

Ukrainian Opposition Shuns Protest Amnesty Law

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Ukraine's parliament has voted to approve an amnesty for detained anti-government protesters on the condition that activists vacate all occupied government buildings, but the opposition has refused to accept the terms, demanding an unconditional pardon and pledging continued protests.

Oleh Tyahnybok, an opposition lawmaker from the nationalist Freedom party, called the document a "law on hostages," referring to a passage that states that the amnesty will be revoked unless protesters give up all government buildings within 15 days of the law coming into effect, Itar-Tass reported Wednesday. He said that street protests will continue.

Boxing champion and opposition leader Vitali Klitschko said that "instead of turning down the heat in the society" the law meant that "the temperature will keep rising."

Klitschko said that the opposition will hold its ground and demand the release of all detained

protesters.

The bill, put forward by the ruling Party of Regions, on Wednesday passed by votes 232 to 11, only 6 votes more than the minimum required. There were 173 abstentions.

A lawmaker from the opposition Fatherland party and a leader of the street protests in Kiev, Andrei Paruby, said "only one version was acceptable — an amnesty without any conditions," Itar-Tass reported.

Freedom party lawmaker Ihor Shvaika said that his party will push for the law to be rescinded and for the parliament to review other amnesty bills that were submitted by opposition parties, Interfax reported.

The protests broke out in November in response to the government's decision to pull out of a planned association deal with the European Union in favor of closer ties with Russia

But the protests have taken on a wider political significance, with opposition leaders demanding President Viktor Yanukovich's resignation and an early election.

Prime Minister Mykola Azarov [resigned](#) earlier this week in what he said was an attempt to pave the way for a peaceful settlement. The vacated post was offered to Fatherland leader Arseny Yatsenyuk, who promptly turned the job down.

The upheaval has grown increasingly violent in recent weeks, and has engulfed other parts of the country, with demonstrators blockading or seizing regional administration buildings in a number of cities.

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83