



From left, Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), Senator Chris Coons (D-DE), and James Roscoe, deputy head of mission at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., listen as Evgenia Kara-Murza, rights advocate and wife of Vladimir Kara-Murza, speaks about her husband at an NED-sponsored event on Capitol Hill on April 9. [Source: [thenationalnews.com](https://thenationalnews.com)]

## National Endowment For Democracy continues to weaponize human rights

By [Jeremy Kuzmarov](#) (Posted May 23, 2024)

Originally published: [CovertAction Magazine](#) on May 20, 2024 (more by [CovertAction Magazine](#)) |

[Imperialism](#), [Political Economy](#), [State Repression](#), [StrategyAmericas](#), [Europe](#), [Russia](#), [Ukraine](#), [United StatesNewswireCentral Intelligence Agency \(CIA\)](#), [CIA-subsidized Security Service of Ukraine \(SBU\)](#), [John McCain](#), [Magnitsky Act of 2012](#), [National Endowment for Democracy \(NED\)](#), [President Vladimir Putin](#), [Sergei Magnitsky](#), [Vladimir Kara-Murza](#)



Senator John McCain with Vladimir Kara-Murza and his wife and kids at an NED event in September 2017. [Source: [twitter.com](https://twitter.com)]

On April 9, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a CIA offshoot specializing in political propaganda, hosted an event to showcase its solidarity with Vladimir Kara-Murza, a right-wing political operative who has been imprisoned for two years in a Siberian jail after

being convicted of treason and other offenses.

A dual Russian-British citizen who was educated in England and lived most of his life in the West, Kara-Murza was particularly close with neo-conservative war hawk John McCain, serving as a pallbearer at his funeral. Kara-Murza and McCain worked together on pushing anti-Putin measures through Congress, including the Magnitsky Act of 2012, which triggered the new Cold War by imposing crippling sanctions on Russia. The NED event featured speeches from Kara-Murza's wife Evgenia and senators and congresspersons known for their strong anti-Russia and pro-Ukraine stance, including Roger Wicker (R-MS), Steve Cohen (D-TN), Chris Coons (D-DE), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH).

The first speaker, Senator Cardin (D-MD), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was the original sponsor of the December 2012 Magnitsky Act, which poisoned U.S.-Russian relations following efforts at a reset during President Barack Obama's first term.

The Magnitsky Act was named after Sergei Magnitsky, an accountant who died in prison after supposedly blowing the whistle on a Russian government scheme to defraud American hedge fund manager Bill Browder of \$230 million.



Vladimir Kara-Murza [Source: [in.org](#)]

In reality, Magnitsky was an expert in assisting foreign capitalists like Browder to offshore their money, and helped Browder to defraud the Russian government of the \$230 million.<sup>1</sup>

At the NED event, Cardin characterized Kara-Murza as a great champion for human

rights and said that his imprisonment reflected the cruelty of Vladimir Putin, who was ritually denounced as a vile dictator and mass murderer by the other speakers.

Evgenia Kara-Murza claimed her husband was poisoned by Putin and suffered brain damage, though evidence for this is lacking. Russia expert John Helmer told me that “Putin has not poisoned any of the people about whom it has been claimed, starting with the Skripals and then [Alexei] Navalny.”

Kara-Murza’s father, Vladimir Alexeyevich Kara-Murza, was a critic of Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982) and prominent supporter of Boris Yeltsin in the post-Soviet 1990s. Kara-Murza became an adviser to Boris Nemtsov, Russia’s Minister of Fuel and Energy in 1997 and Deputy Prime Minister from 1998 to 1999 who was involved in corrupt privatization schemes that enabled the looting of Russia by foreign capitalists.<sup>2</sup>



Bill Browder, left, Sergei Magnitsky, right.

[Source: [themoscowtimes.com](#)]

The Kremlin’s disdain for Kara-Murza stems from his association with Nemtsov and Browder. He and

Browder lobbied in support of the Magnitsky Act, giving speeches promoting a false story about Magnitsky and vilifying Putin. More recently, Kara-Murza has been a staunch supporter of Western policies in Ukraine against his own country’s interests.

Part of the basis for the treason charge was Kara-Murza's association with the Free Russia Foundation, which has been accused of being a front for Western intelligence agencies' efforts to destabilize Russia and promote regime change under the guise of democracy promotion.<sup>3</sup>

In October 2017, Kara-Murza authored an article in the NED's *Journal of Democracy* comparing Putin to Mussolini, claiming falsely that the Bolsheviks seized power in November 1917 in a coup d'état, and advocating for a color revolution in Russia modeled after ones supported by Western intelligence agencies in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine.

Kara-Murza contrasted Boris Yeltsin favorably with Putin, claiming that Yeltsin presided over "competitive elections" when Yeltsin won 1996 elections only because of massive U.S. interference. Kara-Murza further ignores Yeltsin's storming the Russian parliament in October 1993.<sup>4</sup>



Senator Ben Cardin speaks at April 9 NED event alongside Evgenia Kara-Murza, wife of Vladimir Kara-Murza. [Source: [nationaljournal.com](http://nationaljournal.com)]

## An Ulterior Agenda

While there may be legitimate grounds to criticize Kara-Murza's imprisonment and demand his release, the NED clearly has its own nefarious agenda in spotlighting his case.

The agenda is to paint the Putin-led government in Russia in the worst possible light and support regime-change efforts in Russia for which the NED has been at the forefront.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, U.S. neo-conservatives saw an opportunity to dominate Central Asia and control its rich oil and gas resources.

This goal could only be achieved if Russia were kept weak, which it was under Boris Yeltsin (1991-2000), who allowed Western corporations to penetrate Russia's economy and begin to gain control over its abundant natural resources.

When Putin began reasserting Russian control over its economy and made it clear that he would not allow the U.S. to dominate Central Asia unequivocally, the U.S. regime change machine went into high gear, with the NED leading the way.



The Ukraine War was engineered as part of these efforts with the goal of drawing Russia into a quagmire that would deplete its military and ruin its economy as the U.S. ratcheted up sanctions.

Kara-Murza is a key prop in U.S. global propaganda efforts directed against Russia that are designed to help mobilize public support behind an aggressive anti-Russia policy.

In March 2023, the Biden administration imposed Magnitsky Act sanctions on six Russian officials involved in Kara-Murza's supposedly false arrest—showing that his case was being used to directly expand sanctions that had already reached record levels.

## Silence on Massive Ukrainian Human Rights Abuses



[Source: [time.com](https://www.time.com)]  
The NED's hypocrisy and double standard on human rights is evident in its

silence about political prisoners being held in Ukraine. One of these prisoners, Bogdan Syrotiuk, is a socialist who was arrested on April 25 by the CIA-subsidized Security Service of Ukraine (SBU).

David North reported on the World Socialist Website (WSWS) that Syrotiuk, age 25, was being held in a prison in Nikolaev under atrocious conditions on fraudulent charges of undermining the territorial integrity of Ukraine and serving the interests of Russia, and was facing 15 years to life in prison. North wrote that SBU agents ransacked Syrotiuk's apartment and office, claiming that they found a Russian military coat, a backpack with the letter "Z"—a symbol associated with Russian military chauvinism—and a gas mask, which North believes were planted by the SBU,

whose unscrupulous and Gestapo-like methods are common knowledge in Ukraine.

According to North, attempts to portray Syrotiuk as a supporter of the Putin regime and its special military operation (SMO) in Ukraine are politically preposterous: Syrotiuk is a leading member of a Trotskyist youth organization that opposes "the oligarchic-capitalist governments in both Ukraine and Russia," and condemned the SMO while calling for unity of working-class people in Russia and Ukraine.



Ilya Kyva's lifeless body in a photo released by the CIA trained Ukrainian SBU. [Source: [nypost.com](http://nypost.com)]

Syrotiuk is one of many leftists persecuted by the

Zelensky regime, which has banned all left wing parties. Ilya Kyva, the head of the socialist party in Ukraine's parliament was shot and knifed to death by Ukrainian assassins in December in Moscow.

The SBU openly boasted of the killing, posting photos of Kyva's lifeless body lying in the snow surrounded by drops of blood along with the weapons used to kill him hanging from a tree. In disturbing video also released by the SBU, the suspected assassin is seen showing his stakeout position, which he

jokingly dubbed his “office” with a “red carpet,” and a route for him to escape to a nearby bus stop.

Right on point, David North wrote that the “arrest of Comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk, part of a pattern of brutal repressive measures by the Zelensky regime against opponents of the war and the entire working class, exposes the lying claim that the U.S.-NATO war against Russia is being waged in defense of democracy. Ukraine is a police state. Its population is subjected to martial law. Elections have been cancelled and [Volodymyr] Zelensky rules as a dictator, subject only to the dictates of his NATO sponsors, the financial interests of the billionaire oligarchs, and the neo-Nazi gangs upon whom he relies to intimidate the Ukrainian people.”<sup>5</sup>

The NED’s silence on all this makes clear the fraudulent nature of the organization and phoniness of its congressional supporters. They only care about human rights abuses of U.S. government enemies when they can be used to support imperialistic policies and regime change operations.

## Notes:

- ↪ In 2013, Browder was convicted in absentia of tax evasion in a Russian court and sentenced to nine years in prison. For broader discussion and reference to key sources that debunk Browder’s lies, see Jeremy Kuzmarov and John Marciano, *The Russians are Coming, Again: the First Cold War as Tragedy, the Second as Farce* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2018).
- ↪ Many of the speakers at the NED event accused Putin of killing Nemtsov, though the suspects convicted in court were not tied to Putin and many believe that Nemtsov was killed by the mafia in retribution for his defrauding the Russian people.
- ↪ David J. Kramer, Board Chairman of the Free Russia Foundation, served in the State Department in the George W. Bush administration. Kara-Murza was also a coordinator for Open Russia, an NGO set up by convicted felon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who had a personal vendetta against Putin for jailing him for his criminal activities.
- ↪ Kara-Murza provides no political or historical context in understanding Putin’s political appeal within Russia and never discusses the pernicious impact of NATO expansion toward Russia’s borders in

violation of a pledge by George H. W. Bush, or U.S. sanctions policies or interference in Ukraine in triggering a new Cold War. Kara-Murza criticized Putin for jailing Mikhail Khordokovsky, a corrupt oligarch who participated in the looting of Russia in the 1990s. Alexey Navalny and his brother Oleg are characterized by Kara-Murza as political prisoners when they were jailed because of their participation in a corruption scheme that resulted in the embezzlement of \$850,000.

- ↪ North wrote that the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor acknowledges in its latest report (*2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practice* issued in April 2024) the Ukrainian government's brutally repressive character. Among the grave "human rights issues" cited by the report are: "enforced disappearance; torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; restrictions on freedom of expression, including for members of the media, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, and censorship; serious restrictions on internet freedom; substantial interference with the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association; restrictions on freedom of movement; serious government corruption; extensive gender-based violence; systematic restrictions on workers' freedom of association; and the existence of the worst forms of child labor. Some of these human rights issues stemmed from martial law, which continued to curtail democratic freedoms, including freedom of movement, freedom of the press, freedom of peaceful assembly, and legal protections."