

Avakov withholds support for Poroshenko in election campaign

Opinion

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Analyst: "with his control of the national police force, Avakov can gain from Tymoshenko many concessions for his fellow party leaders. They could compete in the elections as a bloc of parties, or become members of Tymoshenko's Fatherland party."

KYIV, Apr 5, 2018 - Ukraine's Interior Minister Arsen Avakov, among the founders of the People's Front party, indicated difficulties in reaching an agreement for uniting his party with the Solidarity Poroshenko Bloc for the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2019. Concorde Capital informed clients of the situation based on an interview with the liga.net news site published on April 4. Avakov indicated that the People's Front is considering supporting a presidential candidate other than Poroshenko. "I shudder when I hear about a single candidate," Avakov said. "I believe that Poroshenko can be one of the realistic presidential candidates, among others." For the parliamentary vote (scheduled for October 2019), he said he opposes uniting in a single party, which would have been done by proportionally divvying up places on the closed list. The pre-election window of possibilities is closing, he said. Former political prisoner Yulia Tymoshenko enjoys 24.6% support for the presidential elections among those who will vote and have decided, compared to 9.8% for Poroshenko, according to a poll conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology between Feb. 5 and 21 of 2,043 respondents. Among political parties, Tymoshenko's Fatherland party has 22.5% support, compared to 6.6% for the Solidarity Poroshenko Bloc and 1.5% for the People's Front, which would miss the 5% threshold to qualify. The People's Front finished first in the October 2014 parliamentary elections with 22.2% support, while the Poroshenko Bloc finished in second with 21.8% support and Fatherland was sixth with 5.7%. Concorde analyst Zenon Zawada added: "The president's Solidarity party and People's Front are currently in talks on how to approach next year's election. So Avakov is using this interview to help raise his ante to draw as much concessions as he can from the president for himself and his fellow party members. The tone of his responses indicates that he's not afraid to walk away from any alliance with the president and his party, whose ratings have collapsed in recent months. With the same polls showing surging support for pro-EU populist Tymoshenko and her party, Avakov and the other People's Front leaders could easily decide to unite with her. The People's Front party by itself has no chance of qualifying for parliament. But with his control of the national police force, Avakov can gain from Tymoshenko many concessions for his fellow party leaders. They could compete in the elections as a bloc of parties, or become members of Tymoshenko's Fatherland party.

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