

Starving Ukrainian Pilot Jailed in Russia Promises to Consider Ending Strike

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Ukrainian army pilot Nadezhda (Nadia) Savchenko (C) is escorted by police during a hearing at the Basmanny district court in Moscow.

Jailed Ukrainian pilot Nadezhda Savchenko has promised to end her hunger strike if her health seriously deteriorates, her lawyer said, ahead of the prisoner's scheduled appearance in a Moscow court on Wednesday.

Amid reports that Savchenko was on the verge of death after an 80-day hunger strike, lawyer Mark Feygin said Tuesday via Twitter: "At least I have managed to get her word that when things get completely terrible, she will listen and stop. That's what she said."

"Tomorrow she will be brought to court, and Nadezhda Savchenko will be able to explain things herself," he said in another Twitter message.

Previous attempts to persuade Savchenko to end her hunger strike have been unsuccessful,

but Feygin told the RBC news agency on Tuesday that "we have a chance to convince her that it makes no sense to battle a Leviathan."

Feygin said he and another lawyer, Ilya Novikov, had visited Savchenko in jail to tell her that she had been awarded the order of Hero of Ukraine "and that it would be stupid to receive it posthumously," RBC reported.

The court hearing Wednesday will review Feygin's motion to have Savchenko released based on her immunity as a delegate to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, or PACE, the lawyer said via Twitter.

He also told CNN's Christiane Amanpour that the pilot, 33, would not survive until her scheduled May trial if she continued her hunger strike.

Pro-Moscow forces in Ukraine seized Savchenko last summer and handed her over to Russia, which accuses her of abetting the killing of two Russian journalists who died in an artillery strike in eastern Ukraine in June.

Western governments and Ukraine, where Savchenko has become a symbol of resistance to Russia and was elected to parliament in absentia, have long called for her release.

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