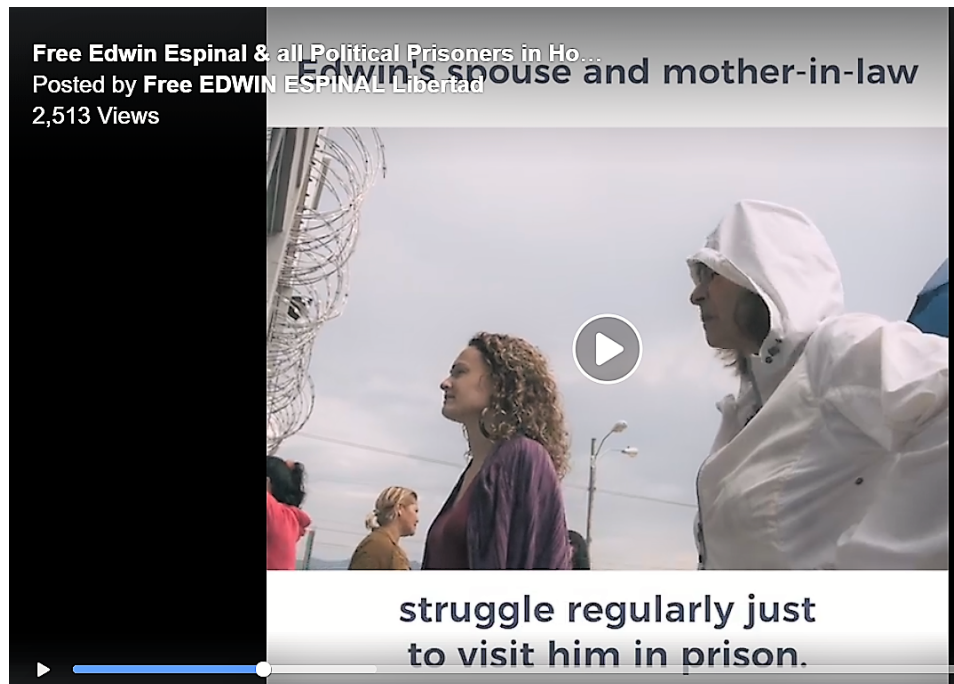


Rights Action  
December 29, 2018  
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Film by Jesse Freeston

**Janet and Karen Spring try to visit Edwin Espinal in military jail of Honduran regime**  
**Day #345 – Illegal detention of political prisoner Edwin Espinal**



View/Share:

<https://www.facebook.com/freeEDWINESPINALlibertad/videos/2071286179594395/>

Song: Dig Deep by RW Smith

Film: Jesse Freeston, @jessefreeston, [jfreeston@gmail.com](mailto:jfreeston@gmail.com), <http://jessefreeston.com>

As 10s of 1000s of Honduran flee into exile every year, Janet Spring (mother-in-law of Edwin, and mother of Karen Spring) asks “Where does the Canadian Government Stand?”

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Politics, Corruption, and Human Rights in Honduras: Where does the Canadian Government Stand?

By Janet Spring

Since January 19, 2018, the Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor has been working non-stop to advocate for political prisoners’ release in Honduras. This fight has been an

eye-opener, a task that we once thought was straightforward. Yet after 11 months we now understand the situation to be multi-layered and multi-faceted, one that is steeped in back-room politics, corruption, and the lack of regard for human rights across the board.

We have made some progress due to public outcry; 18 political prisoners have been freed, yet 4 original political prisoners (including my son-in-law Edwin Espinal) remain jailed and there have been other arrests.

Journalists have been targeted; they have been harassed, murdered, missing, or expelled from Honduras. Protests have been marred with violence. The corrupt political situation, gang violence, lack of rule of law, poverty, and unemployment has forced Honduran individuals and families to flee the country in mass exodus toward the United States to seek asylum.

Here are the things we have uncovered:

#### Illegal election

We researched the election of Juan Orlando Hernandez of November 26, 2017 and found that it was indeed an illegal election, and any person protesting or speaking out against it was imprisoned, teargassed, murdered, disappeared, or terrorized.

This election was condemned by the Organization of American States (OAS), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty Canada, and other international organizations around the world. Some demanded that a second election take place and produced documents outlining the facts. Other than Minister Freeland's statement in December 2017 acknowledging the contested election and mentioning that human rights of the Honduran people be upheld, no firm statement from Canada condemning these conditions and this illegal election was made.

#### Illegal detentions

We found evidence that Edwin's and others' cases were fraught with irregularities that we do not condone in Canada. The arrests were improperly carried out, (no rights were read upon arrest; they were snatched away and taken to a military base and later prison, despite being civilians). The Canadian government has not taken a stand and has continued business as usual.

Political prisoners were detained with lack of evidence (to this day so-called evidence for all arrests have not been handed over). In Canada, Crown prosecutors must hand over evidence to lawyers. Canada remains silent.

The judicial procedure was carried out with lack of due process. Judge Claudio Aguilar who presided over Edwin and Raul's cases (they were arrested at the same time and sent to La Tolva prison) refused to recuse himself; in 2013, Aguilar had ordered an illegal raid on Edwin's family home, and under Honduran law (and Canadian law) a

judge cannot preside over a case involving an individual twice. In Canada, the cases would be thrown out of court.

Charges were trumped up; detainees had a laundry list against them. There were and still are no lawyer-client privileges awarded; lawyers are only allowed a few minutes with their clients and under heavy surveillance. Still no evidence was produced. Again, in Canada, the cases would be thrown out of court.

Edwin and other political prisoners are held in pre-trial detention, a period that can last up to 2.5 years. We found that in Honduran prisons, over 60% of the prison population is being held in pre-trial detention. Canada remains silent.

Political prisoners are held in newly built US owned-maximum security prisons which do not allow for family visits unless permits are purchased at (\$150 US) for each family. Those few who can afford the passes are harassed and often denied visits. The prisons are in rural areas far from urban centers, making family visits difficult and expensive. Prisoners are denied medication if ill, food and water is of very poor quality and scant, and prisoners are sunlight deprived. This treatment violates international law and human rights. Canada remains silent.

Government infiltrated by narco-trafficking and organized crime

The Hernandez government is wrought with corruption; it has been labeled as a narco-trafficking government. The brother of President Juan Orlando Hernandez – Antonio Hernandez – was arrested in Miami on November 23, 2018 for drug trafficking. Further arrests are pending in cases known as the ‘Pandora Case.’ The Canadian government funds social and judicial projects in Honduras and has done so for years. Canadian fiscal support continues despite lack of success in reforms and this blatant corruption. Is Canada complicit?

Therefore

The Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor and its supporters want to know the answer to these questions.

1. Where does Canada stand on human rights in Honduras?
2. Why does Canada remain silent on corruption and human rights violations in Honduras?
3. Whose interests is the Canadian government serving?

As Canadians, we will not remain silent.

Janet Spring

Simcoe Country Honduras Rights Monitor

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

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

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Chip away: Pester U.S. and Canadian politicians

Keep on sending this information to your elected politicians in the U.S. and Canada, & to media outlets, holding them to account for their support for the Honduran regime, turning a blind eye to the systematic human rights violations, killings, corruption and impunity.

Keep on supporting community based groups in Honduras, struggling to defend human rights, restore democracy and to put an end to the undemocratic regime - a huge and dangerous struggle.

United States: Contact 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 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), [tgipa@international.gc.ca](mailto:tgipa@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

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Demands - short term

The U.S. and Canadian governments must:

Rescind their "legitimization" of the Nov. 26, 2017 elections;

Condemn the multiple acts of electoral fraud carried out by the illegitimate regime headed by Juan Orlando Hernandez;

Condemn government repression, including the killing of over 40 pro-democracy protesters, and the illegal detentions of dozens of political prisoners, including Edwin Espinal;

Suspend 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 killings and illegal jailings.

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, Honduras Solidarity Network, [spring.kj@gmail.com](mailto:spring.kj@gmail.com) /  
<https://www.facebook.com/freeEDWINEPINALibertad/> /  
<https://twitter.com/EdwinLibertad> / <http://freedwinespinallibertad.blogspot.com/> /  
[freedwinespinal@gmail.com](mailto:freedwinespinal@gmail.com)

Janet Spring (Karen's mom, Edwin's mom-in-law), Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor <https://simcoecountyhondurasrightsmonitor.wordpress.com/> /

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

Grahame Russell, Rights Action, [grahame@rightsaction.org](mailto:grahame@rightsaction.org)

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Tax-Deductible Donations (Canada & U.S.)

Your funds at work (to date in 2018): <http://rightsaction.org/your-donations-at-work/>  
Matching donor: Two supporters will match donations, up to \$50,000, deadline: Dec.31, 2018.

To support the work of our partner groups in Honduras, responding to the permanent 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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