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## Kissinger: Statesman or murderer? Ask Chileans

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On 10 September in Geneva Henry Kissinger was greeted by jeers of "murderer" from over 100 demonstrators, mainly Chilean, as well as Argentines. The man who made the 11 September 1973 military coup in Chile possible, Kissinger had come to Switzerland to deliver the keynote speech on "Power shifts and security" at a meeting of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

As National Security Adviser and Secretary of State for U.S. Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, the list of Kissinger's crimes is long. Although awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for negotiating the end of the Vietnam war, he had been a main architect of that war and a long-time advocate of using American troops and airpower to force Vietnam to give in to a political settlement acceptable to the U.S. To achieve that goal, he advocated spreading the war throughout Southeast Asia. He was behind the bombing that destroyed much of Cambodia (a campaign kept secret from an increasingly antiwar public in the U.S.) and the U.S. invasion of Cambodia in 1970 that sparked an unprecedented broadening of the antiwar movement.

The other crime with which his name will always be associated is the CIA-backed overthrow of the elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile. At that time, he told his colleagues, the emergence of possible challenge by the then Soviet Union to U.S. domination of Latin America was "too important" to let Chileans decide. "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its people."

Under Kissinger's direction, the U.S. tried to block Allende's assumption of the presidency, and then, when that failed, conducted three years of economic sabotage and political conspiracies until the Chilean army bombed and stormed the presidential palace and overthrew Allende. The military junta led by General Augusto Pinochet rounded up and killed thousands of Allende supporters and others. Pinochet's brutal, U.S.-supported regime lasted for almost two decades.

Kissinger supported a secret project called Operation Condor that coordinated efforts by U.S.-backed military juntas in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay to kill suspected opponents on the national, continental and international levels.

Last April, a leaked U.S. State Department document revealed that Kissinger personally blocked a letter from the U.S. State Department to the Pinochet government warning it that political assassinations would not be tolerated. Five days later the Pinochet regime organized the car-bomb murder of Orlando Letelier, formerly Allende's ambassador to the U.S. and a prominent anti-Pinochet figure, and Letelier's assistant Ronni Karpen Moffitt, in Washington, D.C.

These crimes are a matter of public record, having been disclosed through leaked documents and even a U.S. Congress investigation (see the documentation listed on the Wikipedia and National Security Archives Web sites). Many of Kissinger's acts were illegal according to the laws of the country whose government he helped lead and also international law. Although legal cases have been filed against him by families of his victims in several countries, one after another American government has put its full weight behind him. Protecting Kissinger from possible indictment as a war criminal is one reason why to this day, under President Barack Obama, the U.S. refuses to sign the convention that established the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Kissinger's appearance at this Geneva conference amounted to an endorsement by many of the world's most powerful political leaders, foreign policy experts and opinion makers. Instead of condemning his crimes and bringing him to justice, they seek his advice on how to further oppress the people of the world. Switzerland welcomed this man who is responsible for thousands of murders and the ruining of millions of lives. Switzerland's Chileans didn't.