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Navalny Was 'Joking' When he Said the Kremlin Could Murder Him

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Alexei Navalny **Screenshot / Echo Moskvy**

In an interview with the Ekho Moskvy radio station on Monday, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said he had been "joking" when he said in earlier comments that there was a 50 percent chance he would killed by the Russian authorities for his political activism.

In an interview with U.S. television channel CBS, which aired on Monday, Navalny was asked whether he thought he would "end up dead" for his criticism of President Putin.

"Well, like, you know, [there is a] 50 percent [chance] I would be killed or I would not be killed]," Navalny said.

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The influential American TV station took him at his word and published the interview excerpt on its website on Saturday, which caused alarm among his sympathizers.

“This is a lesson for me,” Navalny told Ekho Moskvy on Monday. "Don’t joke in a foreign language."

“They took it so seriously and put it in the title, which comes across as very frightening,” he said.

The opposition leader, who plans to challenge Vladimir Putin for the Russian presidency in elections next March even though criminal convictions bar him from running, went on to caution that political activity is risky in Russia.

“Any politician in Russia, and anyone active in independent politics, faces certain risks,” Navalny said. “But to estimate those risks in percentages, or in terms of probability, is absolutely impossible.”

“It’s pointless to even think about it because you won’t be able to do anything.”

The interview with Navalny was part of the broadcast called “Enemy of the State,” which aired on CBS News on Monday.

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