

Ukraine Opens Registration for Snap Elections

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Ukraine has officially opened registration for snap presidential elections on May 25 after former President Viktor Yanukovich fled Kiev over the weekend.

Candidates from political parties and self-nominated candidates must register by April 4, and pay a \$255,100 deposit, Interfax reported.

A number of prominent figures have already declared their candidacy, while others remain on the fence.

Vitali Klitschko, world-famous boxer and leader of the opposition UDAR (Punch) party announced his candidacy, saying it was time for the "rules of the game to change."

He will be challenged by Kharkiv region Governor, Mikhail Dobkin — an ally of Yanukovich — who announced on Monday his intention to run. Although Dobkin has not yet decided if he

will run as an independent or on a party ticket, he said that he will run for office on behalf of all those "who do not accept fascism and nationalism."

Former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko has not yet announced her intentions, although her spokeswoman said that she had not yet ruled out a bid for the presidency, the BBC reported.

Tymoshenko, who lost to Yanukovich in Ukraine's 2010 election, was released from prison on Saturday after being imprisoned in Kharkiv since 2011. Many observers considered her detention to be an act of political revenge based on trumped up charges.

On Monday, Tymoshenko announced that she would travel to Germany to undergo treatment for a serious and long-standing back injury that was left untreated during her time in Kharkiv.

Meanwhile, interim President Oleksander Turchynov said that the formation of a coalition government had been postponed until Thursday.

The original date for the formation of the unity government was Tuesday, but consultations continued and Turchynov is keen to ensure that every region acknowledges the authority of the new administration. There is fears of separatism in regions of Ukraine's predominantly Russian-speaking east, where Yanukovich had stronger support.

On Saturday, Turchynov assumed the office of the President on an interim basis. Shortly thereafter, Ukraine's parliament voted to impeach Yanukovich, whose whereabouts remain unknown.

The EU-mediated agreement signed by Yanukovich and opposition leaders Friday originally envisioned presidential elections to be carried out after the ratification of a new constitution. Although Russia refused to sign the agreement, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov disapproved of the decision for snap elections.

"The presidential election set for May 25 is a departure from the accords reached" on Friday, he said, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Twitter account posted.

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