

Obama backs dictatorship in Honduras

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Honduras [removed](#) its bullying, autocratic President after he began behaving as a dictator, and its Congress replaced him with a less power-hungry member of his own political party. Now Obama is joining the Cuban dictator Castro and Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez in [demanding the Honduran ruler's return](#). This is simply outrageous.

As *Investors Business Daily* [notes](#), Honduras had [ample reason to remove its dangerous, out-of-control President](#), who had repeatedly violated his country's constitution and laws:

"Honduras' now ex-president, Mel Zelaya, last Thursday defied a Supreme Court ruling and tried to hold a "survey" to rewrite the constitution for his permanent re-election. It's the same blueprint for a rigged political system that's made former democracies like Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador into shells of free countries. Zelaya's operatives did their dirt all the way through. First they got signatures to launch the 'citizen's power' survey through threats — warning those who didn't sign that they'd be denied medical care and worse. Zelaya then had the ballots flown to Tegucigalpa on Venezuelan planes. After his move was declared illegal by the Supreme Court, he tried to do it anyway. As a result of his brazen disregard for the law, Zelaya found himself escorted from office by the military Sunday morning, and into exile. Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Cuba's Fidel Castro rushed to blame the U.S., calling it a 'yanqui coup.' President Obama on Monday called the action 'not legal,' and claimed that Zelaya is still the legitimate president. There was a coup all right, but it wasn't committed by the U.S. or the Honduran court. It was committed by Zelaya himself. He brazenly defied the law, and Hondurans overwhelmingly supported his removal (a pro-Zelaya rally Monday drew a mere 200 acolytes)."

John Fund of the *Wall Street Journal* call's Zelaya's ouster [a "triumph"](#) of the law:

"Many foreign observers are condemning the ouster of Honduran President Mel Zelaya, a supporter of Hugo Chavez, as a 'military coup.' But can it be a coup when the Honduran military acted on the orders of the nation's Supreme Court, the step was backed by the nation's attorney general, and the man replacing Mr. Zelaya and elected in emergency session by that nation's Congress is a member of the former president's own political party? Mr. Zelaya had sacked General Romeo Vasquez, head of the country's armed forces, after he refused to use his troops to provide logistical support for a referendum designed to let Mr. Zelaya escape the country's one-term limit on presidents. Both the referendum and the firing of the military chief have been declared illegal by the Honduran Supreme Court. Nonetheless, Mr. Zelaya intended yesterday to use ballots printed in Venezuela to conduct the vote anyway. All this will be familiar to members of Honduras' legislature, who vividly recall how Mr. Chavez in Venezuela adopted similar means to hijack his country's democracy and economy. Elected a decade ago, Mr. Chavez held a Constituent Assembly and changed the constitution to enhance his power and subvert the country's governing institutions. Mr. Zelaya made it clear that he wished to do the same in Honduras and that the referendum was the first step in installing a new constitution that would enhance his powers and allow him to run for re-election."

The press coverage of the Honduran crisis, which refers to the ex-president's removal as a "military coup," is amazingly [biased](#). As Tom Palmer, who has helped promote democracy abroad, notes, what really happened in Honduras is that "a President who seeks dictatorial powers in an illegal move" was "[removed by the Congress and by the Supreme Court](#)":

"[Imagine that](#) George Bush, Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan or some other American president had decided to overturn the Constitution so that he could stay in power beyond the constitutionally limited time. To do that, he orders a nationwide referendum that is not constitutionally authorized and blatantly illegal. The Federal Election Commission rules that it is illegal. The Supreme Court rules that it is illegal. The Congress votes to strip the president of his powers and, as members of Congress are not that good at overcoming the president's personally loyal and handpicked bodyguards, they send police and military to arrest the president. Now, which party is guilty of leading a coup?"

If Richard Nixon had been impeached and convicted for Watergate, and then refused to leave office, until being forced out by the military, would that have been a "military coup"? Of course not. But Obama and many in the press are taking a similarly extreme position in demanding the reinstatement of Honduras's would-be despot.

Even the Cato Institute, which espouses antiwar positions and a dovish, liberal foreign policy, [approved](#) of Honduras's removal of its oppressive ruler. Cato's Juan Carlos Hidalgo [notes](#) that "the removal from office of Zelaya on Sunday by the armed forces is the result of his continuous attempts to promote a referendum that would allow for his reelection, a move that had been declared

illegal by the Supreme Court and the Electoral Tribunal and condemned by the Honduran Congress and the attorney general. Unfortunately, the Honduran constitution does not provide an effective civilian mechanism for removing a president from office after repeated violations of the law, such as impeachment in the U.S. Constitution. Nonetheless, the armed forces acted under the order of the country's Supreme Court, and the presidency has been hastily bestowed on a civilian figure — the president of Congress — as specified by the constitution.”

While Obama is busy ignoring the Honduran President's violation of his citizens' constitutional rights, he is busy extending U.S. Constitutional rights to [foreign terrorists overseas](#). The Obama Administration is needlessly [making investigators give Miranda warnings](#) to captured terrorists and enemy combatants in Afghanistan. It is doing that [even though](#) Miranda rights do not apply to aliens captured in Afghanistan, a foreign country, and neither Afghan law, nor human-rights treaties like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, mandate such warnings.

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