



WORLD MOVEMENT *for* DEMOCRACY

Confronting the Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century

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1 September 2009

Statement of the World Movement for Democracy Steering Committee regarding the Legal Case against Yevgeniy Zhovtis

The Steering Committee of the World Movement for Democracy calls upon the authorities in Kazakhstan to drop unfair charges brought against Yevgeniy Zhovtis.

On 26 July 2009, Kazakhstani human rights activist Yevgeniy Zhovtis, a member of the World Movement Steering Committee, was involved in a car accident, resulting in the tragic death of a pedestrian, Kanat Moldabayev. The Steering Committee expresses its condolences to Mr. Moldabayev's family.

Over the last few weeks, the Steering Committee has received numerous reports that attempts are being made to exploit this tragic accident by manipulating public opinion and politicizing the investigation. A number of procedural violations have been cited. For one, Mr. Zhovtis was never informed that he was a defendant, and thus was never able to use his rights as a defendant to file motions on his own behalf. The complaints he has filed remain unanswered. Most recently on 27 August 2009, Judge Kulan Tolkunov charged Mr. Zhovtis with manslaughter, despite the fact that the prosecution's forensic analysis found that he was neither intoxicated nor driving above the speed limit at the time of the accident.

The Steering Committee joins several organizations around the world in calling on the authorities, political parties, civil society groups, and mass media in Kazakhstan to refrain from politicizing this tragic case, from distorting information, and from using the case to further their own interests. The rule of law should prevail over the desire to silence the voice of a leading human rights defender.

On behalf of the Steering Committee of the World Movement for Democracy:

The Rt. Hon. Kim Campbell
Former Prime Minister of Canada

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