

Germany Negotiating Treatment for Tymoshenko

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BERLIN — The German government is talking to Ukraine about possible medical treatment in Germany for former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko.

Opposition leader Tymoshenko, 51, is serving a seven-year prison term on charges of abuse of office in a trial condemned as politically motivated in the West.

Tymoshenko has complained of severe back pain in custody but said prison doctors are denying her treatment at a specialized medical clinic as recommended.

Germany's Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily, which did not cite sources, reported that Ukraine had assured Germany that President Viktor Yanukovich plans to ask for legislation to be drawn up that would allow for prisoners to be treated abroad.

Berlin's Charite hospital has said two of its doctors were part of a team that examined Tymoshenko in prison in Kharkiv in February.

On March 7, the doctors took part in a meeting in Kiev with Ukrainian and German officials. The hospital says Ukrainian Prosecutor General Viktor Pshonka said Tymoshenko could be treated outside the Kharkiv facility if needed.

Doctors and officials agreed that there is a "pressing" need for treatment, and the German doctors argued that treatment was too complex to be conducted in prison, the hospital said March 8.

Tymoshenko was convicted of abusing her powers during natural gas import negotiations with Russia in 2009. A contract she negotiated significantly increased the price Ukraine pays for Russian gas imports.

She accused Yanukovich, her longtime foe, of putting her in prison to bar her from parliamentary elections this fall.

On Friday, Ukraine and the EU took the first step toward the country's gradual integration in the bloc, beginning the process of concluding a new accord calling for the implementation of constitutional reforms, including an independent judicial system.

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