

Ukraine in Brief

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Tymoshenko prior to being questioned greets many of her supporters in Kyiv. (Photo: Kyiv Post)

Concern Over Selective Justice and Lack of Freedom in Ukraine Spreads Across the Globe

In the past few weeks Ukrainian law enforcement officers have investigated a number of political opponents to President Yanukovich. The destruction of a Stalin monument in Zaporizhzhia prompted another wave of arrests of members in Ukrainian nationalist organizations. Members of the Tryzub and Svoboda organizations were detained and questioned for days, despite little evidence they were involved in the destruction of the monument. The police also searched the homes of two journalists, confiscating their electronic equipment.

These actions, on top of the arrests of many of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko's allies late last year have drawn the attention of leaders across the globe. Tymoshenko, as well as several of her supporters are being investigated for a misuse of funds. She is currently in the pre-trial phase and cooperating with investigators. While Yanukovich claims he is simply trying to "fight corruption" Tymoshenko accuses him of "trying to crush his political foes."

Though several of Tymoshenko's supporters remain in jail for misuse of money, Yanukovich spurned more rumors of selective justice when the son of a close friend and government official was released on bail despite being accused of murder.

The independent Freedom House group in Washington, DC has moved Ukraine from a status of "free" to "partly free" because of the actions under the rule of Yanukovich. The Freedom House believes that, "Ukraine suffered from deteriorating levels of press freedom, instances of election fraud, and growing politicization of the judiciary." Freedom House is the not only group concerned about the changes Yanukovich is making in Ukraine.

The European Union has also expressed concern specifically stating that if Ukraine wants to work closely with the EU they cannot deviate on issues like democracy and media freedoms. The EU's enlargement commissioner, Stefan Fuele, said he had been given evidence by journalists that they were being forced to keep quiet by the Yanukovich administration. The US has also spoken out about its unease with the lack of media freedoms, as well as the selective justice being executed in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) just recently issued a statement denouncing the repression in Ukraine. Officially UCCA "strongly condemns the recent prosecutions of political opponents, as well as the harassment of Ukrainian journalists, civic and cultural activists by Ukrainian state authorities." Already organizations are taking note of this strong denunciation of Yanukovich and his administration's actions.

Ukraine Requests Official Confirmation on Danylyshyn's Political Asylum

On Tuesday January 18 Ukraine asked that the Czech Republic officially declare whether or not they will grant political asylum to Bohdan Danylyshyn, the former Economic Minister. He is currently being investigated for caused damage to the state of over UAH 4.5 million and abusing his office. Ukraine has asked for this decision, but still hopes that it will cause no ill will so as to continue the "partnership and friendly relations between the two countries" according to Oleh Voloshyn, director of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry's information policy department.

The Czech Republic was said to have granted Danylyshyn asylum last week, after he was detained in Prague. He along with other officials mentioned in the previous article are facing prosecution by President Yanukovich's administration.



Former Minister Bohdan Danylyshyn (Photo: Kyiv Post)