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Bukovsky Loses His Bid to Run for President

By Unknown

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Former Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky lost his final hope of running for president on Tuesday when the Supreme Court dismissed his appeal against the refusal of his candidacy.

Bukovsky, who spent 13 years in and out of labor camps in the Soviet era after exposing the role of psychiatric hospitals in silencing critics, launched a long-shot bid for the Kremlin last month.

Authorities swiftly denied Bukovsky registration for the March 2 election, saying he had not lived in Russia for the past 10 years and had a residency permit in another country, Britain. Bukovsky described the ruling as "obviously political."

The Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld the original decision, saying the Central Elections Commission had acted lawfully in denying Bukovsky's candidacy, court officials said.

Bukovsky's lawyer, Vadim Prokhorov, told reporters after the hearing that the court had violated the Constitution with its ruling because the only valid grounds for denying registration were mental illness or a criminal conviction.

The 65-year-old former dissident, who has lived in Britain since his deportation in 1976, said his main mission was to restore rights to the people. He claimed that the Kremlin was frightened by his candidacy.

President Vladimir Putin's chosen successor, Dmitry Medvedev, is widely expected to win by a large margin in the election because of Putin's popularity and the Kremlin's strong support of his candidacy.

Four other candidates are running, including Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, Liberal Democratic Party leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky and former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov.

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