

# I Have No Doubt That Putin Killed Navalny

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Alexei Navalny and Ilya Yashin. **Pavel Golovkin / AP / TASS**

News comes slowly to the camp barracks, and I learned about Alexei Navalny's death only yesterday. It's hard to convey my shock. It's hard to gather my thoughts. The pain and horror are unbearable.

And yet I will not remain silent. I will say what I think must be said.

There is no question about what happened to Navalny. I have no doubt that he was murdered. For three years, Alexei was under the control of the siloviki, who had already organized an unsuccessful assassination attempt on him in 2020. Now they carried it out.

And there is no question about who killed him. I have no doubt that Putin did it. He's a war criminal. Navalny was his key opponent in Russia and was hated in the Kremlin. Putin had both motive and opportunity. I am certain that he ordered the assassination.

I already know how state propaganda will try to manipulate public opinion. They will say that Navalny's death is not in the president's interest, that it doesn't make sense to kill him a month before the elections, that Putin is focused on global politics and has no time to think about some convict... Utter nonsense, dismiss it outright. After Alexei was poisoned in 2020, Putin was defended in propaganda with the argument "if he wanted to kill him, he would have killed him." That's correct. He wanted to, and he did. And he didn't just kill him, he made a show of killing him — just before the elections so that no one would doubt Putin's involvement. He made a show of killing Prigozhin, too, so that no one would doubt who did it.

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In Putin's understanding, this is how power is established: through murder, cruelty, and demonstrative revenge. This is not the thinking of a statesman. It is the mindset of a gang leader. Let's be honest: Putin is the leader of a mafia organization that has merged with our state. He is devoid of any moral and legal constraints. He holds people in fear, and he imprisons and destroys those who are not afraid.

That's why Boris Nemtsov was shot. That's why Alexei Navalny was killed. For three years in the prison camps, Navalny was tortured in punishment cells to break him, so that he'd beg for mercy. It didn't work, and so they took his life.

The confrontation between Navalny and Putin showed the scale of their natures. Alexei will go down in history as a man of exceptional courage who strode ahead for what he believed in. He kept going, defying fear and death. He kept going, smiling, with his head proudly raised high. And he died a hero.

But Putin will remain a small man who gained enormous power by chance, a guy who hides in a bunker, kills stealthily and holds millions of people hostage to his psychological complexes. But I don't wish him dead. I dream that he will answer for his crimes not only before God, but also before the court on earth.

Alexei Navalny was my friend. So was Boris Nemtsov. We shared a common cause and dedicated our lives to making Russia peaceful, free and happy. Now both my friends are dead. There is a black hole inside me. And, of course, I realize my own risk. I am behind bars, my life is in Putin's hands, and it is in danger. But I will continue to stay the course.

As I stood over Boris's body in February 2015, I vowed to myself that I would never be afraid, never give up, and never run. Nine years later, as I mourn Alexei, I can only repeat that vow.

As long as my heart beats in my chest, I will fight tyranny. As long as I live, I will fear no evil. As long as I breathe, I will be with my people.

I swear it.

Alexei, my brother, sleep in peace.

Yulia, Lyudmila Ivanovna, Anatoly Ivanovich, Oleg, Dasha, Zakhar — stand firm.

I am with you.

*The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.*

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