

Tymoshenko Expelled From Kiev Courtroom

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Yulia Tymoshenko filming her trial. **Sergei Chuzavkov**

KIEV — The chaotic trial of Yulia Tymoshenko was plunged further into disorder Wednesday when the former Ukrainian prime minister was expelled from the courtroom for calling the judge a monster.

Tymoshenko, the country's charismatic top opposition leader, known for the blond braid around her head, has dismissed her abuse-of-office trial that started last month as a ploy by her enemy, President Viktor Yanukovich, to bar her from politics.

Her supporters have been routinely disrupting proceedings, and Tymoshenko has refused to respect the court or rise when addressing the judge.

"You are not a judge, you are a monster," Tymoshenko told Judge Rodion Kireyev on Wednesday after police forced out some of her supporters for disrespecting the court.

Tymoshenko also joined her activists in the courtroom in shouting "Shame! Shame!" when

the judge entered the room.

A visibly agitated Kireyev, sighing deeply and struggling to contain his anger, barred Tymoshenko from proceedings for one day for contempt of court. Tymoshenko was escorted out of the session hall by black-clad riot police.

Tymoshenko stands accused of abusing her office powers by signing a natural gas import contract with Russia amid a bitter pricing dispute in 2009. Prosecutors say Tymoshenko did not have a formal authorization from her Cabinet to sign the deal because the price was too high.

Tymoshenko says she is a victim of political repression. She says the contract ended weeks of natural gas disruptions to Ukrainian and European consumers and that she did not need any special permission as the country's prime minister.

The United States and European Union have criticized the trial and other corruption probes into Tymoshenko and her top allies as political persecution. The U.S. State Department has said Tymoshenko's trial "does create the appearance of a political motive."

Ukraine's state security service, the SBU, said it has opened an additional criminal case linked to the affairs of an energy company once run by Tymoshenko, Reuters reported.

The SBU said company executives, together with former government officials, tried to steal \$405 million from the state budget.

"The country's top 'spy' has launched a criminal case based on 1996 fakes," Tymoshenko said on her Twitter feed. "Here's a hint: Investigate me for supporting the Golden Horde in the age of the Mongol invasion."

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