

June 28, 2012

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

pm@pm.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

Return to democratic rule in Paraguay

On behalf of over 618,000 members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), we urge the Canadian government to join the calls from around the world for the return to democratic rule in Paraguay, and for a peaceful solution to what amounts to the coup d'état that took place on June 23, 2012.

For 61 years, Paraguay was controlled by the Colorado Party, a one party dictatorship that ruled the country under what amounted to martial law. Elections were heavily rigged, opponents were harassed and intimidated, and Indigenous peoples who rejected being relocated from their lands to make way for foreign multinationals were displaced or massacred. In 2008, Fernando Lugo, a former Roman Catholic bishop who comes from the tradition of liberation theology, was democratically elected. Since his election, he has been fighting for the rights of the poor against the wealthy land-holding class.

This past week, the Paraguayan Congress, dominated by parties who support the traditional landed oligarchy in the country, found Fernando Lugo guilty of mishandling the armed clashes over a land eviction in which 17 people died including police and peasant farmers. This resulted in Lugo's impeachment from office. It is clear that the President had no direct responsibility for what took place, and that the impeachment is an excuse to overthrow the democratically elected President Fernando Lugo. We underline that the so-called impeachment did not follow due process, violating article 17 of Paraguay's constitution which provides for the right to an adequate defense.

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We were disappointed to read that Honourable Diane Ablonczy, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs refers to the situation in Paraguay as an expression of democratic order. Instead, this action represents a rupture of the democratic order, leading to destabilization in Paraguay and across the region that cannot be tolerated.

- We call on the Canadian government to condemn the attempted coup and refuse to recognize the new regime of Federico Franco.
- We call on the Canadian government to join calls for the immediate and unconditional restoration of the democratically elected president of Fernando Lugo.
- We call on the Canadian government to withdraw its ambassadors from Paraguay until democracy has been restored.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Moist". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

PAUL MOIST
National President

cc: C. Fleury; S. Marshall; P. Beattie; K. Cameron
Honourable John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs;
Honourable Diane Ablonczy, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs);
Paul Dewar, Official Opposition Critic for Foreign Affairs