



**United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
(U.S. Helsinki Commission)**

**Hearing on
“Boris Nemtsov, 1959-2015:
Seeking Justice, Securing His Legacy”
Wednesday, February 28, 2018
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 138**

Opening Statement of Senator Benjamin Cardin, Ranking Member

Well, first, let me thank our chairman, Senator Wicker, for calling this hearing. Senator Wicker’s been one of the great champions in the United States Senate on human rights. And we’re very proud of his leadership here on the Helsinki Commission. And it’s very appropriate that we have this hearing in regards to Boris Nemtsov.

I just really want to put this in context, Mr. Chairman, if I might. And that is, in Russia Mr. Putin uses an asymmetric arsenal of weapons in order to control his country, to oppress his people, and to interfere with the democratic principles of countries in Europe, and, as we’ve seen, in the United States in our 2016 elections. So this is a pattern of conduct. And I mentioned that we issued a report, and Damian Murphy of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is here. He spent a year of his life writing this report on Mr. Putin and what he does in Russia, and the tools that he uses to compromise our way of life.

He uses his military. We know that. We saw that in Ukraine. We see that in Georgia and Moldova. He uses financing of fringe parties. We’ve seen that in several countries, including France, financing a coup in Montenegro, cyberattacks in the United States, misinformation in Germany and the U.K., support for fringe groups, including corruption – he uses corruption of his oligarchs in Russia in order to finance his own operations, but then gets involved in corrupt enterprises in other countries, as has been documented in Italy and elsewhere, uses energy as a tool, which we saw, again, in Ukraine.

I mention all that because he also uses murder. He also uses intimidation against his own people. And Boris Nemtsov was a victim of that violence. And it’s very appropriate that we have this hearing. Mr. Chairman, I recall how Boris joined me for the screening of “Justice for Sergei” in November 2010, and almost immediately after was assaulted at the airport upon returning to Russia. He helped us in getting justice for Sergei Magnitsky, who was also a victim of Mr. Putin’s violence in Russia. So this is not an isolated example. We have not yet had justice for Mr. Nemtsov.

We know that the gunman who shot four bullets into Mr. Nemtsov's back served as a commander in the Chechen security forces under leader Ramzan Kadyrov, a close associate of Vladimir Putin. And while the gunman and his accomplices have been punished, the masterminds behind the assassinations have not been served justice. And I'm very pleased that we have our good friend Vladimir Kara-Murza here. Not once but twice they tried to poison him. And he's still here. And we're proud about that.

My final point is this, many of us have been very outspoken about our opposition to what Mr. Putin has done to his own people, to democratic countries in Europe, his interference in the Middle East, in Syria, his support for Iran, and his attack here in the United States. But let's make it clear, we're on the side of the Russian people. And we very much want to acknowledge the brave Russians who have stepped forward to try to return Russia to a country that respects the rights of all of its citizens.

And following our chairman, I'll put the rest of my statement into the record and look forward to hearing from our witnesses.