

Chronology of the fall of Lucio Gutiérrez (December 8 2004 - April 20 2005)

December 8. In a session summoned by Gutiérrez, a new congressional majority (PSP, PRE, smaller parties and independents) sacks and replaces 27 of the 31 Supreme Court justices. The move is rejected as unconstitutional by all opposition political parties, business chambers, popular organizations, and the press (DH 2004a; DH 2004b).

January 26. "White March" led by mayor Jaime Nebot (PSC) protesting the government's inattention to Guayaquil's needs. Smaller counter-march organized by Gutiérrez' supporters (DH 2005a).

January 28. Quito mayor Paco Moncayo (ID) and other sectors of the opposition prepare "March for Democracy" demanding dissolution of the Supreme Court and reform of the organic law regulating the judicial branch (EUN 2005a).

February 1. Portraying the crisis as a confrontation among sectors of the oligarchy, CONAIE announces that it will not participate in Quito's "March for Democracy" (EC 2005a).

February 16. "March for Democracy" urges president and congress to restore constitutional rule. Smaller counter-march organized by Gutiérrez' supporters (DH 2005b; DH 2005c).

March 1. Gutiérrez seeks agreement with the congressional opposition to restructure the Supreme Court. None of the discussed alternatives has the necessary legislative support (DH 2005d).

March 30. Quito's mayor Moncayo and the Citizens' Assembly convoke a meeting of governors and mayors and call for a national civic strike against the "dictatorial" regime (DH 2005e).

April 2. Bucaram returns to Ecuador a day after the Supreme Court withdraws all pending charges against him (DH 2005f; DH 2005g; DH 2005h).

April 5. Quito's Citizens' Assembly and opposition governors and mayors call for a national strike against Gutiérrez' dictatorial rule. After the meeting, they march towards the Supreme Court, where they are violently dispersed by the police (DH 2005i; EUN 2005b).

April 10. Mayor Moncayo, coordinator of the impending national strike, tells the press that the mobilization will be suspended if Congress finds a solution to the crisis (DH 2005j).

April 12. The congressional opposition fails to muster the necessary votes to dissolve the Supreme Court (EUN 2005c).

April 13. National strike fails to elicit a strong response. Street demonstrations in Quito and other locations in five provinces are disarticulated by riot policemen using force and tear gas. In the afternoon, government ministers qualify the strike as a failure. Gutiérrez presents the events of the day as a victory for the country and a defeat for the politicians who tried to fool the people of Quito (EC 2005b; DH 2005k).

April 13. Responding to spontaneous proposals by callers to Radio La Luna, protesters congregate in northern Quito after working hours, banging pans and demanding the president's resignation. Later in the night, the protest continues in front of Gutiérrez' private residence (EC 2005c).

April 14. President Gutiérrez refers to the previous night's protesters as forajidos (outlaws). Callers to Radio La Luna and other stations adopt the label as nom de guerre and stage a second night of demonstration in which thousands of protesters burst balloons (EC 2005d; DH 2005l; EC 2005e).

April 15. In another nocturnal event, protesters (including families with children and elderly people) march through northern neighborhoods of Quito banging wooden spoons on cutting boards calling for the ouster of Gutiérrez (EC 2005f).

April 15. President Gutiérrez declares a state of emergency and announces the dissolution of the Supreme Court. Within hours, however, divisions among the military force the president to lift the state of emergency (DH 2005m; EC 2005g; DH 2005n).

April 16. For the fourth consecutive night protesters take to the streets, flinging toilet paper in the air as a symbol of the need to clean politics. Police use tear gas to prevent them from reaching the presidential palace (DH 2005o).

April 17. As the protests intensify, congress unanimously approves the opposition's proposal to dissolve the Supreme Court and appoint new judges (DH 2005p; DH 2005q).

April 19. Chaos in Quito as the police escalates violence to contain the protests against Gutierrez and the army's high command meets behind closed doors (DH 2005r; DH 2005s; DH 2005t).

April 20. New congressional majority (PSC, ID, PK, smaller parties and independents) passes a resolution stating that Gutierrez has abandoned the presidency. Shortly afterward, the joint chiefs of staff announce that they withdraw their support of Gutiérrez.

Vicepresident Alfredo Palacio is sworn in by congress (EUN 2005d; EC 2005h; DH 2005u).

References

DH - Diario Hoy (Quito daily newspaper).

2004a. Congreso reestructura la Corte (December 9).

2004b. SP y PRE están al frente de la Corte Suprema (December 11).

2005a. Marcha Blanca en Guayaquil borra del mapa a la gobiernista (January 27).

2005b. Siete puntos pide asamblea de Quito (February 16).

2005c. Protestan 150 mil contra el dictócrata (February 17).

2005d. Gobierno busca acuerdos para la sustitución de la CSJ de facto (March 1).

2005e. Asamblea de Quito convoca a paro nacional (March 31).

2005f. Cayeron las máscaras: providencias a favor de Abdalá (April 2).

2005g. Bucaram en el parque Centenario en Guayaquil (April 3).

2005h. Anulación de los juicios contra Bucaram, Dahik y Noboa: Sin Estado (April 4).

2005i. Asamblea Quito marcha al congreso a pedir destitución corte (April 6).

2005j. Moncayo: Paro se suspenderá si el Congreso soluciona crisis (April 11).

2005k. Paro Pichincha y Quito no tuvo respuesta esperada, Gobierno se ufana (April 14).

2005l. EL cacerolazo por convocatoria de radio La Luna April 15).

2005m. Tablazo y bicicletazo en Quito (April 16).

2005n. Gutiérrez levanta estado de emergencia (April 16).

2005o. Ciudadanía cerca el Palacio a la medianoche (April 17).

2005p. La oposición triunfa y Congreso finalmente disuelve a la Corte (April 18).

2005q. Prosigue la resistencia pacífica y activa (April 18).

2005r. A pesar de que el Congreso cesó la Corte de facto siguen protestas (April 19).

2005s. "Que vivan los forajidos" se corea en Quito (April 20).

2005t. Reunión Alto Mando FFAA genera especulación en otra jornada represiva (April 20)

2005u. El Alto Mando precipita la caída (April 21).

EC - El Comercio (Quito daily newspaper).

2005a. La Conaie decidió no participar en la marcha del 17 en Quito (February 2).

2005b. El Gobierno canta victoria y sigue con su estrategia (April 14).

2005c. Las manifestaciones continuaron anoche en Quito (April 14).

2005d. Intensa protesta nocturna en Quito (April 15).

2005e. El cacelorazo fue un castigo al partidismo (April 15).

2005f. El decreto encendió la protesta en Los Shyris (April 16).

2005g. El Ejército se resistió al decreto de emergencia (April 16).

2005h. Diputados cesan a Gutiérrez y FFAA le retiran apoyo (April 20).

EUN - El Universo (Guayaquil daily newspaper).

2005a. En Quito se prepara una marcha cívica política para el 17 de febrero (January 28).

2005b. Bucaram, su regreso desata la protesta (April 6).

2005c. Gobierno no respaldó a oposición y se estancó una vez más caso de CSJ (April 13).

2005d. Cayó Gutiérrez, Palacio presidente (April 20).