

## Ottawa

Pièce 879, Édifice de la Confédération  
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0A6  
Tél. : 613-992-6779  
Télec. : 613-995-8461



CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CANADA

## Ottawa

Room 879, Confederation Building  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6  
Tel.: 613-992-6779  
Fax.: 613-995-8461

## Circonscription

1001, boulevard Maisonneuve est, suite 507  
Montréal (Québec) H2L 4P9  
Tél. : 514-522-1339  
Télec. : 514-522-9899

## Hélène Laverdière

Députée / Member of Parliament  
Laurier—Sainte-Marie / Laurier—Sainte-Marie  
Helene.Laverdiere@parl.gc.ca

## Constituency

1001 Maisonneuve Blvd East, suite 507  
Montréal, Quebec H2L 4P9  
Tel.: 514-522-1339  
Fax.: 514-522-9899

**Hon. Stéphane Dion**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Global Affairs Canada

*June 1, 2016*

**Re: URGENT – Inter-American Commission on Human Rights**

Dear Minister Dion,

We write today to draw you attention to an urgent financial crisis faced by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a supranational body devoted exclusively to monitoring whether members of the Organization of American States (OAS) comply with their human rights obligations. **This crisis must be addressed within the next two weeks, before June 15, 2016.**

As you know, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (the Commission) is a long-standing and essential hemispheric institution. It plays a fundamental role in safeguarding respect for human rights in the Americas, including ensuring the protection of human rights defenders who are constantly under threat from reprisal. The Commission works to end discrimination faced by vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples, sexual minorities, and migrants, and it helps member states develop concrete solutions to correct historical injustices. The Commission plays a vital role in the hemisphere's human rights system due to its central role in referring cases to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, where it litigates those same cases before the Court.

On May 23<sup>rd</sup> the Commission publicly revealed its financial crisis; due to cuts in funding over the past few years, it is no longer able to fulfill its mission. The Commission has asked OAS member states, of which Canada is one, to offer voluntary contributions by June 15<sup>th</sup>. If the Commission does not receive adequate funding by this time, it will be forced to lay off 40% of its staff and cancel much of its planned work.

Minister, **Canada's financial support to the Commission has decreased significantly** since 2011 and **Canada has not made any funding commitment for the current year.** Our inaction on this is jeopardizing the Commission's work.

The Commission's recent work in the case of the 43 students from the Rural Normal School at Ayotzinapa, Iguala, Mexico has been vital. Due to widespread corruption within all levels of government, particularly within municipal and state levels, Mexican authorities were unable to pursue the case on their own.

More recently, the family of assassinated Honduran indigenous leader Berta Caceres has publicly requested that an independent body from the IACHR investigate Ms. Caceres' murder, knowing that local authorities, themselves suspected of being complicit in her death, cannot be trusted to do so. You will remember, Minister, that we wrote to you in support of the family's request in March 2016.

I know you will agree with me that the work of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is essential, and must be supported. Given Canada's tradition of speaking up for human rights and our central role as a member of the OAS, I urgently request that Canada offer a strong voluntary contribution to the Commission before June 15<sup>th</sup>.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



**Hélène Laverdière**  
NDP Critic for Foreign Affairs



**Cheryl Hardcastle**  
NDP Member of the House of Commons Sub-committee for International Human Rights