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Russia Condemned Over 'Ineffective' Nemtsov Murder Probe

By AFP

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People laying flowers in memory of Boris Nemtsov, in Moscow, 2021. **Valery Tenevoy / pexels**

Russia was condemned Tuesday by Europe's top rights court for failing to adequately investigate the shooting of top opposition politician Boris Nemtsov in 2015, including possible links to Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov.

Nemtsov, an outspoken critic of Russian leader Vladimir Putin, was gunned down crossing a bridge a short walk from the Kremlin in Moscow.

Although a court convicted five people over the death in 2017, the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) said that the Russian investigation had been "ineffective."

In its judgment Tuesday, the seven-judge panel concluded that investigators "had obtained substantial evidence pointing to possible involvement of certain officers of interior security forces of the Chechen Republic in the events."

But it said these lines of inquiry had never been explored or exposed in court because this part of the police probe had been "severed" from the official investigation.

"A number of persons who could have provided information of crucial importance for the case had either never been examined nor asked key questions," the judgment said.

"The investigation had singularly failed to either explore the political motive for the assassination with particular diligence or to come up with another plausible explanation for the motives behind the murder," it added.

The ECHR is part of the pan-European rights body the Council of Europe from which Russia was expelled in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine last year.

The complaint over the killing of Nemtsov was filed by his daughter in August 2015, meaning the court was still competent to examine the case.

Nemtsov's family have long suspected Kadyrov of involvement in the killing and the Chechen leader has been placed under sanctions by the United States over the murder and other alleged human rights abuses.

A key ally of Putin, whose so-called Kadyrovtsy forces have played a major role in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Kadyrov has denied any involvement.

In June, the ECHR also condemned Russia for failing to properly investigate the 2020 poisoning of opposition figure Alexei Navalny, which the West believes was an assassination bid.

Like the Nemtsov case, the court noted that the official inquiry had failed to explore a possible political motive for the crime or the involvement of state agents.

In its ruling on Tuesday, the ECHR ordered Russia to pay Nemtsov's daughter 20,000 euros ($22,000).

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