

# CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF CANADA

For Immediate Release

## CANADIAN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES CONDEMN THE ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT OF RUSSIAN PRO- DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS AND OPPOSITION LEADER BORIS NEMTSOV

**Toronto, Ontario** –The Central and Eastern European Council of Canada is calling on The Canadian Government and all Canadian politicians to join the international community in condemning the recent arrest and imprisonment of **Russian opposition leader and former Deputy Prime Minister, Boris Nemtsov**, along with hundreds of other pro-democracy activists during a peaceful demonstration in Moscow on New Year's Eve, by Russian security forces.

Similar demonstrations have been held in Russia on the 31<sup>st</sup> of every month with 31 days in support of Article 31 of the Russian Constitution, which guarantees Russians the right to assemble and protest freely.

This most recent crackdown on pro-democracy activists is the latest in a series of Kremlin measures targeting democracy and the rule-of-law in Russia and follows the recent, internationally condemned, political show trial of former Russian businessman, **Mikhail Khodorkovsky**. Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Lawrence Cannon**, recently characterized the Khodorkovsky verdict as a “worrying signal.”

Mr. Nemtsov spoke at the August, University of Toronto, **Black Ribbon Day Conference** (sponsored by the CEEC) about the erosion of freedom and democracy in Russia and warned against an increasingly oppressive, authoritarian Kremlin.

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**For more information contact:**

**The Central and Eastern European Council in Canada**  
[ceec.canada@gmail.com](mailto:ceec.canada@gmail.com)

Marcus Kolga  
416 833 5553  
[marcuskolga@gmail.com](mailto:marcuskolga@gmail.com)

Markus Hess  
647-231-0058  
[mjhess2003@yahoo.ca](mailto:mjhess2003@yahoo.ca)

*The Eastern and Central European Council represents nearly 4 million Canadians of Eastern and Central European heritage and includes as members, the Councils and Congresses of the Ukrainian, Polish, Hungarian, Slovak, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian communities in Canada.*