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Altai Court Rejects Lawsuit Challenging Controversial Local Governance Reform

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Protesters in Gorno-Altaysk. **@this_is_Barnaul**

The Supreme Court of the Siberian republic of Altai on Monday rejected a lawsuit challenging a controversial municipal reform passed by the regional parliament in June, local media and activists reported.

Hundreds of people gathered outside the court ahead of the ruling to protest the Kremlin-backed reform, which effectively eliminates local government bodies in rural communities and further concentrates power in the regional administration.

Videos posted by activists showed the crowd chanting "Shame on the judge" and "We are united, we are invincible" after activist and lawyer Dmitriy Todoshev, a plaintiff in the case, announced the decision.

Todoshev said he plans to appeal to a higher court. "Victory will be ours no matter what. I will fight till the end," he told protesters, who presented him with a traditional Altaian hat and belt in a gesture of gratitude.

Altai, Russia's least populous ethnic republic, has just over 221,500 residents spread across more than 92,000 square kilometers (35,521 square miles). Its capital, Gorno-Altaysk, is home to just over 65,000 people, leaving most residents in rural villages directly impacted by the reform.

A rally against the reform in Gorno-Altaysk in June drew around 4,000 people, a rare public display of anti-government sentiment amid the government's tightening crackdown on dissent since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

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