

Nemtsov Urges West to Place Restrictions on Putin's Travel

January 17, 2011



Opposition leaders Boris Nemtsov and Eduard Limonov facing the media on Monday after being released following 15 days in police custody. **Sergey Ponomarev**

Opposition leader Boris Nemtsov urged the West on Monday to refuse entry to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and his top lieutenants in reaction to what he described as repression of dissent.

Nemtsov spoke after spending 15 days in jail over what he called fabricated charges following an anti-government rally. His Dec. 31 arrest drew outrage in the West and prompted Amnesty International to call him a prisoner of conscience.

Nemtsov said he was jailed on the false testimony of police officers by a judge who followed government orders. The judge rejected Nemtsov's plea to consider video footage demonstrating that he was not violating public order or resisting police.

Other leading opposition activists were also jailed by the same judge.

"The Russian judiciary has been fully destroyed," Nemtsov told reporters Monday.

Police routinely break up opposition rallies, but protest leaders were usually only detained for a few hours before being set free. But the jailing of Nemtsov and other top opposition activists marked a toughening of authorities' response to street protests.

Nemtsov said the latest crackdown reflected the authorities' fear of the opposition ahead of the parliamentary elections this fall and the presidential vote next year.

"They will stop at nothing to preserve their power and money," Nemtsov said about the government.

Putin, who shifted into the prime minister's seat after two presidential terms, is widely expected to reclaim the presidency. Last month, Putin accused Nemtsov and other opposition leaders of trying to return to power to sell the country out to the West. Nemtsov said Monday that he was considering a libel suit.

Nemtsov urged the West to refuse visas to top Russian officials and their relatives to encourage more respect for democracy and civil rights.

"That list must start with Putin's name. He is the man who has trampled upon and torn apart the Russian Constitution," he said.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/01/17/nemtsov-urges-west-to-place-restrictions-on-putins-travel-a4269>