

Moldova Closes Pro-Communist TV Station

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CHISINAU, Moldova — Moldova's state broadcast regulator has stripped a pro-Communist television station of its license, forcing it off air for what it said was biased reporting, the station said.

The move sparked accusations of censorship and could set back the country's efforts to forge closer ties with the European Union.

The station, NIT, has often criticized the ruling Alliance for European Integration, a group of pro-Western parties that came to power after defeating the Communist Party in 2009.

NIT said it planned to appeal the regulator's ruling via the courts.

"Their decision shows the weakness of the authorities and the fact that the oversight body serves [the ruling parties'] political interests," NIT producer Adela Raileanu said Friday.

Moldovan law requires local media to observe "political and social pluralism" in reporting

and stipulates that political parties or the respective sides in any conflict get equal airtime.

The ruling alliance took power after violent protests in April 2009 triggered by a parliamentary election in which the Communists won 50 percent of the vote, enough to allow them to select a new president and amend the constitution.

The alliance won a subsequent election and pushed the Communists into opposition.

However, it took Moldova 2 1/2 years to elect a president — who is voted in by the parliament rather than a popular vote — due to the Communists' refusal to support the alliance's candidate.

The parliament finally elected Nicolae Timofti, a veteran judge with no political allegiance, as president last month with the help of several former Communist Party defectors.

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