

Hillary Clinton's Link to a Nasty Piece of Work in Honduras

By [Prof. Marjorie Cohn](#)

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A critical difference between Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton is their position on whether children who fled violence in Central American countries, particularly Honduras, two years ago should be allowed to stay in the United States or be returned.

Sanders states unequivocally that they should be able to remain in the U.S.

Clinton disagrees. She would guarantee them "due process," but nothing more.

In 2014 Clinton told CNN's Christiane Amanpour, "It may be safer [for the children to remain in the U.S.]," but "they should be sent back."

By supporting the [June 28, 2009, coup d'état](#) in Honduras when she was secretary of state, Clinton helped create the dire conditions that caused many of these children to flee. And the assassination of legendary Honduran [human rights leader Berta Cáceres](#) earlier this month can be traced indirectly to Clinton's policies.



Hillary Clinton speaking during a campaign event at Hillside High School in Durham, N.C., last week. (Carolyn Kaster / AP)

During the Feb. 11 Democratic debate in Milwaukee, Clinton said that sending the children back would "send a message." In answer to a question by debate moderator Judy Woodruff of PBS, she said,

"Those children needed to be processed appropriately, but we also had to send a message to families and communities in Central America not to send their children on this dangerous journey in the hands of smugglers."

Sanders retorted, "Who are you sending a message to? These are children who are leaving countries and neighborhoods where their lives are at stake. That was the fact. I don't think we use them to send a message. I think we welcome them into this country and do the best we can to help them get their lives together."

In the March 9 debate in Miami between the two Democratic candidates, Sanders accurately told moderator Jorge Ramos of Univision, "Honduras and that region of the world may be the most violent region in our hemisphere. Gang lords, vicious people torturing people, doing horrible things to families." He added, "Children fled that part of the world to try, try, try,

try, maybe, to meet up with their family members in this country, taking a route that was horrific, trying to start a new life.”

The violence in Honduras can be traced to a history of U.S. economic and political meddling, including Clinton’s support of the coup, according to American University professor Adrienne Pine, author of “Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras.”

Pine, who has worked for many years in Honduras, told Dennis Bernstein of KPFA radio in 2014 that the military forces that carried out the coup were trained at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly called the U.S. Army School of the Americas) in Fort Benning, Ga. Although the coup was supported by the United States, it was opposed by the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS). The U.N. and the OAS labeled President Manuel Zelaya’s ouster a military coup.

“Hillary Clinton was probably the most important actor in supporting the coup [against the democratically elected Zelaya] in Honduras,” Pine noted. It took the United States two months to even admit that Honduras had suffered a coup, and it never did admit it was a military coup. That is, most likely, because the [Foreign Assistance Act](#) prohibits the U.S. from aiding a country “whose duly elected head of government is deposed by military coup or decree.”

Although the U.S. government eventually cut nonhumanitarian aid to Honduras, the State Department under Clinton took pains to clarify that this was not an admission that a military coup had occurred.

“Hillary Clinton played a huge role in propping up the coup administration,” Pine said. “The State Department ensured the coup administration would remain in place through negotiations that they imposed, against the OAS’ wish, and through continuing to provide aid and continuing to recognize the coup administration.”

“And so if it weren’t for Hillary Clinton,” Pine added, “basically there wouldn’t be this refugee crisis from Honduras at the level that it is today. And Hondurans would be living a very different reality from the tragic one they are living right now.”

In her book “Hard Choices,” Clinton admitted she helped ensure that Zelaya would not be returned to the presidency. She wrote,

“In the subsequent days [following the coup] I spoke with my counterparts around the hemisphere, including Secretary [Patricia] Espinosa in Mexico. We strategized on a plan to restore order in Honduras and ensure that free and fair elections could be held quickly and legitimately, which would render the question of Zelaya moot.”

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