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“Simcoe County group reminds Canadian leaders Saudi Arabia isn't the only place with political prisoners”

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/7-months-counting-edwin-espinal-imprisoned-in-honduras>



CTV interview with Janet Spring

Mother-in-law Edwin Espinal, political prisoner in Honduras

<https://barrie.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1470945>

“Simcoe County group reminds Canadian leaders Saudi Arabia isn't the only place with political prisoners”

by [Erika Engel](#)

<https://www.collingwoodtoday.ca/local-news/simcoe-county-group-reminds-canadian-leaders-saudi-arabia-isnt-the-only-place-with-political-prisoners-1017325>

An Elmvalle woman believes a strong stance from Canada could save the life of her son-in-law, imprisoned in Honduras for peaceful protest against civil and human rights abuses.



Janet Spring (second from right) and Karen Spring (second from left) at the United Nations building in Honduras. Contributed Photo

It was a tweet heard 'round the world. Canada took on Saudi Arabia and now Canada's leaders are boasting about standing up for human rights. But a family in Elmvale is calling their bluff.

Janet Spring and her daughter Karen, as well as several family and friends from Elmvale have been calling on those in power in Canada to demand the release of Karen's partner, Edwin Espinal, who was arrested and imprisoned in January following mass protests related to the Honduran election.

"If Canada makes a statement regarding the release of a political prisoner in Saudi Arabia, it must do so for Edwin Espinal in Honduras, who is a very loved member of the Spring family of Elmvale, Ontario," said Janet Spring.

Recently, a tweet by Foreign Policy CAN, "urged" Saudi Arabia authorities to "immediately release" civil society and women's rights activists, including Samar Badawi, and all other "peaceful human rights activists."

Chrystia Freeland, Canada's minister for foreign affairs, told national news reporters Canada "was always going to speak up for human rights."

But it's been six months since the Springs and others who have formed the Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor first appealed to Freeland and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to help their family member Edwin Espinal and the other political prisoners who were arrested while they peacefully protested against human and civil rights abuses in Honduras.

Prime Minister Trudeau told a group of reporters in Montreal on Aug. 8 Canada "will continue to stand up for Canadian Values and indeed for universal values and human rights at any occasion."

“Canadians have always expected our government to speak strongly, firmly, clearly and politely about the need to respect human rights at home and around the world,” said Trudeau.

“We consider it hypocrisy for Canada to ignore the desperate pleas coming from our family and from our rural community,” said Janet Spring from Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Spring is in Honduras for Espinal’s appeal, which was to be heard by a judge late last week or early this week.

“It’s time for Mr. Trudeau and Ms. Freeland to make clear that Canada will cease political and financial support for the corrupt Hernandez government, until prisoners are allowed basic human rights in the legal process and their treatment meets basic civilized norms,” said Spring.

Espinal and Raúl Eduardo Alvarez Ordoñez are both political prisoners incarcerated in a maximum security prison.

The conditions in the prison are dismal, with insect infestations, lack of sanitary toilet facilities and lack of fresh air being some of the factors of poor sanitation noted by a Canadian ambassador who visited Espinal at La Tolve prison in July.

Espinal and Alvarez have lost approximately 35 pounds each due to poor nutrition, according to the Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor.

Spring has made two visits to Honduras since Espinal was arrested, and spoken with embassy staff and ambassadors and been in the prison to see Espinal. She said a word from Canada’s leaders would be the difference for Espinal and Alvarez.

“I am confident Espinal would be released if Canada took a firm stand and demanded his freedom,” said Spring.

Recently, both Espinal and Alvarez wrote letters from their prison cells to those still fighting for their rights and others whose civil and human rights are being abused in Honduras.

“Comrades, Thank you for all of your solidarity. These actions are what give us the strength to survive in this hole, where we’re constantly harassed as a form of psychological and emotional torture,” writes Espinal. “But that’s not enough to silence us or make us desist from our struggle. Now more than ever we want to continue struggling by your side.”

Alvarez started his letter with greetings from prison and asked his comrades to stay strong in their struggle.

“Don't tire or falter,” he writes. “Our country needs brave people for it to progress. Soon we'll be in the city with you to achieve the long-awaited victory that was stolen from us by the corrupt and sell-out politicians that we've had. May God bless Honduras and our comrades who struggle, the defenders of our homeland. I have lost my freedom but not my will to keep going for my country, Honduras.”

For more on the Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor and ways to take action on behalf of Espinal and other Honduran political prisoners, [click here](#).

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- **Your donations at work:** Organizations, individuals & projects Rights Action has funded as of August 15, 2018: <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/your-donations-at-work>

To support the work of our 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/>

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Canada

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Ambassador James Hill, Embassy of Canada in Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua, James.Hill@international.gc.ca, tgipa@international.gc.ca

Minister Chrystia Freeland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Global Affairs Canada, 1-613-992-5234, 1-343-203-1851; chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca, chrystia.freeland.c1d@parl.gc.ca, chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca

Honduran Ambassador to Canada

Sofia Cerrato Rodriguez: ambassador@embassyhonduras.hn, 1-613-233-8900

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 business and military-police-security 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

Karen Spring, Edwin Espinal’s partner & coordinator of Honduras Solidarity Network,
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Campaign to free Edwin Espinal and all political prisoners in Honduras:

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[website](http://freedwinespinallibertad.blogspot.com/) - <http://freedwinespinallibertad.blogspot.com/>

email - freedwinespinal@gmail.com

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