

Under Yanukovich, Ukraine slides deeper in ranks of corrupt nations

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Corruption watchdog Transparency International puts nation in 'highly corrupt' category. The results for President Viktor Yanukovich's much-trumpeted campaign against corruption are in – a drop of 18 places in a leading global ranking.

Ukraine now sits alongside the Central African Republic, Congo, Uganda and Tajikistan in 152nd place of 183 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index on Dec. 1.

Ukraine scored 2.3 in Transparency International's 10-point scale, falling in the "highly corrupt" group of countries.

That's sobering news for Yanukovich, who made fighting corruption a top campaign pledge and recently said corrupt officials are "increasingly feeling" the effects of new legislation.

Yanukovich has formed a much-lauded anti-corruption committee and pushed through legislative changes designed to combat graft.

But many in and outside of Ukraine say that the nation has only become more corrupt under his rule, and has slid deeper toward kleptocracy and authoritarianism.

"Transparency International urges Viktor Yanukovich to fully make use of his powers as president of Ukraine and head [a] real fight

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against corruption offenders," said TORO, a corruption watchdog in Kirovohrad and Transparency International's national contact in Ukraine

"Ukraine in the year 2011 is on the way to corruption abyss," the organization said.

The president's press service refused to comment, referring the Kyiv Post instead to the president's official website. The website had not addressed Transparency's report by the time the Kyiv Post went to press. A spokeswoman for Yanukovich could not be reached.

The Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), a Council of Europe body to which Ukraine has belonged since 2006, on Nov. 30 urged Ukraine to increase its efforts to combat bribery and create greater transparency of political funding.

"Provisions on public sector bribery needed expanding to cover non-material gain, private sector bribery and trading in influence were not fully addressed, and improvements were needed on sanctions," GRECO said in their third corruption monitoring report on Ukraine.

At a June 8 meeting of the National Anti-Corruption Committee, Yanukovich said that corruption robs the state budget of some \$2.5 billion in revenues annually. On top of that, Yanukovich said, improper government spending robs the state of additional billions of dollars.

Through corrupt dealings in the sphere of public procurement, from 10 to 15 percent of the state budget ends up in the pockets of officials. That is, \$7.4 billion," Yanukovich said in June. "That's why in

the last 15 months we have worked hard on the eradication of corruption.”

Yanukovych has faced increased criticism inside and outside Ukraine for trying to present attempts of political persecution against his opponents as genuine attempts at cracking down on corruption.

Referring to the Transparency International corruption ranking, Hryhoriy Nemyria, an adviser to jailed opposition leader Yulia Tymosheko, asked: “Is this the result of Mr. Yanukovych’s anti-corruption campaign?”

For their part, citizens need to continue demanding better performance from their leaders, the Transparency report said.

Transparency’s rating is comprised of 17 data sources. The surveys and assessments used to compile the index include questions relating to the bribery of public officials, kickback in public procurement, embezzlement of public funds, and questions that probe the strength and effectiveness of public-sector anti-corruption efforts.

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