

Rights Action
February 7, 2018

Update by Karen Spring

Day #20 – Free Edwin Espinal, political prisoner in Honduras

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/day-20-free-edwin-espinal-political-prisoner-in-honduras>

Below: Update by Karen Spring, Edwin's partner and Canadian human rights expert and activist living in Honduras

Please keep after your elected politicians and government officials.

This struggle is about freeing Edwin Espinal, ASAP, from unjust incarceration in a military run prison, and it is about the big picture, post-2009 coup endemic repression and criminality, corruption and impunity of the U.S. and Canadian backed regime in Honduras.

Carry it on.

Grahame Russell, Rights Action (U.S. and Canada)

Free Edwin Espinal & Other Political Prisoners in Honduras

Update: February 5, 2018, by Karen Spring

[See original Urgent Action & Demands here](#)



On January 22, Honduran judge Claudio Elvir, ordered pre-trial detention for two Honduran political prisoners, Edwin Espinal and Raul Eduardo Alvarez. Since then, Edwin and Raul are being held in a US-style maximum security prison, La Tolva in southern Honduras. Since then family members and various national and international human rights delegations have been unable to verify the conditions of their detention. Visits by family members are extremely restrictive and often have to wait several months to get permission to enter.

International Human Rights Observers Denied Entry Into Honduran Prison

On Wednesday, five international human rights defenders and companions (three from the US faith-based delegation) along with the Committee of the Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared of Honduras (COFADEH) attempted to enter the prison. The purpose of the visit to the prison was to enter and see Edwin and verify the conditions of his detention and his physical and emotional health.

After waiting over 5 hours, the five international defenders finally spoke to military coronel Najera who oversees the prison and who [refused to allow](#) the observers to enter. Coronel Najera made several arguments against the international defenders entering to see Edwin despite their insistence that they had come specifically to accompany COFADEH to talk to Edwin.

Citing several laws of Honduras, Coronel Najera ridiculed the international defenders and specifically, Karol Cardenas of COFADEH (Edwin's legal representation), for not explaining Honduran laws to the delegation. Drawing on the façade of institutionality and the so-called rule of law, the Coronel would not budge. The international human rights delegation spend the entire day trying to enter the prison and despite their efforts, were turned away. The US Embassy, who met with the members of the faith-based delegation, was notified.

Attorney Karol Cardenas from COFADEH was able to enter to see Edwin for one hour. She met briefly with Edwin but was not taken to his cell to inspect or verify the conditions. She was unable to take in food or reading material. According to what Edwin told Karol, he is being held in a very small cell basically in isolation. He is allowed outside for two hours a day and spends the rest of the time by himself. There is a small window inside his cell that looks out to a cement wall.

Honduran Institutions Not Responding to Urgent Requests by Human Rights Groups

Since Edwin's detention, representatives of COFADEH have requested a meeting with the Honduran institution that oversees the prison system - the National Penitentiary Institute (INP). The purpose of speaking to the INP is to ensure they are taking all necessary measures to guarantee Edwin's integrity and life while in prison (as per the state's obligations since Edwin was granted protective measures from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) as a result of state persecution against him). The other reasons for meeting with the INP are to request for Edwin to be transferred to another detention center; and authorize the entrance of human rights representatives and Edwin's family members into the prison.

In 10 days, the INP did not respond. COFADEH followed up with several phone calls. Finally, on the 10th day, the INP requested a meeting with COFADEH for Thursday (yesterday) at 2 pm in the INP offices in Tegucigalpa. Upon arrival at the office, COFADEH's General Coordinator Bertha Oliva and three other human rights defenders waited 1.5 hours to be received by the sub-Director who never showed up.

Canadian Government

We received this response from the Canadian Government:

“As promised, we have shared the information provided with our colleagues in Ottawa for their awareness and also to seek guidance on the points you raised. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to provide definitive responses at this time. We will let you know as soon as we can offer you more information.”

US Government

Despite receiving several letters of concern about Edwin and other political prisoners, there has been no official or unofficial response from the US Government about Edwin's case, political prisoners or the human rights situation in the country in the context of the post-electoral crisis.

More information

Karen Spring, HSN (Honduras Solidarity Network)

spring.kj@gmail.com; + (504) 9584-8572

<https://freedwinespinalibertad.blogspot.com/>

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Contact the following authorities

(Send freedwinespinal@gmail.com copies of your communications, and responses from government officials, etc.)

United States

- Contact directly your elected Senators, Congress members:
<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>
- Heide Fulton: US Chief of Mission, Honduras, BronkeHM@state.gov
- Jason Smith, Human Rights and Labor, SmithJA6@state.gov

Canada

- Directly contact your Member of Parliament:
<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>
- Ambassador James Hill, Embassy of Canada in Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua, James.Hill@international.gc.ca, tglpa@international.gc.ca
- Minister Chrystia Freeland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Global Affairs Canada, chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca, tel: 613-992-5234
- Canadian embassy for Honduras: Bertrand-Xavier Asselin, Bertrand-Xavier.Asselin@international.gc.ca; Isabelle Solon Helal, Isabelle.SolonHelal@international.gc.ca; Kyle Sundstrom, Kyle.Sundstrom@international.gc.ca
- Alex Nuttall, MP Barrie, Springwater, Oro-Medonte, Alex.Nuttall@parl.gc.ca
- Bruce Stanton, MP Simcoe North, bruce.stanton@parl.gc.ca
- Kellie Leitch, MP Simcoe-Grey, Kellie.Leitch@parl.gc.ca;

Demands

The U.S. and Canadian governments must pressure their allies in the government and military to:

1. immediately release Edwin (& other political prisoners) and drop all charges;
2. pending release, transfer Edwin to a normal detention facility in Tegucigalpa;
3. directly visit Edwin in jail and verify the conditions of Edwin's detention.

Tax-Deductible Donations (Canada & U.S.)

To support the work and struggle of our long-term partner groups in Honduras, responding to the human rights and repression crisis, including the political prisoners, make check 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

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