



## **Russian citizen Irina Belenkaya to appear before French court**

27.05.2009, 02.28

PARIS, May 27 (Itar-Tass) - Russian citizen Irina Belenkaya is arriving in France from Hungary on Wednesday. Member of the Russian Public Chamber, well-known lawyer Anatoly Kucherena told Itar-Tass that she will be transported to Aix-en-Provence. The court of this city of the Southern France is to consider litigation between Belenkaya and her former French husband Jean-Michel Andre.

After their divorce in 2007 the former spouses failed to agree on dividing the parental rights to their daughter Elise. The father and mother were alternately taking the girl to France and back to Russia. In late March 2009, Belenkaya made an attempt to take Elise from her former husband who lives in the South of France, by force. After the incident Jean-Michel turned to police and as a result the mother and daughter were detained in Hungary three weeks later. On May 19, a court in Budapest ruled to extradite Irina Belenkaya to the French authorities within 10 days.

Mediators from Russia and French are involved in the settlement of the conflict between the former husband and wife. Representative of the Russian side at the negotiations Anatoly Kucherena told Itar-Tass in an interview earlier that in his view, the French court could pass a ruling on either keeping Belenkaya in custody or on her release with following judicial control.

The Russian lawyer expressed the hope that Andre will keep his promise and will provide assistance in securing a favourable outcome of the trial and help release his former wife. Kucherena stressed that Belenkaya is ready for an amicable settlement agreement.

Earlier, Russian and French officials agreed to maintain constant contact in order to resolve the conflict between Elise's parents. Representatives of both parents met in Paris last week. Anatoly Kucherena said, "The discussion was quite constructive." He informed the French partners that Elise's mother, Irina Belenkaya of Russia, had signed an amicable agreement wither former husband Jean-Michel Andre of France. The lawyers also discussed procedural aspects of Belenkaya's extradition to French authorities.

Belenkaya signed the amicable agreement on May 6 when the Hungarian court ruled to extradite her to France. Her ex-husband has so far not signed it.

"Until Irina Belenkaya is in France, the case cannot be settled," Kucherena said, adding that the court in France might meet shortly, but did not name any dates. Speaking about the extradition of Irina Belenkaya to France, Kucherena stressed, "Irina should come to France as a free person." "I hope that after the amicable agreement has been signed, we will come to an understanding in court too," Kucherena said. He recalled that Jean-Michel Andre is ready to withdraw his appeals, but the question of the trial remains open because a withdrawal of a lawsuit does not provide grounds for closing a criminal case. Jean-Michel Andre, his lawyer, Kucherena and Russian embassy official agreed in Avignon that Elise's parents would reach an amicable agreement that will allow both of them to bring up their daughter.

Belenkaya, detained in March on the border between Hungary and Ukraine and accused of abducting her own daughter, was in Budapest under arrest. Irina Belenkaya's lawyer Robert Friedman expressed hope that France would reconsider its decision to insist on the extradition of his client, and that Belenkaya would be released from the Hungarian prison.

"Frankly speaking, I very much hope that during the coming days, given for the settlement of all problems connected with the extradition, France will reconsider its decision, and Irina will be set free from the Hungarian prison," he said earlier. "It is clear that the situation has been complicated by the criminal proceedings instituted against Irina in France. I am absolutely sure that the problem, which affects the interests of the child, should be settled only on the basis of mutual accord. It is gratifying that we see the same understanding on the part of Jean-Michel Andre, Elise's father," the lawyer said.

Speaking about Irina, Friedman said that many people in Hungary showed sympathy and understanding for her as a woman and a mother. The consulate is helping her resolve both legal and material problems.

The signing of an amicable agreement by Irina Belenkaya will facilitate further resolution of her case in court, lawyer Irina Sidorova said earlier. "I am confident that both Russian and French courts are closely watching the situation between the two parties because it is obvious that, in my opinion, this is a personal and family rather than a criminal

case,” she said. Sidorova is the president of the “Franco-Russian Attorneys and Lawyers” Association.

Belenkaya was detained on April 12 together with her three-year-old daughter Elise Andre as she was trying to cross the Hungarian-Ukrainian border by car.

---

© ITAR-TASS. All right reserved. You undertake not to copy, store in any medium (including in any other websites), distribute, transmit, re-transmit, broadcast, modify or show in public any part of the ITAR-TASS website without the prior written permission of ITAR-TASS. Contact phone.: +7(095) 202 1127, 202 1295, 290 4468, 229 2864, 229 4171; fax: (095) 202 5474 e-mail: [worldmarket@itar-tass.com](mailto:worldmarket@itar-tass.com)