


Daughter Says Tymoshenko's Life at Risk

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Yevgenia Tymoshenko speaking in an interview at the Kiev headquarters of her mother's party, Batkivshchyna. **Gleb Garanich**

KIEV —  The daughter of jailed Ukrainian opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko says her mother's life is now at risk after President Viktor Yanukovich "crossed a fine line" when he rejected all early chances of compromise to free her.

In an interview, Yevgenia Tymoshenko urged the West to consider applying personal sanctions against officials in Yanukovich's government, such as visa bans, to stop Ukraine from driving itself further into isolation.

"It [the situation] is unpredictable now. ... They have crossed the line where my mother's life now is at risk," said Yevgenia, speaking in English in Kiev at the riverside headquarters of her mother's party, Batkivshchyna.

"This line is a kind of fine line, and once the regime crossed it we do not know now what could be the consequence of this war ... against political opponents. The regime is doing all it can to

break her morale, to break her psychologically.”

Tymoshenko’s husband, Olexander, took asylum in the Czech Republic earlier this month out of fear he also was about to be arrested, leaving the English-educated Yevgenia, 31, the only close relative left in Kiev. Yevgenia, who is married to a British rock singer, now makes a six-hour car trip from Kiev to a prison in Kharkiv twice a week to see her mother, whose health and conditions are the subject of an information battle between her lawyers and officials.

Yevgenia says her mother is in constant pain from a recurring back problem and has not been able to get up unaided since early November.

“The Health Ministry denies this. They say she does not require medical treatment, that she needs exercise. When I see her, I have to pick her up. I have to move her, to help her stand up and it is evident that any slight movement causes very sharp pain,” Yevgenia said. “She is much paler and weaker.”

The family has also complained that she is under constant surveillance from a video camera with a light on in her cell round the clock.

“The video camera is a microscopic one that can see what she is writing in bed. Whatever she writes they can see and this causes a lot of psychological, moral strain,” Yevgenia said.

Tymoshenko, Yanukovych’s rival, is serving a seven-year jail sentence for abuse of office in connection with a 2009 gas deal that she signed as prime minister with Russia. The trial, widely seen as a settling of scores between rival groups of influence, has been deemed by the United States and the European Union as politically motivated.

But Yanukovych appeared on Sunday to rule out any prospect of Tymoshenko being freed, saying those responsible for signing the 2009 gas deal on “enslaving” terms should be punished. “Ukraine has become hostage to enslaving gas agreements ... that have caused the country huge losses, billions of losses. We have been left with a huge external debt. Those who, regardless of their office, pushed Ukraine to the abyss must bear responsibility before the Ukrainian people,” Yanukovych told a ceremony on Sunday.

Although self-confident and equally stylish, Yevgenia Tymoshenko is far less forceful than her mother and denies media reports that she has ambitions to step into her mother’s shoes.

“I am far from being a public person. I see my mother continuing her political career. ... She is the one in our family who is going to continue this,” she said.

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