

Rights Action  
February 18, 2011

Below:

### **Honduras: Canada Offer Regime Legitimacy Through Potential Bilateral Trade Deal**

By Anca Gurzu, Embassy Magazine, Canada

*"Following the March 2010 round [of "free" trade discussions], Canada concluded that, among the CA4 countries, Honduras offered the best opportunity to conclude a free trade agreement in the short-term," according to information on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade."*

### **CANADIAN GOVERNMENT TRYING TO SIGN "FREE" TRADE AGREEMENT WITH ILLEGITIMATE, POST-MILITARY COUP REGIME IN HONDURAS**

**BELOW:** An article from Embassy Magazine about how the repressive, undemocratic regime in Honduras offers the "best opportunity" for Canada to sign a bi-lateral "free" trade agreement

Over the past year, Rights Action has distributed numerous articles documenting concerted Canadian government efforts to 'legitimize' the post-military coup regime of Honduras, ignoring well-documented State repression, so as to further Canadian corporate & investor interests (mining, maquiladora sweat shops, tourism, etc) in Honduras.

Most governments of Latin America do not recognize the Honduran regime! - that came to power through the June 28, 2009 military coup that violently ousted the elected government of President Zelaya.

Honduras remains excluded from the Organization of American States! - due to the obviously illegal and brutal military coup.

### **WHAT TO DO?**

Rights Action believes Canadians should strongly oppose the position of the Canadian government vis a vis Honduras:

- Because it serves to ‘legitimize’ the repressive, undemocratic regime of Honduras, and weaken the aspirations of the Honduran people who are courageously struggling for the restoration of democracy and the rule of law and for the re-founding of their State and society,
  - Because it promotes the “free” trade model of economic development that prioritizes the desires of global corporations and investors at the expense of the real development needs of a majority of Hondurans, and
  - Because ‘legitimizing’ the repressive regime of Honduras should be seen as counter to long-term “Canadian” interests rooted in respect for global human and indigenous rights, environmental well-being, democracy and the rule of law.
- Please re-publish this information, citing author and source
  - To get on/ off RA’s listserv: [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)
  - What to do: see below

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, ENGLISH & ESPANOL:**

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 Annie Bird, Washington DC, 202-680-3002, [annie@rightsaction.org](mailto:annie@rightsaction.org)  
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**HONDURAS: CANADA OFFER REGIME LEGITIMACY THROUGH POTENTIAL BILATERAL TRADE DEAL**

<http://embassymag.ca/page/printpage/honduras-02-16-2011>

By Anca Gurzu, Embassy Magazine, Ottawa, February 16, 2011

Canadian and Honduran officials are meeting this week in the Central American capital of Tegucigalpa for a round of free trade talks-and, for the second time, officials from El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua will not be at the table.

For the past 10 years, Canada and the four Central American states had been involved in back-and-forth trade talks marred by slow progress and delays. But Canada and Honduras have now dropped the other countries from negotiations, focusing instead on bilateral talks.

While some of the other countries, notably Nicaragua, has lamented the decision, experts say Canada must work with willing partners - in this case, a post-coup Honduras that is trying to gain more political legitimacy in the hemisphere.

Official negotiations between Canada and the four Central American countries, known colloquially as the CA4, were launched in November 2001 and 10 rounds were held until they officially stalled in February 2004, largely due to disagreements over agricultural products, textiles and labour rights requirements. Another factor has been changes in government in the region.

The CA4, along with the Dominican Republic, inked a deal with the United States in 2005 before meeting with Canadian officials to discuss re-launching talks. Since then, there have been unofficial visits and meetings, and an 11th round was finally held in Ottawa in February 2009, followed by another in March 2010, but no agreement was reached so Canada and Honduras decided to continue alone.

[“BEST OPPORTUNITY”]

"Following the March 2010 round, Canada concluded that, among the CA4 countries, Honduras offered the best opportunity to conclude a free trade agreement in the short-term," according to information on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Canadian and Honduran officials met for their first official bilateral trade negotiating round in December in Ottawa, and the meeting in Tegucigalpa this week follows "an ambitious schedule," according to a press release. Honduran Ambassador Sofia Cerrato was out of the country and not available for an interview. However, the move was met with mixed reaction from officials from other CA4 ambassadors.

Canadian officials informed the other three Central American states in November 2010 about plans to pursue bilateral trade talks with Honduras, said a displeased Nicaraguan Ambassador Francisco Obadiah Campbell Hooker in an interview from Washington on Feb. 14. "I don't know whether the move came from Honduras or not, but what we do know is that we were negotiating as a bloc and to our surprise, Canada decided it would sign off, really, with Honduras," he said. "We feel this is

negative for the strengthening of the Central American integration process."

But Guatemalan Ambassador Georges de la Roche, the dean of the Central American ambassadors, described the bilateral talks between Canada and Honduras as "nothing unusual." "If a country within multilateral negotiations finds more cohesion or level ground with one country, it's not out of the normal for that country to go ahead with the other country on a bilateral basis," Mr. de la Roche said.

The other three countries are still holding meetings, both as a group and bilaterally, he added. Caitlin Workman, spokesperson at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, also wrote in an email that "Canada's negotiations with Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador are continuing." They have found common ground, while we are still looking for that common ground and we will find it," Mr. de la Roche said of Honduras and Canada.

#### LOOKING FOR LEGITIMACY

Carlo Dade, executive director of the Canadian Foundation of the Americas, said that the understanding in the region is that Nicaragua, which is a member of the ALBA bloc, is in fact the reason the talks have stalled. "One key issue with free trade agreements is that you can only dance with someone who wants to dance," Mr. Dade said. "If a country like Honduras steps up and says 'we are serious and we will put resources in this,' then it makes sense to prioritize this country."

Furthermore, in light of the recent political crisis in Honduras, the move is not surprising, Mr. Dade said. "It would be part of an attempt of Honduras to get back on the political map after the situation there," he said. Honduras became the focal point of the ideological battle that has erupted in the hemisphere over the last decade when leftist president Manuel Zelaya, who was threatening to run for an unconstitutional third term, was removed in coup d'état in 2009.

[Rights Action correction: Shame on Anca Gurzu who here repeats, unquestioningly, the often-repeated lie, used to 'legitimize' the brutal military coup, that President Zelaya was trying to run again for the presidency. This was false in 2009, and remains so

today. Furthermore, president Zeyala was in his first term in office, which is all the Honduran constitution permits.]

After months of international efforts to bring stability back to the Central American country, the political crisis drew to a close after elections that led to the inauguration of Porfirio Lobo as the new Honduran president in January, bringing a centre-right conservative administration to power. However, several leftist countries have refused to recognize Mr. Lobo's government.

[Rights Action clarification: Anca Gurzu uses and manipulates the word "leftist" in his article to cast dispersion on certain governments. The vast majority of Latin American governments do not recognize the government of Honduras. Honduras has not been re-admitted to the Organization of American States. Moreover, the United Nations, the Organization of American States and most governments of Latin America do not accept the legitimacy of the November 2009 "elections".]

The search for greater political legitimacy is probably Honduras's key driving factor in pursuing bilateral trade talks with Canada, said Philip Oxhorn, director of the Institute for the Study of International Development at McGill University. "Since the coup d'état and the controversial election, Honduras has been isolated by most of Latin America, so they are looking for allies," he said. "They would gain the most from reaching an agreement with Canada, it would grant them more legitimacy from Latin American."

At the same time, Canada is signalling the legitimacy of the Honduran government by holding these talks, said Mr. Oxhorn, who researches Latin American comparative politics. "It's clear that Canada would know that this is how it would be perceived and would understand that's one of the things Honduras would want and would inevitably get," he said. "If Canada wants any kind of free trade agreement with [the CA4], this is the easiest kind for them to negotiate." Like Mr. Dade, Mr. Oxhorn said the most likely partner to "have dragged its feet" in the CA4 trade talks is Nicaragua.

But Ambassador Campbell said Nicaragua is interested in obtaining greater access to the Canadian market, especially through exports of

textiles and beef products, and also pointed out Canadian companies are already investing in Nicaragua, especially in the fields of mining and energy.

According to Ms. Workman, bilateral trade with Honduras more than doubled in the last decade. In 2010, Honduras was the second largest recipient of Canadian exports among the Central American Four countries. Exports totalled \$40.7 million in 2010.

Canada appears to have the strongest trade ties with Guatemala: exports totalled \$90.8 million last year, down from \$112 million in 2009, while exports to El Salvador and Nicaragua stood at \$36.2 million and \$40 million respectively in 2010.

Key Canadian interests in Central America include telecommunications, goods and services, environmental equipment and services, value-added processed foods, automotive goods, and construction equipment, and services, according to the government.

[Rights Action observation: Interestingly Embassy Magazine does not mention extensive Canadian mining interests throughout Central America.]

"A free trade agreement with Honduras will open a new market for Canadian exporters and level the playing field for Canadian businesses against competitors who already have or are seeking preferential access to the Honduran market," Ms. Workman wrote in an email.

Mr. Campbell said he has not heard about any of the other CA4 countries wanting to cancel negotiations. "But I would imagine that everyone is looking at their options and analyzing the implications and consequences taken with respect to Honduras," he said.

[By Anca Gurzu, [agurzu@embassymag.ca](mailto:agurzu@embassymag.ca),  
<http://embassymag.ca/page/printpage/honduras-02-16-2011>]

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**CANADIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS:**

Please send letters of concern to your own member of parliament, and to other government officials:

Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
509-S Centre Block, House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6  
[cannol@parl.gc.ca](mailto:cannol@parl.gc.ca)

Dean Allison  
163 Confederation Building, House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6  
Tel: 613-995-2772  
[Allison.D@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Allison.D@parl.gc.ca)

Carmen DePape (Clerk of the Committee) – Ask Ms. DePape to distribute your letter to all Committee Members:  
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen St., House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6  
[FAAE@parl.gc.ca](mailto:FAAE@parl.gc.ca)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE MINISTER  
Peter Van Loan  
Room 157, East Block  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6  
Tel: 613-996-7752  
[vanloan.p@parl.gc.ca](mailto:vanloan.p@parl.gc.ca)

CANADIAN EMBASSY FOR HONDURAS  
Canadian Consulate in Honduras  
PO Box 3552, Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
Tel: (504) 2232-4551  
[tgipa@international.gc.ca](mailto:tgipa@international.gc.ca)

Canadian Embassy in Costa Rica (For Business and Commercial Affairs & where Honduran Ambassador is based)  
Attn: Cameron MacKay (Canadian Ambassador)  
PO Box: 351-1007, Centro Colón, San José, Costa Rica  
Tel: (506) 2242-4400  
[sjcra@international.gc.ca](mailto:sjcra@international.gc.ca)

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## **TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS**

To make a tax-deductible donation for community based organizations in Honduras' pro-democracy movement working to eradicate poverty and exploitation and to re-found their nation-state, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

CANADA: 552 - 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: <http://rightsaction.org/contributions.htm>; or go to: [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org). (Credit card donations can be done anonymously)

FOR DONATION OF STOCK: contact [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org). (Stock donations can be done anonymously – have your stockbroker contact [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org))

## **Rights Action's EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES & MATERIALS**

### **EDUCATIONAL DELEGATIONS**

TO HONDURAS (MARCH 19-27): "HONDURAN PEOPLE'S PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT, in resistance to the post-military coup regime". CONTACT: Karen Spring ([spring.kj@gmail.com](mailto:spring.kj@gmail.com))

TO GUATEMALA (APRIL 17-23): "INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & HUMAN RIGHTS \* versus \* MINING COMPANIES & IMPUNITY". CONTACT: Grahame Russell ([info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org), 860-352-2448)

TO HONDURAS (MAY 14-22): "HONDURAN PEOPLE'S PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT, in resistance to the post-military coup regime". CONTACT: Karen Spring ([spring.kj@gmail.com](mailto:spring.kj@gmail.com))

TO HONDURAS (JUNE 28 - JULY 5): The Alliance for Global Justice is organizing a delegation to Honduras. We'll be hosted by the FNRP and led on the ground by Rights Action's Karen Spring. CONTACT: [AFGJ@AFGJ.org](mailto:AFGJ@AFGJ.org), 202-544-9355 x1

## **SPEAKING TOURS**



IN USA (MARCH-APRIL 2011): "FROM CONQUEST TO COUP - INDIGENOUS & AFRODESCENDENT PEOPLES IN HONDURAS: 519 Years in Resistance to the Conquest, 580 Days (as of January 21, 2011) in Resistance to the Military Coup". Rights Action announces two speaking tours of representatives from Honduran Indigenous and Afro-descendent (Garifuna) organizations - Ofraneh & Copinh. CONTACT: Annie Bird ([annie@rightsaction.org](mailto:annie@rightsaction.org), 202-783-1123)

## **SPEAKERS**

On an on-going basis, Annie Bird & Grahame Russell (Rights Action co-directors since 1995) are available for speaking engagements in Canada and USA, showing slides and documentaries, and speaking about:

- \* the pro-democracy, anti-military coup movement in Honduras, and its implications for the Americas, south, central and north
- \* indigenous and community resistance to environmental and health harms and other human rights violations caused by gold and nickel mining (Goldcorp Inc. in Guatemala & Honduras; HudBay Minerals in Guatemala; Pacific Rim in El Salvador), hydro-electric dams (the infamous Chixoy dam in Guatemala; the pending Xalala dam in Guatemala) and other mega-"development" businesses
- \* on-going struggles in Guatemala to achieve justice for the genocide, massacres and disappearances of the 1970s, 80s and 90s
- \* widespread community-based work and struggle for "another world is possible and necessary"

CONTACT: Grahame Russell ([info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org), 860-352-2448); Annie Bird ([annie@rightsaction.org](mailto:annie@rightsaction.org), 202-783-1123)

## **STUFF FOR SALE**

FILM: "All That Glitters Is Not Gold"

"All That Glitters Isn't Gold" (60 minutes), by Steven Schnoor, documents the stories and resistance of community members residing near and harmed by Goldcorp's "San Martin" open-pit, cyanide-leaching gold mine in Honduras' Siria Valley. CONTACT: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

FILM: "THE BUSINESS OF GOLD in Guatemala: Tale of a Conflict Foretold"

"The Business of Gold in Guatemala" (50 minutes), by Gregory Lassalle, documents the struggle and resistance of the Mayan-Mam people of San Miguel Ixtahuacan against the Canadian company Goldcorp Inc, and the harms and violations caused by its "Marlin" open-pit, cyanide-leaching mine. CONTACT: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

BOOKS: "CODE Z59.5: There Is Only One People Here" & "The Never Ending"

"Code Z59.5" (2010) and "The Never Ending" (1993), by Grahame Russell, are self-published books of diary excerpts (comments, facts, quotes, stories, etc.) from the 1990s and 2000s, related to the author's work in Central America, Mexico and North America, in defense of human rights, in promotion of a caring and just global economic development model. CONTACT: Grahame Russell ([info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org), 860-352-2448)

BOOKS: "RECOVERING OUR HISTORICAL MEMORY" & "OUR CULTURE IS OUR RESISTANCE"

"Recovering Our Historical Memory", a photography-based book by Jonathan Moller, is about Guatemalan populations displaced by the conflict. It is a visual testimony to Guatemalans working for truth, memory & justice, and for reconciliation for the victims of the violence. "Our Culture is Our Resistance", by Jonathan Moller - It is said that the bones of the dead tell no lies. In Guatemala, every clandestine cemetery that is dug up, every bone that is recovered from Mother Earth speaks of the people who were massacred; the bones speak of crimes against humanity, of genocide committed by the Army against the indigenous population. The photographs speak of this and they also show the face of life, hope, redemption, and demands for change. CONTACT: Katy Troyer ([katytroyer@gmail.com](mailto:katytroyer@gmail.com)) or Jonathan Moller ([jonas@igc.org](mailto:jonas@igc.org))

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