

Ukraine Opposition Wants Tymoshenko Freed for Treatment

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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KIEV — Ukraine's opposition parties Friday pressed President Viktor Yanukovich to release jailed ex-Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko for medical treatment in Germany, saying this would be likely to secure the signing of key agreements with the European Union.

Tymoshenko, 52, a former prime minister and arch rival of Yanukovich, was jailed for seven years in October 2011 for abuse of office linked to a 2009 gas deal she brokered with Russia.

The EU says her prosecution smacks of "selective justice," and Western governments say her continuing confinement threatens the signing of agreements on political association and free trade with the 27-member bloc in November.

The Yanukovich leadership says it favors European integration to forging closer ties with Moscow in a Russia-led customs union and hopes the landmark EU accords can be signed at a summit in Lithuania.

The free-trade agreement potentially on offer from the EU would open up a huge market for Ukrainian exports — steel, grain, chemicals and food products — and provide a powerful spur for much-needed foreign investment.

But freeing Tymoshenko, a fierce political campaigner, and lifting other pending charges against her could be risky for Yanukovich as he prepares to run for a second term in 2015.

Releasing her to travel to Germany to receive medical treatment for chronic back problems has emerged as a possible formula that would improve Yanukovich's standing with the EU.

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle told Yanukovich during a visit to Kiev last month that Berlin's proposals for providing treatment for Tymoshenko in Germany remained on the table.

After meeting EU officials in Kiev on Friday, the three main opposition leaders urged Yanukovich to accept the offer.

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