

Transdnestr Poll Ends in Runoff

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TIRASPOL, Moldova — Transdnestr leader Igor Smirnov, who is seeking to extend his two-decade rule, appears to be out of the running after coming third in a presidential election.

According to preliminary election results, former parliamentary speaker Yevgeny Shevchuk, a 43-year-old lawyer, was in first place with 38.5 percent of the vote. Current speaker Anatoly Kaminsky, 61, who is endorsed by Moscow, was in second with 26.5 percent, while Smirnov, 70, was on 24.8 percent.

The two top candidates should now face each other in a runoff, the breakaway republic's elections commission said.

But Smirnov, who has run the mainly Russian-speaking territory as an independent fiefdom since it broke from Moldova and fought a brief separatist war against Moldovan forces in 1992, still holds out hope of hanging on to power. His camp has demanded that the Dec. 11 election be annulled and submitted a 50-page dossier of alleged violations to support its call.

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