

Life News Defends Publishing Nemtsov Phone Conversations

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Tabloid news website Life News did not break the law in publishing private telephone conversations of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, because the information contained in the recordings served the public interest, Life News lawyer Tatyana Khokhlova said in an interview published Wednesday.

Nemtsov said Tuesday that a criminal case had been opened against the pro-Kremlin tabloid, for the illegal tapping and publication of cell phone calls last month in which he derided other members of the opposition. The calls went viral, and Nemtsov vowed to sue Life News over their publication.

Khokhlova said Wednesday that the news site had the right to publish the recordings, since they informed the public about the activity of a political leader, an action Khokhlova said was defended by law.

"It is our contention that Life News did not break the law. In the law 'On the Media,' it is clearly stated that the press has the right to publish such materials if, for example, we're

talking about defending public interests. In this case, a journalist does not even have to receive consent," Khokhlova said.

"In the telephone conversations with other politicians, Nemtsov discussed issues of strategy and tactics of 'social struggle.' At the same time, the politician himself did not choose his expressions [carefully] toward his colleagues and spoke pejoratively about ordinary citizens who followed him to a protest and completely trusted their leader," she said.

"The obligation of the media consists of informing people in a timely and skilled manner. The Internet publication simply presented readers for them to judge the actual attitude of the politician to the people," she said.

Khokhlova's comments appeared in an interview given to Izvestia, which has the same owner as Life News. She added that Life News did not violate Nemtsov's privacy in publishing the recordings and did not tap his phone, but that investigators would ultimately constitute whether the publication broke the law.

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