

A Closer Look at Nemtsov's Comments on Charlie Hebdo

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Boris Nemtsov

Russian investigators and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov on Sunday reiterated suggestions that opposition leader Boris Nemtsov might have been killed for offending Muslims with his views on French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo. But while famous for his criticism of the Kremlin, Nemtsov was hardly known for his opinions on the Muslim faith.

Investigators on Sunday detained five men, all identified as Caucasus natives, for the gunning down of Nemtsov on Feb. 27 near the Kremlin.

Leader of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov leaped to defend one of the suspects — Zaur Dadayev, a former serviceman in the Chechen interior troops who reportedly confessed to the killing — as a Russian "patriot" and a pious Muslim who was angered by French magazine Charlie Hebdo's satirical cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad.

"All who know Zaur confirm that he is a deep believer and also that he, like all Muslims, was shocked by the activities of Charlie and comments in support of printing the cartoons," Kadyrov wrote on his Instagram account.

We line up the statements made by Nemtsov on Charlie Hebdo that supposedly could have led to his death:

"The tragedy with the killing of 12 journalists of Charlie Hebdo magazine has shocked all normal people. My condolences to the families and loved ones of the innocently slain journalists. When Russia's Council of Muftis calls the actions of the publication's journalists a provocation and a sin, it is justifying the terrorists." ([Facebook](#), Jan. 7)

"Tolerance ends there where violence begins. Many in Europe do not understand this. As a result, [French right-wing politician Marine] Le Pen will win." ([Facebook](#), Jan. 8)

Nemtsov accompanied the post with a political caricature from a German magazine denouncing the Charlie Hebdo attack, titled: "No, you cannot kill our liberty."

"Since the dawn of time, people have been killed for their beliefs. Romans crucified Jesus and persecuted Christians, and during the Middle Ages hundreds of thousands of people were burned alive on the bonfires of the Inquisition. ... Now we are witnessing a medieval Islamic inquisition. Centuries will pass and Islam will mature, and terrorism will become a thing of the past." ([Ekho Moskvyy](#), Jan. 9)

Nemtsov also commented on threats made by Kadyrov earlier this year against other prominent Russians who spoke out in support of Charlie Hebdo.

Kadyrov declared former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky his "personal enemy" for urging other publications to reprint Charlie Hebdo caricatures in a demonstration of solidarity. The Chechen leader also threatened that Ekho Moskvyy's editor-in-chief, Alexei Venediktov, "would be called to account" after the radio station's website ran a poll on whether media should publish similar political caricatures.

Nemtsov responded: "With his threats against Venediktov, Kadyrov crudely violates Article 144 of the Criminal Code of Russia: infringing on journalists' activities. Under that charge, Ramzan faces two years behind bars.

If I were in Venediktov's shoes, I would file a report to [Investigative Committee chief] Alexander Bastrykin.

"Everybody is already sick and tired of Ramzan's threats, but he is certain that [President Vladimir] Putin will not let anyone touch him, so he is growing increasingly brazen every day." ([Facebook](#), Jan. 9)

Journalists who attended the court hearing on Sunday reported that Dadayev, the murder suspect, had told the court: "I love the Prophet Muhammad," strengthening his portrayal as a devout Muslim.

Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said shortly after the shooting that the attack may have an "Islamic extremist trail," adding that Nemtsov had received threats for

his comments about Charlie Hebdo, Interfax reported.

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