



FRANCE INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

France: Stop extradition of Kazakhstani opposition activist at risk of torture

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The decision to authorize the extradition to Russia of Kazakhstani banker and opposition figure Mukhtar Ablyazov by the Lyon Court of Appeal (France) has set in motion a procedure that may eventually see him forcibly returned to Kazakhstan, where he is wanted on fraud charges, Amnesty International said today.

"If extradited, Mukhtar Ablyazov will face serious human rights violations. Not only do we have fears that Ablyazov would not get a fair trial in Russia, there is the real danger that he will eventually end up in Kazakhstan, where he will be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment," said Julia Hall, Amnesty International's expert on counter-terrorism and human rights.

"Russian security services collaborate routinely with the security apparatus in Kazakhstan. The French authorities must not send Ablyazov to any country where he could be threatened with onward transfer to Kazakhstan."

Kazakhstani national Mukhtar Ablyazov, a fugitive banker, and key political opponent of the country's President Nursultan Nazarbayev, was apprehended by French police on 31 July during a house raid in Mouans-Sartoux, near Cannes.

In giving a green light to Ablyazov's extradition to Russia, the Lyon court approved a parallel extradition request from Ukraine, though stating that extradition to Russia should be the priority.

Last April, the French Cour de Cassation (Supreme Court) repealed its consent to Ablyazov's extradition and decided that the proceedings for his extradition to Russia and Ukraine on fraud charges should commence anew in a court in Lyon.

"European governments, including France, must set an example and guarantee that Ablyazov's human rights are respected and protected. Otherwise, Europe becomes deeply implicated in the on-going human rights violations that plague Central Asian republics, including Kazakhstan, where torture and ill-treatment in detention are commonplace."