

Shein Breaks Hunger Strike With Glass of Juice

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Shein, right, drinking a cup of juice on April 12 while on hunger strike, in a goodwill gesture to the elections commission. On Tuesday, he broke his hunger strike by drinking juice. **Dmitry Gudkov**

After going 40 days without food, former Astrakhan mayoral candidate Oleg Shein has stopped his hunger strike by drinking a glass of juice.

Shein had said he would end the strike once election officials agreed to review footage of vote violations in Astrakhan mayoral elections — which they did last week — and his supporters who had been arrested were released from jail.

"The court has just called — the last of our arrested comrades has been freed. As such, the hunger strike is finished," he wrote Tuesday on his LiveJournal blog.

The ex-State Duma deputy from the Just Russia party, who claims to have lost 14 kilograms during the hunger strike, said he and his fellow protesters are restricting their diet to liquids upon a doctor's orders.

"We have just drunk some juice. We are first of all only going to take juices and children's puree, as per dietitians' recommendations," he told Interfax.

Shein had told Komsomolskaya Pravda that the juice would be orange or carrot and that it would be diluted.

Shein said he is now concentrating on preparation for Thursday's court hearing about the potential annulment of the election results, for which he is feeling confident.

"We are actively preparing for the hearing," he said. "We have all the necessary video materials to achieve the cancelation of the results."

Shein and his supporters had been protesting alleged violations in the Astrakhan mayoral election last month in which he officially received 30 percent of votes, compared with 60 percent for his opponent, United Russia candidate Mikhail Stolyarov.

Last week, the Central Elections Commission reviewed web camera footage from polling sites at Shein's request. Elections commission head Vladimir Churov said violations had been spotted in 128 of the city's 202 polling stations, though he said there was no evidence of falsification.

A first hearing in the court case brought by Shein is scheduled for Thursday.

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