

Rights Action
June 20, 2018

Letter by Kevin Skerrett (CUPE) to the Canadian government

“Every person I speak to is appalled to learn of the blind eye that Canada has turned to [Honduras’] terrifying repression”

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/every-person-i-speak-to-is-appalled-to-learn-of-the-blind-eye>

Keep pressure on U.S. and Canadian governments: Edwin Espinal –and all political prisoners in Honduras- must be released



Letter by Kevin Skerrett (CUPE, Canadian Union of Public Employees) to the Canadian government.

From: Kevin Skerrett, 2018 3:59 PM

To: james.hill@international.gc.ca

Cc: catherine.mckenna@parl.gc.ca; Isabelle.SolonHelal@international.gc.ca; Kyle.Sundstrom@international.gc.ca; Bertrand-Xavier.Asselin@international.gc.ca; ioanna.sahasmartin@international.gc.ca; michael.roy@international.gc.ca; chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca; chrystia.freeland.c1d@parl.gc.ca; chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca

Subject: Urgent message re political prisoners in Honduras

Monday, June 4, 2018

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

Dear Ambassador Hill,

I write today to join my voice to those of hundreds of others demanding the immediate release of Edwin Espinal from a Honduran prison, either with conditions pending trial, or (more fairly) with the immediate dropping of all charges.

The Canadian government must openly advocate for his immediate release if it is to continue to claim to be a defender of human and democratic rights.

From the information that has come to my attention, it is clear:

- that Edwin Espinal has been a target of regime repression and harassment, on multiple occasions, going back to 2009
- that the Honduran legal system has been used against him on numerous occasions as a tool of repression
- that Edwin's jail living conditions, right now, are harmful and abusive, and a violation of multiple legal and human rights; and
- that his current punitive (and illegal) jailing is being used by the regime to send a message to other human rights and democracy defenders in the country.

I agree strongly with the concerns already communicated to you by the organization Rights Action. The Government of Canada's policies and actions in Honduras are contradictory: on the one hand, Canada legitimized the 2009 military coup / regime change, and then – against all evidence – rubber-stamped three sets of fraudulent, violent elections since the coup, while turning a blind eye to the increasing rates of human rights violations, corruption and repression committed by the regime since then; on the other hand, Canada funds human rights organizations that are, sometimes, trying to address the violations and suffering caused by the regime.

I work as a Senior Research Officer for the Canadian Union of Public Employees, based in Ottawa. I am discussing the detention of Edwin Espinal and other political prisoners in Honduras with my colleagues at the CUPE National Office and across the labour movement. Every single person that I speak to about this issue is appalled to learn of the blind eye that Canada has turned to this terrifying repression. The information about this case, and about Canada's role in Honduras, is growing by the week. It is urgent that these concerns and issues be immediately addressed.

I ask that you do everything in your power to secure Edwin's immediate release and to keep us informed of your actions. Further, I urge that the Government of Canada withdraw all support for and recognition of the fraudulent election processes carried out since 2009, and to initiate a thoroughgoing review of Canada's relationship with the current *de facto* government in Tegucigalpa.

Kevin Skerrett
Ottawa

Cc:

Minister Chrystia Freeland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Global Affairs Canada,
Catherine McKenna, Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, MP for Ottawa-
Centre

Update: “Simcoe County delegates return from Honduras, demand political prisoners’
release”

<http://aware-simcoe.ca/2018/05/simcoe-county-delegation-arrives-in-honduras-to-advocate-for-political-prisoners/>

Keep on writing

There is NO EXCUSE for the U.S. and Canada not to be advocating directly and relentlessly for the release of Edwin, and all political prisoners. Since the 2009 military coup, the U.S. and Canada’s unwavering support for the undemocratic, repressive and corrupt post-coup regimes continues to be part of the problem.

United States

Contact directly your elected Senators (<https://whoismyrepresentative.com/>) and 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 elections
- Condemn the multiple acts of electoral fraud carried out by government of Juan Orlando Hernandez
- Condemn the repression including the killing of over 40 pro-democracy protesters, and the illegal detentions of dozens of political prisoners, including Edwin Espinal

- Suspend all economic, military and political relations with the government of Honduras, until the political / electoral crisis has been resolved and impartial justice processes are proceeded against the intellectual and material authors of the electoral fraud and stolen elections, and the endemic repression

Demands - medium 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.

More information

Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor

<https://simcoecountyhondurasrightsmonitor.wordpress.com>

Tw: @can_hon_rights

FB: Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor

simcoecountyhondurasrights@gmail.com

Karen Spring (Edwin Espinal's partner & Coordinator of Honduras Solidarity Network)

spring.kj@gmail.com

freedwinespinallibertad.blogspot.com

Fb: Free EDWIN ESPINAL Libertad

Tw: @EdwinLibertad

Grahame Russell, Rights Action

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www.rightsaction.org

www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org

<https://twitter.com/RightsAction>

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
Credit-Card Donations: <http://rightsaction.org/donate/>
Donations of stock? Write to: info@rightsaction.org

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