

Yanukovych Blocked from Leaving Ukraine, Speaker Says

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A wall painting of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych. **Abode of Chaos**

Ukraine's former president was blocked from taking a plane to Russia, hours after the Ukrainian legislature voted to remove him from office, the country's new parliamentary speaker said.

President Viktor Yanukovych abandoned his lavish estate Saturday and tried to board a charter plane in Ukraine's eastern region of Donetsk, but was prevented from doing so by Ukraine's customs officers, Oleksandr Turchynov said.

"He [Yanukovych] is now hiding in the Donetsk region," Russian media reports quoted Turchynov as saying. He gave no details on Yanukovych's destination, as the flight did not undergo the registration procedure.

Yanukovych insisted Saturday that he would neither resign nor sign any agreement with what he called "bandits terrorizing the country." He described the events in Kiev as a "coup".

A report by Donetsk Vesty claimed Yanukovich could be now outside the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv at a dacha, belonging to an unnamed official. The presidential plane reportedly landed at the airport of the United Arab Emirates Saturday to distract attention.

Presidential spokeswoman Anna German said Saturday Yanukovich had left Kiev for Kharkiv to meet with his supporters.

Yanukovich fled his luxury mansion in Mezhyhirya, outside Kiev, Saturday, which was previously closed to visitors. Thousands of Ukrainians were given unprecedented access to the 343 acre estate that features a huge man-made lake, a private zoo, car park and spa.

On Saturday the Ukrainian parliament voted to impeach Yanukovich and scheduled presidential elections for May.

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