

Snowden's Asylum and Double Standards

By [FAIR](#)

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NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden has been granted temporary asylum by Russia, which has generated coverage focusing on the U.S. outrage at Russia's decision. "Defiant Russia Grants Snowden Year's Asylum" is the headline at the New York Times (8/2/13), where readers were told of the "risk of a breach in relations with the United States" and that the Russian move "infuriated American officials."

 The Washington Post reported ([8/2/13](#)) that Russia's decision "opened a fresh wound in Moscow's battered relations with the United States." And USA Today's cover, as shown at the right, read "Welcome, Comrade Snowden"– Russia's decision was a "snub."

But journalism that wanted to take a more independent look at issues like who is granted asylum by a given country, or how countries refused to extradite those wanted on serious charges, might consider cases where the United States has protected suspected criminals–people who have caused actual harm in the world.

As Dan Beeton pointed out (CEPR Blog, ([7/11/13](#)) one might consider the U.S. government's [ongoing refusal](#) to extradite Bolivia's former president Gonzalo ("Goni") Sánchez de Lozada for [serious human rights crimes](#) related to the shooting of protesters in 2003. Goni lives comfortably just outside Washington, D.C. in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and as a [member emeritus](#) of the Inter-American Dialogue is close to Washington foreign policy circles. The worst allegations that pundits have leveled at Snowden are that his leaks could endanger Americans – allegations for which there is no evidence. The case against Goni, however, is serious: he is believed to be responsible for ordering the military to attack protesters, resulting in the [shooting deaths of over 67](#) and injury to over 400.

Or, Beeton points out,

The U.S. continues to shelter Luis Posada Carriles, a convicted (and admitted) murderer and terrorist believed by U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies to be responsible for blowing up a Cuban airliner in 1976, killing 73 people, including the entire Cuban fencing team. Posada surfaced in the U.S. in 2005; he was tried on immigration charges several years later, but was acquitted and has been allowed to stay in the U.S. since.

The New York Times mentioned some of this history at the bottom of a [July 12](#) piece– saying that "Washington's push for extradition has poked at a sore spot for several countries that have sought the extradition of people wanted by their justice systems." The Times

mentioned Carriles, and also noted that Ecuador has been unable to extradite two bankers who were “at the center of a huge Ecuadorean financial scandal in the 1990s.”

It’s not as if those are the only examples, of course. Haitian death squad leader and CIA informant Emmanuel “Toto” Constant was living in New York City while authorities back home wanted to try him for his role in [scores of deaths, rapes and torture](#).

We’d be having a more interesting-and honest-discussion about Snowden’s asylum if journalists could try to see this issue from the perspective of those outside the United States.

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