

Ukraine in Brief

Volume VI, Issue 8

February 25, 2011



Former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko being swarmed by reporters before questioning.

(Photo: Kyiv Post)

Relatives of political opposition being “terrorized” according to Tymoshenko

On Monday Feb. 21 former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko told the media that not only are members of the political opposition being persecuted for their differing beliefs, but their families fear retribution from the government as well.

When speaking to reporters before going to meet with officials in the Prosecutor’s General Office, she said, “I want to tell you that the terror is being conducted not only against politicians, but against the relatives of politicians – [relatives] of those politicians who influence the situation and are engaged in opposition activities.”

She cited a number of examples, including the wife of parliamentarian Ruslan Lukyanchuk, as well as relatives of members of the Batkivschyna party. These family members were questioned by the authorities, and some were even arrested.

Tymoshenko believes that this is simply a tactic being used by the current administration to keep political opposition quiet. If the administration is going after people’s families it may make opponents think twice before speaking out against Yanukovych.

Ukrainian Government Rating Continues to Fall

Recent reports concerning the Ukrainian government has shown that the country has fallen in a variety of areas. A survey done throughout the country showed that most citizens do not support the work being done by President Yanukovych and his administration. Additionally, the Freedom Without Borders NGO released its annual 2010 Press Freedom Index where Ukraine dropped sharply in the rankings.

The Ukrainian survey was conducted from the end of January through early February of this year. The Ukrainian Democratic Circle undertook the responsibility of collecting the data, at the request of the Institute of Politics.

Based on the results they gathered, 59.5% of Ukrainians say they do not support the activity of Yanukovych. This is a sharp change from only nine months ago. In May of 2010 61.3% of Ukrainians supported Yanukovych’s activities, while only a little over 30% support him today.

Not only is Yanukovych failing in the ratings, but the survey also found citizens are not fond of the actions undertaken by Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, with two-thirds of people not approving of his actions.



LA LIBERTÉ DE LA PRESSE DANS LE MONDE EN 2011

Freedom Without Borders Map based on free press. Countries in red (like Ukraine) have less media freedoms

(Photo: Kyiv Post)

Based on the Feb. 15 report issued by Freedom Without Borders, Ukraine have fallen significantly in the ratings of a free press. Currently Ukraine ranks 131st out of 178. Last year the country was in 89th place, which means Ukraine fell over 40 spots in a single year.

The organization states that the reason for Ukraine’s sharp decline is “the slow and steady deterioration in press freedom since Viktor Yanukovych’s election as president in February.” Some of the lack of media freedoms includes press being censored, and journalists fearing investigation for independent reporting. Some well known journalists had their homes or offices searched, and equipment seized after presenting stories not entirely favorable to the administration.

Ukraine was not the only country to fall so far in a single year. Also facing the heavy fall was Greece and Kyrgyzstan.

Ukraine to Work on Constitutional Reform

With the hope of furthering constitutional reform, Leonid Kravchuk, the first Ukrainian President, asked current President Yanukovych to support the membership of a scientific expert group on the Constitutional Assembly. Yanukovych agreed to support this scientific expert group, and opened their meeting on Monday Feb. 21.

At this meeting he explained how important reform to the constitution is to Ukraine, saying “Ukraine has not seen systemic reform in the 20 years of its independence.” He spoke about how the reforms he has issued within Ukraine should continue, and that amending the constitution is the next step in this process.

The expert group will work on establishing the Constitutional Assembly, which will then begin work on reform. Yanukovych has said that this reform should be “truly comprehensive.”