

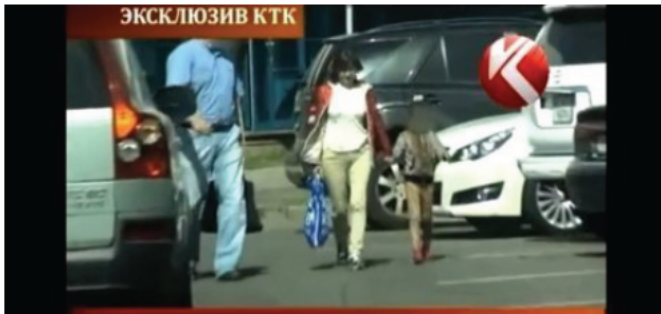
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## Italians reverse Ablyazov's wife deportation. A story of puppets and puppeteers

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Alma Shalabayeva with daughter Alua Ablyazova. Snapshot of KTK video

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After 1.5 months Italian Interior Ministry has suddenly reversed its decision to extradite Alma Shalabayeva and her daughter to Kazakhstan, [Tengrinews.kz](#) reports citing the Italian government.

Shalabayeva is the wife of Mukhtar Ablyazov, the former banker who fled Kazakhstan when charged with embezzling \$5 billion from BTA bank in Kazakhstan. The massive fraud was found out after the bank almost collapsed in the financial crisis and had to be taken over by the government to save millions of Kazakhstan citizens from losing their deposits and keep the bank afloat. He was sentenced to prison terms both by Kazakhstan courts and by the UK's High Court in London, but still remains comfortably at large in Europe.

The authorities said that Alma Shalabayeva's extradition to Kazakhstan was done with observance of all the required procedures and was absolutely legal until today when the Italian authorities have suddenly decided that they have wronged the criminally notorious banker by extraditing his wife back to her home country.

The unexpected change of the official mind would have seemed oddly out of place if not for the row around the Italian Interior Minister and Vice PM Angelino Alfano. Opposition MPs have discovered that masking Ablyazov for a political refugee and using his wife's deportation as a human rights bomb against Alfano could be a way to undermine Alfano and make him resign.

Only a few months ago Italian government [expressed readiness to sign extradition treaties with Kazakhstan](#) while now the Italian Democratic party (PD) senators are saying that the extradition breached laws forbidding deportation of foreigners to states where they might be subject to political persecution which implies that Kazakhstan has suddenly started to be viewed as one of such states by the Italian government and Ablyazov, the criminal charged by the London High Court for embezzling billions, has suddenly become a political refugee.

### A scheme that has worked once

Ablyazov was appointed to lead BTA bank back in 2005 and remained in the position until he fled the embezzlement charges in 2009. He was not involved in any politics in Kazakhstan or elsewhere while chairing the bank, but started posing as Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev's vocal critic immediately after he was accused of fraud and fled Kazakhstan with a healthy fortune of \$10 billion.

In a common understanding political refugees are people persecuted for their political opinion, of which he had none, but not for their financial crimes which he had in plenty, according to London's Judge Nigel Teare who sentenced Ablyazov to prison for [failing to disclose his assets](#).

This is not the first time when Ablyazov reserves to the tactics of turning into a vocal opponent

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of the government immediately after being charged with a financial crime. All the difference is that he did not flee Kazakhstan the first time so the case did not draw very much international attention.

He was first charged with embezzlement in 1999 when he served as Kazakhstan Minister of Energy, Industry and Trade. He had to resign because of the criminal case and immediately turned his cloak and joined the government's opposition. After several years of court procedure he was sentenced to 6 years in prison in 2002, but was amnestied less than a year later in April 2003. After that he turned his cloak back and peacefully coexisted with the government dealing in bank loans instead of politics.

Abyluzov has been following in his own footsteps over the past several years, but things might turn out differently the second time with all the international attention his affair is getting. He is surely enjoying manipulating western media and placing paid articles, but even from the actions of the Italian officials that are using his case to undermine their political opponent Alfano it is clear that everyone is playing their own 'game of thrones'.

#### **Missing part of the puzzle No dual citizenship for Kazakhstan**

While Kazakhstan, Russian and British authorities are chasing Abyluzov with arrest warrants Italian Interior Ministry has reversed its decision to extradite Alma Shalabayeva and her six-year-old daughter to Kazakhstan and authorized Shalabayeva's return to Italy where she "can explain her position". Italian Prime-Minister Enrico Letta has even initiated an internal investigation of Shalabayeva's deportation.

However, Italy has not always been ignoring its partner-countries' warrants or calling illegal migrants back to explain positions. The deportation took place in late May after Italian law-enforcement authorities held a special operation in a house in the suburbs of Rome in an attempt to capture Mukhtar Abyluzov. The former banker was not found in the house, but the police did find his wife and daughter who for some reason chose to produce their African IDs instead of Kazakh ones. On May 31 Alma Shalabayeva and her daughter Alua were deported to Kazakhstan for illegal stay at the territory of Italy under fake passports.

Shalabayeva later filed an 18-page [declaration that was distributed by her lawyers](#) to all the prominent Western media, where she confirmed that they were brought to the police quarters in Rome early in the morning of May 29. After spending two days in a detention center for illegal immigrants they were deported to Kazakhstan on the official grounds of possessing fake Central African Republic passport.

Abyluzov's lawyer, Riccardo Olivo later [denied that Shalabayeva and her daughter had any forged documents](#) and said that they were carrying valid Kazakhstan passports and EU residency permits issued by Latvia.

Judging from the Italian police reports however, the two chose not to produce their valid Kazakhstan IDs or their Latvian permits, as the Italian police was not aware they had any of those.

Two days later in the hearing on May 31 Riccardo Olivo confirmed that his clients held Central African Republic passports. But he insisted both of the passports were legal and produced signed confirmations from the Central African Republic embassy that the passports were genuine.

Here is where the missing part of the puzzle comes in: Kazakhstan legislation does not support dual citizenship. This means that Shalabayeva could have either a valid Kazakhstan passport or a valid Central African Republic passport, but not both of them at the same time.

And here is a copy of Shalabayeva's valid Kazakhstan passport with her photo published by [Italian Insight](#) that shows that she indeed possesses a Kazakh passport.

However, the African embassy's testimony became the ground for the Italian government's decision to revoke the deportation ruling.

Strange as it may seem, after it took the authorities 72 hours to deport the wife and daughter, it took them a month and a half after the passports' validity was proven in court to reverse the decision. It only remains to guess who or what turned the tide, and if the tide is going to persist. But it is clear enough that every puppet in the show believes itself a puppeteer.

#### **Turning of the tide**

According to [TheStar.com.my](#) on Friday, Italian authorities were discussing serious omissions in the deportation procedure and the intention to proceed with the investigations. Italy's Justice Ministry said it was unaware of the operation until after the fact and Foreign Minister Emma Bonino criticized the incident as "[abnormal](#)".

In a statement distributed by Shalabayeva's Italian lawyers on Saturday, Abyluzov thanked the "Italian people" and Prime Minister Enrico Letta for revoking the expulsion order, but said he was worried about his family.

Shalabayeva and her daughter are currently staying in Kazakhstan [under a written pledge not to leave the country](#). They are staying in a cottage [at their relatives](#) and are neither guarded nor threatened as the video shows.

Italian Government is blaming the police for failing to warn the ministers on the routine operation, Italian Foreign Minister Emma Bonino is denying being aware of the operation, opposition MPs are calling for resignation of Interior Minister Angelino Alfano [claiming he was behind the operation](#).

#### **Background**

Mukhtar Abyluzov is accused of embezzlement of \$5 billion from Kazakhstan's BTA Bank. The businessman fled in 2009 after the criminal case was initiated against him. Abyluzov received an asylum in Great Britain. Kazakhstan is requesting the banker's extradition on accusations of major fraud and siphoning off of the bank's funds via dummy companies.

On February 16 London's High Court [sentenced Abyluzov to 22 months in prison](#) for contempt of court. According to the latest information, Abyluzov [may now be hiding in France](#).

Earlier [Tengrinews.kz](#) reported that former head of BTA Bank Mukhtar Abyluzov who fled Kazakhstan to avoid justice had obtained [a fake passport registered to another person in](#)

Kyrgyzstan. Head of Kyrgyzstan State Registration Service Erian Saparbayev said that the document for the name of Nurdin Osmonov was issued to Abylazov by the Passport Office of Alamedin region in Chu oblast. The passport had the ex-banker's photo. Abylazov also received a second Kyrgyz passport registered to Murat Zhamalov (born on December 15, 1965).

Shortly before that a group of 7 people was discovered and convicted for forging documents in Kazakhstan. Among other things the criminal group forged passports for the banker's children (Madiyar, Aldiyar and Alua), as well as for Syrym Shalabayev (Abylazov's brother-in-law) and his family members (Zhanna Shalabayeva, Aigul Shalabayeva, Salima Shalabayeva and Alma Shalabayeva) in in 2009-2012.

Tags Abylazov, Europe, Italy, Kazakh, Kazakhstan, Mukhtar Abylazov, news

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