

Rights Action
March 18, 2011

Below:

One More Day Of Repression In Honduras / Edwin Espinal At Risk By Karen Spring

In Honduras, yesterday, peaceful marches by the pro-democracy, anti-coup regime Resistance Movement in support of protesting teachers were violently repressed in many parts of Honduras. Many people were detained, beaten and tear-gassed.

Human rights defenders have been working arduously for the release of the detained.

COFADEH (Committee of Family Members of the Disappeared in Honduras) is extremely concerned that militarized "Cobra" anti-riot squads are being deployed against protesters and fear on-going, extreme violence and repression.

EDWIN ESPINAL AT RISK

COFADEH reports that all detained protesters (from yesterday) have been released with the exception of Edwin Robelo Espinal. COFADEH is concerned about Edwin's safety. Since 2009, Edwin has been regularly attacked, harassed, detained & tortured. COFADEH is concerned for his physical safety, his life and risk of further torture. Edwin has protective measures issued by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission which were recently renewed.

PLEASE CALL the offices & numbers set out below, demanding that Edwin be released and expressing concern for his safety.

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS: Karen Spring (spring.kj@gmail.com), Annie Bird (annie@rightsaction.org), Grahame Russell (info@rightsaction.org), and Jenny Atlee, Friendship Office of the Americas, jennya@friendshipamericas.org

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CONSTANT REPRESSION AGAINST EDWIN ESPINAL

Yesterday, Edwin Espinal was present in pro-democracy, anti-coup regime protests on his motorcycle (as usual), when the protesters were attacked by police with extreme violence and massive use of tear gas. An eight year old girl and her grandmother were in the protests but became separated during the attack. A journalist asked Edwin to take the lost girl to safety, out of the tear-gas, a request which resonated with Edwin who in late 2009 watched his wife die from respiratory collapse as a result of excessive use of tear gas by police during a protest.

Although the girl's grandmother expressed gratitude for Edwin's assistance to the girl, the District Attorney's office apparently has the intention of charging him with kidnapping! The girl's family is present in the preventative prison and as yet the authorities have not returned their child. The intention to charge Edwin with a criminal defense appears to be an attempt to criminalize the protests.

Since the June 28, 2009, military coup, and overthrow of the democratic government of Honduras, Edwin has been a visible part of the pro-democracy resistance movement, performing unarmed security functions in public protests, in particular riding with the unarmed motorcycle security brigade, and in seeking justice for those killed and harmed by police and soldiers in the protests.

On September 22, 2009, in a small protest in his Tegucigalpa neighborhood of Flor del Campo, he witnessed police shoot and kill an unarmed elderly protester, Francisco Alvarado.

On September 26, 2009, Edwin witnessed the killing of his own wife by police with the excessive application of tear gas during a protest.

Though Edwin filed official complaints about these crimes, neither killings have been investigated.

Edwin has since been subject to constant harassment by police from the Flor del Campo post, constantly blocking the entrance to his garage with police cars, verbal harassment, etc.

On June 30, 2010, Edwin was talking to friends, standing beside his car a few blocks from his home. Police arrested him for “drunk driving” [he drinks in extreme moderation and was not driving], and held him in the Flor del Campo post until a nationally recognized human rights activist, alerted by neighbors, came to get him.

While illegally detained, police beat him, applied electric shocks, repeatedly applied pepper gas to his face, and held a gun to his ear and fired it, apparently without bullets. Days later one of the police who detained him held a gun to his chest and cocked it.

On July 22, 2010, the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States ordered Honduras to undertake precautionary measures to ensure Edwin's safety. In August, an agreement was signed by the IACHR and the post-coup regime making the same police post responsible for his torture also responsible for his protection.

Days after signing this “protection” agreement, police detained Edwin's nephew (a minor) without cause. At the time his nephew was driving Edwin's car. At the time of the detention police asked the young man about his uncle. Edwin's nephew has been subject to constant verbal harassment by the police in their neighborhood, who always ask about his uncle.

In December 2010, Edwin was arrested and held overnight in Tegucigalpa on the pretext that he was not carrying identification.

PEOPLE CLOSE TO EDWIN HAVE BEEN KILLED OR TORTURED

The “Globo” television journalists, kidnapped and tortured in January 2010, were friends of Edwin's, as was José Ricardo Domínguez Hernández who was an eyewitness to the detention of the journalists by police.

On January 15, 2011 Jose Ricardo Dominguez's tortured body was found in Tegucigalpa.

Vanessa Zapeda was also closely associated with Edwin in protests. On February 3, 2010 Venessa was detained by masked men outside a union hall, her body was later found.

In April 2010, another friend was killed, while leaving a protest driving Edwin's motorcycle.

CAR "ACCIDENTS"

A rash of killings of people identified with the pro-democracy, anti-coup regime movement by automobiles, and some incidents of clearly intentional attack with automobiles lead to the suspicion that this and similar killings may have been intentional.

This constant repression against Edwin and people close to him is motive for grave concern about his safety.

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CALLS NEEDED – PROTECTION AND RELEASE OF EDWIN ESPINAL

HONDURAS:

District Attorney Manuel Ramirez, 011 504 2237-6830

Police Commissioner Chamorro, 011 504 9990-0149

Police in Colonia Dolores, Metro 1, 011 504 2237-6830

Jorge Alberto Rivera Avilés, Presidente de la Corte Suprema de Justicia, 011 504 2269-3000, & 2269-3069, cedij@poderjudicial.gob.hn

Luis Alberto Rubí, Fiscal General de la República, Fax 011 504 2221-5667, Tel 011 504 2221-5670 & 2221-3099, lrubi@mp.hn, suazog@mp.hn

Expresar su preocupacion para la integredad fisica de Edwin Robelo Espinal quien goza de medidas cuatelarias de la Comission Inter-Americana de Derechos Humanos. Exijir su liberacion ahora mismo.

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. (Credit card donations can be done anonymously)

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

WWW.RIGHTSACTION.ORG

Rights Action is a not-for-profit organization, with tax charitable status in Canada and the USA. We directly fund and work with community-based development, environmental, disaster relief and human rights projects and organizations fighting to eliminate poverty and impunity and the underlying causes of poverty and impunity in Guatemala and Honduras, as well as in Chiapas [Mexico], El Salvador and Haiti. We educate about and are involved work aimed at critically understanding unjust north-south relations and global development, environmental and human rights issues and the challenges of poverty eradication.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, ENGLISH & ESPANOL

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