

Tymoshenko's Husband Says He Fled Under Pressure

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The husband of Ukraine's jailed opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko said Tuesday that he had been forced to flee to the Czech Republic by "enormous pressure" and persecution by President Viktor Yanukovich's government.

Oleksander Tymoshenko, 51, who was granted political asylum in the Czech Republic on Jan. 6, said in a statement that by fleeing abroad he had deprived Yanukovich of additional leverage over the opposition.

"The regime in Ukraine has not shied away from using dirty methods. They were not able to break Yulia Tymoshenko either through intimidation, the courts, imprisonment or torture. So they resorted to even uglier means. They began to persecute me and other members of her family," he said.

"I do not want to provide Yanukovich with any additional leverage against the opposition and for me political asylum is the only way to achieve this goal," the statement said.

Yulia Tymoshenko helped lead the 2004 Orange Revolution that thwarted a first bid for the presidency by Yanukovych. She went on to serve two terms as prime minister.

But after Yanukovych made a comeback and beat her in a February 2010 election, criminal proceedings were brought against her and other members of the opposition. ☒

She was jailed for seven years in October on a charge of exceeding her powers in a 2009 gas deal with Russia. Her trial was widely condemned as politically motivated.

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