

Leading Russian Academic Steps Down Over Nemtsov Insult

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A senior academic at a leading Russian institute attended by the son of Boris Nemtsov has resigned from his post as deputy dean after inciting the outrage of his students by posting an offensive comment about the recently slain opposition activist.

Vladimir Talismanov initially offered to resign from his post at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT, or Phystech) on Monday after about two dozen MIPT students and alumni publicly condemned remarks that he had posted on social media site VKontakte following the murder of Nemtsov, who was gunned down Friday outside the Kremlin.

“The Americans created this scum [Nemtsov] themselves, financed [him], and they took [him] out themselves. Such is the fate of all prostitutes. [There is now] one less scumbag,” Talismanov, who later deleted his post, reportedly said of Nemtsov’s death, according to an open letter posted Sunday on the MIPT student portal.

“We, students, alumni and instructors of MIPT have come to recognize Phystech as an institute of high standards — not just academic ones, but also moral and ethical ones,” read

the open letter. “We acknowledge the right of Vladimir [Talismanov] to express his opinions ... But we believe that any death should be viewed only as a tragedy, and in no other way.”

The authors of the letter also offered their apologies to Nemtsov’s son Anton, who is currently studying at the MIPT, on behalf of “those who were incapable of acting decently.”

Talismanov later apologized for his comments in an interview with Russian News Service, saying he was willing to resign if the students at the institute so desired.

“It was never my intention to offend [the] family. I categorically condemn any violence, any murder. The fact is that I took a certain position toward Boris Yefimovich [Nemtsov] and his actions in the ’90s. Probably it was an excessively emotional act, for which I am now embarrassed,” Talismanov was quoted as saying.

He told Russian News Service later on Monday that he had resigned from his position as a deputy dean but would continue to work at the institute in a different capacity.

The MIPT administration has already offered its apologies to Nemtsov’s family for the “deeply flawed and provocative comment” by Talismanov, according to a post on its official VKontakte page.

A Moscow march held Sunday in Nemtsov’s memory drew some 50,000 people, according to organizers’ estimates, while other memorial events took place in dozens of cities.

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