



**UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE  
(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)**

**“Boris Nemtsov, 1959 - 2015: Seeking Justice, Securing his  
Legacy”**

**Rep. Chris Smith, Co-Chairman**

**Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

**February 28, 2018**

Good afternoon, and thanks to everyone joining us today.

More than an elected official, Boris Nemtsov was Zhanna’s father, and I want to thank her for being with us today. And for some of us here today, he was a friend and colleague.

We may never know who ordered his murder, but he was certainly slain for the role he had played in Russian public life – he was Russia’s foremost advocate of freedom and the rule of law. He knew that in working for a Russia marked by the rule of law, freedom of expression, and democracy he risked his life.

Although Boris was taken from us three years ago, the outrages against democratic activists continue today. Just recently Russian authorities charged an opposition leader with public incitement to extremist actions by means of the Internet. Calls to join mass public demonstrations or to change the government, absent a direct indication that this should be done by means of violence, are not unlawful and cannot be considered criminal offenses. As we consider Boris Nemtsov’s legacy today, let us not forget that opposition figures are under extreme pressure from the Russian authorities.

The assassination of Boris Nemtsov also speaks to the need for historic justice. Time, even years, doesn’t lessen the need for accountability in crimes like this, and addressing them is necessary for family, and in this case for an entire country, to have closure.

While the Putin government did everything in its power to push Mr. Nemtsov to the margins of Russian political life, he will not be on the margins of our minds and our hearts.