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On May 17, Ecuadoran TV channels reported the death of Abraham Chimborazo Macas, who had been stabbed during an alleged confrontation between rival gangs. The footage showed a group of young people whose faces were covered and their heads shaved swearing to avenge the death of their "comrade." The following day, a video was broadcast, which had been sent to the TV channels anonymously, on which another skinhead took responsibility for Chimborazo's death. "I am Álvaro Paredes. I am an anti-fascist skinhead, a member of the Brigada Antifascista Quito," began the confession. After describing the events, the youth ended by saying, "What happened is a consequence of the judicial system's ineffectiveness." The same day, in the place where Chimborazo was killed, a large group of skinheads protested against the institute where Paredes studied. The institute is run by Chilean professors whom the skinheads accused of "promoting drug addiction and homosexuality," besides protecting Paredes. After shouting slogans against foreigners living in the country, especially Cubans and Jews, the protesters ended the demonstration with the words of Abraham Chimborazo's brother, who, giving the typical Nazi salute, said, "For each of us who falls, 100 of them will fall....My brother is a warrior, my brother lives as does our beloved leader Adolf Hitler." A secret war Ecuadoran society and the media, through their reporting on Chimborazo's death, are beginning to learn about a wave of invisible violence that was shaking at least eight Ecuadoran cities, manifested in various forms of aggression toward urban-youth cultures. "These violent groups are neofascist groups that attack us because they consider us their enemies; they do so under the ideological protection of strange slogans about our way of life and sheltered by the state's inability to investigate and punish," said Felipe Ogaz, coordinator of the Colectivo Político Cultural Diabluma, which includes various urban cultures that have adopted a leftist perspective. The neo-Nazi-skinhead activity is believed to have begun more than ten years ago, with a process of social cleansing targeting sex workers, homosexuals, street children, and homeless people. In 1997-1998, a significant number of transvestites were murdered during the struggle to decriminalize homosexuality led by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities. Meanwhile, through a constant and progressive process, the urban cultures were politicized, and this prompted them to denounce the actions of the state, which they accused of criminalizing their cultural, political, and sexual identities. They give the example of the Policía Nacional (PN), which persecutes, harasses, and violates the human rights of the urban cultures through illegal arrests, physical and psychological torture, and, most commonly, by raiding, interrupting, and closing down events aimed at promoting cultural identities, such as rock concerts. At the same time, these cultures began denouncing the educational institutions where students are threatened with expulsion and are frequently morally humiliated by having their style of dress ridiculed and even in some cases by physical aggression such as forced haircuts. "It's common to punish young people who wear the distinctive garb of their culture or who defend life styles that, while constitutionally guaranteed in Ecuador, are not accepted by school authorities. For example, high school youth are pressured to keep their hair short; if they don't, "inspectors" are in charge of crudely cutting their hair, thus forcing the students to find a barber and have their hair cut in military style," said Ogaz. For members of Diabluma, exposing official instances of repression that conform to the implementation of an urban model based on the dominant class's need to build "clean cities," that is, cities in which
problems caused by the unjust distribution of wealth are not seen, was what made them objects of the aggression and harassment of armed neofascist and neo-Nazi organizations that promote social cleansing as a solution to problems caused by poverty. "This schizophrenic need to build a safe city is defended, sustained, and promoted by the mass media, which have generated an atmosphere of paranoia and insecurity in the community. The media have managed to implant in the popular psyche stigmas against urban cultures. For example, society immediately equates the rock style's long hair, multicolor crest, leather clothing, black boots, which are our most important elements, with Satanism and criminality," says Ogaz. In Ecuador, the new youth identities question the failure of the current political and economic system; they look for more solidarity and more equality. This is why they link to social-change processes and to permanent solidarity with the various struggles begun by the social movements, such as the indigenous movement or the Iniciativa Yasuní conservation process to avoid oil exploitation (see NotiSur, 2010-02-05). Ironically, it is this identification with the need for social change that has made them vulnerable to Nazi groups.

Judicial system does not function

On Sept. 26, 2007, rocker and journalist Cora Cadena, a member of Diabluma and host of the program Transgresor Jatarishun on Radio La Luna, was attacked by a group of Nazi women and left for dead. The attack elicited the total condemnation of President Rafael Correa's administration, and Vice President Lenin Moreno and then Minister of Government Gustavo Larrea offered to carry out an exhaustive investigation and to dismantle the Nazi groups. With this backing, 17 young people agreed to go public with their own cases and, represented by the legal team of the Fundación Regional de Asesoría en Derechos Humanos, filed complaints with the Fiscalía General del Estado, following a large demonstration of some 2,000 urban-culture youth. The 17 complaints were dismissed by the Fiscalía. Moreover, in the judicial proceedings in Cora Cadena's case, a computer confiscated from one of the neo-Nazi leaders contained photos of the principal representatives of the urban cultures, including photos of the youth who filed the complaints. What was surprising was that the complainants' photos were taken in the Fiscalía offices, while they were making their declarations. The aggressions have not stopped; five additional cases have been reported to the Fiscalía, and the case of Cora Cadena was forgotten, the arrest orders against those responsible for her attack were never issued despite positive identifications. The prosecutor in the case, Daniela Camacho, was convinced that it was all part of personal quarrels and a fight between gangs. "I am not going to get involved in resolving personal quarrels," said Camacho in a letter sent to Cora Cadena. Camacho's response was made in the face of a letter from the urban-cultures collectives issuing an ultimatum regarding the investigative process, since the judiciary's failure to act had motivated the neo-Nazi groups to increase their attacks, even giving interviews to the media in which they affirmed working together with some police groups. This confirmed the complaints of the youth who said that on various occasions the Nazi attacks happened alongside police raids. The urban-cultures collectives warned in the letter that they would defend themselves in the streets, since the judiciary had demonstrated its inefficiency. Given the judicial system's ineffectiveness, Álvaro Paredes, self-identified "red skinhead," that is a member of the main opposition group to the neo-Nazi skinheads, decided to form the Brigadas Antifascistas.

"We need to be physically prepared to defend ourselves in the streets," said Paredes in a video he circulated, and he added, referring to Chimborazo's death, "He came to kill me....It was his life or mine." The death of Chimborazo, known as Ram 88 and the leader of Acción Nacionalista Revolucionaria del Ecuador, one of the more than ten identified neo-Nazi groups in the country, has again put the authorities on guard and, as they did in the case of Cora Cadena, they have once more offered to investigate and dismantle these groups. However, since Chimborazo's death, there have been three more attacks and graffiti has appeared threatening other leaders of the urban cultures.
Meanwhile, the first police report presented reveals a total ignorance of the dynamics of the neo-Nazi groups and their systems of organization. Álvaro Paredes turned himself in. "I am going to give the system one last opportunity because I don't want more deaths in the streets....Abraham's family and mine are destroyed and I don't want this to continue happening," said Paredes. The urban-cultures collectives hope that there will now be official responses, but they fear that otherwise this secret war will continue on the streets of Ecuador's cities.

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