

Stephen Kinzer (The Boston Globe) Denouncing Role of U.S. in Honduras' Nightmare, Berta Caceres' Assassination

(<http://us9.campaign-archive2.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=ff430258e0>)

"Honduras was in bad shape before the [2009] coup, but it has become far worse. It is corruptly governed, plagued by violence, and servile to rapacious foreign corporations." (Stephen Kinzer, The Boston Globe)

Much of what Kinzer denounces here about the role of the U.S. government must be said about the Canadian government that collaborated directly with the U.S. government in 2009 to support and legitimize the coup. In both the U.S. and Canada, there should be full, public inquiries into the roles played by our governments during and after the coup, in support of the repression, corruption and impunity that are Honduras today.

- What to do / How to support: See below

Hard Choices In Honduras

The Boston Globe, by Stephen Kinzer, March 30, 2016

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2016/03/29/hard-choices-honduras/sLI9xnEw6TwxQgGb9ZVTZO/story.html>

Before dawn one morning early in March, gunmen burst into the home of Berta Caceres, the most outspoken environmentalist in Honduras, and murdered her in her bed.

It was a tragedy on many levels, but also something more. This killing brings into sharp focus the horror that has been inflicted on Honduras since an American-approved coup there seven years ago. Because the American who approved that coup was Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, it also shadows — or should shadow — the American presidential campaign.

Many countries in the world are suffering the effects of American intervention. Those effects are vivid in places like Iraq and Libya, where most people lived reasonably secure lives before the United States attacked and unleashed the forces of terror and anarchy. Invasions and missile attacks, however, are not the only ways to shatter societies. In Honduras, we did it without firing a shot.

Honduras has been the quintessence of a banana republic — dominated by American fruit growers — for more than a century.

Nonetheless, life in Honduras was relatively tranquil until the 1980s when the United States turned it into a military platform for our Contra war against the Sandinista government in neighboring Nicaragua. We bolstered the Honduran military, which supported our policy, and turned a blind eye when it kidnapped and murdered dozens of human rights campaigners, labor leaders, and other dissidents.

That propelled Honduras into a vertiginous spiral. The next step down came with the forced return from the United States of young Honduran men who had grown up as refugees in Los Angeles. They brought gang culture to Honduras, which now has one of the world's highest murder rates.

Honduras has, nonetheless, held regular elections. The winner in 2006 was Manuel Zelaya of the Liberal Party, which American leaders have always viewed as unfriendly. Americans deposed a Liberal president in 1911 after he chose to borrow money from European instead of American banks. The next Liberal to take power was deposed in 1963 after proposing a land reform law that would have affected interests of the United Fruit Co.

Zelaya suffered the same fate.

Powerful Hondurans were repelled by Zelaya's advocacy of populist reforms like subsidies for small farmers and increased minimum wages. Some in Washington disliked him because of his ties to President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, who was then a hot-button bogeyman.

On the night of June 28, 2009, after Zelaya proposed a referendum to change the Honduran constitution, soldiers stormed his residence, captured him, and put him on a plane out of the country — in his pajamas.

This coup was a throwback to the bad old days when Central American generals deposed elected civilians at will. Nearly every country in the hemisphere condemned it. A resolution was introduced at the Organization of American States demanding the "immediate, secure, and unconditional" return of President Zelaya.

The United States blocked it.

Republicans in Congress proclaimed the coup a victory for freedom. A handful of them even flew to Honduras to embrace the country's new leaders. Secretary of State Clinton sided with them. She approved a new election in which the deposed president was not allowed to run. Her goal, as she wrote in her memoir, was to "render the question of Zelaya moot."

Honduras was in bad shape before the coup, but it has become far worse. It is corruptly governed, plagued by violence, and servile to rapacious foreign corporations.

Berta Caceres is among the most prominent victims of this new Honduras. Caceres, 43 years old at the time of her death, was a tireless leader of the indigenous Lenca people. For years she

had been campaigning to stop construction of a dam in her native region, one of many in Honduras that involve privatizing rivers and uprooting communities. Last year, she won the world's most prestigious award for environmental activism, the Goldman Prize. "Her murder would not surprise her colleagues," the citation said.

Honduras continues to receive generous military aid from the United States, but that does little to resolve the social catastrophe Americans helped create. Caceres did not shrink from pointing a finger of blame. "We're coming out of a coup that we can't put behind us, we can't reverse it," she said in one interview. "Hillary Clinton, in her book, 'Hard Choices,' practically said what was going to happen in Honduras. This demonstrates the meddling of North Americans in our country."

The destruction of Iraq, Libya, and other countries where the United States has intervened plays out every day on our front pages. In other countries, like Honduras, the effects of our intervention are largely unreported. By accepting the 2009 coup in Honduras, we rid ourselves of a leader we didn't like because he seemed too socialistic — even though he led a miserably poor country that could not possibly threaten us. Once he was deposed, we lost interest in Honduras. That helped create a situation in which a brave woman could be murdered for defending her country's environment and native people.

It should not take a murder like this to focus our attention on the effects of our intervention in Honduras. Now that it has happened, it should make us pause. The lesson is clear: When we interfere in a country's domestic politics, we often create as much of a mess as we do when we bomb or invade.

[Stephen Kinzer is a senior fellow at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. Follow him on Twitter @stephenkinzer.]

Pressure Needed in U.S. and Canada

Here, a Letter to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry; and a Letter to Canadian Government Officials: <http://us9.campaign-archive1.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=29af29c555>

Please re-send Kinzer's article and these Public Letters to your elected politicians, pressuring them to publicly support the key demands:

- That the Honduran authorities let Gustavo Castro (shot twice himself, during the March 3, 2016 assassination of Berta Caceres) go home to Mexico;
- The establishment of the independent international judicial commission to directly join the criminal investigation in Honduras (... short of this, corruption and impunity will prevail in Honduras);

- The establishment of Congressional, Senate and Parliamentary inquiries into the role that the U.S. and Canada played in supporting the 2009 military coup and legitimizing and doing business with the post-coup regimes since then.

Funds Needed for Family of Berta Cáceres and COPINH

Since the assassination of Berta Cáceres on March 3, 2016, Rights Action has channeled over \$15,000 to her family and to COPINH, that are at the forefront of efforts to ensure that justice is done, even as family and COPINH members are receiving threats, even as the corrupted regime is trying to 'criminalize' members of COPINH for the killing of Berta.

Tax Deductible Donations in the U.S. or Canada: Make checks to "Rights Action" (write Berta/COPINH on memo line) and mail to:

- U.S.: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

Credit-Card Donations:

- Canada: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/rights-action/>
- U.S.: <http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations> (click on NetworkForGood)

Articles

- Berta Cáceres' Acceptance Speech, 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize. To view: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AR1kwx8b0ms>
- Murdered for Activism in Honduras, by Silvio Carrillo (Berta's nephew), March 11, 2016, New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/12/opinion/international/murdered-for-activism-in-honduras.html?emc=edit_tnt_20160311&nlid=45556342&tntemail0=y
- Berta Cáceres: Who She Is & What She Lived For, by Grahame Russell, March 3, 2016: <http://us9.campaign-archive2.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=026d1728a3>
- Fight With Joy: Remembering Bertha Cáceres, by Sandra Cuffe, March 7, 2016: <https://intercontinentalcry.org/fight-joy-remembering-bertha-caceres/>
- Eulogy For Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores, by Bev Bell, March 9, 2016: <http://otherworldsarepossible.org/bertha-lives-life-and-legacy-bertha-caceres>
- Blood Flows Where Canadian Capital Goes, by Tyler Shipley, 03/6/2016: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/blood-flows-where-canadian-capital-goes-371189471.html>
- Berta Cáceres, the Murdered Honduran Activist, Did Not Die. She Multiplied, by Karen Spring, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/karen-spring/bertha-caceres-murder_b_9500088.html

More Information

- www.BertaCaceres.org (established by Berta's family)

- Honduras Solidarity Network: <http://www.hondurassolidarity.org/>
- Other Worlds: <http://otherworldsarepossible.org/>
- Common Frontiers: <http://www.commonfrontiers.ca/>
- School of the Americas Watch: <http://www.soaw.org/about-the-soawhinsec/what-is-the-soawhinsec>
- Witness For Peace: <http://www.witnessforpeace.org/>

“Berta Caceres did not die, she multiplied.” Thank-you for your multiplying commitment and activism. Please share this information far’n’wide.

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