



**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 Roger Wicker, Chairman

We’re turning our attention in today’s hearing to the loss of one of Russia’s great democratic reformers, Boris Nemtsov, who was gunned down within sight of the Kremlin three years ago yesterday. Although the triggermen were apprehended and tried for their crime, the masterminds behind it have never been identified. Our witnesses today are people who knew Boris Nemtsov well. I stood behind them yesterday at the ceremony to rename a section of Wisconsin Avenue as Boris Nemtsov Plaza. I am very pleased that this hearing will focus on the legacy of Boris Nemtsov as Russians prepare to cast their votes in another presidential election next month.

We are honored to have his daughter, Ms. Zhanna Nemtsova, join us and reflect on her father’s work and the prospects for realizing his dream of a free and democratic Russia. Ms. Nemtsova is joined by someone who is no stranger to members of the Helsinki Commission nor in the halls of Congress, thanks to his tireless and courageous work for democracy in Russia. Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza knows better than almost anyone about the intense and all-too-often lethal pressure being applied to brave Russians like him and Boris Nemtsov, who engage in opposition politics. Mr. Kara-Murza directed the documentary film, “Nemtsov,” a truly remarkable tribute to Boris, which opened in Nizhny Novgorod, and was screened in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Washington, where many people in the room had a chance to see it. We’re also very fortunate to have Mr. Vadim Prokhorov, the lawyer for the Nemtsov family, who’s worked for years now to see the masterminds of this heinous act brought to justice.

As I mentioned, yesterday our witnesses participated in the naming ceremony for the Boris Nemtsov Plaza. As an American, I’m proud that Washington held the very first such official memorial of Boris Nemtsov anywhere in the world. The Russian people should know that we will continue to build legislative monuments to their heroes here, until stone monuments can be built in Russia.

Let me offer a word about the posters on display at the front of the room. They serve as a reminder that brave Russians have gathered on a regular basis to ask for justice for Boris Nemtsov. The photo of these flowers at the site of his murder could have been taken virtually any day in the past three years. Despite being removed every day the flowers are always replaced by the many people who revere the memory of Boris Nemtsov. I think these people deserve to be recognized for their devotion to democracy in Russia, and for their dedication to honoring one of Russia's great democratic leaders.

I'll place the rest of my statement in the record and recognize my colleague and dear friend Senator Ben Cardin of Maryland.