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French Prosecutor Requests 3-Year Suspended Sentence for Russian Mother

By The Moscow Times

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A French prosecutor has asked a local court to hand a Russian mother a three-year suspended sentence for abducting her daughter from her French ex-husband with the use of violence.

Christian Pasta, prosecutor of the southern French town of Tarascon, asked a local court on Tuesday to hand the sentence to Irina Belenkaya, RIA-Novosti reported.

Belenkaya has been charged with abducting her 3-year-old daughter, Elise Andre, from the girl's French father Jean-Michel Andre twice, in 2007 and 2009, and has been separately charged with complicity in violence toward her ex-husband during the second abduction, when two accomplices allegedly beat him.

Pasta said complicity in violence was punishable by up to 10 years in prison in France but said Belenkaya "needs a chance."

Belenkaya's lawyer Bruno Rebstock asked the court to acquit her of the charges related to the first abduction and to give her a suspended sentence, legal news agency Rapsi reported.

Both Belenkaya and Andre received custody rights from courts in their own countries after their divorce in 2007.

Belenkaya secretly took their daughter from her father to Russia in 2007, then Andre took the girl back to France. In 2009, Belenkaya tried to take their daughter to Russia again, but Hungary, acting on an Interpol warrant, extradited Belenkaya to France as she tried to cross the border into Ukraine with the child. French authorities passed the girl back to her father.

The case of 3-year-old Elise Andre highlighted the lack of transnational agreements regarding custody of children with dual citizenship when their parents' marriages break up. Since then, Russian officials have worked on such agreements with a number of different countries, including France and Finland.

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