

French Court Orders Kazakh Billionaire Extradited to Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A French court decided to extradite a Kazakh opposition leader and former banker, who is wanted in Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan on embezzlement charges, to Russia.

A judicial panel on Thursday considered requests filed by both Russia and Ukraine last summer to extradite Mukhtar Ablyazov, accused of embezzling billions from a bank he ran in Kazakhstan, The Associated Press reported. The court preferred the \$5 billion at stake in the Russia embezzlement case to the \$400 million in Ukraine, The Independent reported.

Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine brought charges against Ablyazov in 2009, accusing him of embezzling \$6 billion from BTA Bank, after the Kazakh government seized the institution and declared it insolvent. The bank has Russian and Ukrainian subsidiaries.

Ablyazov's lawyer Peter Sahlas said that the case was politically motivated. "This is not a story about a theft. This is a settling of political scores," he said.

Ablyazov fled to Britain. and used his funds to bankroll Kazakhstan's opposition movements, in an apparent violation of British courts' orders to freeze his assets.

Accused of contempt of court in Britain, he fled the country and was in July arrested in southern France,

The banker's wife and daughter were detained in Rome in May and deported back to Kazakhstan, but were allowed to return to Italy in late December after criticism that the deportations were illegal.

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