

Tymoshenko Wins Victory in European Court

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Yulia Tymoshenko

The European Court of Human Rights ruled Tuesday that the detention of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko was illegal.

The ruling, the first of several lawsuits filed on Tymoshenko's behalf with the Strasbourg court, does not necessarily mean that she will be freed anytime soon. But it does give credence to her complaints that the criminal case against her is politically motivated.

Ukraine's government representative to the European court stomped out of the room when the verdict was issued, The Associated Press reported.

The European court said in a statement that Tymoshenko's pre-trial detention "had been arbitrary, the lawfulness of her detention had not been properly reviewed, and she had no possibility to seek compensation for her unlawful deprivation of liberty."

Tymoshenko was detained on charges of contempt of court in August 2011 and only sentenced in October 2011 to seven years in prison on charges that she had abused her authority in signing a gas agreement with Russia in 2009.

The European court noted that Tymoshenko, being a former prime minister a leader of one of Ukraine's strongest opposition parties, was prosecuted shortly after a change of government and compared her case to that of former Interior Minister Yuri Lutsenko, who was jailed after being found guilty of spending too much money on Police Day celebrations in 2008 and 2009.

Lutsenko was pardoned by Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich on April 7.

Encouraged by the pardon, Tymoshenko's lawyers filed a petition on her behalf. Last Saturday, the Ukrainian pardons commission recommended that the president not free her.

Supporters in Kiev also voiced doubt that Tuesday's court ruling would lead to Tymoshenko's release.

"This is a fully expected decision, but it concerns the detention, not the arrest itself," lawmaker Viktor Chumak from the Udar faction told Interfax.

But Tymoshenko's daughter, Yevgenia, said that the ruling was a "first victory" that could serve as grounds to release her mother. "Based on the decision made by the European court, the president of Ukraine has all the power to free mother. And we hope that he makes that decision," she said in a statement.

Ukrainian authorities have three months to appeal Tuesday's ruling.

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