, and in September pledged to uphold freedom of

expression, judicial independence and the rule of law in a speech to the UN General Assembly. In practice, his government clamped down on free expression, widened the jurisdiction of military courts to try civilians, and allowed security forces to use torture and excessive force with impunity.

Over 1,400 people were killed in protests between July 2013, when Mohamed Morsi was ousted as President, and the end of 2014. The vast majority were killed by security forces dispersing sit-ins by Morsi supporters at Rabaa al-Adawiya and al-Nahda Squares in Greater Cairo on 14 August 2013. The crackdown also saw the arrest and detention or imprisonment of at least 16,000 people, according to official estimates published by the Associated Press news agency, with the activist group Wikithawra later estimating that over 40,000 people had been detained, charged or indicted. Most of those detained were Muslim Brotherhood supporters but they also included left-wing and secular activists and other government critics.

An upsurge in lethal attacks on the security forces by armed groups led to the deaths of at least 445 soldiers and security officers, according to official statements. Most attacks took place in Sinai, where at least 238 security forces officers were killed. After renewed attacks in October, the government declared a state of emergency in North Sinai, imposed a curfew, closed Egypt's border with Gaza, and began constructing a "buffer" zone along it. Military reinforcements launched a "combing" operation to identify what they called "militants" within the area's population, posing a risk of further human rights violations.<sup>1</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY

Members of the UN Human Rights Council examined Egypt's human rights record under the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism in November, recommending that the authorities combat torture, investigate excessive use of force by security forces, and lift restrictions on civil society. With