

5 December 2017

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Freeland,

We are writing to express our deep concern about the violence and repression taking place in Honduras following the national elections held on 26 November 2017. We have received information directly from the Jesuit Province for Central America, which has issued a statement calling for international solidarity, and from our fellow Jesuits and colleagues in Honduras, where Radio Progreso, a Jesuit-run community radio station, faces significant risks for reporting on the current situation and standing with the people.

The people of Honduras went to the polls peacefully and in large numbers on 26 November and are now outraged and traumatized by the actions of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal and the illegal interference of President Juan Orlando Hernández, who seems to be prepared to cling to power at any price. The government's actions and violence against its own citizens demonstrate its absolute lack of commitment to democracy and fundamental human rights.

Indeed the situation in Honduras has been dire ever since the 2009 coup d'état. It has the highest murder rate in the world and deepening inequalities and violations of human rights, especially against women, indigenous people, environmentalists and journalists.

Canada needs to speak out strongly and unequivocally against this abuse of the democratic process and all violations of human rights in Honduras. We urge you and the Government of Canada at this critical juncture to apply immediate pressure on the

Government of Honduras to ensure that the rule of law is upheld and that the people of Honduras enjoy the full range of human rights, including the right to elect the government of their democratic choice.

We ask you to take a genuine stand for democracy and the people of Honduras by:

1. Calling for an independent, international commission to undertake a transparent vote count and an investigation into all claims of state involvement in electoral fraud and violence during and since the 26 November elections;
2. Requesting that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Honduras refrain from announcing the winning candidate, without first obtaining the result of the recount as requested above;
3. Demanding an end to the State of Emergency and the reinstatement of all human rights, including the people's right to peaceful demonstration, expression and movement;
4. Urging that the media's freedom of expression be guaranteed with unrestricted access to all sources so that they can report in a truthful and timely fashion;
5. Insisting that all people who have committed crimes or violated the Constitution of Honduras be brought to justice;
6. Supporting the rights of women, indigenous people (including Garifuna communities) and others who organize to protect ancestral land, water and the environment against state repression and multinational companies' complicity.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent situation.

Sincerely,



Fr Peter Bisson SJ
Provincial Superior
Jesuits in English Canada



Fr Erik Oland SJ
Supérieur provincial
Les jésuites du Canada français et d'Haïti

Cc: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
Ambassador James Hill, Canadian Ambassador to Honduras
(James.Hill@international.gc.ca)