The Moscow Times
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Ex-Speaker Gets Vote in Transdnestr

December 26, 2011



Shevchuk

TIRASPOL, Moldova — Former parliament speaker Yevgeny Shevchuk won the presidential election in Moldova's breakaway Transdnestr region, the territory's election authority said Monday. This is the second setback for regional power Russia within two months.

"According to preliminary results, he [Shevchuk] received 73.88 percent of votes while his opponent Anatoly Kaminsky received 19.67 percent," Central Elections Commission chairman Pyotr Denisenko told reporters.

Shevchuk competed against current speaker Anatoly Kaminsky, who was backed by Russia, in a runoff on Sunday.

Kaminsky's defeat comes after a Kremlin-endorsed candidate lost a presidential election in November in Georgia's rebel region of South Ossetia, leading to court battles, public protests and legal chaos.

Kaminsky indicated that he would not challenge the election results.

"I recognize Shevchuk's victory," he said.

President Igor Smirnov, who ran the mainly Russian-speaking territory as an independent fiefdom since it broke from Moldova and fought a brief war against Moldovan forces in 1992, was voted out in the first round on Dec. 11.

Not recognized internationally, Transdnestr relies on Russian financial and political support for its half a million people. Moscow still has about 1,500 troops in the strip of land along Moldova's eastern border with Ukraine.

Talks with Moldova failed to make progress under Smirnov, who insisted on sovereignty while Moscow suggested Transdnestr should be part of Moldova with a special status.

Shevchuk, 43, fell out with Smirnov in 2009 after suggesting constitutional reform to limit presidential powers. His campaign in this election focused on fighting corruption and nepotism.

Although he has not spoken in favor of rejoining Moldova, Shevchuk has called for compromise solutions that would make traveling and doing business easier for Transdnestrians.

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