

**18 February 2010**

**Willie O'Dea's belated resignation displays contempt for rule of law  
and the office of minister – McKenna**

The political campaign group the People's Movement has described the resignation of defence minister Willie O'Dea as too little too late and claims that the government's handling of the situation displays contempt for the principles of ethics in public office.

In a press statement issued this evening, People's Movement chairperson Patricia McKenna said: 'Minister O'Dea should have done the honorable thing and stepped down when he was first caught out giving false evidence to the High Court. Instead he tried to brazen it out, only deciding to go when he knew he was to be given his marching orders by the same group of government ministers who, ironically, less than 24 hours previously had voted through a motion of confidence in him.'

'No right thinking government minister should have condoned the actions of Minister O'Dea. But sadly, all members of government – Fianna Fáil and Green alike – displayed a total disregard for standards in public office, ethics or the truth when they lining up to speak in Mr O'Dea's defence' said McKenna.

'Just like Mr O'Dea, who when he was caught out last year giving false evidence to the High Court backtracked on his position, the government parties agreed at the eleventh hour that O'Dea would have to go when they realized that they had no other option because allowing him to stay in office would result in their own eventual downfall. No party in government can take the high moral ground on this issue. Public reaction and the opposition has forced them to backtrack.'

'Minister O'Dea abused his position and more importantly displayed utter contempt for the rule of law. He was a minister with a very important portfolio, which had increased in importance since ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. As minister for defence, Mr. O'Dea was Ireland's representative on the European Defence Agency (EDA), which is the new EU armaments agency tasked with "*promoting Defence Research and Technology, promoting armaments co-operation and creating a competitive EU Defence Equipment Market*". This controversial agency has been given huge powers via the Lisbon Treaty. Our main access to information about what is going on there would, if Mr. O'Dea was still minister, have been courtesy of a minister that had given false evidence to the High Court.'

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