



93-year-old former serviceman loses ruling on expats voting in UK elections

Voting rights expire after 15 years for British citizens living abroad

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Tuesday, 7 May 2013

A 93-year-old former British serviceman vowed to spend the rest of his life, if necessary, fighting for the right to vote after Strasbourg judges rejected his case.

Harry Shindler, who moved to Italy three decades ago, has been battling through the courts for the right to vote in his native land. But the European Court of Human Rights ruled that allowing UK non-residents to continue voting for 15 years was "not an insubstantial period of time" and it was up to the British Government whether to choose a cut-off point.

Mr Shindler said that he refused to be disappointed or discouraged by the decision and would seek to appeal to Strasbourg's Grand Chamber.

"We believed we would win. We always knew the case was unanswerable because we live in new times of technology and travel. We will continue to fight on," he said.

"He is 93 and he is not going to give up. He will probably be fighting for the rest of his life," added his lawyer Charlotte Oliver, who explained that Mr Shindler had fought at Anzio during the Second World War and married an Italian woman. He returned to Italy in 1982, upon his retirement from the army, to be with his son and his family.

But Strasbourg judges ruled that they were satisfied that the 15-year limit "pursued the legitimate aim of confining the parliamentary franchise to those citizens with a close connection to the UK and who would therefore be most directly affected by its laws".

The ruling against the widower was greeted with anger by other expatriates. Penelope Hearn, of the Cyprus Expat website, said: "Many people have paid their dues, Tax, National Insurance have worked in the UK and yet still, after a 15 year period of not living in the UK, they lose their right to vote in General Elections.

"Many expats still contribute to the UK economy, by purchasing British goods and services for consumption in their new home abroad. Many expats visit the UK to visit family, friends and for other matters. Many expats visit British pubs abroad to view football matches and drink British beer for instance, which is imported from the UK. Just some examples of how expats help the UK economy."