

To:

The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, The Hon. Bev Oda, Minister of International Cooperation, Margaret Biggs, President of CIDA

cc: NDP Leader Jack Layton
Liberal Party Leader Michael Ignatieff
Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Ducesne

RE. Denial of CIDA support to KAIROS

We, members of the Executive Committee of the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean at York University (CERLAC) – Canada's premier academic research centre on the Americas – write to express our extreme dismay at the news that the Canadian government has cut funding to KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, a long-term and invaluable community partner of our research centre. We urge you to reverse this ill-advised decision.

Your decision to deny funding to KAIROS will have a devastating impact on KAIROS' partners throughout the Americas (and elsewhere), and on the thousands of marginalized people in local communities that they support.

CERLAC has collaborated fruitfully with KAIROS – and its predecessor organization, ICCHRLA (the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America) - since the latter was founded in response to the Pinochet coup in Chile in the mid-1970's. The organization has been a much-valued partner to us; KAIROS has contributed to CERLAC conferences, offered our students training opportunities, provided us speakers on topics of interest to our research community on numerous occasions, and has disseminated information that has informed our research.

However, the greatest value of KAIROS is in the work it undertakes in support of human rights and social justice around the globe. We can assert that the presence of KAIROS (and other organizations of its kind) in the Latin American context is vital to the pursuit of these values in the hemisphere. The support of the Canadian government for such contributions abroad – in the case of KAIROS / ICCHRLA, a 35-year tradition - is something to be celebrated and maintained, not discontinued. Their work is also very much in tune with Canada's long-standing support for human rights, and fits clearly with current DFAIT/CIDA priority on democratic governance.

Again, we are profoundly dismayed at the news of CIDA's refusal to fund KAIROS and strongly urge you to reverse this harmful decision.

(signed) Members of the Executive Committee of The Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean at York University:

Marshall Beck (CERLAC Coordinator)
Brigitte Cairus (PhD candidate,)
Eduardo Canel (CERLAC Director; Professor, Social Science) Luin Goldring (Professor, Sociology)
Ricardo Grinspun (Professor, Economics) Judy Hellman (Professor, Social Science and Political Science)
Viviana Patroni (Professor, Social Science) Liisa North (Professor emerita, Political Science) Alan
Simmons (Professor emeritus, Sociology) Harry Smaller (Professor emeritus, Education) David Szablowski
(Professor, Osgoode Hall Law School) Patrick Taylor (Professor, Humanities) Anna Zalik (Professor,
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