

News / From Our Bureaus Kazakh Group To Award Democracy Prize To Jailed Men

A Kazakh opposition group will jointly award a democracy prize to a jailed journalist, rights activist, and businessman, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

The unregistered Alga political group said the prize for outstanding contribution to democracy in Kazakhstan will be awarded to Yevgeny Zhovtis, the director of the nongovernmental Kazakh Bureau for Human Rights; Mukhtar Dzhakishev, the former head of Kazakh uranium producer Kazatomprom; and Ramazan Esergepov, the "Alma-Ata Info" newspaper editor.

The award ceremony will be held on January 19 at Communist Party offices in Astana.

Organizers said they had to change the original venue due to government pressure on the owners of the hotel where the ceremony was to take place.

The prize has been awarded since 2003 on January 19, which was declared "Democracy Day" at an assembly held by opposition members.

Zhovtis was sentenced in September to four years in prison for his role in a deadly traffic accident. Dzhakishev, who has been under arrest in prison since May, is accused of theft and corruption. Esergepov was found guilty in August of revealing state secrets after publishing some government documents and sentenced to three years in prison.

Supporters and human rights organizations say the charges and/or sentences against the three are politically motivated.

<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1932985.html>