

## **FREE! Political prisoners Edwin Espinal & Raul Alvarez freed from Honduran military prison**

Update by Janet Spring

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/political-prisoners-edwin-espinal-raul-alvarez-freed-from-honduran-military-prison>



On Friday, August 9, 2019, after more than 18 months of illegal and very abusive detention by the U.S. and Canadian-backed Honduran regime, political prisoners Edwin Espinal and Raul Martinez were let out of a maximum security military prison - they are out on bail pending their “trial” on trumped up charges filed by the regime.

- **Below:** Update from Janet Spring, Edwin Espinal’s mother-in-law (from Elmvale, Ontario, Canada)

### **This is how hard work and struggle are against repressive, corrupt, undemocratic regimes**

Commentary by Grahame Russell, Rights Action

Edwin and Raul never should have been detained in the first place, let alone stuck in a maximum security Honduran military prison, “awaiting trial.”

The corrupt, repressive Honduran regime would not be able to continue to violate the rights of its own people without the past 10 years of unconditional political, military and economic support of Canada, the U.S., and multiple actors in the so-called “international community” (including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and a host of multi-national companies).

The judiciary and legal system, and the penitentiary system are themselves tools of repression in the hands of this regime.

The struggle to liberate Edwin and Raul – led in Honduras by Edwin’s partner Karen Spring and many courageous women-human rights defenders; led in Canada by Edwin’s mother-in-law Janet Spring and many supporters – was a struggle against the impunity and corruption of the Honduras regime and also against the complicity and indifference of the U.S., Canada and other actors in this ‘international community’.

We wish huge strength for Edwin and Raul as they begin to deal with the trauma of their brutal detention, as they proceed to defend themselves in Honduras’ corrupted court system against the trumped up charges, as they seek reparations for their unjust incarceration and suffering, and as they and millions of Hondurans continue with the 10 years-and-counting struggle to rid Honduras of its U.S., Canada and ‘international community’-backed regime.

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## **Edwin Espinal released on recognizance**

By Janet Spring, August 10, 2019

The Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor is delighted to announce that yesterday in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, political prisoners Edwin Espinal and Raul Alvarez were ordered released on their own recognizance. Their court case begins next week. It has been more than 18 months since Espinal was imprisoned on trumped-up charges and the Springwater-based group was formed to campaign for his release. Two large meetings were held in Elmvale and the fight for justice in Honduras has engaged politicians of all parties and individuals across Canada.

## **Honduran regime leader Juan Orlando Hernandez implicated in drug trafficking**

By Janet Spring, August 8, 2019

In the past few days, news releases have been sent out by four US mainstream magazines and news outlets. They have all reported that US court documents have linked President Juan Orlando Hernandez to serious drug trafficking in Honduras.

Univision News reports that a 44-page New York court document labels Hernandez as a “violent, multi-ton drug trafficker who allegedly abused his political connections for personal and political gain and at least twice helped arrange murders of drug trafficking rivals.” For further information, the full article may be retrieved at: <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/president-of-honduras-implicated-in-1-5-million-drug-money-conspiracy-by-new-york-prosecutor>

In the New York Times, Sunday July 26 edition, an article entitled “Pay or Die” describes how the narco-trafficking state - under the leadership of Hernandez - forces Hondurans to flee from ‘war taxes’ paid to the gangs and that he is totally immersed in this gang related drug trafficking. It also states that “the rot starts at the top, with President Juan Orlando Hernandez” when in 2015 he admitted that his campaign to run for president was financed by \$300 million stolen from the Honduran Social Security Institute.

Since then his wife, Ana Garcia and sister, Hilda have also been implicated in drug trafficking and money laundering schemes. Even the Honduran Ambassador to Canada Sofia Rodriguez’ family member has been charged with crimes - her father was arrested earlier this year on

corruption.

In an Economist August 3rd article, "The Humbling of Honduras's President," it reports that in the latest Gallup Poll, Hernandez' popularity amongst Hondurans has dropped "from +34 to -17" and that corruption within his regime is making him unfit to complete his full term. This is due to the accusations of Hernandez being linked to drug trafficking and turning against his allies within his party. As protesters have taken to the streets to stand against the President's repression tactics, Honduran businesses have suffered, crime has spiked and many human rights violations have been committed.

The Washington Post, in an August 3rd article, also states that "US prosecutors accuse Honduran president of drug conspiracy" and that Hernandez and the former president, Pepe Lobo, according to court documents, "relied on drug proceeds to fund political campaigns and cite evidence of high-level political corruption."

The Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor has known and stated openly since Edwin's arrest in January 2018, that the Honduran government is a dangerous narco-trafficking regime. We have been encouraging our government to take a stand to disassociate Canada from the Honduran government.

Our committee has lobbied the Canadian government to make a public statement to demand Edwin Espinal and others' release but no statement has been issued. Four prisoners still remain in maximum security prisons for speaking against Hernandez' corruption, and his strong links to gangs and drug-trafficking.

We have asked the PM through Minister of Foreign Affairs to revisit the free trade agreement with Honduras, which stipulated that no human rights abuses would occur on Canada's watch. We have also asked the federal government to stop aid, as the money that has been donated by Canadian taxpayers has fallen into corrupt government officials' hands and has not been used as stipulated. Yet none of our requests have been granted or even considered!

**PLEASE ACT: CONTACT FREELAND'S OFFICE**

This is a very crucial time for Edwin Espinal and other political prisoners who are political pawns in the silencing games played by the corrupt narco-trafficking, money laundering government of Honduras. We ask that you contact Minister Freeland and PM Trudeau now in this election year to voice serious concerns regarding Canada's involvement with Hernandez' corruption. As they say in school, the bully bystander is just as guilty as the bully!

Thank you for your continued support.

Janet Spring and the Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor Committee  
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Your donations and grants will help Rights Action continue to fund land, environment and human rights defender groups in Honduras and Guatemala at the forefront of land, environmental, human rights and justice struggles, including work to free political prisoners and 'criminalized' community defenders.

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