

Overview

QA BRANCH generated resources

Ecuador Country-Specific Training

QA Branch, Training Branch, SAOs (ZBO, ZCH, ZNK, ZOL), June 2021.

Research unit resources

Resource Guide: Ecuador

RAIO Research Unit – Additional Resources (RU ECN Page containing additional sources, including country reports)

external resources

Ecuador

Encyclopedia Britannica (retrieved on 26 May 2020)

The World Factbook: Ecuador

Central Intelligence Agency, Updated 31 Jul 2020

Ecuador: In Brief

Congressional Research Service, 13 Feb 2018

Ecuador: An Overview

Congressional Research Service, 19 May 2019 (2-page summary)

Ecuador Profile: Timeline

BBC News, 07 Feb 2018

Politics & Protests

BACKGROUND

Ecuador: Government

Michigan State University – Global Edge (retrieved on 20 May 2020)

ElectionGuide: Ecuador

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) (retrieved on 4 Aug 2020)

List of Approved Political Organizations (Spanish)

National Electoral Counsel (Updated Occasionally) (all registered parties and movements, national and local. Right-click on list to download a PDF copy.)

See also Resource Guide: Ecuador - Politics & Human Rights

RAIO Research Unit

Parties and Elections

Conservative Ex-Banker Headed to Victory in Presidential Election in Ecuador

New York Times, 11 Apr 2021

Ecuador Just Voted Against Populism, but Its Democracy Is Far from Healthy

Foreign Policy, 15 Apr 2021

Ecuador weighs two very different economic visions in election

Al Jazeera, 9 Apr 2021

From Rafael Correa to Lenin Moreno: Ecuador's Swing to the Right

Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 02 July 2019

Elected Left, Governing Right

The North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), 13 Mar 2019

Ecuador's Former President Convicted on Corruption Charges

The New York Times, 07 Apr 2020

The country shows an atomized political spectrum for the 2019 elections (Spanish)

El Telegrafo, 9 Jan 2019

Alianza PAIS - About Us (Spanish)

Alianza PAIS (retrieved on 20 May 2020)

Wikipedia Links (Spanish): While Wikipedia should not be cited to as a source, the following links may have information providing a direction for further research or links to citable sources.

- A list of regional political parties

- Summary of March 2019 local elections, including links to specific results in Azuay, Cuenca, Azogues, and other locations

- A list of the winners of the 2019 local elections

October 2019 Protests

Report of the Special Commission for Truth and Justice Regarding the events that Occurred in Ecuador Between October 3 and 16, 2019 (Spanish PDF),

Defensoria del Pueblo (Ecuador), March 2021

IACHR Issues Observations Following Visit to Ecuador

Organization of American States - Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 14 Jan 2020

State of emergency in Ecuador: 3 questions to understand the violent protests over the rise in fuel prices

BBC, 4 Oct 2019

Protests on October 8, 2019 left 19 wounded, according to the Ministry of Government (Spanish)

El Comercio, 8 Oct 2019

Anti-Austerity Protests and Strikes Shut Down Quito, Ecuador

The Atlantic, 9 Oct 2019

Seven Days of Unrest and Counting: Thousands Stream into Ecuador's Capital

The New York Times, 9 Oct 2019

Ecuador Unrest: What Led to the Mass Protests?

Al Jazeera, 10 Oct 2019

Protests leave 435 policemen injured and 108 patrollers damaged in Ecuador (Spanish)

El Mercurio, 15 Oct 2019

Ecuador's Unlikely Revolution

Slate, 16 Oct 2019

Ecuador: Lessons from the 2019 Protests

Human Rights Watch, 6 Apr 2020

Rights group: Justice awaits for Ecuador protest violence

Associated Press, 6 Apr 2020

Oct 2019 Protests in Cuenca

Cuenca closes the day of protests, breaking the silence with which it dawned (Spanish)

El Mercurio, 3 Oct 2019

Excesses in the streets of the historic center of Cuenca in a day of paralysis (Spanish)

El Universo, 3 Oct 2019

National Strike: Protests in Cuenca Escalate (Spanish)

El Mercurio, 9 Oct 2019

Protests leave destruction in the center of Cuenca (Spanish)

El Mercurio, 9 Oct 2019

Four injured protesters and twelve beaten police officers after the 7th day of national strike in Cuenca (Spanish)

El Universo, 9 Oct 2019

Injured during protests in the center of Cuenca (Spanish)

El Mercurio, 10 Oct 2019

Justice processes 26 crimes related to protests; 48 arrested in final week of national strike (Spanish)

Canar Television, 16 Oct 2019 (summary of arrests and charges in Cuenca)

May 2020 Protests

Coronavirus: Ecuador Protests Against Cuts Amid Pandemic

BBC News, 26 May 2020

Police Beat and Injure Ecuador's Covid-19 Protesters

Human Rights Watch, 25 May 2020

Students, workers and social sectors mobilized on May 25 against government measures (Spanish)

El Comercio, 25 May 2020

Police, Local Politics, and Corruption

Research unit resources

Ecuador: Local Corruption in Azuay & Cañar Provinces

RAIO Research Unit, June 25, 2020 (specific evidence of police and political corruption in these two provinces in recent years)

Ecuador: Police Structure and Oversight

RAIO Research Unit, June 19, 2020

Ecuador: Ability of the Government (Including Police) to Track Individuals

RAIO Research Unit, June 24, 2020

Ecuador: Jurisdiction and Policing in Indigenous Communities

RAIO Research Unit, June 19, 2020

See also Resource Guide: Ecuador - Politics & Human Rights; Crime & Security Forces

RAIO Research Unit

External Resources

Ecuador Profile

InSight Crime, last updated 26 Jun 2018

The Experiment to Stop Latin America's Carnage

Wall Street Journal, 31 Dec 2018 (information on police reform in Ecuador)

Police Corruption Scandals Hit Well-Regarded Forces in Ecuador, Chile

InSight Crime, 16 Oct 2017

Police and guards among the detainees of the alleged gang that operated in the Turi prison in Cuenca (Spanish)

El Universo, 11 Jun 2020

Ecuador National Police – Complaint System (Spanish)

Accessed 21 April 2021

Do you know where to report crimes and violations? (Spanish)

El Comercio (story appears to be from 2014, includes list of relevant police divisions, unclear if still relevant)

Municipal Police Websites (Examples):

Quito Municipal Police

Guayaquil Municipal Police

Cuenca Municipal Police

Most local governments have websites with information (in Spanish) about current elected officials (Examples):

Government of Azuay Province

Accessed 4 Aug 2020

Government of Cuenca (Canton and City)

Accessed 4 Aug 2020

Government of Baños Parish

Accessed 4 Aug 2020

research unit generated resources

Gangs & Criminal Organizations in Ecuador: Los Solocos; El Negro Holmer; Los Falcones; La Banda del Vecino; Los Tisis/Los Ticis; Las Truchas; Alias El Tovi; Cicuta

RAIO Research Unit, Mar. 19, 2021

Ecuador: Gangs in Azuay & Cañar

RAIO Research Unit, Jun. 23, 2020

Ecuador: Sombra Negra Gang

RAIO Research Unit, Apr. 20, 2020

See also Resource Guide: Ecuador - Gangs; Crime & Security Forces

RAIO Research Unit

External Resources

Ecuador 2020 Crime & Safety Report: Guayaquil

DOS Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), 3 Mar 2020

Ecuador 2020 Crime & Safety Report: Quito

OSAC, 3 Mar 2020

Ecuador: A Cocaine Superhighway to the US and Europe

InSight Crime, 30 Oct 2019

InSight Crime's 2020 Homicide Round-Up

InSight Crime, 29 Jan 2021

Capital Murder: 2019 Homicide Rates in Latin America's Capital Cities

InSight Crime, 5 Mar 2020

Ecuador Profile

InSight Crime, last updated 26 Jun 2018

4 Security Challenges Awaiting Ecuador's Next President

InSight Crime, 20 Apr 2021

Details released of expat murder; City remains on track for record low number of murders

CuencaHighLife, 18 Dec 2019

Officials push back against claims of a crime wave, say murder and violent assault are down

CuencaHighLife, 22 Jul 2019

Ecuador and Cali, Colombia show Latin America how to reduce the murder rate

CuencaHighLife, 6 Jan 2019 (low murder rates in Guayaquil and Cuenca)

Gangs

Ecuador 'Legalizes' Gangs and Slashes Murder Rate

BBC News Mundo, Nov. 29, 2018 (translated by InSight Crime)

Ecuador legalized gangs. Murder rates plummeted.

Vox, 26 Mar 2019

Inside Ecuador's Surprising Gang Violence Strategy

Inter-American Development Bank (retrieved 4 Aug 2020)

The Experiment to Stop Latin America's Carnage

Wall Street Journal, 31 Dec 2018

Bloody fight for the control of the drug business and the hitman is evident in prisons (Spanish)

Primicias, 2019

Local mafias vie for spaces to operate with Mexican cartels

Ecuador Times, 1 May 2021

Morocho Quigua in the sights of the Police (Spanish)

El Tiempo, 12 Jan 2017 ("The history of Morocho Quigua related to being the refuge of criminal organizations goes back decades, even in the Cuenca community there was talk that the Police itself was suspicious of entering the area.")

Sombra Negra

Transnational Menace in Black & White

Voices of NY, 29 Apr 2015

"Sombra Negra" Gang Transcends Borders (original Spanish version)

El Diario, 21 Apr 2015

Minister Romo visits Cañar to strengthen actions for security (Spanish)

Ministry of Government, 9 Mar 2019 (Evidence that at least some members of Sombra Negra have "legalized")

Indigenous issues

Research unit generated resources

Indigenous Groups in Guatemala and Ecuador Training

RAIO Research Unit, June 1, 2020

Ecuador: Jurisdiction and Policing in Indigenous Communities

RAIO Research Unit, June 19, 2020

See also Resource Guide: Ecuador – Indigenous Peoples & Afro-Ecuadorians

RAIO Research Unit

External resources

Indigenous Peoples in Ecuador

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) (retrieved 4 Aug 2020)

Indigenous World 2020: Ecuador

IWGIA, 11 May 2020

World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Ecuador

Minority Rights Group International, May 2018

Category: Nationalities – Sierra (Spanish)

CONAIE (retrieved 4 Aug 2020) (Information about Indigenous groups in the Sierra region.)

Visit to Ecuador: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples

OHCHR, 4 July 2019

4912 Police belong to indigenous peoples and nationalities of the Country (Spanish)

Ministry of Government, 12 Oct 2018

Indigenous communities & police coexist amid a tense relationship after the October strike in Ecuador (Spanish)

El Comercio, 2 Feb 2020

Ecuador's Legal Authorities Target Practitioners of Indigenous Justice

NotiSur, 11 Aug 2017

Ecuador's indigenous justice system on trial

BBC, 27 Jul 2010

Other Claims

research unit generated resources

Ecuador: Discrimination, Tension, and Violence between Catholics and Evangelicals

RAIO Research Unit, 9 Oct 2019

Ecuador: LGBTI

RAIO Research Unit, Sep. 16, 2019

See also Resource Guide: Ecuador – Sexual Minorities; Religion

RAIO Research Unit

External resources

International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 - Ecuador

U.S. Department of State, 10 Jun 2020

Ecuador's LGBT+ community seen suffering deadliest year in a decades

Reuters, 21 Jan 2020

ECUADOR ONE-PAGE REFERENCE GUIDE

Historical context snapshot:

- About the size of Nevada, Ecuador is divided by the Andes into 3 geographic regions. Most CF applicants come from the Sierra region; ~65% come from Azuay or Cañar province.
- Ecuador has 24 provinces, 221 cantons (similar to counties), and 1499 parishes or *parroquias*, which can be either a rural village or a subdivision of a city.
- Local elected politicians include prefects of provinces, mayors of cantons/canton seats, members of the canton council, and parish councilors. Local politicians may be affiliated with a national party/movement, an entirely local party, or a coalition of these.
- Alianza PAIS came to power in 2006 under Rafael Correa; Correa's VP Lenin Moreno became president in 2017. Moreno took steps to reduce corruption that had grown under Correa. His pursuit of neo-liberal economic policies led to massive protests in Oct. 2019. Guillermo Lasso of the CREO Party won the 2021 presidential elections.
- The National Police handles criminal matters. They are paid higher salaries, and are perceived as less corruptible, than police in many other parts of Latin America.

Common claims and issues to probe: (b)(7)(E)

- Possession of protected ground
 - Establishing that applicant is in fact Indigenous, including specific Indigenous group he/she may associate with.
 -
- Gangs and Crime
 - Most street gangs are likely small and local. Sombra Negra, based in Biblián, Cañar, was one of the biggest street gangs but appears to have little recent activity (although COI is limited on this and other gangs).
 -
- Police and political corruption
 - Which police force was involved – National Police or municipal?
 - Did the applicant report what happened to other authorities or civil society groups who might help, e.g.
 -

Additional common issues to consider:

- Legal pluralism in Indigenous areas may limit the police's ability to intervene.
- The context of claims within the applicant's community should be explored.
- In the CF context, AOs must check the I-867A/B and confront on any inconsistencies.

(b)(7)(E)

Asylum Country-Specific Training: Ecuador

COI, Case Trends, and Eliciting Testimony
June 2021



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services



Road Map

Introduction to Ecuador

Types of Claims: Background, considerations, and eliciting testimony

- Politics and Protests
- Police, Local Government, and Corruption
- Drug Trafficking, Crime, and Gangs
- Indigenous Issues
- Other Claims

TRIG and Fraud Issues

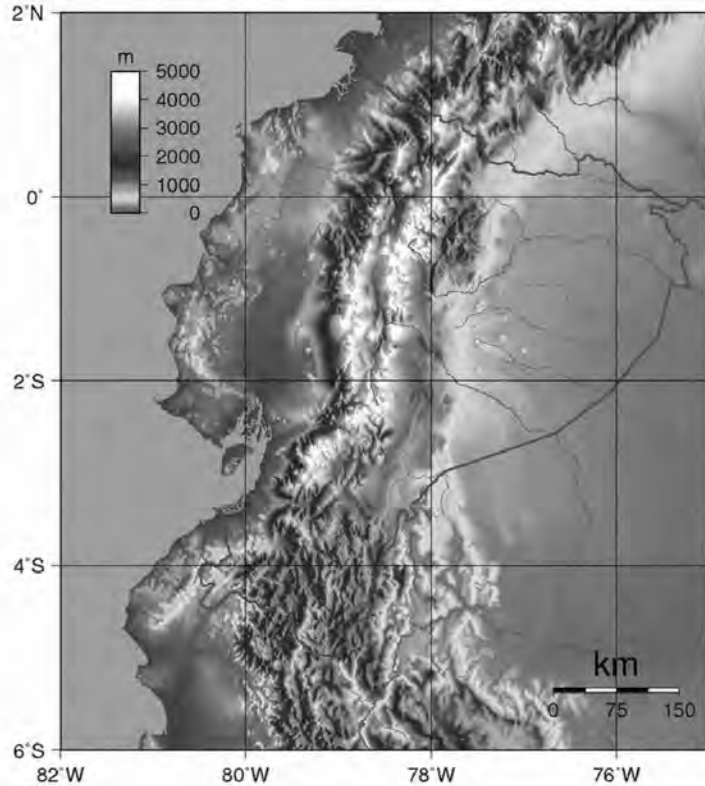


U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services



FOUO

Introduction: Geography



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Introduction: Patterns of Migration



■ Azuay: Cuenca & Gualaceo



■ Cañar: Azogues & Cañar



■ Chimborazo: Riobamba



■ Morona-Santiago: Morona (Macas) & Gualaquiza



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Introduction: Demographics of Ecuador

Ethnicities of Ecuador:

- Mestizo 71.9%
- Montubio 7.4%
- Amerindian 7%
- White 6.1%
- Afro-Ecuadorian 4.3%
- Mulatto 1.9%
- Black 1%

Languages:

- Spanish (Castilian) 93% (official)
- Quechua 4.1%
- Other indigenous 0.7% (including Shuar)
- Foreign 2.2%

Religion

Roman Catholic 74%,

Other 6.4%

Evangelical 10.4%,

Atheist 7.9%

Jehovah's Witness 1.2%



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

COI: Availability & Limitations

In general, the COI for Ecuador is limited in content and quality, especially compared to other countries in the region.

- There may be limited or no COI in support of certain claims made by refugee or asylum applicants.
- Other countries in the region may have more comprehensive COI that covers topics more relevant to refugee and asylum claims.

Possible reasons for a lack of COI?

- The type of events described does not occur.
- The type of events described occurs but has not been reported on in available COI or at all.

**** Remember - the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence!**



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Introduction: Types of Claims

- Politics and Protests
- Police, Local Government, and Corruption
- Gangs, Drug Trafficking, and Other Crime
- Indigenous Issues
- Other Claims: religion, sexual minorities



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services



Politics & Protests



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Politics & Protests: Two Main Claim Types

- 1) Applicant attacked by members of a rival party, usually for one of three reasons:
 - i) Failure to support a specific candidate.
 - ii) Failure to support the party in an upcoming election.
 - iii) Applicant left party and joined a rival party.
- 2) Applicant attacked at a protest by police and police continue to want to harm applicant.
 - Usually Oct 2019 gasoline protests, but also Aug 2019 mining or university protests.
 - May eventually see claims related to May 2020 protests.
- Claims may also include references to the applicant's race or religion.



Politics & Protests: Political Background

- **Rafael Correa** of leftist party/movement **Alianza PAIS** elected in Nov 2006.
 - Current constitution approved in 2008.
 - When reelected in April 2009, became first president since 19th C. to serve a second term.
 - Poverty and crime decreased; corruption increased.
- President **Lenin Moreno** won a close election in 2017, with the support of Correa.
 - Moreno quickly distanced himself from Correa's corruption and swung to the right.
 - In January 2018 Correa and his supporters formed Movimiento Revolución Ciudadana, then merged with "Fuerza" party, and later joined UNES coalition.
 - In April 2020, Correa was convicted of bribery in absentia.
- **Spring 2021 election:** Moreno did not seek re-election; Guillermo Lasso won election over Correa ally Andrés Arauz.



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services



- Noticias ANDES -

Politics & Protests: Voting

- Voting is compulsory for most literate individuals aged 18-65. Individuals may only belong to one political party/movement.
- Ecuador requires certain steps to change party affiliation
 - (1) fill out a form at the local electoral office
 - (2) list the party they are officially leaving
 - (3) provide a copy of their national ID card.
- Each party or movement has a list number. Applicants will often refer to the list number in addition to, or instead of, the party or movement name.
- We did not find COI showing generalized political violence occurring between members of opposing parties, but we have seen applicants testify to this.



Politics & Protests: National Parties & Movements

- Unión por la Esperanza (**UNES**): A coalition of 2 large movements and several smaller ones, holds over 1/3 of delegates in the National Assembly
 - Fuerza Compromiso Social (aka Fuerza; List 5): Correa's movement
 - Centro Democrático (CD) (List 1)
- Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional **Pachakutik** (List 18): Primary Indigenous party, 2nd most delegates after 2021 elections.
- Izquierda Democrática (**ID**) (List 12): Social-democrats, 3rd most delegates
- Movimiento **CREO** (List 21): Center-right
- Partido Social Cristiano (**PSC**) (List 6): Centrist party, popular in the Costa region.
- Alianza PAIS (aka AP, List 35): Former Ruling Party, received few votes in 2021.



Politics & Protests: Oct 2019 Protests against Decree 883

- Protests against the end of fuel subsidies began on Oct 3 and lasted until Oct 13, when Moreno repealed Dec 883.
- Transportation unions began the protests on Oct 3; by Oct 6, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) took the lead. Student groups and other unions also joined.
- Violent actions by both demonstrators and government actors: applicants must be asked about potential involvement in violence.
- Primary protests were in Quito; smaller ones in Cuenca, Riobamba, & Azogues.
- After negotiating with CONAIE, government restored fuel subsidies and protests came to an end.



October 2019 Protests: Aftermath

- Several organizations investigated the government's use of force, including the Ombudsman of Ecuador (Defensor del Pueblo de Ecuador), CONAIE, and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).
- Special Commission for Truth and Justice: 249 cases of human rights violations (200 in Quito, 15 in Azuay, 1 in Chimborazo), mostly by the National Police.
 - 14 deaths related to the protests: 6 deemed extrajudicial executions
 - 22 “attacks against the right to life”; 123 violations of personal integrity
 - ~1900 people treated for injuries (~144 in Azuay)
 - 1192 detentions (55 in Azuay)
- Police indicated a week after the protests that they would be tracking members of 19 far left groups that employed violence during the protests.



Politics and Protests: May 2020 Protests

- Started for a variety of reasons, including austerity measures and government response to COVID-19.
- Reports of violence towards protestors and journalists covering the protests in Guayaquil.
- About 2000 people protested in Quito, while hundreds protested in Cuenca. There were demonstrations in Macas, Morona-Santiago and Azogues, Cañar among other places.



Politics and Protests: Political Opinion

- Possession of a Protected Characteristic
 - General and Specific Political Participation
 - Reasons for choosing one party over another
 - If changed parties, what was the specific reason(s) for doing so? What process was involved?
- On Account Of: Why Targeted? (b)(7)(E)



Politics and Protests: Example Case 1 (b)(7)(E)



Politics and Protests: Example Case 1

(b)(7)(E)

Officer

Applicant

--	--

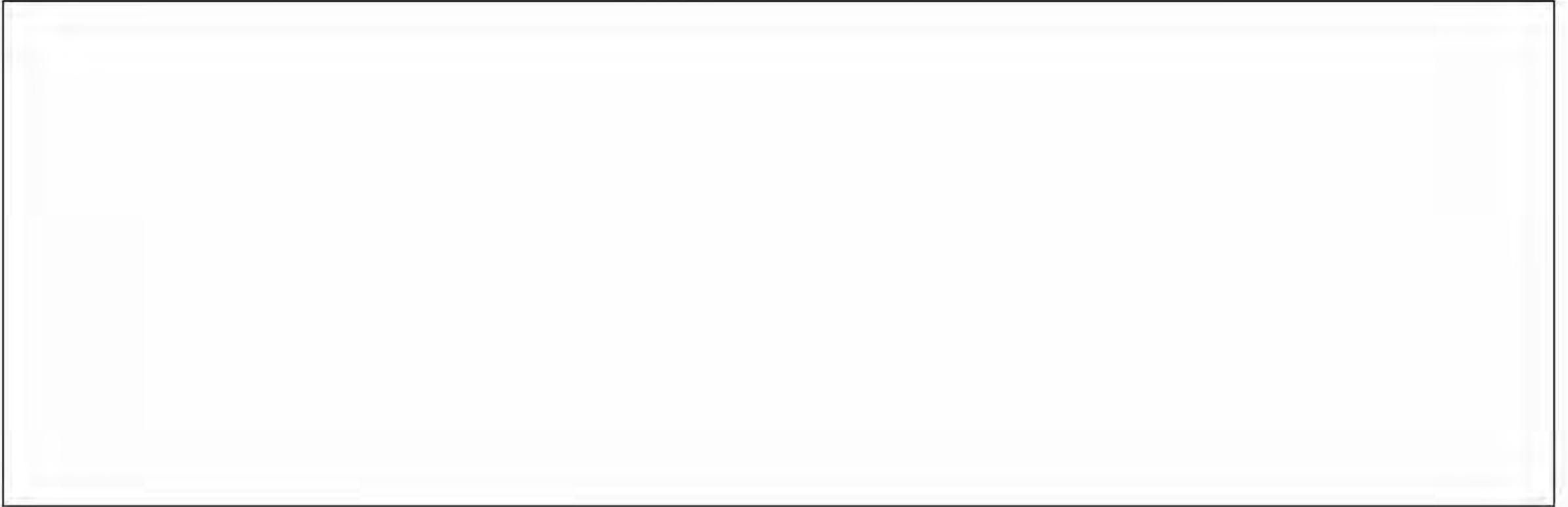


**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

FOUO

Politics and Protests: Example Case 2

(b)(7)(E)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Politics and Protests: Example Case 2

(b)(7)(E)

Officer

Applicant

--	--



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

FOUO

Police, Local Government, and Corruption



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Police, Local Government, & Corruption: Types of Claims

■ Police cases

- Recruitment and/or extortion, sometimes along with a criminal group.
- Applicant witnessed police breaking law.
- “Personal” cases where perpetrator happens to be a police officer.

■ Local politicians

- Seeks to harm applicant for not supporting him/her in March 2019 local elections.
- Applicant discovers act(s) of corruption by politician, politician seeks to silence applicant.
- Politician involved in drug smuggling, recruits applicant to participate.



Police, Local Government, & Corruption: Organization of Police in Ecuador

- Policía Nacional del Ecuador (National Police of Ecuador) (“NP”)
 - Tasked with all the police work, investigations and arrests for criminal issues (Judicial Police).
 - Control and review of the national camera system throughout Ecuador.
 - Coverage sparse outside major urban areas, low conviction rate for major crimes. “Common for police to take 45-60 minutes to respond to emergencies.”
- Policía Municipal (Municipal Police): Local police force in some municipalities.
 - Different tasks in different places: protection of tourists, traffic management, assisting the National Police, community outreach, enforcing local ordinances.
 - Sometimes have firearms, others have batons and pepper spray.
- Other forces: Ministerial Military Police, Ecuadorian Army.



Police, Local Government, & Corruption:

Police Procedures and the Duty to Intervene

- Members of National Police and Armed Forces are required to apprehend a person caught in the act of committing a crime and inform the suspect of the reasons for the apprehension. Members of armed forces must take the arrestee immediately to the National Police.
- A suspect cannot be held under arrest more than 24 hours without formal charges, and any interrogation must take place in the presence of a public or private attorney.
- There is no bail for major offenses, including crimes subject to imprisonment for more than 5 years & crimes against vulnerable populations (e.g. children, women, family members).

(b)(7)(E)



Police, Local Government, and Corruption: Police Corruption

- Ecuador's National Police has been cited as one of the most professional and trusted law enforcement institutions in Latin America; described as a "model for the region to follow."
 - Relatively high pay, polygraph testing for certain sensitive positions.
 - 2018 survey: 46% trust the police "a lot" or "some"; 54% trust police "little" or "none".
- Moreno took steps to combat corruption, but problems remain.
 - Oct 2019 article indicated police have been caught working with drug traffickers.
 - RU review of Azuay and Cañar found 3 reported examples of NP extortion in the past 5 years: 2 NP were part of an extortion ring based in a Cuenca prison (6/2020), 2 NP killed a shop keeper in his home during a robbery (12/2019), and 6 NP extorted truckers at a checkpoint (2015).
- An online portal to anonymously submit complaints against police officers and government officials has been available since at least 2016.



Police, Local Government, and Corruption: Example Case 1

(b)(7)(E)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Police, Local Government, and Corruption: Structure of Local Government

- Province (24)
 - Prefect (elected along with a Vice-prefect)
 - Provincial Council: elected canton & parish representatives, including mayors
 - Governor (appointed by president): Oversees central government ministries.
- Canton (221)
 - Mayor: Oversees both the canton and the capital city.
 - Cantonal Council: From 5 to 21 members, who appoint a vice-mayor.
 - Political Leader/Political Lieutenant: President's appointed representative.
- (Rural) Parish (788): 5 councilors, led by member with most votes.



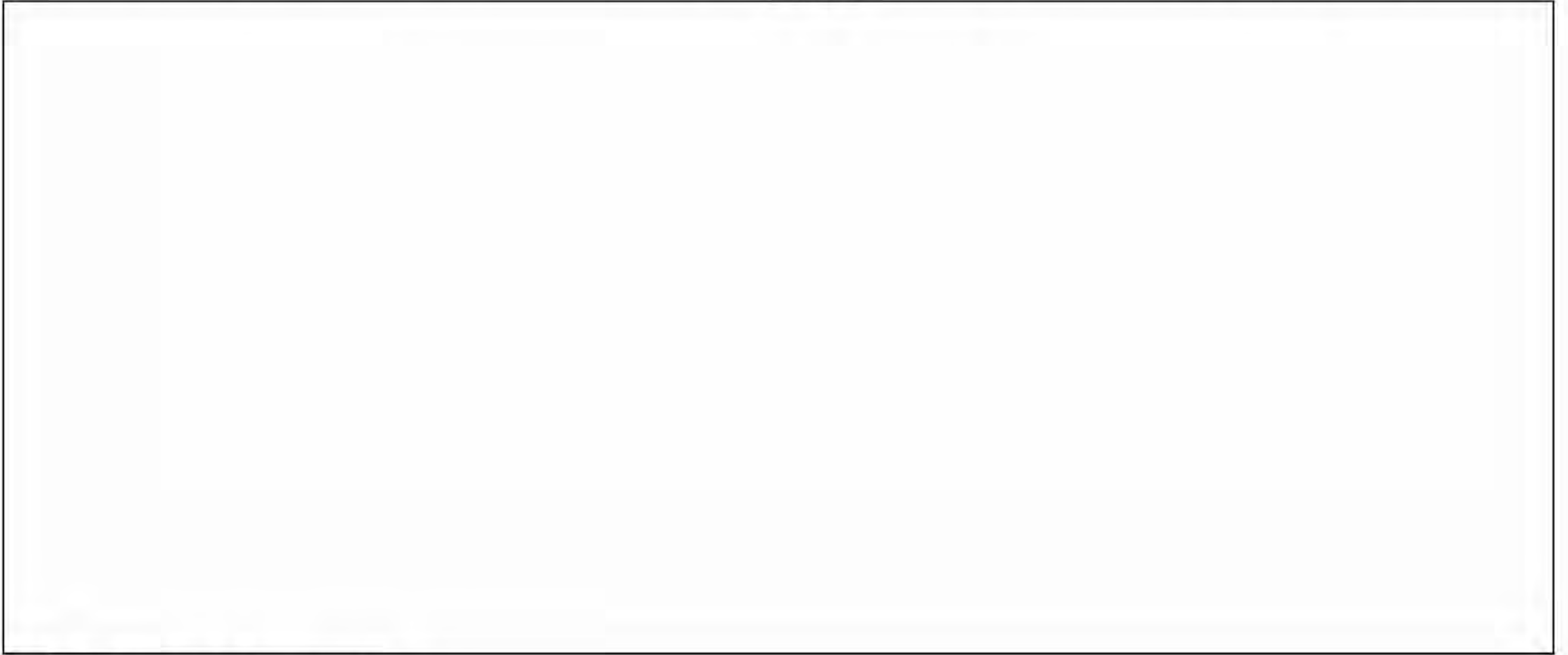
Police, Local Government, & Corruption: Local Politics

- **Local Parties and Movements**
 - In addition to national parties running candidates, local candidates may run as part of an alliance between national parties or with a completely local party.
 - The List number will indicate whether it is a national party or alliance (e.g. List 4-20), or a local party (e.g. List 105 – a canton-level party).
 - Local list numbers may be reused for different localities and elections.
- **The politician involved in claims was typically the mayor of the canton/city.**
 - Officers may be able to verify the information provided on the canton's webpage; Spanish Wiki might also have some information..
 - Per Freedom House, the March 2019 elections took place “without incident.” We were unable to find any reports of violence related to the local elections.
 - RU report on Azuay and Cañar: Isolated reports of financial corruption.
 - Freedom House & DOS: Officials in Ecuador engage in corruption with impunity



Police, Local Government, and Corruption: Example Case 2

(b)(7)(E)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Drug Trafficking, Crime, and Gangs



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Drug Trafficking, Crime, and Gangs – Overview

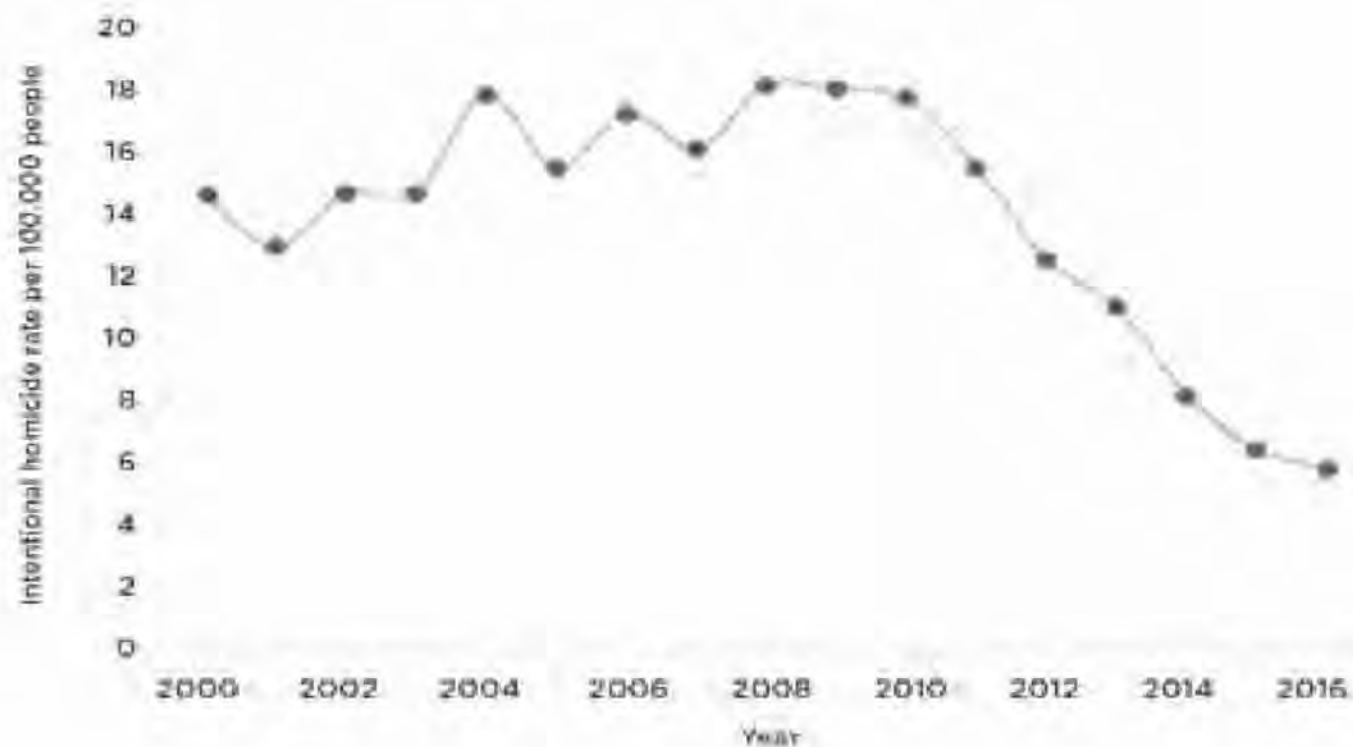
- **The Good**: In 2007, Ecuador legalized gangs, and several years of declining homicide rates followed. Ecuador’s murder rate became one of the lowest in Latin America from 2016-2018, though it rose slightly in 2019 and again in 2020.
- **The Bad**: Smaller local gangs continue to cause problems, but Ecuador generally lacks the type of transnational gangs seen in the Northern Triangle.
- **The Ugly**: Ecuador has long been attractive to foreign criminal groups as a “drug transshipment point and a logistical safe haven.” At the time of a June 2018 Insight Crime article, drug trafficking in Ecuador was on the rise.



Declining Homicide Rate

How much has the intentional homicide rate decreased in Ecuador?

The country has reduced its homicide to almost a third of what it previously was, in less than 20 years.



Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Drug Trafficking, Crime, and Gangs: Trafficking Routes



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Drug Trafficking, Crime, and Gangs: Criminal Groups

- “Ecuador’s domestic crime groups have traditionally been fragmented and regionally-based, operating as subcontractors for foreign criminal organizations, particularly Colombian groups and, to a lesser extent, Mexican syndicates, such as the Sinaloa cartel.”
- In 2007, gangs were legalized: Ecuador offered street gangs the opportunity to remake themselves as cultural associations that could register with the government, which in turn allowed them to qualify for grants and benefit from social programming, such as job training.
- Extortion rackets are a particular problem in the northern border area, where kidnappings are also far more likely to occur.



Drug Trafficking, Crime, and Gangs: Sombra Negra

- Formed in the rural region of Biblián, Cañar where there are high emigration rates.
- As of 2016 estimated to have around 400 active members in Biblián canton, but a 2019 post by the Interior Ministry suggests the gang may have “legalized.”
- The gang has a US counterpart operating out of Corona, Queens. Members in Ecuador may wear black, loose clothing, with hats to one side, heavy chains, and tattoos. Bandanas and hats may be black and white, with NY letters that imitate the clothing of Queens members.
- Rival gangs formed in different parishes of Biblian to counter Sombra Negra: Diablos Rojos, Batos Locos, and Los Chikanos.



Drug Trafficking, Crime, and Gangs: 3 Widespread Groups

- Latin Kings: aka Sagrada Tribu Atahualpa Ecuador (STAE)
- Los Choneros: A major prison gang involved in drug trafficking
 - 2020 turf battles against Los Lagartos in Guayas province led to several murders.
 - Ran extortion ring out of prison in Cuenca that targeted family members of prisoners.
 - Involved in February 2021 prison massacre (“23F”)
 - Los Lobos & Los Tiguerones factions may have created “Nueva Generación” group.
- El Negro Holmer: alias of Holmer Melanio Cortez Ramírez
 - Leader of various criminal groups, some operating in Cuenca/Azuay.
 - Active since at least 2001: subjected to 25 arrests, 15 “judicial proceedings”
 - Imprisoned in 2011, 2015, and 2016 but subsequently released each time.
 - Post-2019 imprisonment: continues to run a group that engages in robbery



Drug Trafficking, Crime, and Gangs: Other Gangs

Verified Groups (and Location)

- Los Pepinos (Gualaceo, Azuay; Morona-Santiago?)
- Los Vatos Locos (San Isidro de Patulu, Chimborazo & Azogues, Cañar)
- Los Crazy Boys (Jerusalén, Biblian, Cañar)
- Cicutu (La Troncal, Cañar; Naranjal, Guayas)
- Tren de Aragua: Venezuelan group

Unverified Groups by Location

- Paute: Los Tisis/Ticis, Las Truchas
- Cuenca: Los Solocos, Los Falcones, La Banda del Vecino (Venezuelans)
- Guayas: Alias el Tovi (El Triunfo);

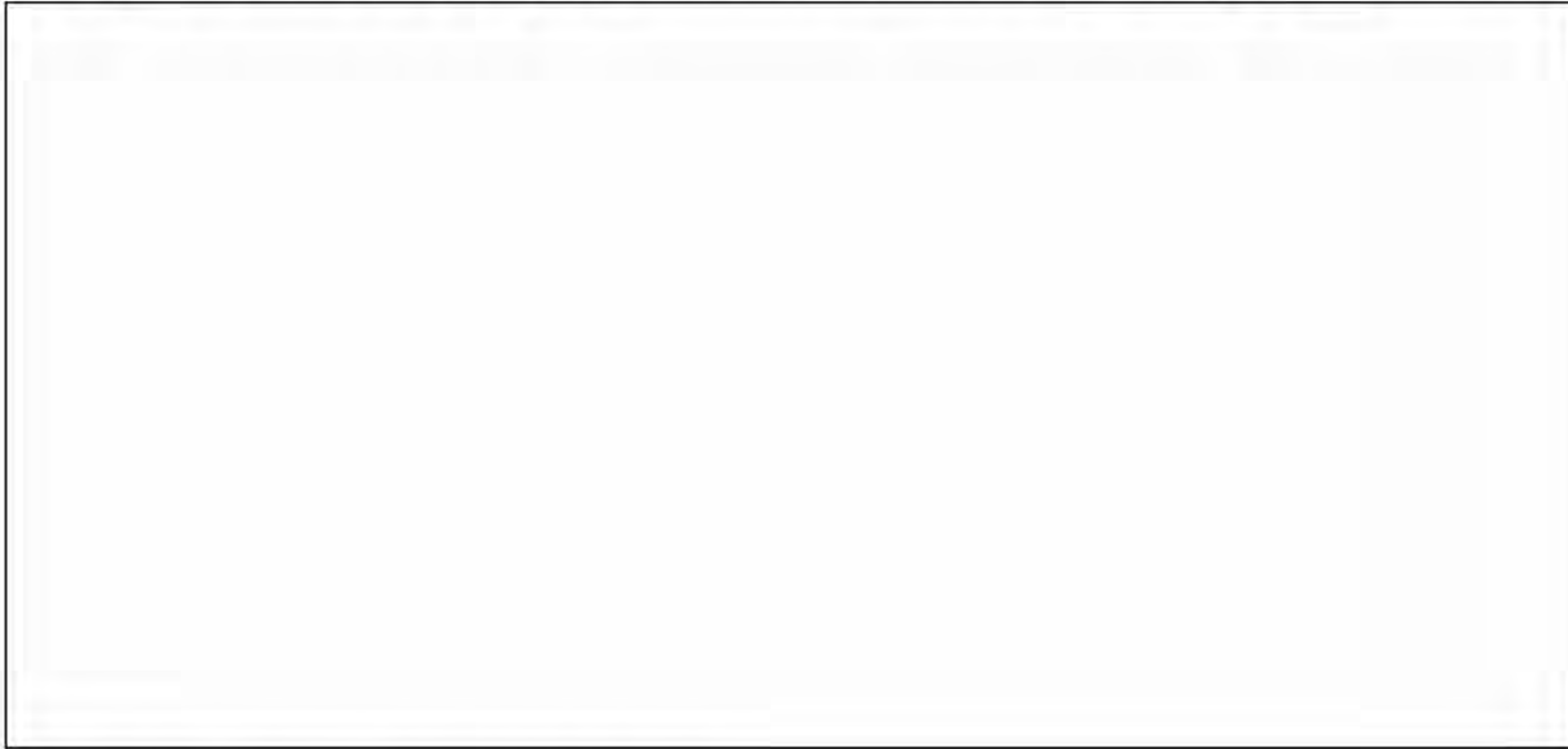
Morocho Quiwa aka Moriches Kiles (Paute & Cuenca, Azuay): Appears to refer to a town, not a gang.



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Drug Trafficking, Crime, and Gangs – Example Case 1



(b)(7)(E)

What else would you want to know?



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Example Case 1 – Suggested Follow-Up

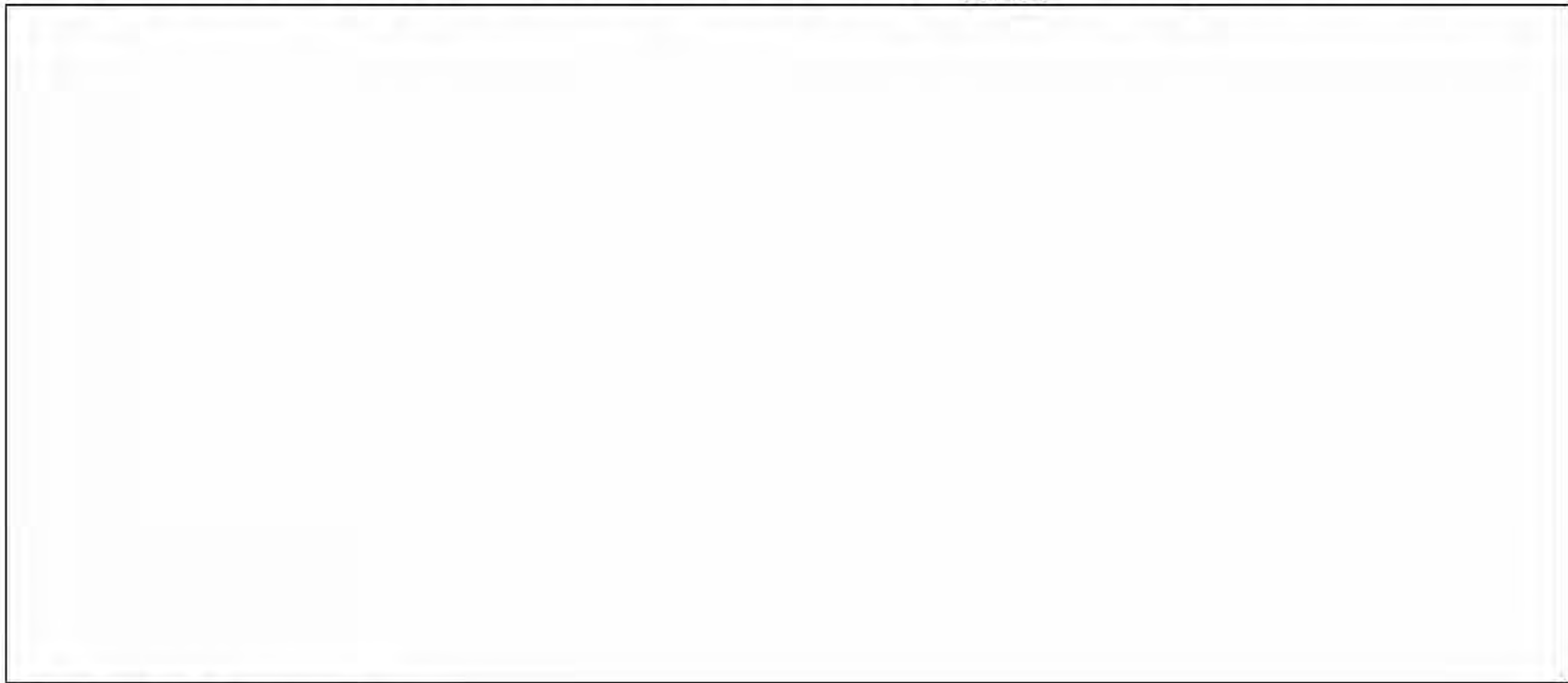
(b)(7)(E)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Drug Trafficking, Crime, and Gangs – Example Case 2

(b)(7)(E)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Example Case 2 (cont.)

(b)(7)(E)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Indigenous Issues



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Indigenous Ecuadorians

- 1.1 million out of ~17 million inhabitants
- 14 indigenous nationalities, 10 live in the Amazon/Oriente.
 - Most commonly seen in recent cases: Kichwa from Chimborazo, Shuar from Morona-Santiago
- Kichwa people: over 16 sub-groups
 - Kañari people are in Cañar, Puruhá/Puruwá in Chimborazo.
- When relevant, officers should explore the specific indigenous group the applicant identifies with.



Indigenous Interest Groups

- CONAIE: Ecuador's Largest Indigenous organization
 - Took leadership of Oct 2019 protests after the first couple days, negotiated with government.
- Pachakutik Party: formed in 1996
 - 2021: 27 seats in NA, 5 prefects
- Fundación Pachamama: Works with Indigenous groups to protect rain forest
 - Shut down by Correa in Dec. 2013, reopened in 2018.
 - Per HRW, allegations of inciting violence are not supported.



Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional
PACHAKUTIK



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Quechua dialects



- 2 main groups: Quechua I (central) & Quechua II (peripheral).
 - Quechua II further divided into northern (Kichwa/Quichua) and southern.
 - Speakers from different points within any of the 3 regions can generally understand one another reasonably well.
 - However, speakers from different major regions are not able to communicate effectively.
 - 8 dialects of Kichwa/Quichua in Ecuador.
 - Chimborazo and Imbabura Highland dialects the most common.
- *** Not to be confused with Quiche/K'iche (from Guatemala)!



Claims Seen Involving Indigenous Ecuadorians

APSO

- Political opinion/land rights
- Race – general harm
- DV
- CAT: police or gang issues
- Harmed by indigenous groups, usually those protesting oil/land rights (“colono” = non-indigenous)

Affirmative

- DV
- Political opinion/land rights
- Mostly UACs
- Gang recruitment (Sombra Negra)



Indigenous Issues: Common Challenges

Legal Pluralism/Indigenous Justice

Police protection

Establishing Indigenous Identity

Relocation



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

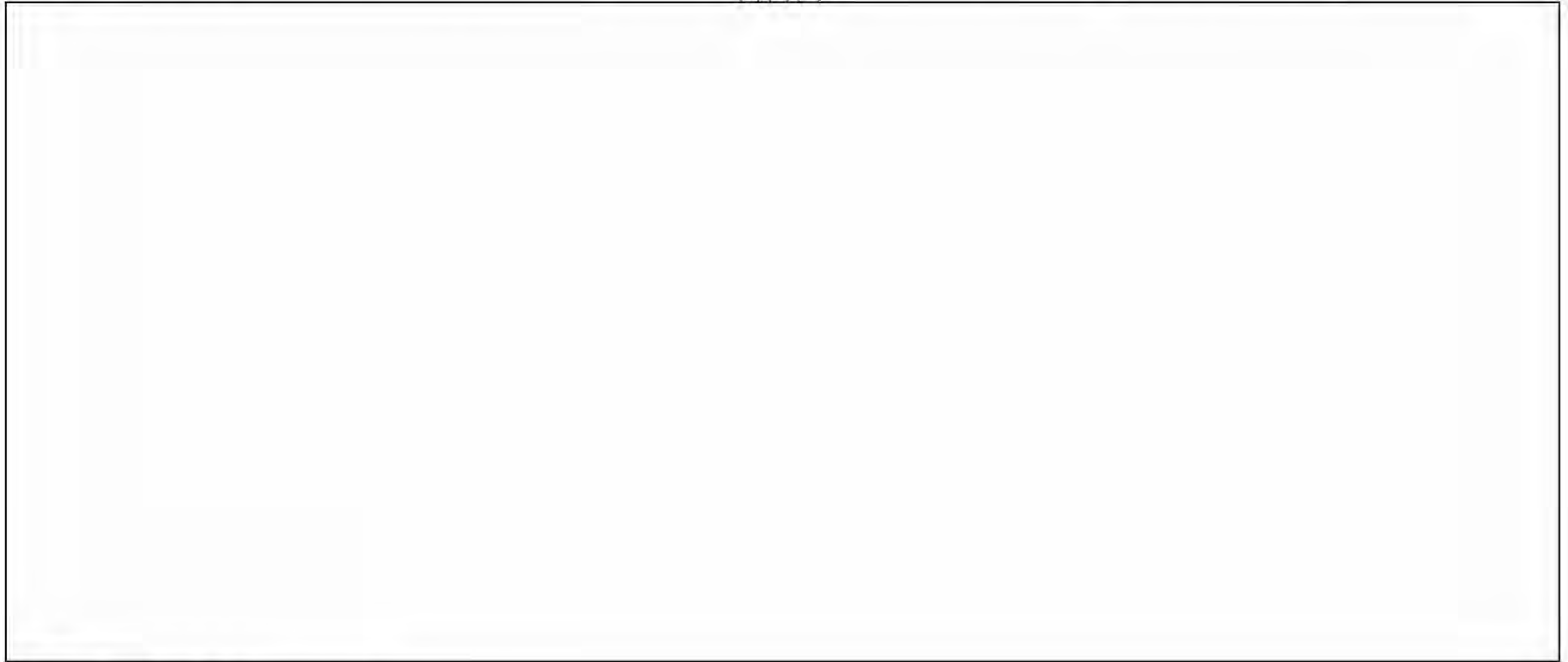
Indigenous Justice & Rule of Law

- 2008 Constitution: right of indigenous peoples to administer justice in their territories in accordance with ancestral traditions (indigenous justice system)
 - Constitutional Court held that Ecuador's ordinary criminal justice system may review decisions of indigenous authorities if those decisions violate or jeopardize the exercise of fundamental rights, such as life or personal integrity
- Police presence in indigenous areas post-2019 protests
 - 2019 protests resulted in many clashes between indigenous protestors & police.
 - Police must be escorted by elders in some areas, and in other areas they are abused by the indigenous population. Some areas they no longer enter.
 - Police are working to rebuild relationships with indigenous population, including holding information events & hiring indigenous officers to patrol indigenous areas.



Suggested lines of inquiry: Establishing Identity

(b)(7)(E)

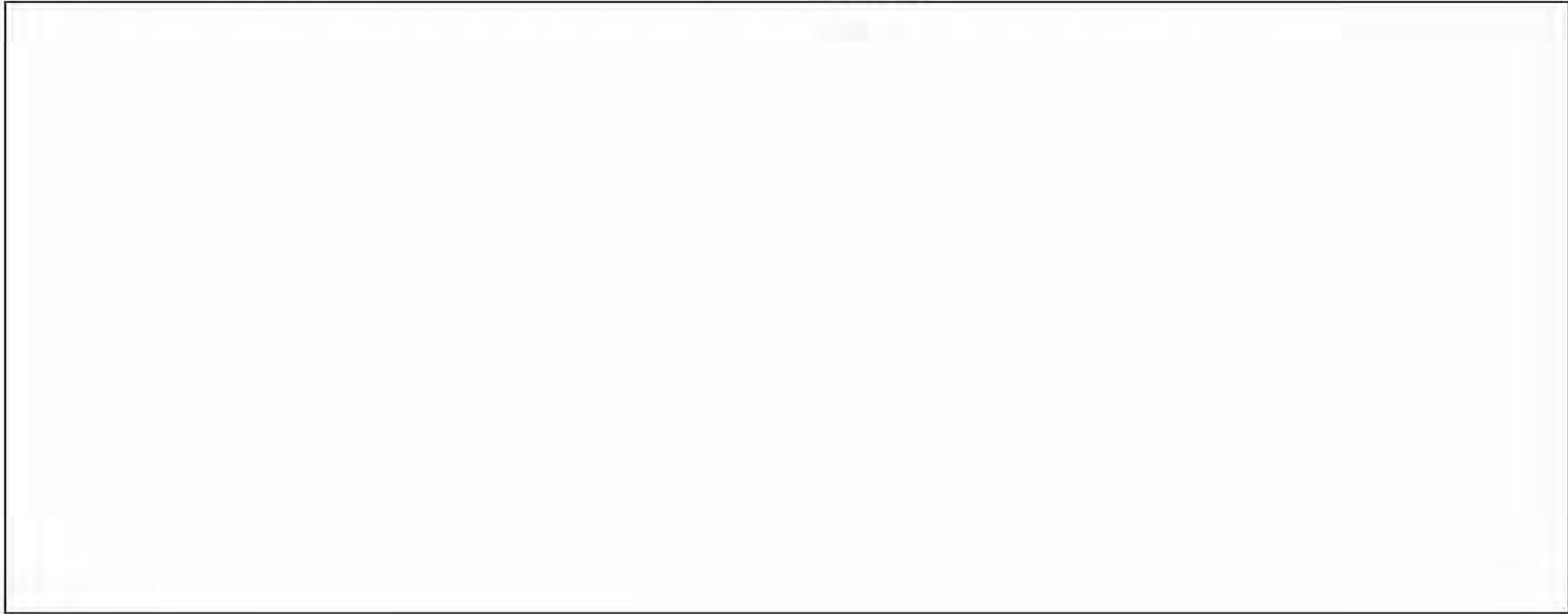


U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Suggested lines of inquiry: Other Issues

(b)(7)(E)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Indigenous Issues: Example 1

(b)(7)(E)

Officer	Interviewee

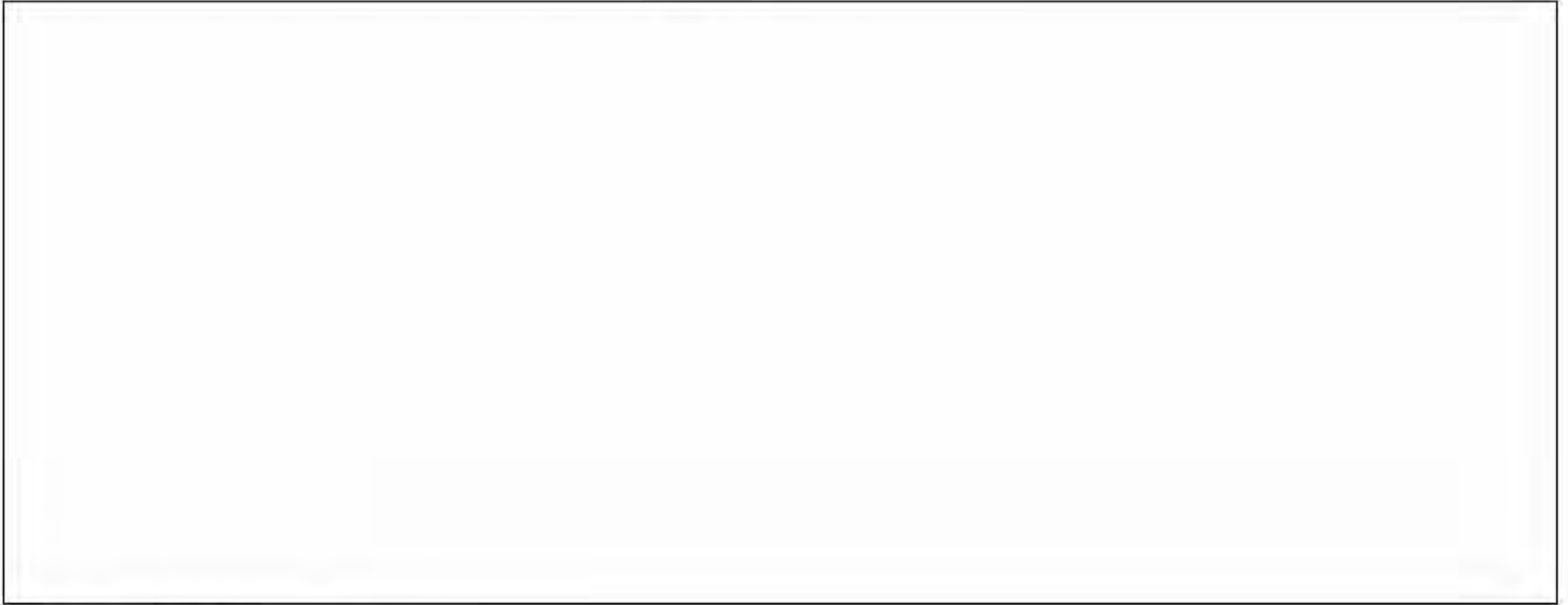


U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Indigenous Issues: Example 2

(b)(7)(E)

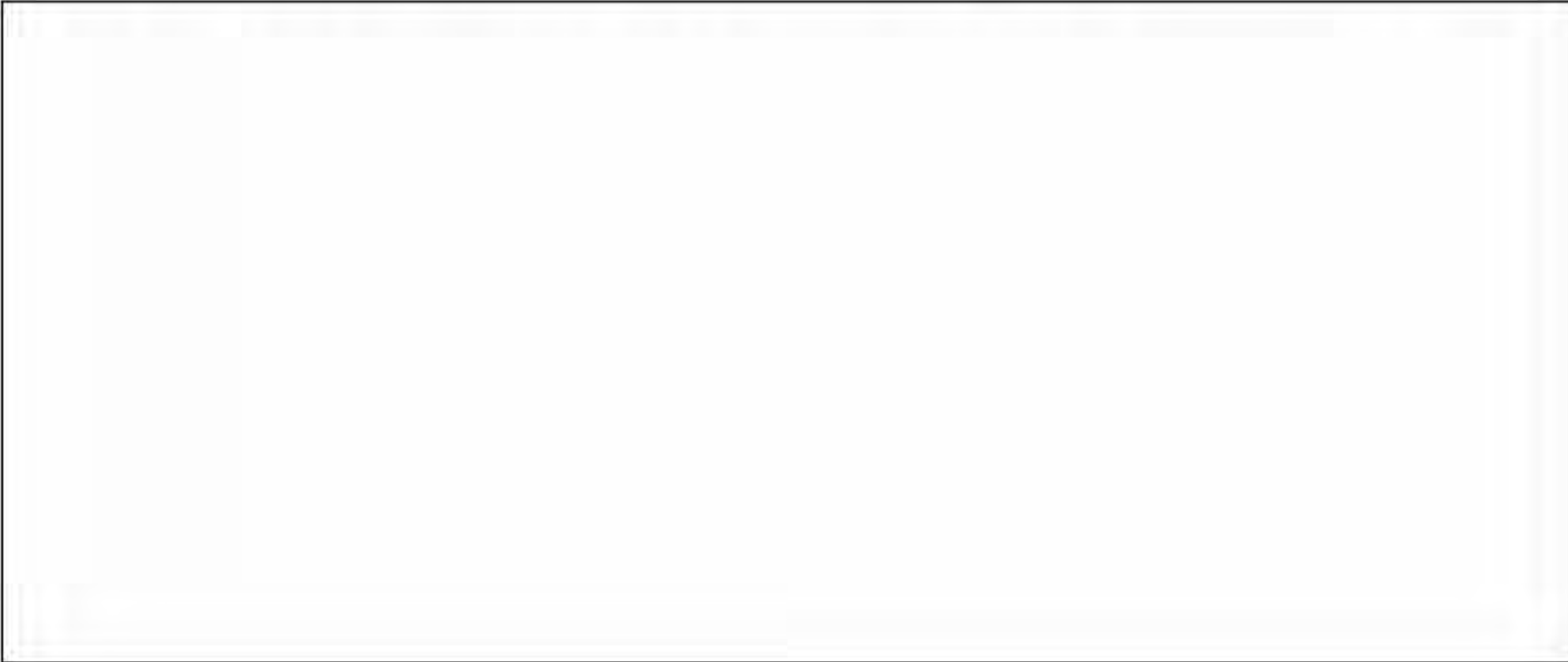


U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Indigenous Issues: Example 3

(b)(7)(E)

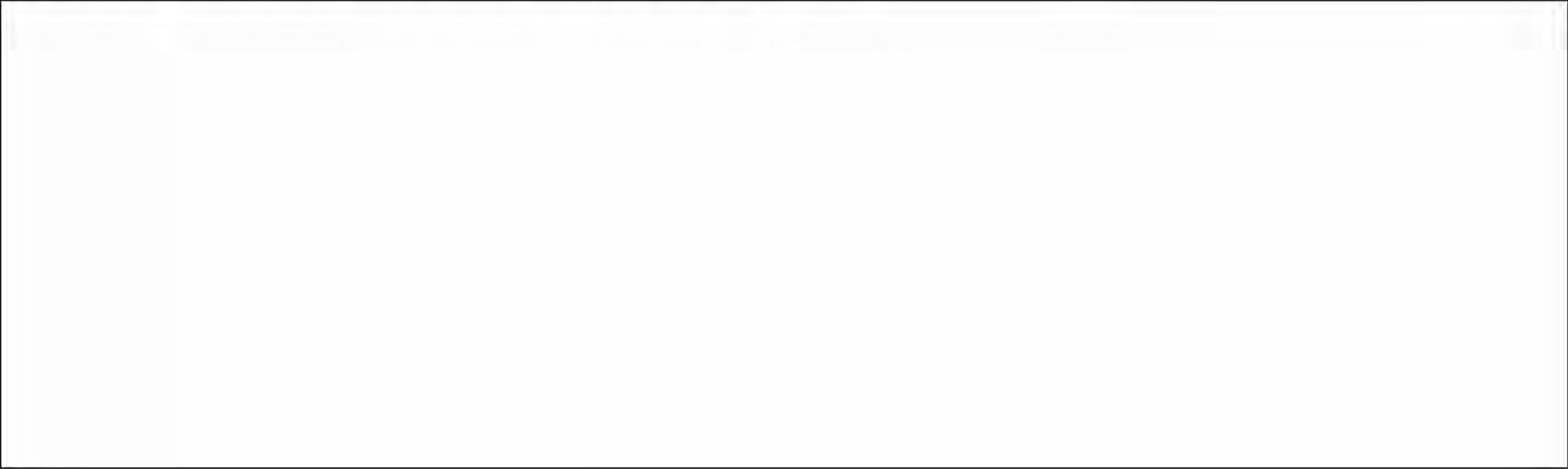


U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Indigenous Issues: Example 4

(b)(7)(E)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Indigenous Issues: Example 5

(b)(7)(E)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Indigenous Issues: Example 6

(b)(7)(E)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

Other claims: Religion and Sexual Minorities

Religion -- Claims typically involved:

- Applicant converted to Evangelical Christianity and is harmed by family and/or the local community.
- Applicant is Catholic and harmed by Evangelicals.
- Also a few cases involving Jehovah's Witnesses being targeted for harm.
- Though there have been incidents of violence between Catholics & Evangelicals in past decades, an Oct 2019 Research Unit review noted a single reported incident of Evangelical-Catholic physical violence from 2006-2019 (which occurred in 2013).
- **Sexual Minorities**
 - 2019: Same sex marriage legalized, but also an increase in murders involving LGBTI people.
 - According to one report there were 16 such murders; most victims were transgender women.



Internal Relocation: Recap

- Unable to find COI suggesting that police sought out non-violent protestors after the October 2019 protests.
- COI indicates that gangs tend to be localized. Officers should explore whether applicants have specific testimony that the gang would be able to locate him/her in another part of Ecuador.
- Indigenous Ecuadorians may face language barriers and discrimination. At the same time, there are numerous Quechuan-speaking communities in cities and towns of the Sierra region.



TRIG Issues

- Unlike its neighbors Colombia and Peru, Ecuador does not have a history of violent insurgencies.
- Ecuadorian Groups
 - 2009 DOS Report lists the following as present in Ecuador but inactive: Marxist-Leninist Party of Ecuador, Revolutionary Militia of the People, Alfarista Liberation Army.
 - Grupos de Combatientes Populares (GCP): 2010 letter bomb, possibly 2011 pamphlet bombs
 - 2011 article about bombings by Armed Revolutionary Insurgent Forces of Ecuador (FAIRE) also mentions Red Sun Communist Party of Ecuador, Guerrilla Coordinator of Ecuador
 - 2017: Unnamed Indigenous group in Morona-Santiago kidnapped 2 soldiers
- Colombian Groups (reported to be active at some point in Ecuador)
 - Ex-FARC: Car bomb in Jan 2018, 3 journalists murdered Mar 2018; both in Esmeraldas.
 - ELN (National Liberation Army)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Fraud and Credibility

(b)(7)(E)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FOUO

About this Presentation

- Authors: Newark Asylum Office, Chicago Asylum Office, Boston Asylum Office, New Orleans Asylum Office, Asylum HQ Quality Assurance Branch, Asylum HQ Training Branch
- Date of last revision: 6/23/21. This presentation is current only as of the date of last revision.
- This presentation contains no sensitive Personally Identifiable Information (PII).



Disclaimer

- This training module is intended solely for informational purposes. It is not intended to, does not, and may not be relied upon to create or confer any right(s) or benefit(s), substantive or procedural, enforceable at law by any individual or other party in benefit applications before USCIS, in removal proceedings, in litigation with the United States, or in any other form or manner. This training module does not have the force of law, or of a DHS directive.



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services