

Vote Fails in Moldova, Setting Stage for Elections

September 06, 2010



Former Moldovan President and current head of the Communist Party Vladimir Voronin attending a news conference in Chisinau on Monday. **Gleb Garanich**

CHISINAU, Moldova — Moldova's pro-Western leaders agreed on Monday to call new parliamentary elections to break a political deadlock after being dealt a humiliating setback on Sunday when a referendum flopped because of poor turnout.

As opposition Communists reveled, the four-party Alliance for European Integration conceded they would now have to give in and call new elections as their opponents wanted.

"The situation ... means we must now go to the Constitutional Court for advice on dissolving the parliament and announcing a date for new elections," acting President Mihai Ghimpu said on behalf of the alliance's four leaders.

The alliance took power over a year ago after eight years of Communist rule, vowing to take Moldova into mainstream Europe.

Alliance leaders had called the referendum to win people's approval for switching to a system of electing the president by popular vote and ending months of chronic political paralysis.

They wanted to ditch the present system by which the president, the most powerful figure, is elected by the parliament.

Because of the delicate balance of power in the 101-seat assembly, their choice of candidate for president has been twice blocked and the country has been mired in a state of paralysis without a full-time president since April 2009.

In a day of lackluster voting Sunday, only about 30 percent of the electorate turned out, short of the 33 percent required for the poll to be valid.

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