



Statement

Washington, DC, New York, Brussels, Oslo, The Hague

July 15, 2011

International human rights organizations call again upon the Government of Kazakhstan to release human rights defender Evgeniy Zhovtis.

On July 19, the administration of the colony–settlement where Zhovtis is serving his sentence will review his application for parole to decide on his conditional release. We express our hope that the commission will ensure a fair and thorough examination of the issue and make full use of this opportunity to release Zhovtis.

Our organizations and other independent national and international human rights observers have expressed concern about Zhovtis’s trial and noted it was fraught with procedural flaws: he was not allowed to have independent experts corroborate his story, and he had been interviewed by law enforcement before the trial without having been alerted first that he was considered a suspect. This has led many to the conclusion that Zhovtis’s conviction was politically motivated, as he had often criticized the Kazakhstani government when it fell short of international human rights standards. However, it is apparent he poses no threat to Kazakhstani society; rather, he has done nothing but seek to protect and promote the rights of his fellow citizens. We are confident that after his release Yevgeniy Zhovtis will continue to contribute to the advancement of human rights, thereby securing a brighter future for Kazakhstani citizens.

We urge the administration of the colony and the Kazakhstani authorities to guarantee maximum objectivity in their judicial and penal review and, ultimately, release Zhovtis.

Freedom House
Human Rights Watch
Open Society Foundation

Norwegian Helsinki Committee
International Partnership for Human Rights
Netherlands Helsinki Committee