



*Office of Cheryl Hardcastle, Member of Parliament  
NDP Critic for International Human Rights*

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Confederation Building  
Room 130  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019

RE: CONTINUED DETAINMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST EDWIN ROBELO ESPINAL BY HONDURAN AUTHORITIES

Dear Minister Freeland,

As you will know, this is the third such missive I have been compelled to write to you in a year's time. I write to you today about two closely related issues: the continued detainment by Honduran authorities of activist Edwin Espinal, spouse of Karen Spring of Elmvale, Ontario, and two, the very serious human rights situation in Honduras, itself.

You are surely aware that Mr. Espinal was arrested January 19, 2018, on trumped-up charges in the wake of popular protests against the outright theft of the Honduran general election by the Juan Orlando Hernandez government. This election was condemned by the Organization of American States, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the European Union Electoral Observation Missions, which reported voting irregularities, errors and systemic problems in the electoral process.

The government responded to the protests with a massive crackdown and the abolition of human rights, arresting many. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that Honduran security forces used excessive, lethal force and extra-judicial killings to control and disperse protests.

Yet it has not gone unnoticed that the Government of Canada has been working closely not just with the Government of Honduras, but also with a number of other unsavoury right-wing regimes through its membership in the Lima Group, as you seek to affect regime change in Venezuela. In your role as Foreign Affairs Minister, you have focused on the human rights abuses of the Venezuelan government, yet have been troublingly silent on the massive corruption and repression taking place in Honduras.

You have called on the Maduro government in Venezuela to respect the “sovereignty of the people,” yet ally our country with the Juan Orlando Hernandez government in Honduras, a regime that, I will say again, literally stole the country’s last federal election.

Even the Organization of American States, whose statements you have cited regularly in your case against the Venezuelan government, has called for new presidential elections in Honduras after finding copious irregularities in the previous electoral process.

Minister, I urge you to join the United Nations and Amnesty International in calling on the Honduran government to release and drop all trumped-up charges against Edwin Espinal. It is necessary to use all available means to pressure the Honduran government into releasing not just him, but also four other political prisoners--Raul Alvarez, Jose Godinez, Edy Gonzalo, Gustavo Caceres--still held in inhumane maximum-security military prisons in Honduras. It is not too late to hold the government of Juan Orlando Hernandez to the same exacting standards to which you purport to hold other regimes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cheryl Hardcastle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cheryl" being more prominent than the last name "Hardcastle".

Cheryl Hardcastle, M.P.  
NDP Critic for International  
Human Rights

