

## **Saakashvili forcibly deported from Ukraine to Poland** **Ukraine**

Posted by:

Posted on : 2018/2/13 17:35:57

**Analyst: "In the big picture, this rivalry among Ukraine's pro-Western forces will only work in the Kremlin's favor. A Maidan-style protest will not be effective and will more likely lead to chaos in the country as the president's numerous political opponents are too splintered and have no one to rally around."**

KYIV, Feb 13, 2018 — Mikheil Saakashvili, the former head of the Odesa regional administration who has led mass protests to impeach President Poroshenko, was detained in Kyiv and deported by the State Border Service on Feb. 13, Concorde Capital informed its clients today. He was delivered by private charter plane to Polish border authorities, news reports said, for having forcibly entered Ukraine in September with the help of several dozen supporters. The Polish Border Service said it readmitted Saakashvili based on Ukrainian court rulings that determined he entered the country illegally. Saakashvili's supporters described his detention as a kidnapping, alleging that law enforcement didn't present any identification and didn't allow him access to a lawyer. In his comments from Poland, Saakashvili said Poroshenko had defeated himself in his decision to deport Saakashvili. He vowed to return to Ukraine "absolutely legally" and succeed in replacing the current government by peaceful means. He also appealed for support in his conflict from the EU leadership and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, in particular. Saakashvili had planned his latest political rally for this weekend at Kyiv's Maidan to announce his endorsements for the candidates for the presidency and the Cabinet. He had led protests since October every few weeks demanding Poroshenko's impeachment, drawing thousands of supporters. Saakashvili was also scheduled to testify today in a court trial examining criminal charges related to the February 2014 killings in the Euromaidan protest. Concorde analyst Zenon Zawada added: "Key Western authorities have distanced themselves from the conflict between Poroshenko and Saakashvili as it has undermined unity — particularly in Ukraine — amid Russian military aggression. We don't expect a strong response to Saakashvili's pleas for support. Indeed, Saakashvili is optimistic if he thinks he can return to Ukraine legally. The Poroshenko administration will make it a top priority to prevent his return at all costs since he is among the few people who have enough trust among Ukrainians to lead mass protests. It's possible Saakashvili will make another attempt to break through a border crossing with the help of his supporters. He is motivated by the potential for renewing his political career in Ukraine, since it's the only place left where he can be active. His native Georgia stripped him of his citizenship, as did the Ukrainian government last year. He has no citizenship currently, though his wife is an EU citizen. All these developments are laying the groundwork for a Maidan-style protest following the presidential elections (scheduled for March 2019) if Poroshenko continues to lag former PM Yulia Tymoshenko in the polls and the official results don't reflect exit polls. Tymoshenko was among the first politicians to come to Saakashvili's defense, calling upon the president to "halt this reprisal." She sees in Saakashvili a valuable political ally should protests erupt regarding the election results. In the big picture, this rivalry among Ukraine's pro-Western forces will only work in the Kremlin's favor. A Maidan-style protest will not be effective and will more likely lead to chaos in the country as the president's

numerous political opponents are too splintered and have no one to rally around. This chaos could set the needed narrative pretext for Russia to intervene militarily in Kyiv and impose its order on Ukraine.

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Editor's Note: Closed circuit cameras in the Kyiv restaurant where Saakashvili was seized recorded the event and have now been published by RFE/RL as a part of that news service's continuing coverage of the Saakashvili situation. A videotape of the seizure may be accessed at the link below: [https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-poland ... break-necks/29037388.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-poland...break-necks/29037388.html)