

Ukraine's Yanukovich Says EU Should Stop Meddling Over Tymoshenko

By [The Moscow Times](#)

November 27, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich said the European Union should stop meddling in the fate of his rival former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, and said her imprisonment should not hinder Kiev's integration with Europe.

Pouring scorn on the woman who helped engineer the 2004 Orange Revolution that thwarted his first bid at the presidency, Yanukovich said she was part of a ring of criminals and that her fate should lie in the hands of Ukrainian judges.

Tymoshenko's jailing symbolized what Brussels has called Kiev's use of selective justice and his comments effectively dismissed the intense diplomatic efforts by the EU, in which he has participated, to secure her release.

Yanukovich's promise to attend an EU summit on Friday appears intended to soothe domestic outrage over his government's sudden about face, or focus on Ukraine's economic ties with

the bloc without making any political promises.

But his comments over Tymoshenko are sure to cause a tense exchange with EU leaders when he attends a summit on Friday, particularly with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

"The issue of Yulia Tymoshenko should not be a hindrance to Ukraine's European integration," the statement said.

"The [Ukrainian] courts, which she has been evading and thereby obstructing justice, should give the answer. What does the EU have to do with this? Is the EU a court?" Yanukovich said in a televised interview.

Germany was to have accepted Tymoshenko for treatment for chronic back trouble under a compromise deal that was being put together by a two-man EU humanitarian mission. This has now died along with the planned signing.

The signing of the EU deal, which Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski said was thwarted by a Russian policy of blackmail and pressure, would have marked a definitive turn towards the West for Kiev and away from its former Soviet master Moscow.

Tymoshenko, whose jailing on abuse of power charges sparked criticism at home and abroad, is on hunger strike over Kiev's decision to renew economic ties with Russia.

Hundreds of protesters continued demonstrations in Kiev against the decision of Yanukovich's government to suspend the signing of the landmark deal with the EU.

"We know that Russia holds nothing for us. We cannot allow Putin's Russia to be our future. We will continue to come out on the streets to let our leadership know our place is in Russia," said Igor Panin, 31, an entrepreneur who travelled from his home city of Poltava to demonstrate in Kiev.

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