

Letter from Janet Spring

**Edwin Espinal: a political prisoner held in a Honduran military jail by U.S. & Canadian-backed government**

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/urgent-letter-from-janet-spring-about-edwin-espinal>

*{Janet Spring is the mother of Karen Spring, a human rights expert and activist who has lived in Honduras since the U.S. and Canadian backed coup in 2009. Karen is the long-term partner of Edwin Espinal, a victim of years of Honduran regime persecution who – since January 19, 2018 – has been illegally detained as a political prisoner in punitive conditions in a military jail.}*



Janet and Karen Spring, April 2018

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**Mounting Concerns Regarding Edwin Espinal In Honduras:  
Appeal To The Springwater Community ... And Folks Across Canada and the U.S.**

<https://simcoecountyhondurasrightsmonitor.wordpress.com/>

by Janet Spring, July 21, 2018

I am writing to the very supportive community members of Springwater Township – and send a copy out more widely - to express my mounting concerns regarding Edwin Espinal and to ask for your help in contacting the Government of Canada through Minister Freeland's office. (In the U.S., I encourage folks to make similar communications with your elected politicians and government officials.)

We urge Minister Freeland's office to make a public statement to demand Edwin Espinal's release and to drop all charges. Our family is very worried about Edwin's safety as well as his physical and mental state. We have been in contact with Minister Freeland's office for this request, yet no action has occurred from the government of Canada to date.

Family members and friends have also tried to contact the Honduran Ambassador to Canada, Sofia Cerrato Rodriguez, yet she does not respond to emails and rarely answers her phone calls.

For two weeks, we had not received any word regarding Edwin, which concerned us. Was he ill? Was he alive? Had he been transferred to another prison without our knowledge? His three lawyers working on his case were denied access to him; they had traveled to La Tolva Prison three times and were told by the guards and the director himself that they had come on the "wrong day," even though they had arrived to visit him on the days scheduled for legal visits. This made us very worried. Finally, Edwin's lawyer was granted entry last Thursday, but was not allowed to bring any legal documents in with her. She is never able to meet with him alone to discuss his 'case.' There are no lawyer/client privileges.

In Honduras, the legal system is wrought with corruption. The judicial system fails the innocent yet protects the corrupt members of the Hernandez regime. Government officials act with impunity. They are above the law. Most of the prisoners in La Tolva maximum-security prison have been denied due legal process, held without evidence, and often without proper legal counsel, awaiting 'trial' for a period of 2.5 years. When that lengthy period of illegal and extended detention is up, they will clearly not then get a "fair trial."

Prison authorities are able to impose new 'rules' on a whim. Families have no legal rights or recourse to question the broken system that bans them from visiting family members. They are bullied. They are terrorized. They are scared to question the 'rules' and restrictions and to speak out.

Another grave concern is that the phone system is still off in the prison; prisoners have not been able to have phone contact with families since April 4th. Families must physically travel to the prison and are unable to visit loved ones unless they have purchased visitor permits and have received them. Some members of Edwin's family are still waiting for their permits. Then families must make that horrible trip to La Tolva, which is at least a 2-hour drive each way from Tegucigalpa, as it is in the middle of nowhere.

Their visits are at the whim of the prison officials. Many times, they are turned away. This is totally unacceptable and breaks all international human rights laws on visitation rights.

On top of the deplorable political prisoner situation in Honduras, I am totally horrified and dismayed at the continual reporting of the great number of money laundering, drug

trafficking, and legal scandals that the government of Juan Orlando Hernandez has been involved in – his court appointees, his Ministers, and himself, since he illegally took office back in 2014. I feel that Hondurans have been totally robbed of any chance for a decent life in their country, which accounts for the very upsetting migration and separation of families at the US border, further sparked by the aftermath of the disgusting, illegal ‘zero tolerance law’ brought in by the Trump administration.

It seems that Honduran jails need to be emptied to make room for corrupt government officials who are breaking the law both in the US and Honduras. I truly feel there is not enough space in these maximum-security prisons to house them all.

I am becoming more frustrated and disgusted as time moves on and can only imagine how devastated the Honduran population is regarding this government corruption in the country. I can't imagine the upset and despair of those who have emigrated from Honduras (the very fortunate ones) to move for a better life elsewhere as they listen to how the state of affairs in their home country is worsening and impacting family members who may still live there.

I would greatly appreciate you making a call to Minister Freeland's office or emailing her staff to DEMAND THAT CANADA MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT TO FREE EDWIN ESPINAL AND OTHERS AND TO DROP ALL CHARGES. I ask you to also call or email SOFIA CERRATO RODRIGUEZ – HONDURAN AMBASSADOR TO CANADA to make the same demand for their freedom.

Amnesty Canada has published an e-action to demand Edwin Espinal's freedom and the dropping of all charges. Please help us and sign this e-petition and pass it to others. This may be retrieved at: <http://www.amnesty.ca/SpeakUpForEdwin>

We are fretting about Edwin's safety. Furthermore, Edwin and Raul Alvarez (also a political prisoner in La Tolva on the same charges) should not even be in this maximum-security military prison. Their rights have been completely violated; their detention is illegal, charges are trumped-up, breaking all international human rights and legal rights standards.

We need Canada to make a stand to demand their freedom now. Please help!

Minister Chrystia Freeland: [Chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca](mailto:Chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca), 1-613-992-5234; 1-343-203-1851

Ambassador Sofia Cerrato Rodriguez: [ambassador@embassyhonduras.hn](mailto:ambassador@embassyhonduras.hn), 1-613-233-8900

Thank-you.

Janet Spring,  
July 21, 2018

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**Keep on calling / Keep on writing  
(and asking for responses, and then calling and writing again)**

### **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](mailto:James.Hill@international.gc.ca), [tglpa@international.gc.ca](mailto:tglpa@international.gc.ca)

Minister Chrystia Freeland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Global Affairs Canada, 1-613-992-5234, 1-343-203-1851; [chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca](mailto:chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca), [chrystia.freeland.c1d@parl.gc.ca](mailto:chrystia.freeland.c1d@parl.gc.ca), [chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca](mailto:chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca)

### **Honduran Ambassador to Canada**

Sofia Cerrato Rodriguez: [ambassador@embassyhonduras.hn](mailto:ambassador@embassyhonduras.hn), 1-613-233-8900

### **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 business and military-police-security 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.

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### **More information**

Karen Spring, Edwin Espinal's partner & coordinator of Honduras Solidarity Network,  
[spring.kj@gmail.com](mailto:spring.kj@gmail.com)

Campaign to free Edwin Espinal and all political prisoners in Honduras:

[facebook](https://www.facebook.com/freeEDWINEESPINALlibertad/) - <https://www.facebook.com/freeEDWINEESPINALlibertad/>

[twitter](https://twitter.com/EdwinLibertad) - <https://twitter.com/EdwinLibertad>

[website](http://freedwinespinallibertad.blogspot.com/) - <http://freedwinespinallibertad.blogspot.com/>

email - [freedwinespinal@gmail.com](mailto:freedwinespinal@gmail.com)

Janet Spring, Simcoe Country Honduras Rights Monitor (Elmvale Ontario),

<https://simcoecountyhondurasrightsmonitor.wordpress.com/>

[janet.spring@utoronto.ca](mailto:janet.spring@utoronto.ca)

Grahame Russell, Rights Action

[info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

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### **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](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

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