


Tymoshenko Moved to Hospital After Ukraine Cancels Summit

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KHARKIV, Ukraine —  Ukrainian opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko was moved to a local hospital in a high-security police convoy Wednesday, a day after the controversy over her imprisonment caused President Viktor Yanukovich to cancel a summit.

Yanukovich has faced growing criticism over the conviction of Tymoshenko — and the authorities' refusal to let her travel abroad for treatment for chronic back pain.

Her transfer from prison in the eastern city of Kharkiv to a nearby hospital for treatment under the supervision of German doctors was worked out last week in a compromise.

But Wednesday's early morning transfer seemed unlikely to relieve pressure on Yanukovich. Tymoshenko, a former prime minister, was jailed last October for seven years for alleged abuse of power while in office, a charge she denied. Her daughter, Yevhenia, said Tuesday that her mother had agreed under the supervision of a German doctor in a local hospital to end a hunger strike started April 20.

Eyewitnesses in Kharkiv said Tymoshenko was brought to a side entrance of the hospital by an ambulance on Wednesday morning in a heavily guarded convoy that included several police cars.

Two lines of white-coated hospital staff shielded her as she was carried into the hospital on a stretcher, preventing journalists and onlookers catching a glimpse of her.

A few supporters nearby shouted out “Freedom for Yulia!”

The state prison service, in a statement, confirmed she had been moved to the hospital “for the course of rehabilitation recommended by the international medical commission.”

Yanukovych appeared placid and untroubled at World War II Victory Day celebrations on Wednesday, despite the growing political pressure.

Addressing war veterans in Kiev, he spoke of the need to defend world peace by shunning “populism of all types,” but remained silent about Tymoshenko.

In an embarrassing setback on Tuesday, he called off an informal summit meeting in Yalta of Central and Eastern European leaders after several of them said they were staying away because of the Tymoshenko affair.

He quickly drew fire for this from other opposition figures.

Arseny Yatsenyuk, leader of the Front of Change party, said cancellation of the Yalta meeting amounted to a “shameful failure” for Ukraine.

“This leadership is dragging the country and its people with it into international isolation,” he said, Interfax reported.

Vitaly Klitschko, world heavyweight boxing champion who heads the Udar party, said: “The leadership clearly has no wish to change the situation and meet calls by Kiev’s European partners to respect human rights and democratic standards.”

Meanwhile, an EU diplomat said he expected EU foreign ministers to “harmonize and coordinate” strategy toward Ukraine at a meeting in Brussels on Monday.

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