

U.K.'s May Facing Challenge From Grassroots Tories Over Brexit

- Petition for premier to go meets threshold for special meeting
- Vote would be non-binding but potentially humiliating for PM



Theresa May speaks in Parliament in March Photographer: Mark Duffy/U.K. Parliament

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U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May will face a challenge from activists in her Conservative Party after enough signed a petition opposing her leadership and Brexit strategy to force an emergency vote on her future.

The beleaguered premier, who survived a confidence vote by members of

Parliament in December, is set to face the judgment of local party leaders and other senior grassroots members at a special meeting of their National Convention — described as “the parliament of the voluntary party.”

May was told Monday by Andrew Sharpe, chairman of the convention, that more than 10 percent of chairmen and women of local parties had signed a petition calling for her to go — meeting the threshold for an emergency meeting, the Sun newspaper reported.

Tory activists and lawmakers angry at May’s handling of Brexit have been looking for ways to remove her from office as her premiership has lurched from crisis to crisis. The party’s constitution disallows another challenge by MPs until December — a year after their last attempt — forcing activists to take the issue into their own hands.

‘Not the Right Person’

May’s office played down the significance of the proposed meeting, saying any vote would not be binding and, in any case, it is not clear if it would be passed. There will also have to be a 28-day delay before any such gathering is held.

The petition, backed by more than 70 local party leaders according to organizers, says that “we no longer feel Mrs. May is the right person to continue as prime minister to lead us forward in [Brexit] negotiations.” It goes on to say that the signatories “ask therefore that she considers her position and resigns.”

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While May would not be required to quit by the party’s constitution if she lost such a vote, it would make it harder for her to meet her pledge to remain as prime minister until Brexit is delivered.

May has failed three times to get the deal she reached with Brussels for Britain’s divorce from the European Union through Parliament — in part because it is opposed by hardline Brexiteers in her own party — and has faced an increasing backlash from rank-and-file members frustrated at her failure to deliver the divorce they want.



Nigel Farage — Photographer: Darren Staples/Bloomberg

Activists have refused to campaign for the party and some have even said they will vote for Nigel Farage's Brexit Party in European Parliament Elections scheduled for May 23 after the premier agreed a delay in leaving the bloc until Oct. 31.

"There's a lot of anger and despair among activists and chairmen," petition organizer Dinah Glover said in a video posted on Twitter last week. May "is no longer the solution but is a sadly becoming the block to Brexit," Glover said.

Source:

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