

rationalizations of Putin's war. Putin didn't invade Ukraine to protect Russian-speaking peoples or to establish a federal state. Putin didn't invade Ukraine because he is crazy or merely to reassert Russia's sphere of influence in the near abroad. Rather, Boris Nemtsov wrote that the goal of Putin's "fratricidal war" is the "preservation of personal power and money at any cost," a "cold strategy for lifelong despotism." Putin was willing to doom Russia to isolation and sanctions and to sink his country "into lies, violence, obscurantism, and imperial hysteria" for his own personal power and enrichment. As Boris Nemtsov knew, this is not Russia's war; this is not Ukraine's war; this is Vladimir Putin's war.

That is why Boris Nemtsov's murder is not just a tragedy for the people of Russia but for the people of Ukraine. He was one of the few brave Russians who sought to pierce the veneer of Putin's cynical and false narrative that Russia was not at war in Ukraine. There are many who now believe that Boris is yet another casualty of that war. At the memorial march honoring his life in Moscow on Sunday, one woman held a sign that read "The war killed Nemtsov."

I had long been concerned about Boris's safety and said so publicly. I will never forget the last meeting we had in my office. I begged him to be careful, and Boris told me he would never give up the fight for freedom, human rights, and rule of law for his fellow Russians, even if it cost him his life. I am heartbroken that it has come to that.

That Boris Nemtsov's murder occurred on a bridge in a shadow of the Kremlin in one of the most secure parts of the Russian capital raises serious questions about the circumstances of his killing and who was responsible. In KGB fashion, Vladimir Putin will round up all the usual suspects, but I fear we will never know who really pulled the trigger that night. Putin's farcical oversight of the investigation ensures that it will be a sham.

We don't need any investigation to know who was responsible for Boris's murder. Vladimir Putin may not have ordered Boris's assassination, but perhaps what is most frightening about Putin's Russia is that he didn't need to. Boris is dead because of the culture of impunity that Vladimir Putin has created in Russia, where individuals are routinely persecuted and attacked for their beliefs, including by the Russian Government, and no one is ever held responsible.

Sadly, Boris Nemtsov was not the first and certainly will not be the last victim of Putin's repression. The culture of impunity has steadily worsened, deepened by the increased surveillance and harassment of members of opposition and civil society groups, the ongoing detention of numerous political prisoners, and by the continued violent attacks on brave journalists who dare to publish the truth about of-

ficial corruption and other state crimes in Russia.

According to one news report, at least 23 journalists have been murdered in Russia for reporting on government criminality and abuse since Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, along with several anti-Kremlin political activists. In only two of these cases have there been convictions.

Igor Domnikov, a reporter who was writing about government corruption, was severely beaten in Moscow. He died 2 months later.

Sergei Yushenkov, a leader of a Russian opposition party, was shot and killed at the entrance of his apartment building. At the time, he was serving on a commission investigating the Kremlin's potential role in the 1999 apartment bombings in Russia.

Another member of that commission, a reporter who was investigating corruption in Russian law enforcement, was poisoned to death.

American journalist Paul Klebnikov was investigating Russian Government connections to organized crime when he was shot to death in Moscow.

Anna Politkovskaya, a journalist and human rights activist, was a fierce critic of Vladimir Putin's brutal war in Chechnya. She was murdered in the stairwell of her apartment building on Vladimir Putin's birthday in 2006. The lawyer who represented her family later survived a poisoning attempt.

Former FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko exposed the Putin regime's massive corruption, ties to organized crime, and involvement in assassination and murder. He was poisoned in 2006 with a radioactive isotope in a brazen act of nuclear terrorism.

Ivan Safronov was investigating a secret sale of Russian missiles and fighter jets to Syria and Iran. He was pushed to his death from the window of his Moscow apartment.

Sergei Magnitsky blew the whistle on tax fraud and large-scale theft by Russian Government officials. He was thrown into one of Russia's harshest prisons without trial, beaten and tortured, denied medical care, and died in excruciating pain. Even after his death, the Russian courts convicted him of tax evasion in a show trial.

As Orwell once wrote, "In a time of universal deceit—telling the truth is a revolutionary act."

Russia has fewer and fewer revolutionaries, but Boris Nemtsov was certainly one of them. Boris told the truth and was willing to lay down his life for it. He told the truth about Putin's reign of terror and hatred. He told the truth about Putin's kleptocracy, rampant corruption, and systematic theft perpetrated against the Russian people. He told the truth about Putin's illegal invasion of the sovereign Nation of Ukraine and Russia's continued support for violence, instability, and terror.

Boris told the truth, and we must honor his memory by speaking these same truths fearlessly. Our Nation and

free people everywhere must draw strength from Boris's example and continue to resist Vladimir Putin's dark and dangerous view of the world.

Last Sunday, over 50,000 Russians marched in tribute to Boris Nemtsov, still seeking, despite the odds, what a Russian poet once called the footprints of the forgotten truth. At a funeral on Tuesday, thousands more waited in line in the cold for more than 1 hour to pay Boris their respects.

Finally, as the hearse carrying Boris Nemtsov pulled away, mourners tossed flowers and chanted: "Russia will be free!"

As I remember my friend Boris Nemtsov, that is my most sincere hope and fervent prayer.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 178, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 178) to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Pending:

Portman amendment No. 270, to amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to enable State child protective services systems to improve the identification and assessment of child victims of sex trafficking.

Portman amendment No. 271, to amend the definition of "homeless person" under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to include certain homeless children and youth.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, the Senate is presently considering a series of human trafficking bills that will help law enforcement and nongovernmental organizations to take swift aggressive action to protect our most vulnerable populations and work to ensure justice, restitution, and healing for victims of these most horrific crimes.

Human trafficking—modern-day slavery—is not a vestige of the past. It is an evil presence here and now. Children and young adults are being bought and sold in our back yard. This problem knows no borders. It is happening in communities across Ohio. It is a particular problem in Toledo—northwest Ohio—where several north-south and east-west highways come together.

It is difficult even to obtain accurate information on this depraved crime