

Springwater Township calls on Minister Chrystia Freeland to intervene in Honduras

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/we-are-not-dealing-with-a-normal-bunch-down-there>

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Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor, April 22, 2018

<https://simcoecountyhondurasrightsmonitor.wordpress.com/2018/01/28/honduras-human-rights-political-prisoners/>



Janet Spring, Karen Spring (Honduras Solidarity Network), & Springwater Deputy Mayor, Don Allen

ELMVALE – April 22 2018 – Springwater Township Council has unanimously voted to call on the federal government to uphold human rights and the rule of law in Honduras and to urgently intervene to help free Edwin Espinal and other political prisoners in that country.

Deputy Mayor Don Allen put forward a motion at the request of the Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor, started by the Springs, a well-known local farm family.

“My family and the families of all political prisoners are deeply grateful for the support from Springwater,” Karen Spring said after the meeting. “This resolution is a demonstration of the stance of local residents in relation to human rights issues that affect us all, one way or another.” “Thank you to Springwater Township for the support and for insisting that Minister Freeland’s office demand the immediate release of Edwin and all political prisoners.”

Spring has been based in Honduras for nine years as the coordinator of the Honduras Solidarity Network which comprises more than 30 organizations from Canada and the United States. She and her mother Janet appeared before council April 18 2018.

Spring told council it’s been three months since her husband Edwin was detained by Honduran security forces. “I haven’t been able to speak with him for two weeks because phone communication has been turned off inside the prison as punishment for a protest that was carried out by other inmates.”

The conditions in the prison are unbearable, she told council. Prisoners have access to water for only 5 to 10 minutes a day, for drinking and washing, they are allowed two hours of sunlight a month, Espinal has not seen his family, with the exception of five visits from Spring before she left the country, he is given little food and has lost 10-15 pounds, and he has respiratory problems that may be related to widespread untreated tuberculosis among inmates.

Espinal’s arrest was part of a crackdown following public protests over an election November 26, 2017 that opposition candidate Salvador Nasralla had appeared to be winning with a mathematically insurmountable lead. But late on election day, the count was suspended. When it resumed, President Juan Orlando Hernández was found to be receiving the majority of votes. The election has been widely condemned by international observers.

Some members of council expressed reservations about some of the wording of the resolution. The mayor put forward a series of amendments that eliminated some of the stronger language in the original motion with the aim, he explained, of making the message more effective with higher levels of government.

“The objective to free Edwin is the only purpose that we have here – and those other prisoners, I’m not suggesting we’re not going to take care of them, because they’re all caught up in the same net,” French said.

Deleted from the Springwater motion:

- that Opposition Alliance presidential candidate Salvador Nasralla was “fraudulently robbed of victory”
- that Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland “regrettably followed the United States lead in recognizing the Hernandez regime”
- that Espinal was arrested on “trumped up charges.”

Spring said she was willing to accept the changes but nevertheless defended the deleted wording. “There’s no rule of law in Honduras and there’s widespread corruption,” she added, explaining that the charges against Espinal and other political prisoners were “randomly ticked off” by prosecutors.

However, she argued, that reference to “inhumane conditions” inside the prison should remain. “It’s a very strong message to the Honduran government that they’re not meeting international standards,” because James Hill, the Canadian ambassador to Honduras, has also raised concern about these horrific conditions.

French agreed that reference to inhumane conditions should remain. Janet Spring pointed out that much of the wording in the resolution is taken from the findings of international bodies like the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Organization of American States.

“Let’s not water it down too much here,” urged Councillor Perry Ritchie. He referred to information conveyed at a well-attended information meeting in Elmvale earlier this month. “These are people that walked out, grabbed the president and took off!” he said, referring to the kidnapping of President Manuel Zelaya in 2009. “And then they’ve instilled a curfew that at 6 o’clock at night to 6 o’clock the next morning, if you’re caught outside, they automatically shoot you,” Ritchie said.

“So to water this down, turn the other cheek, be nice about it, I don’t think it’s going to get anywhere. So I liked the way it was. But whatever it takes to get this passed, let’s do it and help these people – because we’re not dealing with a normal bunch down there.”

The majority of council voted for the mayor’s amendments. They then voted unanimously in favour of the deputy mayor’s resolution.

Fact-Finding Delegation: Political Prisoners in Honduras

Tuesday, May 22 (arrival day) - Sunday, May 27 (departure day)

- Cost: \$700 Canadian, + round-trip flight to Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Delegation fee covers: food, hotel, translation, in-country transportation & small stipends to some groups we meet with. No groups will make money from this trip and we aim to break even.
- Host group: Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor
- Led by: Janet Spring, Karen Spring, and Grahame Russell (Rights Action, U.S. & Canada). Karen and Grahame have extensive experience coordinating and leading delegations in Honduras and Guatemala.

Description

The delegation is part of the on-going work of the Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor that is demanding the release of Edwin Espinal and the additional 21 political prisoners arrested in the context of the post-electoral crisis in Honduras. The purpose

of the delegation is to continue the pressure on Honduran and Canadian authorities as part of efforts to demand that charges be dropped and all political prisoners be released.

This delegation is a full four-day fact-finding mission that will meet with relevant institutions involved in the issue of the political prisoners, including Honduran and international human rights groups and organizations, families of the political prisoners, (at least one and maybe two visits to military-run jails where political prisoners are being detained), and Canadian and Honduran authorities in Tegucigalpa.

Before each meeting, the delegation will establish a strategy and talking points and conduct the relevant follow-up afterwards. The delegation may participate in a press conference in Honduras at the end of the trip to discuss their findings, visits and meetings. Following the delegation, some delegates will be asked to attend meetings arranged in Ottawa to share findings with Canadian government authorities.

This delegation is for people that:

- Are comfortable with sitting through long meetings, being on a tight schedule, and/ or 'hurrying up and waiting' and if necessary,
- Understand that the Honduran climate is hot,
- Are comfortable with inexpensive, but adequate lodging, and open to experiencing different and limited types of food options. We can accommodate vegetarians and people with mild food allergies,
- Are ready to learn a lot about Canada's role in Honduras, about work to free political prisoners, and about work to end Canada's support for the Honduran regime.

Interested: Dr. Janet Spring, 705-734-4238, janet.spring@utoronto.ca, jspring2@lakeheadu.ca

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, tgipa@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

- **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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