

To:
From:
Re: Political Crisis in Honduras: Incarceration of Edwin Espinal
Date:

This correspondence relates to the illegal detention of Edwin Espinal, a Honduran political prisoner and spouse of Karen Spring, a Canadian citizen and human rights expert and activist living in Honduras since 2009. Edwin was arrested through his work as a human rights activist; he assists Honduran citizens who are targeted by pro-government organizations and recently those marginalized by the military crackdown of any who opposed the Honduran regime since the November, 2017 election. I am writing to ask the Canadian government to take all measures – public and back-channel to secure the release of Edwin Espinal, who was detained on January 19, 2018 on a laundry list of trumped up criminal charges. He is being held in La Tolva Military Prison and has not been afforded due legal process and is virtually incommunicado.

Edwin Espinal is a political prisoner and is one of 22 or more who are being held in pre-trial detention across the country. It is important to note that the charges levied against Edwin and the political prisoners are politically motivated. To date, there have been no arrests made of state military forces who were involved in the assassinations, disappearances or injuries of protesters since the election date, yet, the Public Prosecutor's office has worked hard to ensure that people like Edwin are behind bars, facing years of detention in a military prison under harsh conditions. They have been denied visitation by their families, which is in violation of basic human rights and the rule of law.

Karen Spring, Edwin's long-time partner who lives with him in Tegucigalpa Honduras, is from Elmvale Ontario, a farming community north of Toronto. From 2009-2014, she worked with Rights Action. Since 2014, she has held the position of coordinator of the Honduran Solidarity Network, a US and Canadian-based human rights organization. Karen herself has been the target of illegal and threatening defamation campaigns at the hands of the Hernandez regime, pro-government media, and social media networks.

The Canadian Government through Minister Freeland, Foreign Affairs Minister, has stated that human rights of the people in Honduras, specifically after the November election of 2017 must be upheld and their pro-democracy rights respected. Thus, I ask that the Canadian Government make a stand on the following:

- Edwin and Karen are people of the highest integrity as they both work in a human rights capacity, working passionately, peacefully, and legally for the Honduran people. The Canadian Government has a responsibility to act immediately and decisively in this case to promote and uphold international human rights and demand the same of other governments, particularly allies such as the post-military coup government in Honduras;
- The Canadian Government should act immediately in support of Karen Spring, a Canadian citizen and a long-time partner of Edwin;

- Most specifically, the Canadian Government has a responsibility to act because of the role Canada has played in Honduras, since 2009 and being a constant ally of the post-coup regime. It is well documented that the militaristic government of Hernandez is characterized by corruption, criminality (including organized drug-trafficking), repression and impunity;
- Since the 2009 coup, Canada has maintained full political relations with Honduras, negotiated and signed a Free Trade Agreement in 2014, and promoted the expansion of Canadian mining, the garment industry and tourism business interests, while turning a blind eye to endemic corruption, criminality, repression, and operating above the law. Canada must demand that the Honduran government respect human rights and end repression and corrupt governance.

I request that the Government of Canada take the following steps:

- Visit directly with Edwin in La Tolva military prison to verify his emotional, physical, and mental health well-being;
- Advocate directly with the Honduran government for Edwin's immediate release and the dropping of the false criminal charges that are politically motivated due to his human rights work in his community.

I request that you contact Karen Spring directly, who is involved in efforts to secure Edwin's safety and release, and is in close contact with Edwin's family.

I await your response on these serious matters.

Sincerely