

Rights Action denounces Canadian double-standard / hypocrisy

Canadian government won't meet with political prisoners detained by Honduran regime; Roll out red carpet for Venezuelan opposition

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/canadian-double-standard-hypocrisy-venezuela-versus-honduras>



(Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met with Venezuelan Lilian Tintori, wife of jailed Leopoldo Lopez, in Ottawa on May 16, 2017 to discuss situation in Venezuela. © PMO, <http://www.rcinet.ca/en/2017/08/01/canada-condemns-arrests-of-venezuelan-opposition-leaders/>)

Without commenting on the merits of the Canadian government's assessment of Venezuela, Honduras today is the most repressive, corrupt and anti-democratic country in the Americas and the Canada has a significant political and business investment presence in the country.

Below:

- Radio Canada International article
- Rights Action letter to Canadian ambassador to Honduras

We strongly urge Canadian officials in Honduras to go to the La Tolva military run prison and meet with political prisoner Edwin Espinal to attest to his arbitrary detention conditions; and for Global Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland to meet with Karen Spring,

long-time partner of Edwin Espinal and widely respected human rights expert and activist on Honduran issues.

Canada condemns arrests of Venezuelan opposition leaders

By [Levon Sevunts](#) | english@rcinet.ca, 1 August, 2017

<http://www.rcinet.ca/en/2017/08/01/canada-condemns-arrests-of-venezuelan-opposition-leaders/>

Canada is “gravely alarmed” by the detention of two of Venezuela’s opposition leaders who were taken from their homes in the middle of the night by state security agents on Tuesday, said Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland.

Antonio Ledezma and Leopoldo Lopez were rearrested in what was seen as President Nicolas Maduro’s first move against his enemies following a controversial vote on Sunday that gave his Socialist government sweeping powers to reshape the country’s political landscape and rewrite its constitution.

Lopez, a 46-year-old hardliner, was being held under house arrest after he was convicted and sentenced to more than a decade in prison on charges that include inciting protesters to violence in 2014. He was released last month to serve the rest of his term under house arrest.

Ledezma, 62, a veteran politician and the former mayor of Caracas, was also indicted for plotting to overthrow Maduro’s government in 2015 and had been held under house arrest.

An escape plan thwarted?

Venezuela’s Supreme Court on Tuesday said the two men have been jailed because they violated the terms of their house arrest.

[In a Facebook post explaining its decision](#), the court said they were removed from their homes after “official intelligence sources” determined there was an “escape plan” involving both men.

The court added that Lopez isn’t permitted to engage in any sort of political activism and Ledezma is prohibited from speaking to media outlets.

‘Dictatorial intentions’

“Canada is gravely alarmed by the unlawful detention of Venezuelan opposition leaders Antonio Ledezma and Leopoldo López, the latter with whom I spoke less than two weeks ago,” Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland said in a statement Tuesday. “Their detention is further proof of the regime’s dictatorial intentions.”

Canada calls for their immediate release, as well as the release of all political prisoners, Freeland said. “The Maduro government’s campaign of repression is unacceptable. We

urge the Venezuelan government to respect the autonomy and authority of the national assembly and other independent institutions,” Freeland said, referring to the fact that the newly elected National Constituent Assembly has the power to dissolve the opposition-controlled Congress. “The national assembly is the only legitimately elected legislative body in Venezuela: it must be respected and its full powers must be restored.”

Canada will continue to work with like-minded partners in support of the Venezuelan people, said Adam Austen, Freeland’s press secretary.

Conservative MP Peter Kent, the Foreign Affairs critic for the Official Opposition, urged the Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to follow the U.S. lead and “issue meaningful sanctions on the Maduro regime.”

“The arbitrary re-arrest of Venezuela’s opposition leaders is further proof of President Maduro’s desperation and illegitimacy,” Kent said. “We wholeheartedly condemn the extreme socialist policies which have plunged Venezuela into chaos while inflicting mass starvation on its people.”

No Canadian sanctions yet

The U.S. government branded Maduro “a dictator” Monday and announced that it’s freezing his U.S. assets, following the controversial vote for the National Constituent Assembly.

Canada commended the U.S. action but was not ready to follow U.S. sanctions yet, said a Canadian official speaking on background. Freeland’s statement also made no mention of Canadian sanctions targeting Venezuelan officials.

NDP Foreign Affairs critic H el ene Laverdi ere said her party remains deeply concerned about the human cost of the ongoing political, economic, and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, which has hit ordinary people hard with shortages of food and medicine.

“On the heels of Sunday’s illegitimate constituent assembly vote, it’s more important than ever for Canada to work with our allies and through multilateral groups like the OAS to secure a lasting resolution to the crisis,” Laverdi ere said in an emailed statement.

“We would like to see the government be more active in providing humanitarian assistance, calling for the release of political prisoners, the holding of elections and respecting the National Assembly.”

Canada could also boost funding to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which was cut by the previous Conservative government, Laverdi ere said.

With files from The Associated Press, Reuters and CBC News

March 6, 2018

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Re: Political prisoner Edwin Espinal and “Mr. Espinal’s detention as an internal Honduran matter”

Dear Sir,

Greetings. I write in follow-up to a statement from the Canadian embassy in Honduras that the Honduran regime “undoubtedly view[s] Mr. Espinal’s detention as an internal Honduran matter”.

I have just completed a one week trip to Honduras, spending most of my time with Karen. Besides being a good friend, Karen worked with me at Rights Action from 2008-2014.

Of course the Honduran regime – when used generally, the term ‘government’ presumes the existence of real democracy and the operation of the rule of law – wants no person, no organization, no other government to investigate and denounce the situation of human rights violations and repression, corruption and impunity endemic in the country since the 2009 coup; let alone the killings, wounding, and arbitrary detention of pro-democracy/ anti-regime activists since the fraudulent elections of November 26, 2018; let alone one specific case in all this – that of Edwin Espinal.

But it is not a question of these being “internal Honduran matters” and therefore somehow ‘off limits’ to other governments and actors in the “international community”.

In 2009, Canada – along with the U.S. – effectively endorsed the June 28 military coup, and then openly worked with and legitimized the post-coup regime of Micheletti. This was active U.S. and Canadian government involvement in and support for “internal” Honduran political, legal and military matters.

In 2009, 2013 and again in 2017, Canada – along with the U.S. – publicly endorsed elections that were deeply anti-democratic, characterized by fraud and repression. This was active Canadian government involvement in and support for matters “internal” to Honduras.

Starting in 2011, Canada actively promoted a Free Trade Agreement with successive post-coup regimes, said agreement having direct impacts on legal, economic and human rights matters “internal” to Honduras.

Since the 2009 coup, Canada actively and directly support the reform of Honduras' post-coup mining law with obvious direct involvement in and impact on matters "internal" to Honduras.

Since the coup, the Canadian government has – in various ways – actively supported Canadian companies and investors in mining, maquiladora garment sweatshops and tourism, with a long-list of serious implications for matters "internal" to Honduras.

Etc.

With respect, I can only demand that the Canadian government not hide behind this "internal Honduran matters" smokescreen, and rather prioritize direct investigation and denouncing of human rights abuses and cases of repression now endemic in the country; to specifically demand permission to visit Edwin in the La Tolva and bear witness to the health, nutrition and living conditions that he is forced to live in; and, to directly advocate for his immediate release and the dropping of all trumped up charges against him and the dozens of political prisoners.

Yes, these are complicated issues. Thus is a very unjust, unequal global order.

In the measure that the Canadian government is actively promoting our own business, investor and political interests in Honduras, openly maintaining relations with and legitimizing successive Honduran regimes and powerful business sectors, then the Canadian government has a bare minimum concomitant responsibility to actively ensure full respect for human rights, the rule of law and democratic practices.

Thank-you.

Grahame Russell, Rights Action
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Copies to: Karen & Janet Spring, Canadian government officials

More Information

Karen Spring, Edwin Espinal's partner & Coordinator of Honduras Solidarity Network
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[Free EDWIN ESPINAL Libertad](#) / #FreeEdwinEspinal #LibertadEdwinEspinal /

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KEEP ON writing

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

Ambassador James Hill, Embassy of Canada in Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua,

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Minister Chrystia Freeland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Global Affairs Canada,

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Directly contact your Member of Parliament and ask them as well to write Chrystia

Freeland and James Hill: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>

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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Donations of stock? Write to: info@rightsaction.org

Other organizations

Honduras Solidarity Network: <http://www.hondurassolidarity.org>;

<https://www.facebook.com/HondurasSolidarityNetwork>; <https://twitter.com/hondurassol>

Witness for Peace: www.witnessforpeace.org; <https://twitter.com/WitnessforPeace>

School of Americas Watch: www.soaw.org; <https://twitter.com/SOAWatch>

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