

## Kazakh banker's wife returns to Rome after expulsion row

Alma Shalabayeva's deportation in May and subsequent detention in Kazakhstan caused uproar in Italy

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Alma Shalabayeva in Rome. Photograph: AGF/Rex Features

Alma Shalabayeva, whose husband, a Kazakh banker wanted for fraud in three countries, received a warm personal greeting from [Italy's](#) foreign minister on Friday when she flew back to Rome months after being summarily expelled.

Shalabayeva's husband, Mukhtar Ablyazov, is an adversary of the Kazakh president, Nursultan Nazarbayev. He denies charges that he embezzled billions of euros from his former bank, but [Kazakhstan](#) has demanded that Ablyazov return from France, where he is currently held.

In May, Shalabayeva and her daughter Alua, who had been living in Italy, were arrested in a stealth police operation and dispatched on a private plane to Kazakhstan where they were detained.

The case created uproar in Italy, with opposition politicians and the press accusing the government of disregarding normal judicial and diplomatic procedures to please Kazakhstan, a major oil producer.

Since the furore, the Italian government has gone to some lengths to support Shalabayeva, pressing the Kazakh government to release her and promising a VIP welcome upon her arrival back in Rome.

She and her three children were received by the foreign minister, Emma Bonino. An official photograph showed the minister with her arm around Shalabayeva's waist and her hand laid affectionately on Alua's head.

Bonino said in a statement: "It was a pleasure for me to be able to share with Mrs Shalabayeva and her children their joy at being in Rome again."

