

Tymoshenko Stays in Custody After Court Ruling

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KIEV — A Ukrainian court on Friday refused to consider an appeal to release former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko from jail, where she has been kept for a week while her abuse-of-office trial proceeds.

Tymoshenko was jailed on Aug. 5 for violating court procedures at her trial, including refusing to rise when requested by the judge. She says her resistance is a protest of a trial she contends is politically motivated.

On Friday, the Kiev Appeals Court refused to hear an appeal, saying the country's criminal code does not allow appealing a preventive measure.

Tymoshenko's lawyer Yury Sukhov said that ruling would be appealed to the Supreme Court.

Tymoshenko is charged in connection with a natural gas deal with Russia in 2009 that prosecutors claim was disadvantageous to Ukraine.

The United States and the European Union have condemned court cases against Tymoshenko and several of her top allies as selective prosecution of political opponents. Tymoshenko was a key figure in the 2004 Orange Revolution protests that forced the annulment of a presidential election purportedly won by Viktor Yanukovich.

Yanukovich defeated Tymoshenko in presidential elections last year.

On Friday, the German government's human rights commissioner, Markus Löning, warned Ukrainian authorities against "selective and politically motivated justice," saying the rule of law was essential for closer ties between Ukraine and the EU.

"The German government will, together with its partners in the European Union, watch further developments in Ukraine very closely," Löning said in a statement.

Italy summoned Ukraine's ambassador to the Foreign Ministry to express concern about Tymoshenko's trial. The ministry said it would emphasize the "need for full respect for fundamental freedoms, for the state of law and for proceedings that are transparent and fully responsive to the democratic rules and international standards on justice."

President Dmitry Medvedev urged Yanukovich during a phone call Friday not to "politicize" ties in the natural gas industry between the two countries, an unidentified Kremlin official told RIA-Novosti, Bloomberg reported.

RIA-Novosti also cited an unidentified Kremlin official as saying Ukraine's partial role in Russia's customs union with Belarus and Kazakhstan is "unacceptable" and should be transformed into full membership.

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