The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ukraine Parliament Votes to Free Tymoshenko

By The Moscow Times

February 22, 2014



Tymoshenko supporter holding up a picture of the former prime minister at a rally outside a court in Kharkiv.

Ukraine's parliament voted to release former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko from jail in a session on Saturday that also saw the appointment of a new Interior Minister and the dismissal of the country's top prosecutor.

Applause broke out in parliament as 322 out of the 331 deputies present approved a decree for the release of Tymoshenko, an avowed foe of embattled President Viktor Yanukovych.

A spokeswoman for Tymoshenko told the Associated Press on Saturday afternoon Tymoshenko had been released from detention in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, but later retracted the statement, saying she meant Tymoshenko should be released immediately following the outcome of the vote.

Uncertainty persisted on Saturday about the exact whereabouts of Yanukovych, who was reported to have left Kiev for an unknown destination. Some media claimed he fled to the country's east, a heavily ethnic Russian-populated region and home to most of his supporters.

In another development in parliament, deputies voted to appoint a member of Tymoshenko's Batkivshchyna Party, Arsen Avakov, as Interior Minister.

Avakov will be replacing outgoing Interior Minister Vitaly Zakharchenko, who is held responsible by the opposition for a crackdown on protesters this week in which at least 80 people were killed.

Another ally of Tymoshenko, Oleksandr Turchynov, was approved as speaker of the parliament, and will replace a close associate of Yanukovych.

The parliament vote came a day after the government signed a deal with the opposition restoring the 2004 constitution, which was designed to limit presidential powers and make Ukraine a parliamentary republic. The deal, overseen by EU envoys and a Kremlin-appointed mediator, said an interim government would be formed in the coming days.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/02/22/ukraine-parliament-votes-to-free-tymoshenko-a32365