

Former Ukrainian Prime Minister Seeks Removal of EU Sanctions

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Ukraine's former prime minister is appealing to the European Union to lift the asset freezes that have been imposed against him and his son for suspected misuse of government funds, a news report has said.

Mykola Azarov, who stepped down in late January in a failed bid to defuse the political protests in his country, has enlisted a German law firm, Alber & Geiger, to help seek the lifting of sanctions, EUobserver reported Thursday, citing unidentified diplomats.

The firm has sent letters to the EU Council and to the embassies of all 28 member nations on behalf of Azarov and his son Oleksii — a politician who was also named on the EU blacklist — and has sought a meeting with at least one member of the European Parliament, Britain's Charles Tannock, who refused talks with what he called Azarov's "lobbyists," the report said.

Azarov, a close ally of Ukraine's ousted President Viktor Yanukovich, was among 18 Ukrainian officials sanctioned by the EU in early March on suspicion of misusing government funds. He

flew to Austria in a private jet hours after his resignation, news agencies reported.

The EU has imposed visa bans and asset freezes against 33 people in connection with Russia's annexation of Crimea.

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