

Respected Participants of the Alternative NGO Summit!

Thank you for allowing me to address you. For well known reasons, I cannot participate in the Summit of Civil Organizations of the OSCE even as I would have enormous interest in doing so.

The conference is taking place during a very difficult period for promoting ideals and values which further civil society and are based on the fundamental principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international pacts of the UN, and the UN series of documents.

The ideals of democracy, rule of law, and human rights more and more retreat under the onslaught of cynical international politics founded on geopolitical and economic interests, oil and gas, the war against terrorism, and the desire of the ruling elite to permanently stay in power.

International rights in the realm of human rights have become rights of a second class. It has become the norm that international commitments in the realm of human rights are not fulfilled without any consideration to political or moral consequences. Within the OSCE member states, the number of cases of murdered journalists, rights defenders, and political opposition representatives is growing; the number of political prisoners, closed newspapers, broken up meetings and demonstrations, persecuted religious communities, and simple civil dissidence has grown. And the larger part of the former Soviet Union generally has returned to an enclave where the founding international principles of human rights are incorrectly interpreted, distorted, or all together not recognized. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, from the old trunks of history, once again references soaked in poison are dredged up to imply discrepancies between democratic development and human rights and certain national qualities and cultural traditions. Under this view, somehow there are nations in which truth, freedom, and justice are not advisable!

The OSCE was the one of many international organizations which was founded on values and principles which it endeavored to promote and support. Unfortunately, it was affected by this serious recoil of work politics clashing with fundamental human values.

There are many questions standing before the OSCE and civil society. What strategy and tactic to chose for the counteraction of these negative, destructive tendencies leading everyone to big disappointment, despair, feelings of being at a dead end with regards to prospects for democratic development? How to influence governments which still listen well to the voice of society, and those which all together are not interested in hearing this voice? How to hold onto our own rights and be the subject and not the object of international and domestic politics in separate countries?

I don't have any prepared prescriptions, and my treatment on the matter does not come in the form a report or programmatic introduction. But I am sure that we do not have any way out other than to continue to hold on; to hold on to our own rights so that we can be heard for the sake of human dignity and participation in the governance of our own countries, and on the international level; to hold on to our rights to call black, black, and white, white; to hold on to our right to associate unhindered, to build coalitions, and to turn to an open, global civil society as a counterweight to the elite club of presidents, rulers, and transnational corporations.

I want to again emphasize that, as it is presented to me, the most important task of the OSCE civil society is to transform itself from object to subject in international politics and in the domestic political life of the member states of the OSCE.

I hope that this summit calls to answer these burning questions and works out effective strategies for our consolidation and combined action directed so that the documents of the OSCE in the realm of the human dimension do not ultimately become meaningless declarative papers.

I wish the summit success and important, permeating results.

Yevgeniy Zhovtis  
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City of Ust'-Kamenogorsk, Establishment OV 156/13