

Ukrainian Speaker confirms Parliamentary Crisis in Kiev over NATO

By [Mu Xuequan](#)

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Ukrainian Parliament Speaker Arseniy Yatsenyuk confirmed Wednesday that there is a parliamentary crisis in the country.

"The parliament has been blocked since mid-January, therefore Ukraine is in a parliamentary crisis now," Yatsenyuk told a news conference.

He said the situation in the parliament "is destroying the foundation of Ukraine's democracy."

When asked whether President Viktor Yushchenko should begin the procedure of dissolving parliament after a 30-day period of inactivity, he said, "I would not make such forecasts so far."

The speaker said he was firmly opposed to dissolving the parliament, arguing that a new parliamentary election would not change the political structure.

However, the Regions Party's lawmaker Vasyl Hrytsak said Wednesday that an early parliamentary election is the only way out of the current crisis.

The biggest opposition party also declared on Wednesday that it has quit work in the National Constitutional Council, delivering a big blow to Yushchenko's bid to revise the Constitution through parliament.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko said her government's work will not be affected by the parliamentary crisis.

"The blockage of the parliament's work is artificial and is supported by those dreaming about a reformatted coalition...This will not prevent the government from working confidently and persistently," she told a news conference Wednesday.

On Jan. 18, Yushchenko, Yatsenyuk and Tymoshenko sent a letter to NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, expressing their hope that Ukraine could join the NATO membership action plan at a NATO summit scheduled for early April in Bucharest, Romania.

Since then, the opposition, which is calling on Ukrainian leaders to reverse the decision to request further NATO integration, has been blocking parliamentary work.

The Regions Party's leader Viktor Yanukovich released a statement on Wednesday that his party plans to call on the people to resolve the thorny issue of Ukraine's relations with

NATO.

“Let the Ukrainian people say whether they support the policy of the leaders on NATO that threaten the good neighborly relations and strategic partnership with our biggest neighbor Russia,” Yanukovich said.

This means the beginning of mass protests, said the Regions Party’s lawmaker Anna German.

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