

Rights Action
March 22, 2018

Public letter to Canadian Minister of Global Affairs Chrystia Freeland
“These are, in significant ways, Canadian problems to resolve” in Honduras

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/public-letter-to-canadian-minister-of-global-affairs-chrystia-freeland>

Minister Freeland,

As you know, we recently met with your office in Ottawa on March 16, 2018. As discussed, we have asked the Canadian government to visit Karen Spring's long-term partner and well-known human rights and pro-democracy activist, Edwin Espinal, in the military-run La Tolva prison and bear witness to the terrible conditions in the jail. Additionally, we emphasized that the Canadian government must directly call on the Honduran authorities to drop all charges against the political prisoners and release them immediately.



In our meeting, your office informed us that on Tuesday, March 20, a Canadian government official(s) will finally make this visit. Would you please confirm the details of this visit?

We reiterate that it is not enough to visit Edwin in the prison, and attest to the prison conditions. The Honduran regime is not willing to investigate the dozens of people who

were murdered since the November 2017 elections; and, as it has done since the 2009 coup, it is abusing the legal system in bringing the laundry list of trumped up criminal charges against Edwin, and at least 25 other recently detained political prisoners.

In the context of Honduras' corrupted and manipulated legal system, it is virtually impossible that these (unfairly charged) detainees can get anything close to a fair trial. It has already been made clear that they could spend over two years in jail before ever getting a hearing. This is not justice, but rather punishment for having stood up for democracy and justice in Honduras.

Furthermore, you informed us that Canadian Ambassador to Honduras, James Hill, will meet with the Honduran Attorney General, Oscar Chinchilla, on March 23. When can we anticipate an update about what is discussed at that meeting? It is vitally important that the Canadian government use this meeting, and all other means at its disposal – from Global Affairs Canada in Ottawa to the office of the embassy in Honduras, to call on Honduran authorities to drop all charges against the political prisoners and to release them immediately.

It is time for the Canadian government stand by their public statements and obligations to respect human rights and the rights and well-being in particular of human rights defenders in Canada and around the world. As such, will the Canadian government make a public statement in regard to the dropping of all charges against the political prisoners in Honduras and demanding their immediate release?

Finally, we remind you of the precarious situation in which Karen Spring now finds herself. Not only has she been the target of harassment, persecution, and defamation over the past few years while living and working as a human rights expert and activist in Honduras, but there are indications that the governing regime may now try to use the corrupted legal system to deny her re-entry to the country and/or detain her and pursue some fraudulent legal proceedings against her, or simply force her to leave the country.

As we said in the meeting, we will hold the Canadian government partially responsible to respond in protection and defense of Karen, if and when the Honduran regime decides to act in such a fashion, given how the administration of Juan Orlando Hernández has been empowered by the recognition from Canada and other international actors despite the extraordinary escalation of state-led repression, corruption and centralization of state powers since the 2009 coup and over the course of three successive elections since then.

We reiterate, we truly fear that the Honduran government will not resolve the situation of the more than 25 unjustly detained political prisoners anytime soon largely as a result of the full political, military and economic support that the governments of the U.S. and Canada, and others in the "international community", maintain with the Honduran regime. It is in this way that Canada has helped enable the now endemic human rights violations that the majority of Hondurans are suffering, at the same time that Canada

has sought to secure more favourable conditions for the economic interests in the mining, tourism and garment sectors.

We do not repeat these points lightly, but rather to clarify why we make such direct demands of the Canadian government, and particularly of Minister Freeland's office, the Canadian consulate in Honduras, and the Canadian Embassy in Tegucigalpa. These are, in significant ways, Canadian problems to resolve.

Thank you again for meeting with us. We look forward to hearing back from you.

Respectfully,

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United States

Contact directly your elected Senators, Congress members (<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>) and make your demands known to them.

Canada

Directly contact your Member of Parliament and make your demands known to them (<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>) and ask them to write directly to:

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, chrystia.freeland.c1d@parl.gc.ca, chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca

Demands - short term

The U.S. and Canadian governments must:

- Do an about face and rescind their "legitimization" of the Nov. 26, 2017 fraudulent elections
- Condemn the multiple acts of electoral fraud carried out by government of Juan Orlando Hernandez

- Condemn the repression (including the killing of an estimated over 40 people) against anti-electoral fraud protesters
- Suspend all economic, military and political relations with the government of Honduras, until the political / electoral crisis has been resolved

Demands - medium and longer term

There must be legislative inquiries in the U.S. and Canada into the causes of Honduras' now endemic repression and exploitation, corruption and impunity, with specific focus on the role played by the U.S. and Canadian governments:

- In support of the 2009 military coup
- In support and legitimization of fraudulent and violent elections in 2009, 2013 and 2017
- In support (in the case of Canada) of the promoting and signing of the potentially illegitimate "Free Trade Agreement" with the government of Honduras; In support of the expansion of corporate investments in Honduras (mining, garment "sweatshop" industry, bananas, hydro-electric dams, tourism, African palm, etc.), while turning a blind eye to and – in effect – benefitting from repression, fraud, corruption and impunity.

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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:

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