

and some landowners and logging companies have even demanded that it call out the army. But President Ricardo Lagos has resisted the pressure and called on both sides to respect the state of law. However, "the state of law, in the case of the Mapuche people, is only relative," according to Aucán Huilcamán, leader of the Council of All Lands. The activist said Chile's indigenous people—who currently number roughly one million out of a total population of 15 million—continued to be subjugated by force and violence.

The Mapuche families have defended themselves with sticks, stones and lassos with balls from the Carabineros' tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons. Although each takeover of land has been followed by an eviction even more violent than the last, the indigenous families

have returned again and again, vowing to continue the occupations.

—*Inter Press Service*

### Indigenous Uprising in Ecuador

**QUITO**—By dented trucks, buses and old footpaths called *llaqui-ñan*, 10,000 Ecuadoran indigenous people converged on Quito in late January. On their backs, multicolored fabrics bound infants, tools and pots. Kinsfolk back home blocked every major road and fought more clubs and tear gas than anyone remembered. It was possibly the most significant of three uprisings in the last decade. After ten days of struggle, the Red Cross reported four dead (others say seven), 80 injured, 900 arrested and huge losses in trade. President Gustavo Noboa conceded

and signed a 23-point accord on February 7. The deal reduces the price of domestic gas, freezes gasoline prices, gives transportation discounts to students, elderly, and disabled and suggests that Ecuador's indigenous population (40% of the total) could engender a qualitative shift. The deal also frees and drops charges against 500 activists still jailed, indemnifies the killed and injured, and blasts Ecuador's role in Plan Colombia.

The uprising was led by the National Indigenous Confederation of Ecuador (CONAIE). Its president, Antonio Vargas, united all major indigenous groups with the Social Movement Coordinating Committee (CMS), an alliance of intellectuals, ecologists, small business, human rights activists, barrio organizations and the liberation church. Vargas had been one of three who held power



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one night last January, after a similar revolt brought down then-President, Jamil Mahuad. Most Ecuadorans backed Vargas this time, but not as far as a coup.

Noboa suspended constitutional rights and arrested Vargas, left-labor Popular Front (FP) President Luis Villacis and other leaders. Police embargoed food, water and medicine from 5,000 indigenous activists camping in Quito's Salesian Polytechnic University. They beat, gassed and arrested supporters outside. In Puerto Napo, police fired on CONAIE and FP demonstrators, killing three. Angry demonstrators then burned an air control tower. Police killed another indigenous man in Tungurahua.

This March, CONAIE and CMS will face officials in working committees to push compliance with remaining provisions: recovering

billions lost in bank frauds and bailouts, fighting corruption, resolving land and water disputes, providing rural development funds, disengaging from Plan Colombia and permitting indigenous participation in planning.

CONAIE and CMS leaders believe the immediate economic gains show they speak for all Ecuadorans, not just the indigenous. "Our demands are as Ecuadoran citizens in a plurinational country, and ... have an indigenous content and a political content for all Ecuadorans," explains CONAIE Director Blanca Chancoso.

After a march to Quito's Parque El Arbolito, Vargas emphasized that they had won more than economic gains: "The government did not want to concede anything, but they did concede; that is the most important... This is a struggle of total

unity at the national level, and we have not given in; we have not defrauded the people. That we have obtained our objectives is most important." Brandishing spears, blowing panpipes and waving their indigenous emblem, the rainbow-striped Wipalo, thousands agreed.

—Phillip Bannowsky

## Politics, Lies and Videotape in Peru

LIMA—At the start of April, Peruvians are due to vote to elect their first president and congress of the post-Fujimori era. But the weeks leading up to the polls have been dominated by the details emerging day after day of the extent of corruption in the previous regime, especially that involving the president's unofficial national security advisor, Vladimiro Montesinos.

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