

Public letter to U.S. and Canadian politicians and government officials  
(<http://us9.campaign-archive1.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=7185686a9c>)

**Threats against Karen Spring, a Canadian woman working for the Honduras Solidarity Network (comprised of U.S. and Canadian organizations) on human rights issues in Honduras**

- Friends: Please feel free to edit and make this letter your own, or forward it with your own message, to your own politicians and government officials.

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Public letter to Canadian politicians and government officials

**Threats against Karen Spring, a Canadian woman working for the Honduras Solidarity Network (comprised of U.S. and Canadian organizations) on human rights issues in Honduras**

To whom it may concern:

I write because I am extremely concerned about on-going government and private sector repression and society wide violence in Honduras, about on-going systemic threats against human rights and environmental defenders. The U.S. and Canadian governments must answer, in part, for this situation.

Recently, Karen Spring - a Canadian woman working for the Honduras Solidarity Network (comprised of U.S. and Canadian organizations) on human rights issues in Honduras - was profiled (including a photo of her) in a very threatening way on a Honduras website. Karen worked with Rights Action from 2009-2014, before joining the HSN. Rights Action is a member of the HSN.

- Read: <http://nosquedaclaro.com/modus-operandi-las-algunas-ongs-protegen-narcotraficantes-aguan/?hootPostID=aa04367c8a42f67ad621f61f1c7018fb>

The lies and distortions in this publication, with photos, represent a real and ominous threat. Threats like these are common fare in Honduras, and often have violent, even deadly consequences.

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Since the 2009 military coup, hundreds of Hondurans have been killed by government and private sector forces for political reasons. This situation received heightened attention earlier this year after the assassination of Berta Cáceres, the internationally known Indigenous rights and environmental defender.

In response to letters of concern sent at the time of the murder of Berta Cáceres, I received a form letter from the office of Stéphane Dion, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. (See below)

In that letter, M. Dion expresses Canadian government “concern” related to “the murder of Ms. Cáceres and the recent killing of another Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras member, Mr. Nelson García.”

- Are you aware that, nine months later, no justice has been done in either of these cases?
- Do you know that the family of Berta Cáceres and her organization, COPINH, have no trust in the Honduran legal system that is widely documented (even by the U.S. State Department) to be characterized by rampant corruption and impunity?
- Are you aware that the family of Berta Cáceres and COPINH are calling for the establishment of a completely independent international investigatory commission to get directly involved in the investigations?

M. Dion goes on to say, in his letter, that the government of Canada is deeply concerned about and involved in work to “specifically promote gender equality, human rights, labour rights and justice reform.”

- How does the Canadian government define success in this matter?
- What number of government and private sector political killings and human rights violations would cause the Canadian government to change course?

Does the Canadian government feel that maintaining full political relations and profitable economic dealings with the Honduran regime (including promoting and even expanding Canadian investments in mining, garment factory sweatshops, tourism and hydro-electric dam projects) is a valid way to “promote gender equality, human rights, labour rights and justice reform”?

Or, is Canada promoting our economic and political interests by doing business as usual with the repressive governments in power, turning a blind eye to widespread, systematic repression and human rights violations?

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Specifically, what steps will the Canadian government take to ensure the safety and well being of human rights and environmental defenders like Karen Spring, let alone Hondurans from

every corner of the country whose well-being and lives are at risk when they organize to promote and defend human rights and the environment?

There are a lot of questions here to answer. But Canada, second only to the U.S. government and military, is the government that most has worked to support and legitimize the regimes in power in Honduras since the 2009 military coup, while openly promoting the maintaining of expanding of Canadian economic opportunities in the country.

Grahame Russell  
Director, Rights Action  
Toronto, Canada  
[grahame@rightsaction.org](mailto:grahame@rightsaction.org)

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### Letter from The Honourable Stéphane Dion, P.C., M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs

From: [min.dfaitmaeci@international.gc.ca](mailto:min.dfaitmaeci@international.gc.ca) [<mailto:min.dfaitmaeci@international.gc.ca>]  
Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2016 7:06 AM

Thank you for your email of March 21, 2016, expressing your concerns regarding the murder of Ms. Berta Cáceres and the safety of Mr. Gustavo Castro Soto. The office of your Member of Parliament has also forwarded to me your correspondence on this same matter.

The Government of Canada is also concerned about the murder of Ms. Cáceres and the recent killing of another Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras member, Mr. Nelson García. We are aware that Mr. Castro Soto has now returned to Mexico.

The Ambassador of Canada to Honduras, Mr. Michael Gort, issued statements condemning the killings and expressing his deepest sympathies to the Honduran people, and to the families and friends of Ms. Cáceres and of Mr. García. I fully support his statements, which can be found at: [http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa\\_rica/highlights-faits/2016/2016-03-03a.aspx?lang=eng](http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa_rica/highlights-faits/2016/2016-03-03a.aspx?lang=eng) and [http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa\\_rica/highlights-faits/2016/2016-03-17\\_Statement-Declaration.aspx?lang=eng](http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa_rica/highlights-faits/2016/2016-03-17_Statement-Declaration.aspx?lang=eng).

Canada is very concerned about any events involving violence against human rights advocates, community leaders, minors and journalists in Honduras. Bilaterally and through the G-16 group of donors, Canada maintains an open dialogue with the Honduran government and raises its concerns about the security, rule of law and human rights situation in the country on a regular basis and at the highest levels.

On November 16, 2015, Ambassador Gort presented his letters of credence to the President of the Republic of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernández. He used that opportunity to make

reference to the fact that security, corruption and human rights are all linked and need to be addressed. He also welcomed the arrival of the Organization of American States' Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras.

We are working on several fronts, along with civil society and other international donors on the ground, to help the Honduran government reform its institutions and meet its security and human rights challenges. For example, in regards to strengthening the justice sector, Canadian officials have held meetings with the Office of the Attorney General in Honduras to express concerns regarding the high level of impunity in the country and to explore ways to increase the number of cases being prosecuted, including cases involving human rights defenders.

Canada also advocated with the Government of Honduras in support of the new Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists and Judiciary Representatives, which was approved by the Honduran Congress on April 20, 2015, and had raised concerns with authorities about delays in its approval. Canada also fully endorses the use of precautionary measures of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as a necessary tool to ensure that a petitioner's rights are not irreversibly harmed pending consideration of a petition. Canadian officials will continue to monitor the implementation of these measures by the Government of Honduras.

Following the 2009 coup d'état, Canada supported the implementation of recommendations of the Honduras Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Commission was established to identify ways to avoid further instability.

Canada recognizes the many serious challenges facing Honduras; it is a country of focus for Canada's development assistance. Canada addresses the root causes of insecurity, poverty and inequality through programming in economic growth, security, child protection, youth employment and democracy. Canadian development funding also supports a number of initiatives of Canadian partners and regional initiatives that specifically promote sustainable economic growth, gender equality, human rights, labour rights and justice reform.

Canada will continue to monitor events in Honduras and look for opportunities to contribute to improving human rights and the security situation in the country.

Sincerely,  
The Honourable Stéphane Dion, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

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**Rights Action Solidarity-educational trips to Guatemala and Honduras, 2017**

- Guatemala, Spring Break 2017, Saturday March 25 – Saturday April 1 ... “Why Central Americans Flee North, Decade After Decade. Understanding the Human Rights, Poverty, Repression, Corruption & Impunity Crisis in Guatemala”

- Honduras, May 2017, Saturday May 27 – Sunday June 4 ... “Honouring The Life, Work & Struggles Of Berta Caceres”
- More information: <http://us9.campaign-archive2.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=34125a20ef>

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### **Donations**

Since 1998, Rights Action has been funding community development, indigenous rights and environmental defense organizations in Honduras. Make cheque payable to "Rights Action" 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)

Donations of stock? Write to: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

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### **“This Will Not Stop ...” (Rights Action Newsletter, July-August 2016)**

<http://www.rightsaction.org/action-content/will-not-stop-rights-action-newsletter-july-august-2016>

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