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Imprisoned Tymoshenko Makes Video Appeal

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KIEV — Ukraine's jailed former prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, exhorted her country Saturday to "rise up" against President Viktor Yanukovych's party in next month's parliamentary election.

In an emotional video appeal, recorded covertly by her lawyer with a cell phone in a hospital where she is undergoing treatment, Tymoshenko accused Yanukovych of turning Ukraine into a "police state" and her own life into "hell."

The state prison agency retaliated by publishing a video of Tymoshenko banging her high-heeled shoe against a hospital door in order to be allowed to see her supporters.

The videos offered a rare glimpse into Tymoshenko's life and state of health behind bars more than a year after she was jailed on charges of abusing her office during natural gas import negotiations with Russia in 2009.

Tymoshenko denies all the charges against her and accuses Yanukovych of throwing her in jail

to bar her from contesting the Oct. 28 election.

In the video recorded by her lawyer Friday and released Saturday, Tymoshenko urged Ukrainians to support her party in the vote and end what she called Yanukovych's "criminal" rule.

"Today, unfortunately, the whole country lives under a criminal authority," Tymoshenko said.

Yanukovych's Party of the Regions hopes to maintain its parliamentary majority but will struggle to do so in the face of an opposition re-energized by Tymoshenko's jailing. The next presidential election is in 2015.

Tymoshenko used the video message to complain about her hardship in prison.

"Every day I find myself not only under psychological pressure. Every day here is turned into hell in an absolutely conscious, deliberate way, and it is Yanukovych's direct plan," Tymoshenko said. Yanukovych's office declined to comment on the video.

The state prison agency responded by saying Tymoshenko's video was recorded illegally, and it released its own video, which it says shows her resorting to a "provocation" and behaving inappropriately.

In that video, Tymoshenko takes what appears to be a portable metal detector and bangs it against a hospital door.

"Stop these illegal actions," a guard says as he confiscates the object.

Tymoshenko then takes off her right shoe and strikes it against the door.

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