

Ecuador's Universal Periodic Review

Human Rights Watch Statement

Unlike his predecessor Rafael Correa, President Lenin Moreno has, since taking office in May 2017, publicly endorsed respect for free speech and civil society. The Ecuadorian Foreign Affairs Ministry, however, appears to be adopting positions that are inconsistent with President Moreno's public statements and seems to be still aligned with his predecessor's open support of censorship and attacks on free speech and freedom of association.

In 2013, Correa signed a communications law granting his government broad powers to punish independent media outlets, including an Orwellian definition of "censorship" that allows sanctioning independent media that don't cover issues that the government considers to be of "public interest." Correa's administration has applied this law to ensure favorable coverage.

That year, Correa also adopted a decree granting his government sweeping powers to intervene in the operation of nongovernmental organizations. The government has deployed the decree to dissolve an environmental group and the country's largest and oldest teacher's union.

Despite President Moreno's commitments, in its most recent communication on Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations, of July 2017, Ecuador upheld the policies of the previous administration, saying that both the Communications Law and the presidential decree on NGOs were consistent with international human rights law.

This UPR is an opportunity for the Ecuadorean government under Moreno to recognize that it has failed to implement key recommendations on freedom of expression and association that it had accepted during its previous review in 2012. We urge the Moreno administration to take advantage of this opportunity to commit itself to repealing these problematic norms, as well as to address other longstanding human rights problems.