

[The Latino Post](#)

Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa is calling for international journalists and activist groups to stay out of the affairs surrounding a growing controversy in the country's Yasuni National Park. (Photo : Roosewelt Pinheiro / Abr via Wikimedia Commons)

Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa has a message for the world's journalists and human rights organizations: "Go mind your business and not the affairs of a sovereign country like Ecuador."

The leader of the small South American country has been besieged by activists and NGOs alike for a multifaceted dilemma brewing in the Yasuni Park region of that country; a remote, isolated area that is geographically pristine, rich in biodiversity, and a home to populations of humans that live outside the boundaries of modern culture.

It is also home to vast reserves of oil which are worth billions of modern dollars.

The Ecuadoran government initially offered to halt exploitation of the oil reserves in the Yasuni National Park, under a program called the Yasuni-ITT initiative, Ecuador offered to leave the area untouched if international donors would produce donations in the amount of \$3.6 billion (roughly half the estimated value of the untapped oil reserves). The initiative came up woefully short, and the government dropped the offer and moved toward drilling.

Complicating the matter, tribal warfare has apparently broken out between two groups of indigenous people living in the area. The conflict, many observers say, is fueled in great part by the oil industry and the advantages it brings to those who hold the land on which it rests.

A Jan. 17 Newsweek article on the conflict written by journalist Bethany Horne has come under harsh criticism by the Ecuadoran government. In the article, Horne outlines the events of two bloody incidents between the Taromenane and Huaorani tribes living in close proximity in the affected area. She outlines what she describes as the failure of the government to prosecute those responsible for the violence and the attempt to quell reporting of the incidents in the international media.

Horne was publicly rebuked by the Ecuadoran ambassador to the United States, Nathalie Cely.

"The truth is that the President has publicly called for swift and strong action against any responsible parties involved in the case," stated Cely in a letter. "Like any country, however, the rule of law must be respected. In the meantime, as we await a final outcome, the citizens of Ecuador, our indigenous people, and the robust local media are actively engaged in free and open debate as in any healthy society. It is a shame your publication seems determined to distort the facts to hide these truths."

Horne responded, vigorously defending her work.

Meanwhile, activists are still calling for the Ecuadoran government to stop incursions into Yasuni for the purpose of oil exploration.

"I'm asking for President Correa to not abandon the [Yasuni-ITT] initiative. Anyone can drill for oil, but I ask for Ecuador to be creative. The initiative made the president a leader, but to drill in the ITT will make him a follower of an obsolete model," said Vandana Shiva of Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature according to the Wall Street Journal.

And it is a request that has significance in the United States, a country which has a high economic impact on the decisions which affect the plants, animals and humans which have existed in the area for centuries.

"The United States imported 177,000 bbl/d of crude oil from Ecuador in 2012, down from a peak of 276,000 bbl/d in 2005," notes the Eurasia Review journal and think tank. "Ecuador was the 11th largest supplier of foreign oil to the United States, and was responsible for 2 percent of total U.S. crude oil imports."