



Amnesty International

CANADA

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The Honourable Peter Kent
Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas)
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
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July 8, 2009

Dear Minister,

We are writing with regard to the current crisis in Honduras to urge that the Canadian government intervene in a forceful, direct and principled manner to ensure that human rights are fully protected and not further undermined in the midst of the current political conflict.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned that the forced removal of President Manuel Zelaya from office and from the country by the military has unleashed widespread unrest and a deepening human rights crisis. Continuing to keep President Zelaya from returning to Honduras serves only to place human rights and the rule of law in ever greater danger.

Indeed, Amnesty International has documented a range of serious human rights concerns in Honduras since the crisis erupted with the forced removal of President Zelaya on June 28th. A number of people involved in protests calling for President Zelaya's return have been killed, injured or arrested in clashes with security forces. There are many reports of journalists who have covered the crisis and the protests being intimidated and attacked. This has included the discovery of a grenade at the premises of Radio America, the firing of at least 15 gunshots on another radio station, and the closure of Canal 36 by the security forces. Prosecutors who have sought to verify human rights abuses during the protests have reported that they are receiving threats. Amnesty International also fears for the safety of human rights and political activists who support or are seen to support President Zelaya.

In this context, Amnesty International is concerned that a recent presidential decree formalizing a State of Emergency that includes a curfew and the suspension of some individual guarantees and freedoms could, if applied unreasonably, open the door to even further human rights violations.

As a leading member of the Organization of American States and a country with a significant level of trade and investment with Honduras, it is vital that Canada add its voice to those of other OAS partners in calling unequivocally on de facto authorities in Honduras, including "Interim President" Roberto Micheletti to:

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- Allow President Zelaya's prompt and safe return to Honduras without conditions, as is his right.
- Take effective steps immediately to stop human rights violations and restore human rights protection to all Hondurans.
- Immediately release any government officials and political activists who may be currently detained and refrain from further arbitrary detentions.
- Guarantee that political opponents and human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisal.
- Guarantee the right to freedom of expression and allow journalists to carry out their legitimate work without fear of reprisal.

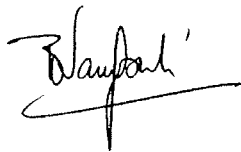
Minister, the crisis in Honduras is not only a political one. Human rights are on the line. There have been many violations over the past ten days. We look to the Canadian government to speak out forcefully in way that is consistent with the stated values of strengthened Canadian engagement in the Americas; namely the defence of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Amnesty International will of course continue to monitor the human rights situation in Honduras and we will commit to share our information with you, as well as the many Amnesty members in Canada who are concerned about this situation. We look forward to hearing back from you about the steps you are taking to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Sincerely,



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Amnesty International Canada
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