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Russian President Putin's Pardon Was 'Vile Hypocrisy' – Savchenko

By The Moscow Times

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Ukrainian pilot and MP Nadezhda Savchenko sings the national anthem as she attends her first session in the parliament after being freed from confinement in Russia as part of a prisoner swap in Kiev, May 31.

Ukrainian politician Nadiya Savchenko has spoken to the BBC about her time in a Russian prison.

The former pilot said her pardon from Russian President Vladimir Putin — described by the Kremlin as an "act of humanism" — was a cynical move.

"I was kidnapped. They tried to break me. And he [Putin] talks about an act of humanism? The fact that the president is trying to show himself as a peacemaker and do-gooder is vile hypocrisy, false and base," said Savchenko.

After being found guilty of involvement in the murder of two Russian journalists during the

conflict in east Ukraine, Savchenko was sentenced by a Russian court to 22 years in prison on March 21.

She was freed on May 25 in exchange for two Russian soldiers — Alexander Alexandrov and Yevgeny Yerofeyev — captured in eastern Ukraine.

Her detention was condemned by world leaders and human rights groups, and Savchenko herself spent long periods in jail on hunger strike.

“It was easier not to eat, than to eat, and the guards could not understand that. It frightened them. But at least I was fighting the enemy somehow, and that fight gave me strength,” she told the BBC. “These days, the Ukrainian people need heroes.”

On returning to Kiev, Savchenko joined the Ukrainian parliament's National Security and Defense Committee as a member of the Batkivshchyna Party. She has proposed talks with pro-Russian rebels, but has also said that she would return to the battlefield if needed.

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