

Wife of Runaway Kazakh Tycoon Under Investigation, Prosecutor Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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ALMATY, Kazakhstan — The wife of fugitive Kazakh tycoon and dissident Mukhtar Ablyazov is under investigation for involvement in a crime, prosecutors said, after she and her daughter were deported from Italy last week.

Ablyazov, whose whereabouts are unknown, has accused Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev of ordering the "kidnapping" of his wife and daughter, who are now staying with relatives in the Central Asian state's commercial capital Almaty.

Alma Shalabayeva has given a written undertaking not to leave Almaty, said Nurdaulet Suindikov, spokesman for the Kazakh Prosecutor General's office, in a statement Monday.

Ablyazov, a former Kazakh minister who became an outspoken critic of Nazarbayev, fled the oil-rich nation after his bank BTA was nationalized and declared insolvent in 2009. The bank has brought fraud charges against him and his allies.



Mukhtar
Ablyazov
Vedomosti

Saying that his life was in danger, Ablyazov was granted political asylum in Britain in 2011, but he fled the country last year after missing a contempt of court hearing at which he was due to be jailed for 22 months.

Suindikov said a group of migration police officers in the western Kazakh region of Atyrau had been charged with receiving bribes for issuing national passports to Ablyazov's relatives, including his wife, who had already left Kazakhstan.

"An investigation is now being conducted into Shalabayeva's complicity in this crime," he said. "The investigation will ensure rigorous respect for her rights and freedoms guaranteed by the constitution."

Ablyazov slammed "the completely illegal actions" of the Italian police and judge who ordered his wife's extradition.

But Suindikov said the Italian prosecutor's office had ruled that the actions of the police and the court were legal.

He added that Italian law enforcement officers had examined Shalabayeva's passport with which she had been residing in Italy and found it was false — it had been issued by the Central African Republic in the name of a person called Ayan Alma.

Ablyazov, who earned a fortune after the Soviet Union's demise, said in December that he would run for office if free elections were called when Nazarbayev's rule ends.

Nazarbayev, 72, has governed his vast nation of 17 million people for more than two decades. He has overseen market reforms and foreign investment inflows that have ensured rapid economic growth, but has tolerated no dissent.

In October, Ablyazov's friend Vladimir Kozlov, also a fierce critic of Nazarbayev, was found guilty by a Kazakh court of colluding with the runaway oligarch in attempting to bring down the Kazakh government and jailed for 7 1/2 years.

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