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'Extremist' Content in Activist's Nemtsov Banner Actually Putin Quote

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A banner denouncing the murder of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov.

An activist who put up a banner denouncing the murder of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov said it has been confiscated for possible "extremism" by police— apparently unaware that the banner was citing Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The banner that appeared on a building in the city of Nizhny Novgorod this week featured a portrait of Nemtsov, accompanied by a quote — placed in quotation marks but without attribution — that read: "We need to rid Russia of the kind of shame and tragedy such as... the audacious murder of Boris Nemtsov right in the center of our capital," according to a photograph of the banner that its author, German Knyazev, posted Tuesday on his Facebook page.

Putin said the words during a meeting with Interior Ministry officials last week, following Nemtsov's murder near the Kremlin on Feb. 27.

The full quote, according to the Kremlin website, read: "We need to rid Russia of the kind of shame and tragedy such as what we have just witnessed. I am referring to the audacious murder of Boris Nemtsov right in the center of our capital."

In a single line of text accompanying the photo of his banner, Knyazev quipped that he would not be surprised if police ordered the conducting of "expert analysis for extremism" in the text.

Police indeed summoned Knyazev for questioning on Wednesday and asked him to "hand over the banner voluntarily" for a "linguistic expert analysis" of its content, the activist said in a later post on Wednesday.

The investigation appeared to have been prompted by a complaint from a local resident about the supposedly extremist nature of the quoted text, he said.

Knyazev said he had responded by asking investigators if they would also want to have the national flag removed from Nizhny Novgorod's local administrative buildings if they "receive a complaint from somebody doubting its color combination."

Knyazev said police might have started paying extra attention to his activities after he first put up a banner on Nemtsov asking: "Whom will you kill next to defeat your own chimeras?"

A day after the banner was put up he received a visit from police officials at his office, asking him for explanations about the display — and also allegedly asking him about the meaning of the word "chimera," according to the activist.

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