

New Trial for Tymoshenko Delayed to Aug. 14

July 31, 2012

The  Moscow Times

KHARKIV, Ukraine — A Ukrainian court resumed a tax evasion case Tuesday against jailed former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko but then postponed the hearing for two weeks after a wrangle over whether she could take part in proceedings by video link from her hospital bed.

Tymoshenko is already serving a seven-year sentence on charges of abuse of office but has been moved from prison in the eastern city of Kharkiv to a clinic for treatment for a chronic back condition.

The new hearing in Kharkiv on charges of tax evasion and embezzlement has been put off several times since a formal opening in mid-April because her treatment prevented her attendance.

More than 1,000 supporters and opponents of Tymoshenko, whose prosecution and jailing have soured relations between Ukraine and the European Union, gathered outside the courtroom in Kharkiv when the case resumed.

Her opponents carried posters denouncing her with slogans such as "Keep her in prison! She is a thief!"

Supporters wore T-shirts bearing her portrait and chanted "Yulia, freedom!"

But Judge Kostyantyn Sadovsky ordered another postponement until Aug. 14 after Tymoshenko's counsel refused a submission by the prosecution that she could take part in the proceedings by video link from the hospital.

"I declare that I do not agree to take part in a video conference," Tymoshenko said in a personal statement read to the court by her lawyer, Serhiy Vlasenko.

The break might allow the issue to be clarified, Sadovsky said.

When the trial resumed Tuesday, Tymoshenko was again absent. German doctors who have been treating her said Monday that her physical condition required up to eight more weeks of attention.

In the new case, Tymoshenko denies the tax evasion and embezzlement charges, which go back to the 1990s, when she was a prominent businesswoman.

Prosecutors say Tymoshenko's now-defunct gas trading company caused losses to the state equivalent to about \$4 million, while she personally evaded paying \$85,000 in taxes.

Tymoshenko, President Viktor Yanukovich's main political opponent, was jailed on charges of abuse of office as prime minister relating to a gas deal that she brokered with Russia.

The government says the 2009 deal saddled Ukraine with an unfair price for gas imports that has hamstrung the economy.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/07/31/new-trial-for-tymoshenko-delayed-to-aug-14-a16669>