

Rights Action
August 19, 2011

BELOW:

“Canada Is Becoming More Gringo Than The Gringos”

By Karen Spring, August 19, 2011



(Maria Louisa, Coordinator of Honduran Women's Collective (CODEMUH) that demands respect for the rights of Gildan sweatshop workers, being interviewed through the metal gate in front of the ExpoCentre. Photos, Karen Spring, August 2011)

CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER HARPER GREETED IN HONDURAS BY RESISTANCE TO THE CANADIAN-HONDURAN “FREE TRADE” AGREEMENT

At 9 am, Friday August 12th, member of the Honduran Women's Collective (CODEMUH), Council of Indigenous and Popular Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), Bishop Monseñor Luis Santos, Rights Action & female workers from Gildan's sweatshops, met in the central plaza in San Pedro Sula to protest the arrival of Prime Minister Stephen Harper to sign the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Honduran regime leader Pepe Lobo.

Background:

http://rightsaction.org/articles/prime_minister_to_Honduras_080811.html

After speeches & being joined by a student march of the National Front of Popular Resistance, we moved to the Expocentre (large event centre in San Pedro Sula) where PM Harper was inside with President Lobo signing the FTA.

We originally hope to enter the meeting to deliver PM Harper a letter protesting the signing of the agreement & highlighting many of the problems caused by Canadian companies and investors currently operating in Honduras including:

- Health, labour and human rights problems of Gildan workers,
- health and environmental harms and other human rights violations in Goldcorp Inc mining-affected communities in Siria Valley,
- the disappearance & ethnocide of Garifuna communities caused in part by Canadian tourist projects and investors,
- the lack of respect for Afro-indigenous & indigenous rights by Canadian companies, etc.



(Mining Companies Out)



(Gildan workers, and their demands)

We were blocked out by a big metal gate guarded by private security guards, police & military. When asked if we could send a letter inside to PM Harper, we were denied once again.

NO DIALOGUE

Phone calls were made as we were outside the meeting location, to the Canadian Consulate in Tegucigalpa & to the Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Americans, Peter Kent (who participated in negotiations in Honduras since the coup). I left a message on the Canadian Consulate's citizen emergency line and never got a call back. Peter Kent's office offered me the Minister of Environment's phone number & the email & fax number for the Prime Minister's Office. No response from either.

Riot police, police trucks with troops & a water tank (spout pointed right at us) drove by as an effort to intimidate us. Their strategy did not work.

Overall, it was a great protest with lots of energy & enthusiasm. We think we managed to make a little bit of noise in Honduras and Canada so that PM Harper, the Canadian Government & Canadian people knew that we were there, excluded from the meeting & unable to participate in a meeting and a policy that had and would affect all the Hondurans outside in the protest and more.

WHAT TO DO:

Write a letter to your MP and/or send a copy of this information, demanding that Canada NOT pursue so-called “free” trade deals, at the expense of human rights and justice, the environment and democracy.

CONTACT YOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT:

<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>

WHAT TO DO – DONATE FUNDS:

To support community organizations in Honduras that are resisting the harms and violations caused by global companies and investors, that are working for human rights and justice, for community-controlled development and real democracy, make tax-deductible 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>

DONATIONS OF STOCK: info@rightsaction.org

MORE INFORMATION:

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