

Rights Action
June 3, 2018

Grahame Russell update

Canadian/U.S. delegation finally ALLOWED into La Tolva military prison where political prisoner Edwin Espinal has been illegally jailed for over 4 months by U.S. and Canadian-backed regime

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/edwin-espinal-must-be-released>

Dear friends, sorry to take so long to provide this final update.

After four days (May 21-24) of intense activism and advocacy work {see summaries of first two days, at bottom), our delegation was finally permitted – soaking wet, after standing in a thunder storm and rain at the gates of La Tolva for close to two hours – to have a one hour visit with the illegally and abusively detained Edwin Espinal.



- Here, article by Ben Powless, a member of the delegation:
<http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/ben-powless/2018/05/fight-get-karen-spring-honduran-prison>
- Here, article by Jorge Burgos, Criterio.HN:
<https://criterio.hn/2018/05/25/despues-de-tanto-rogar-y-exigir-la-visita-a-edwin-espinal-se-hizo-realidad/>

Edwin Must Be Released

Please see letter, here, to the Canadian government. Please keep after your own MPs, the Canadian embassy in Honduras and Global Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland. There is NO EXCUSE for Canada not to be advocating directly and relentlessly for the release of Edwin. Since the 2009 military coup, Canada's unwavering support for the undemocratic, repressive and corrupt post-coup regimes continues to be part of the problem.

Grahame Russell, director Rights Action
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Canadian government must demand the immediate release of Edwin Espinal in Honduras

Separately, the government must consider comprehensive Canadian policy change towards the Honduran regime, including the expansion of Canadian business and investor interests in Honduras. By maintaining political-economic-security 'business as usual' relations with the regime, Canada is part of the problem of endemic repression, corruption, human rights violations on-going in the country.

Ambassador James Hill, Embassy of Canada in Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua,
James.Hill@international.gc.ca, tglpa@international.gc.ca

Dear Ambassador Hill and embassy colleagues, with copies to Minister Freeland and her office:

Thank-you for engaging in a serious discussion with our delegation in Tegucigalpa on Friday May 25th.

So as not to repeat the same background arguments, I write simply to insist that the Canadian advocate directly for the immediate release of Edwin Espinal, either with conditions pending trial, or (more fairly) with the immediate dropping of all the trumped up charges.

The Canadian government can openly advocate for his immediate release without changing its policies towards the regime and country.

Similar to the case of Berta Caceres (who suffered years of legal and political persecution, defamation and harassment, leading up to her assassination), there is ample evidence

that Edwin Espinal has been a target of regime repression and harassment, on multiple occasions, going back to 2009;

that the Honduran legal system has been used against him on numerous occasions as a tool of repression;

that Edwin's jail living conditions, right now, are harmful and abusive, and a violation of multiple legal and human rights; and

that his current punitive (and illegal) jailing is being used by the regime to send a message to other human rights and democracy defenders in the country.

Once Edwin's release is secured – on bail or preferably freed of all charges – I urge the Canadian government, in the strongest possible terms, to engage in a full policy review going back to 2009, through Liberal and Conservative governments alike.

In our meeting, you heard some of our arguments and analysis; we can provide more. We can provide names of human rights and political observers, analysts and activists who will provide clear arguments as to why and how Canada is “part of the problem” in Honduras due to its economic and security policies and actions, and its diplomatic positions dating back to the 2009 military coup, through 3 sets of fraudulent, violent elections, and through 9 years of increasing repression and corruption, human rights violations and generalized despair.

To repeat one point from our discussion, no one in our group was questioning Canadian “aid” programmes in Honduras. But to complete this point, Canada's policies and actions are contradictory: on the one hand, Canada legitimized the 2009 military coup / regime change, and then – against all evidence – rubberstamped three sets of fraudulent, violent elections since the coup, while turning a blind eye to the increasing rates of human rights violations, corruption and repression committed by the regime since then; on the other hand, Canada funds human rights organizations that are, sometimes, trying to address the violations and suffering caused by the regime.

While I understand much of this letter will be dealt with slowly, at best, please do everything in your power to secure Edwin's immediate release and to keep us informed of your actions.

Thank-you.

Grahame Russell, director

Cc: Janet and Karen Spring

Minister Chrystia Freeland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Global Affairs Canada,
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Keep on writing

United States

Contact directly your elected Senators (<https://whoismyrepresentative.com/>) and Congress members (<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>) and make your demands known to them.

Canada

Directly contact your Member of Parliament and make your demands known to them (<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>) and ask them to write directly to:

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

Demands - short term

The U.S. and Canadian governments must:

- Do an about face and rescind their “legitimization” of the Nov. 26, 2017 elections
- Condemn the multiple acts of electoral fraud carried out by government of Juan Orlando Hernandez
- Condemn the repression including the killing of over 40 pro-democracy protesters, and the illegal detentions of dozens of political prisoners, including Edwin Espinal
- Suspend all economic, military and political relations with the government of Honduras, until the political / electoral crisis has been resolved and impartial justice processes are proceeded against the intellectual and material authors of the electoral fraud and stolen elections, and the endemic repression

Demands - medium term

There must be legislative inquiries in the U.S. and Canada into the causes of Honduras’ now endemic repression and exploitation, corruption and impunity, with specific focus on the role played by the U.S. and Canadian governments:

- In support of the 2009 military coup
- In support and legitimization of fraudulent and violent elections in 2009, 2013 and 2017

- In support (in the case of Canada) of the promoting and signing of the potentially illegitimate “Free Trade Agreement” with the government of Honduras; In support of the expansion of corporate investments in Honduras (mining, garment “sweatshop” industry, bananas, hydro-electric dams, tourism, African palm, etc.), 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
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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

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