

Americas Policy Group

Alberta Council for Global Cooperation
Amnesty International Canada
Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network
British Columbia Council for International
Co-operation
Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)
Canadian Catholic Organization for
Development and Peace
Canadian Crossroads International
Canadian Labour Congress
Canadian Society for International Health
Canadian Union of Postal Workers
Canadian Union of Public Employees
CERLAC, York University
Common Frontiers
Christian Peacemaker Teams
Co Development Canada
Communication, Energy, & Paperworks
Union of Canada
Comite pour les Droits Humains en
Amerique Latine
CUSO-VSO
Heartlinks
Horizons of Friendship
Inter Pares
KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice
Initiatives
YMCA-Canada/YMCA Montreal
L'Entraide Missionnaire
Lawyers Rights Watch Canada
Lawyers Without Borders Canada
Match International
Mennonite Central Committee
MiningWatch Canada
Ontario Public Service Employees Union
OXFAM Canada
Presbyterian World Service and
Development
Primate's World Relief and Development
Fund
Public Service Alliance of Canada
Rights & Democracy
Salvaide
Save the Children Canada
Social Justice Committee (Montreal)
United Church of Canada
United Steelworkers

July 22, 2009

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

We are writing this letter on behalf of the Americas Policy Group (APG), a Working Group of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, to express our profound concern with regard to the escalating crisis in Honduras. We urge the Canadian government to take immediate steps and use all of the leverage at its disposal to ensure that the democratic order, respect for human rights and rule of law are restored in Honduras. Specifically, Canada must send a much stronger message, backed by concrete actions, to signal its commitment to the restoration of the elected president Manuel Zelaya to complete his mandate until January 2010.

The members of the APG have long standing partnerships with Honduran civil society organizations including labour, faith based groups, women's groups, NGOs and community-based organizations. APG members and their partners on the ground are deeply concerned for the safety of Honduran citizens who are being persecuted for defending the constitutional order. Those most targeted are human rights defenders, members of the media, trade unionists and supporters of the country's democratically-elected President Manuel Zelaya.

As you are no doubt aware, the list of documented violations of human rights, following the coup d'état, is growing.

These have included: the suspension of constitutional rights; the arbitrary arrest and detention of over 1,150 people; the issuing of arrest warrants for social leaders on fabricated charges; censorship of at least 14 local media outlets; violations of the right to life and physical integrity by security forces who fired on protestors resulting in the death of at least one person and the wounding of many more. In addition there have been execution-style killings of individuals opposing the coup, among them; we note the July 11 murders of Roger Bados of the Bloque Popular coalition in San Pedro Sula and of Democratic Unification activist Ramón García in the department of Santa Bárbara.

Given this context, the APG is disturbed by the activities of business lobbies that are trying to dissuade international sanctions, and promote investment to provide liquidity to the defacto regime. These actions not only attempt to shore up an undemocratic regime that has been fully repudiated and isolated by every other government, but also undermine the negotiations which ideally would help the country move forward in a democratic and peaceful way. Allegations have come to our attention that the Canadian company Goldcorp (Entremares) has provided financial and logistical support to enable its workers to attend pro-coup marches in Tegucigalpa; if founded, this is a clear example of a Canadian company working in a way that is undermining Canada's public position on Honduras.

The current crisis in Honduras represents an important challenge for the Canadian government to stand by the stated values that underpin Canada's reengagement in the Americas. Canada's support for the OAS Resolution of July 4th, 2009 – resulting in the suspension of Honduras from the OAS – was an important first step.

While we recognize Canada's support for the mediation efforts brokered by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, it is clear that this process, in and of itself, is not enough. It is inadequate for Canada to wait on these diplomatic negotiations, while not also applying decisive pressure on the illegal interim government in the form of strong sanctions. The perpetrators of the coup must be held responsible for driving Honduras back to a period characterized by violence, intimidation and authoritarianism. We urge the Government of Canada to:

Review its bilateral relationship with the Republic of Honduras, as called for under section four of the OAS resolution of July 4th, 2009. Recognizing that the coup has led to grave breaches of peace, security and human rights, and has escalated tensions throughout the region, Canada should immediately apply decisive sanctions, to pressure those involved in the coup, and any successors named by illegitimate processes, to step down. We urge Canada to follow the lead of the US Government, the European Union, the World Bank, the Inter American Development Bank, the Central American Bank of Economic Integration, among others, all of which have "paused" programs, transfers, budgetary support and new loans to Honduras. We also ask that you:

- Immediately enforce a mandatory embargo on all funds and transfers to the Military training assistance program, and suspend any other promised funds to Honduran security forces, military or police;

In light of the pervasive culture of impunity which has allowed such a coup to unfold, we urge Canada to:

- Call on the defacto regime to cease human rights violations and restore human rights protections to all Hondurans. In particular, Canada should demand that the Honduran authorities immediately release any government officials, and political activists who may be currently detained and refrain from further arbitrary detentions; and guarantee the right to freedom of expression so that supporters of the democratically-elected President, human rights defenders, and journalists are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisal;
- Support the application of international law and national justice against the coup perpetrators, and call for reparations for the illegal actions and rights violations committed;
- Act urgently in a way which will dissuade or circumvent Canadian investors or business leaders who may be providing support to the coup and countering the OAS resolve to increase the pressure on the regime.

Be assured we will follow the situation very closely and look forward to your response,

Sincerely,

Gerry Barr
President-CEO
Canadian Council for
International Co-operation

Jim Hodgson
APG Co-Chair

Nadia Faucher
APG Co-Chair

CC:

Hon. Minister Lawrence Cannon, Minister of foreign Affairs and International Trade
Hon. Peter Kent, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas)
Alexandra Bugailiskis, Assistant Deputy Minister Latin America and the Caribbean
Ambassador Neil Reeder, Canadian Ambassador to Honduras
Daniel Arsenault, Counsellor and Head of Cooperation of Canada's Embassy in Honduras
Alexandre Leveque, Director DFAIT: Caribbean, Central America & Regional Policy
Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
Gilles Duceppe, Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party
Members of the Americas Policy Group