



# WORLD MOVEMENT *for* DEMOCRACY

*Confronting the Challenges to Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

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## *Statement of the World Movement for Democracy Steering Committee regarding Yevgeniy Zhovtis' Conviction*

The Steering Committee of the World Movement for Democracy strongly condemns the recent trial and conviction of Kazakhstani human rights activist Yevgeniy Zhovtis, a World Movement Steering Committee member. Today, Mr. Zhovtis was convicted of vehicular manslaughter and sentenced to four years in prison by the Balkhash District Court in the Almaty Region in Kazakhstan.

On 26 July 2009, Mr. Zhovtis was involved in a car accident, resulting in the tragic death of a pedestrian, Kanat Moldabayev. It appears that Kazakhstani authorities exploited this unfortunate accident to politicize the investigation and punish Mr. Zhovtis for his human rights work, evidenced by the fact that the investigation and the subsequent trial were rife with procedural violations. Specifically, Mr. Zhovtis was initially not informed that he was a defendant in the case while for two weeks he was cooperating with authorities as a witness to the accident. During the trial, the judge ignored Mr. Zhovtis' defense requests and only provided 40 minutes for his defense team to prepare their final arguments.

The Steering Committee of the World Movement for Democracy calls for a full investigation by the appeals court into the various procedural violations that occurred during the investigation and trial. We encourage the international community, especially the diplomatic community, to urge the Kazakhstani authorities to immediately release Mr. Zhovtis. We also call on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to reconsider Kazakhstan's 2010 OSCE Chairmanship as this case shows the country is ignoring fair trial standards.

We express our solidarity with fellow Steering Committee member Yevgeniy Zhovtis.

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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