



Crime

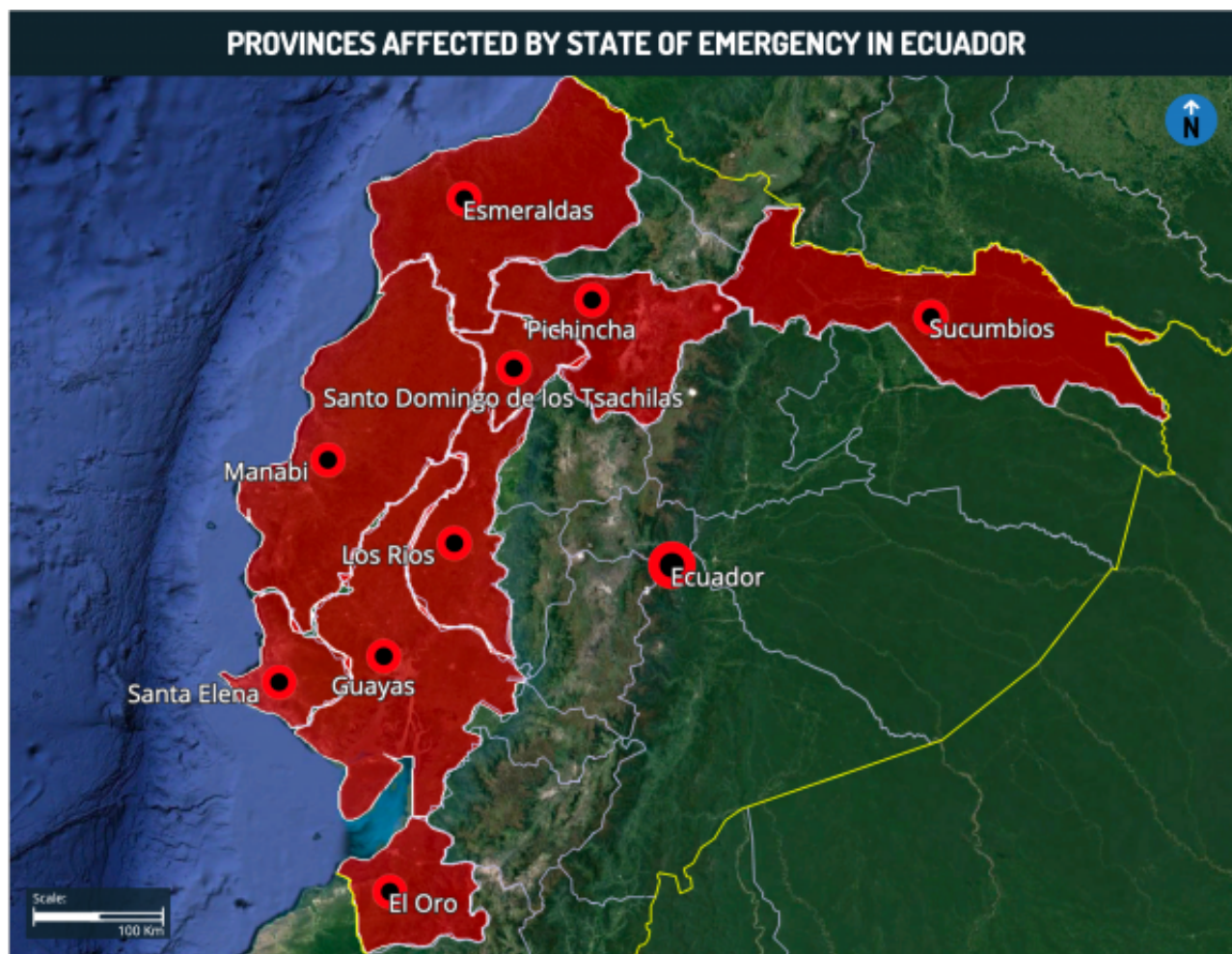
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Ecuador Alert: President Guillermo Lasso decrees 60-day 'State of Emergency' across several provinces to combat drug trafficking, per October 18 reports; likely spurred by increase in violence over past months

Please be advised

- Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso decreed a 'State of Emergency' for 60 days in the provinces of El Oro, Guayas, Santa Elena, Manabi, Los Rios, Esmeraldas, Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas, Pichincha and Sucumbios over an increase in violence and drug trafficking activity.
- The move allows for the military to complement the functions of the police and will lead to increased 24-hour street patrols, inspections, and weapons control operations. It also gives them the right to restrict freedom of movement, assembly and association.
- Further, he announced the creation of a new legal unit for the defense of security personnel who he said have faced prosecution for 'doing their duty' in the past.
- Lasso said that Ecuador had gone from being a drug-trafficking country to a significant consumer of drugs in recent times, attributing this as a cause for a recent increase in violence. On October 17, an 11-year-old was killed in crossfire between police and traffickers while out with his family in Guayaquil.
- On September 30, Lasso had declared a State of Emergency in the penitentiary system following a series of prison riots that left over 116 dead across the country.



Assessments & Forecast

1. **FORECAST:** The decree is likely to lead to a significant increase in security deployment, especially in the western coastal departments, Los Rios, and Guayas, which have seen a sharp rise in homicides related to drug trafficking. Given the increased patrols and powers to arrest individuals deemed to be involved in trafficking, the deployment is likely to lead to retaliatory violence from drug trafficking groups in the state, rendering the security situation tense in the short term. Violent clashes, shootings, and explosive attacks targeting security personnel and facilities can be expected, as well as an increase in prison riots and attempted escapes.
2. **FORECAST:** With this, travel disruptions and disruptions to business continuity in the affected provinces should also be anticipated, given the likely imposition of curfews and security checks for the duration of the state of emergency.
3. Critics of Lasso are liable to denounce the move as an attempt to distract from ongoing investigations into his corruption allegations brought forward by the Pandora Papers, as well as link the right to restrict freedom and the increase in powers of the police as a way to curb the ongoing farmers' protests across the country. **FORECAST:** As such, the move may have the unintended consequence of fanning further anti-government sentiments, especially if it proves inadequate in stemming the rise in violence or if instances of police brutality are witnessed, with potentially large protests against Lasso liable to manifest in Quito and Guayaquil.

Recommendations

1. Travel to urban centers such as Quito can continue in accordance with COVID-19 travel regulations.
2. Avoid nonessential travel to the aforementioned provinces in Ecuador due to the imposition of the state of emergency and high risk of violence.
3. Avoid the vicinity of political gatherings due to the latent potential for unrest.