



MEDIA ADVISORY

Negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement continue between Canada and Honduras while the human rights situation deteriorates

International human rights experts and respected representatives of Honduran civil society organizations will appear before **the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on March 9, 2011**, to testify about the deteriorating human rights situation in Honduras, just as the Canadian government seeks to conclude a Free Trade Agreement with the Central American country.

The following witnesses will be heard at the Committee. They will be available for interviews on March 9 and March 10 in Ottawa and on March 11 and March 12 in Toronto:

- **Craig Scott**, Canadian international law expert and Commissioner on the Honduran non-governmental Truth Commission,
- **Bertha Oliva** coordinator of the Honduran Committee of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared
- **Pedro Landa**, director of the Honduran Centre for the Promotion of Community Development

Craig Scott is a Canadian international law expert who sits on the Honduran non-governmental Truth Commission investigating human rights violations committed in the wake of the June 2009 coup. **Bertha Oliva** is Coordinator of the Honduran Committee of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared. **Pedro Landa** is Director of the Honduran Centre for the Promotion of Community Development, an agency that works with communities affected by Canadian mining companies. **Maria Luisa Regalado** (who will be testifying via videoconference from Honduras) represents the Honduran Women's Collective, who works with women engaged in the export garment industry, which is a major focus of the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Honduras.

Human Rights Context in Honduras

According to Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, human rights violations in Honduras have risen dramatically in the 20 months since the 2009 coup d'état. During the same period, peaceful protests persist, as the Porfirio Lobo government rolls back social and labour rights while investing heavily in security forces. Political activists, journalists and human rights defenders face new threats, but the upsurge in violence is also directed against women, sexual minorities, indigenous and afro-Honduran peoples, and workers, according to Human Rights' Watch's December 2010 report, "[*After the Coup: Ongoing Violence, Intimidation, and Impunity in Honduras.*](#)" A climate of impunity prevails both for abuses that were committed

under the de facto regime in 2009 and for new abuses that have occurred since Porfirio Lobo's inauguration in January 2010. None of those abuses have been prosecuted.

Despite the fact that the situation in Honduras remains quite volatile and despite the gravity of the human rights situation, Canada has moved to strengthen relations with the Lobo government, promising millions in new investments as announced by Canada's Ambassador to Honduras Neil Reeder last April; ramping up government to government development aid, and pursuing a Canada-Honduras free trade agreement that it hopes to ratify in coming weeks.

The witnesses are expected to call on Canada to refrain from signing a trade agreement or taking any other steps to strengthen relations with the Lobo government until there is a verifiable improvement in the human rights situation in Honduras -- including prosecution for human rights violations -- and until an independent human rights impact assessment of the proposed Free Trade Agreement has been conducted and any negative findings are adequately addressed. They will also ask Canada to wait until both Truth Commissions, the government Commission and the non-governmental one, have tabled their reports before taking any decision on the readmission of Honduras to the Organization of American States (OAS).

The elections of Porfirio Lobo were not recognized as legitimate by a majority of countries of the international community and Latin America and Honduras remains excluded from the Organization of American States (OAS).

For more information or to book an interview, contact:

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