

Janet Spring letter to Chrystia Freeland, Canadian minister of global affairs

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/canadian-government-dismisses-concerns-about-political-prisoners-and-human-rights-violations-in-honduras>

"I express my strong opposition to the manner in which the GAC (Global Affairs Canada) representative, Ioanna Sahas Martin, led this meeting, particularly how her approach made us feel that she dismisses our severe family situation involving Edwin Espinal. [Ms. Martin] seemed indifferent to the human rights violations that we raised regarding the political prisoners, specifically my family member [Edwin Espinal], and the fact that human rights workers and the Honduran people are not afforded the right to due legal process, the rule of law and the right of free speech."

(Letter from Dr. Janet Spring to Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Global Affairs)



(Dr. Janet Spring and Karen Spring, partner of Edwin Espinal)

Edwin Espinal, Day #89 in Honduran military jail as political prisoner

Canadian economic and political "interests" continue to trump democracy and human rights in Honduras. Until the media properly exposes these abuses of power and the public brings enough pressure to bear, Canada will continue to prioritize mining, tourism and garment "sweatshop" economic interests with the Honduran regime, turning a blind eye to repression and electoral fraud, corruption and impunity.

- What to do – see below

Letter to Minister Chrystia Freeland

From: Janet Spring <jspring2@lakeheadu.ca>

Date: Fri, Apr 13, 2018

Subject: Feedback from Meeting with GAC (Global Affairs Canada)

To: Minister Chrystia Freeland, chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca; chrystia.freeland.c1d@parl.gc.ca; chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca; Cc: James.Hill@international.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

To Minister Freeland,

On Tuesday April 10, 2018, Karen Spring, Jen Moore, and myself, Janet Spring, attended a meeting with representatives from Global Affairs Canada (GAC). We travelled to Ottawa from Elmvale Ontario to specifically address the illegal incarceration of our family member Edwin Espinal and other political prisoners who are detained in horrific conditions in maximum-security prisons in Honduras. They were arrested because of speaking and peacefully demonstrating their opposition to the repressive situation surrounding the fraudulent election process of the November 2017 election of Juan Orlando Hernandez.

In attendance and leading the meeting was Ioanna Sahas Martin, Director of Development Programming; also attending was Chad Fleck, Deputy Director, and on video-conference from Tegucigalpa and San Jose respectively, representatives of the Canadian Embassy to Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua – Isabelle Solon-Helal, Kyle Sundstrom, and Bertrand-Xavier Asselin.

We assumed we were meeting face to face with representatives from your office as well, who were directly involved in this case and remotely with representatives from the offices of the Canadian Embassy to Honduras. Instead we were met by representatives from Development Programming for Central America, the Caribbean, and Haiti.

I am writing to you to express my strong opposition to the manner in which the GAC representative, Ioanna Sahas Martin, led this meeting, particularly how her approach made us feel that she dismisses our severe family situation involving Edwin Espinal. This meeting was a very unsatisfactory one, for she seemed indifferent to the human rights violations that we raised regarding the political prisoners, specifically my family member, and the fact that human rights workers and the Honduran people are not afforded the right to due legal process, the rule of law and the right of free speech.

Ms. Martin tended to dismiss the work that our very supportive community of Elmvale has accomplished in raising awareness of these human rights abuses and seemed condescending in her tone as to the role that rural agricultural communities play in addressing issues that directly involve the Canadian government.

As the Government of Canada specifically supplies annual fiscal aid to Honduras, our rural community is in opposition to Canadian aid going to Honduras as long as the Honduran government violates human rights.

Despite Ms. Martin's defense of how Canadian fiscal aid is utilized by the Honduran government it is NOT used in promoting the rights of the Honduran people to express their democratic views and is NOT ensuring that human rights are being respected. Canada is turning a blind eye to the worsening human rights conditions including widespread impunity, the lack of rule of law, and most recently the murder of over 35 Hondurans in the post electoral context.

Our rural community of Elmvale supports the work of the Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor, as documented by their letters to MPs and Canadian and Honduran authorities and is determined to continue to pressure the Canadian government to publicly demand of the Honduran regime of Juan Orlando Hernandez to release all political prisoners and drop all charges.

We are also demanding that the Canadian government, under your leadership through Foreign Affairs Canada, suspend all aid to Honduras until the human rights of the people are upheld. Our community continues this advocacy and will not stop until we are successful.

Dr. Janet Spring
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Cc: Karen Spring, spring.kj@gmail.com; Jen Moore, jen@miningwatch.ca

What to do?

Emergency Fact-Finding Delegation to Honduras: Political prisoners, human rights and the role of the Canadian government

- Tuesday, May 22 (arrival day) to Sunday, May 27 (departure day)
- If you are interested in joining this trip organized by the Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor, and lead by Karen Spring, Dr. Janet Spring and Grahame Russell (Rights Action), contact Karen: spring.kj@gmail.com

Keep on writing and calling

Directly contact, again and again, the Minister of Global Affairs, Canadian embassy in Honduras, and your MP (<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>), making your concerns known, asking them also to write directly to:

Ambassador James Hill, Embassy of Canada in Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, James.Hill@international.gc.ca, tglpa@international.gc.ca
Minister Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs, chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca,
chrystia.freeland.c1d@parl.gc.ca, chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca

Demands - short term

The Canadian government must:

- Condemn endemic repression and human rights violations in Honduras, since the stolen November 26, 2017 elections, including the State killing of 40 people, the jailing of dozens of political prisoners, etc;
- Suspend economic, political and “security” relations with the Honduran regime until the political/electoral crisis is resolved, until systemic State repression and corruption have ended, until the political prisoners are released and all trumped-up charges dropped, and until proper criminal investigations have been initiated into all the State killings and violations since the November 26, 2017 “elections”.

Demands - medium term

Canada desperately needs parliamentary and senate inquiries into the causes of Honduras’ now endemic repression and exploitation, corruption and impunity, with a specific focus on the role played by the Canadian government:

- in support of the 2009 military coup
- in legitimization of fraudulent and violent elections in 2009, 2013 and 2017
- in support of the (potentially illegally signed) “Free Trade Agreement” with the military-backed regime in power in Honduras
- in support of the expansion of Canadian corporate investments in Honduras (mining, garment “sweatshop” industry, bananas, hydro-electric dams, tourism, African palm, etc.),
- all 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
spring.kj@gmail.com / <https://freedwinespinallibertad.blogspot.com> / [Free EDWIN ESPINAL Libertad](#) / #FreeEdwinEspinal #LibertadEdwinEspinal /

Grahame Russell, Rights Action

info@rightsaction.org / 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

Rights Action fund-raising newsletter, April 2018, “Central American Punching Bag” (<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/central-american-punching-bag>)

- Matching donor: Anonymous donors will match donations made to Rights Action (U.S. and Canada), up to a total of \$30,000, made by May 15, 2018.

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