


Ecuador on the brink of the abyss



An immense wave of violence has been unleashed throughout the country: more than ten dead so far; kidnapped police officers; 329 detained; burning cars, shootings in shopping centers, bombs in different cities, takeover of Channel 10 television, assaults on the roads. The country's main prisons remain taken over by criminals who are holding 142 prison guards, employees and officials hostage. Two of the main leaders of the mafia groups escaped from prison. Throughout the educational system, in-person classes have been suspended. Almost all commercial establishments closed their doors. Traffic in the cities chaotic, people leaving their jobs and running to take refuge in their homes. Fake news proliferated on social networks without communication, neither public nor private, clearly indicating what had happened. Ecuador is going through a moment of very deep crisis, perhaps among the most serious in its history.

The immediate background of this situation is:

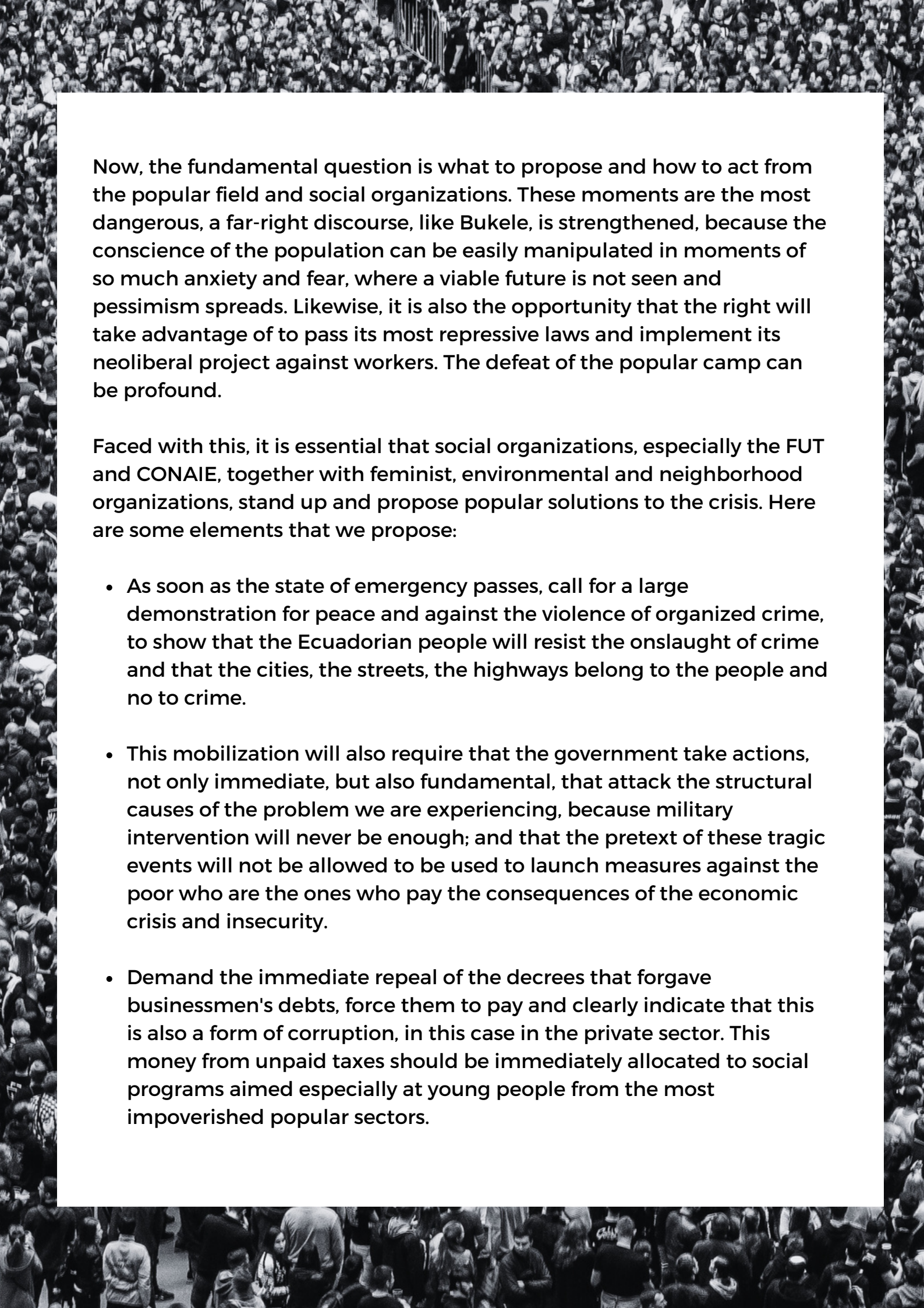
1. The revelation of the penetration of drug trafficking and organized crime in State agencies: administration of justice, Police, Armed Forces and political parties. The investigations have brought to light audios and documents that clearly reveal the way organized mafias act and the way in which they corrupted officials and politicians to put them at the service of drug trafficking.
2. The changes in the leadership of the Police and the Armed Forces, and the decision to transfer mafia bosses from some prisons where they have complete control, to others where they would not have the same power to operate and to confront other criminal groups. Along with this, the announcement of extradition, the construction of maximum security prisons, and the government's decision to regain control of the prisons.
3. The government's announcement declaring war against the mafias means for the army to fully enter the battle. In fact, the central axis of the possible questions for the Popular Consultation is the participation of the army in the fight against organized crime.



The government's first reaction was to decree the State of Exception, which implies a curfew and the mobilization of the Police and the Armed Forces, and then the State of Internal War against 22 organized crime groups, which it has described as terrorists. In this way he tries to regain control. But, it is not possible to know the course that this confrontation will take. The prisons continue in the hands of organized crime, the country cannot function again, in several cities commerce has partially opened and classes continue in virtual mode. From the beginning, the Noboa government adopted the discourse, not only of the internal conflict against criminal organizations that broke the monopoly of the State's force, it has raised its tone declaring that we are in a state of internal war, we would say, of civil war, and talks about its objective being the extinction of these 22 criminal groups. But these groups have tens of thousands of combatants, are heavily armed, control the prisons and neighborhoods in the country's main cities and have built, by force and money, social support bases and are holding important sectors of the population hostage. the population subjected to terror and extortion.

It can be said that the mafias achieved the result they expected and put the State and the population on the ropes, even beyond the effective magnitude of the attacks and criminal actions. Of course, we are facing a population without any experience in this type of violent attacks. Nobody knows what to do, nobody knows how to react, nobody knows what to propose.

The first effects of the situation are negative for the Ecuadorian people: a wave of fear runs through the country, businesses close, transportation is paralyzed, the economic damage is enormous, hopelessness grows, people turn their faces, once again, towards migration, everyone wants to flee. The leaders of the extreme right appear trying to fish in troubled waters, while social organizations are cornered and prevented from acting and demonstrating against neoliberal policies.



Now, the fundamental question is what to propose and how to act from the popular field and social organizations. These moments are the most dangerous, a far-right discourse, like Bukele, is strengthened, because the conscience of the population can be easily manipulated in moments of so much anxiety and fear, where a viable future is not seen and pessimism spreads. Likewise, it is also the opportunity that the right will take advantage of to pass its most repressive laws and implement its neoliberal project against workers. The defeat of the popular camp can be profound.

Faced with this, it is essential that social organizations, especially the FUT and CONAIE, together with feminist, environmental and neighborhood organizations, stand up and propose popular solutions to the crisis. Here are some elements that we propose:

- As soon as the state of emergency passes, call for a large demonstration for peace and against the violence of organized crime, to show that the Ecuadorian people will resist the onslaught of crime and that the cities, the streets, the highways belong to the people and no to crime.
- This mobilization will also require that the government take actions, not only immediate, but also fundamental, that attack the structural causes of the problem we are experiencing, because military intervention will never be enough; and that the pretext of these tragic events will not be allowed to be used to launch measures against the poor who are the ones who pay the consequences of the economic crisis and insecurity.
- Demand the immediate repeal of the decrees that forgave businessmen's debts, force them to pay and clearly indicate that this is also a form of corruption, in this case in the private sector. This money from unpaid taxes should be immediately allocated to social programs aimed especially at young people from the most impoverished popular sectors.

Immediately suspend the payment of the external debt, to stop the economic crisis and have resources to confront organized crime and meet the urgent needs of the population, pay the state debt with the IESS, resolve the energy crisis, pay the debts to municipalities and provincial governments, and to improve the quality of health care.

In the popular field, it is essential to strengthen community organizations, peasants, neighborhoods, small producers, feminists, environmentalists, rural and urban workers, as the best way to resist the penetration of crime and drug mafias. drug trafficking. It is urgent to develop a national plan for these organizations to fully participate in self-organized resistance against crime. Without the active participation of the population nothing will be resolved, which is why strategies must be designed from below. Only in this way will we dispute our young people from organized crime.

Launch a campaign against all forms of violence, which ultimately feed the macro-violence of organized crime. That is, combat gender violence, which is generated on the networks, which is a place where hatred and fake news are incubated, rejecting the symbolic violence that is present at every step in political struggles.

To the extent that the causes of insecurity are not only national but also international, the government should request the formation of a United Nations commission for solidarity and support for our country. Likewise, a Latin American commission will have to be established for the same purpose.

A POPULAR RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS AND VIOLENCE OF ORGANIZED CRIME IS URGENT

Quito on January 11, 2024

