

09:13 , 03.29.11



# jewish world

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## Investigation

### A billionaire in stormy waters

**Alexander Mashkevich, one of Jewish world's biggest philanthropists, suspected of organizing sex party on luxurious yacht seized by Turkish police. His lawyer denies allegations, but Yedioth Ahronoth reveals what really happened on board**

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Mashkevich: 287th place in Forbes list of world's richest

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September 28, 2010. A huge yacht anchors in Budrum, Turkey. The Savarona, 136 meters (446 miles) long, once owned by the "Father of the Turks", Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and is currently rented for tens of thousands of dollars a day.

A helicopter flies above the yacht. Ropes are rolled down from it. Turkish policemen slide to deck. At the same time, in the luxurious yacht suites, there are Kazakh businessmen with nine young girls, two of them under aged. The policemen search the place and find a huge amount of contraceptives and a file with escort girls' pictures and hotel receipts. Ten suspects, among them two Turkish billionaires, are arrested immediately and investigated for solicitation and trafficking in women.

The police raid was the culminating point of a secret investigation conducted for months against a Turkish crime organization that trafficked women. According to the investigation, the organization heads brought young Ukrainian and Russian women in order to satisfy the whims of rich businessmen and their guests. Parties such as the one on the Savarona were a nice source of profit for them, and this specific one was especially profitable and luxurious.

But the investigation sheds light not only on the crime organization but on the identity of the man who chartered the yacht to have a good time wit his friends and business partners: the police suspects that he is no other than Alexander Mashkevich - a well known billionaire and philanthropist holding an Israeli citizenship and heading the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress.

Mashkevich quickly denied his involvement in the event. His spokesman, Roman Spector, told the British daily "Telegraph" that Mashkevich was indeed onboard the yacht when it was raided, but he was in no way connected to criminal or immoral acts on it.

When Yedioth Ahronoth reporter Eldad Beck wrote about Mashkevitch's involvement in the story, the Jewish Oligarch denied he was even interrogated by the Turkish police. According to him, he never spoke to a Turkish policeman. His friends said that the Turkish press' articles that mentioned him were driven by anti-Semitism.

But secret investigation materials from the Attorney General in Anatalia that was obtained by Yedioth Ahronoth, presents a completely different picture and revels the involvement of Mashkevitch in the affair.

The investigation began several months before the police raid on the yacht. The Turkish police received information about a crime organization that deals with human trafficking and solicitation. The organization was headed, according to the information, by Taufik

Arif, a Turkish tycoon, Donald Trump's business partner and owner of a metal production factory in Kazakhstan and many other businesses in the US and Britain. Arif, dubbed "David" by his people, was born in Kazakhstan and lives in Turkey since 1994. The police followed his organization for two months, documented them with video cameras, tapped their phones and broke into their email and bank accounts.

Investigation materials show that Arif's organization provided escort services to businessmen. The young women, some of whom were underage (according to the investigation, one of the businessmen was especially fond of 13-14 year old, and the organization head supplied those girls) were brought from Russian and the Ukraine, through modeling agencies.

The investigation protocol includes transcripts of phone calls between Arif and his partners, describing the girls, their age, height and looks. Many women were documented leaving the airport in Anatalia and taken to hotels. The police investigators seem to have known it all: who these women were, where they came from, who they were intended for, and how much he had paid for them. And they knew that if one of the big bosses or the important customers was not satisfied with a girl, she would immediately be sent back to where she came from.

The police also knew that a big event was to take place on the Savarona, an exclusive event with only a few participants, but lots of money and passion.

In the last five years, the yacht was rented twice a year: one week to Arif and one week to Mashkevich. The investigation materials show that in September of last year, before the party, it was leased to Mashkevich for 9 days, for \$300,000. The money was transferred from his bank account in Kazakhstan to Turkey, and there are bank statements to prove it. The Turkish police was tipped that Arif would also be at the party, and decided it would be a good opportunity to catch him red handed.

And so, on September 28, 2010, the third day of the party, the police raided the Savarona. And that's when Mashkevich enters the picture.

## Synagogues and matzah crates

Mashkevitch's character is mysterious, intriguing. He is a cold, calculated businessman who managed to take over Kazakhstan's natural resources with his partners, and accumulate approximately 3.3 billion dollars of wealth, which puts him in the 287 place in the Forbes list of the world's richest. But he is also a traditional Jewish person, who donates significantly for synagogue construction in Russia, for deliveries of Matzo to faraway communities, and for Jewish studies.

"When [Shimon Peres](#), the Israeli president, visited Kazakhstan, Mashkevich cried at the sound of the Tikva, the national hymn. He is an enthusiastic Jew and Zionist", say one of the people in his entourage.

Mashkevich, 54, was raised in Kirgizstan, bordering on Kazakhstan. He has a Ph.D. in Linguistics, and at the culmination of his academic career he served as the dean of the Kirgizstan University Faculty of Linguistics. But that was not enough for Mashkevich. He established the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress and at the end of the eighties immigrated to Kazakhstan, where he made friends with the Republic's strong president, Nur Sultan Nezdabayev.

With his two Muslim partners, Alian Ibragimov and Phatuch Shudayev, Mashkevich got a franchise from the state and established Kazakhstan Aluminum. Their business expanded and they lay hands on other national resources such as the Chrome industry, iron and coal mines, electricity, trains, and more. Mashkevich took all these companies in under his corporation, ENRC. "I always wanted more. I believed in capitalism", he said in an interview.

In 1991, Mashkevich immigrated to [Israel](#) and received an Israeli nationality, but chose to return to Kazakhstan. He currently divides his time between Asian Russia, Belgium and London, where his wife and two daughters live. Among others, he has done business with Dan Gertler and Benny Steinmatz. So far, Mashkevich has avoided investing in the Israeli economy. "The market is limited and the bureaucracy cumbersome", he explained. However, he has recently announced, at the Herzliya convention, "I have made a strategic decision to invest in the local economy. It is the right time". He even purchased a penthouse for his daughter in the future project, Sea One, in Tel Aviv, and paid NIS 110 million (\$31 million) for 1,000 square meters (10,765 square feet).

When it comes to charity, Mashkevich is very generous. Knesset Member Zeev Bielski, former head of the Jewish Agency, says: "In my very first days on the job, I heard of a Jewish man with a big heart who invests a lot in the Jewish life of Asian Russia. I made an effort to meet him, and when he came to Israel we were introduced.

"I met a warm man who respects his parents and builds synagogues in their memory. We recruited him to the lone soldiers' project. Every time we wanted to bring a soldier's parents to Israel, he financed it. He is one of the donators we enjoy working with. I'm not sure his identification with Israel is good for his business, but that doesn't matter to him".

In the haredi world, Mashkevich is called "Hanagid", a title used for the greatest philanthropists. The Braslev Jews dub him "Redeemer of the holy grave", since he redeemed the debts and foreclosure from the Ukrainian grave of the Rabi Nachman from Braslev. Recently, he donated a large sum of money for the establishment of "Zaka" branches throughout the world. Zaka Chair, Yehuda Meshi Zahav has only good words to say about him.

"I have been flying with him to the Rabbi Nachman of Uman's grave for two years now. If you see him there, you wouldn't believe how he can pray. When the fire broke out in the Carmel Mountains he arrived within a day to see how he can help. When he went to take a look, one of the policemen at the place told us that his daughter's Bat Mitzvah was supposed to take place in Beit Oren and they don't know what to do. Mashkevich immediately said he would pay for a new location. He donated \$10,000. He also donated for the establishment of a special unit of ATVs that would help with future fires."

Does it not disturb you to take money from him, in light of the recent event he took part in?

"Saints are in heaven. Whoever is here is not a saint. Not me, not you, and apparently not him either. I see how he helps and gives charity. And that is above everything he may or may not have done".

## 22 escort girls

A former journalist, an Israeli who worked with Mashkevich, portrays a more complex character. "You have to understand, Oligarchs are a weird people, and Mashkevich is no different. For example, in one of our trips with president Peres, Mashkevich took us on a one day tour. We thought we would be visiting Jewish communities, or important Kazakh sites, but instead all we did was tour synagogues named after his mother.

At first we drove a few hours on the bus and got to one of the synagogues and then we flew to the other. That was extremely strange. Also, at the Herzliya conference he spoke about a "World Jewish Parliament" with great pathos and mentioned several other ambitious ideas. The audience was somewhat embarrassed.

"I'm not surprised with the yacht story. Business trips with "working women" are a well-known concept in Asian Russia. In one of my trips there I was with my wife, and one of Mashkevitch's men was sure she is an escort, and asked for her rate. It's deep in their local culture. You don't go there with your legal wife. And once a man arrives alone, they see to all his needs. When a business man arrives and gets a woman for a night, he doesn't say no."

Taufik Arif's organization supplied such women, according to the investigation. Two of his men would select the women from Russian and Ukrainian model agency websites. Afterwards Arif would look at the pictures and approve them, and his people would take care of all the necessary arrangements: settle the price with the agency, set the dates, purchase plane tickets.

When the women arrived in Turkey, they would be taken to one of the Riksos hotels (Arif owns one of the hotels that previously belonged to the chain). "When Taufik plans a vacation or holiday in Turkey, he usually calls me", says Gondozi Akerniz, one of the suspects, who worked for Arif. "If he wants to rent a yacht, I take care of it. He comes here to meet friends and talk about investments, and I order models for them. I don't know if they're underage or not. Taufik asks me to find them."

The organization members knew that Taufik was organizing an event by May 25. The following is a conversation between Gondozi and Arif, cited in the investigation materials:

**Arif:** "Mashkevitch wants the Savarona. Find out what dates in September."

**Gondozi:** "Okay."

**Arif:** "Speak to him ASAP and ask him when he wants it and arrange it immediately."

Gondozi took care of renting the yacht for Mashkevitch, from September 25 to October 3rd 2010. The owner of the yacht is billionaire Kakharman Sadikuglu, one of Turkey's richest people, and one of the people involved in this affair. In his investigation he said that when he bought the yacht from the state, the condition was that he would only use it for tourism.

He denies having known what was going on aboard it. He says he would have never approved such things aboard a yacht of historical significance to the Turkish people (since Atatürk used it).

"The team onboard is employed by you", said the police investigator, "did you receive any information from them about the suspects bringing escorts and sleeping with them?" Kharman replied, "no one reported such things to me. I didn't know Arif Taufik and Alexander Mashkevitch used the yacht for these purposes." Arif's people started recruiting the girls, after having rented the yacht. They located 22 women, three of which were rejected and flown back to Russia.

The day before the party, one of the suspects received a text message with three names of girls who were supposed to arrive at Budrum. Later, six more girls were located and found suitable. The Turkish Attorney General determined according to recorded phone calls that the organization brought those nine women from Russia to Turkey for prostitution. As part of the deal, they were supposed to provide sex services on September 25- October 3, the dates of the Mashkevitch cruise.

On September 25 at noon, nine carefully selected women arrived in the Budrum airport. They were put on a bus and a private car and driven to the Riksos Hotel.

On the same day, Mashkevitch arrived in Turkey. He says he was never interrogated by

the police, but one of the police documents includes an explanation provided by him, with his signature and a photocopy of his ID.

Mashkevich told the police after the raid, "I arrived in Budrum from Jordan on September 25. I came here to rest and hold a few meetings. The women were not with me. We met on the yacht. I had no intimate relations with them. My accountant paid for the event. I'm a businessman I don't know what he paid for and how much, my accountant takes care of everything.

Mashkevich's bodyguard also testified in the police. "I don't know anyone on the yacht", he said. "I don't know any of those women, or why they came here".

### 'Keep silent'

Arif said in his interrogation that the women weren't prostitutes. He said they were singers and dancers. "When the policemen came aboard they asked us what the girls were doing here", Arif said. I then turned to the girls and asked, "What are you here for?" and they replied that they came to entertain the guests by dancing and singing.

One of the policemen asked one of the girls to sing something, but she said she needed a microphone. He asked her to sing anyway. She sang in Russian and he stepped aside, he didn't expect her to sing so well".

But if those women indeed came to sing and dance, as Arif says, why were they not allowed to testify to the police? According to the investigation materials, when they were arrested the women were told by their "leaders" not to speak or testify. The Turkish police suggested they get help from the Russian embassy, contact a Russian speaking lawyer or their families, but they refused.

"Don't testify, any of you", said a text message they received. "Everything is falling apart, don't sign anything, they are out of control and have no power. You will soon be home", said a second text message. Three days after the arrest, one of the girls received another text message, "You don't know these people, don't worry about it, you were at the wrong place in the wrong time. See to it that all the girls stay silent, as if they were in their grave, don't say a thing". Everyone followed the rules and kept quiet.

Two of those nine women were 16-year-old minors. For both of them, this was not the first time in Turkey, and their last time there, in March 2010, was also at Arif's request. We found pictures of one of them, Vasilisa, on the website of the model agency from which Arif ordered the girls. A thin girl with a baby face and sad blue eyes. In most pictures she appears half naked. On her Facebook page she says she loved horses and has just finished school. The other girls were 18-20 years old.

The police believe that the used contraceptives on board the yacht leave no room for doubt about what happened on the yacht. How is it possible that Mashkevich, who paid huge sums of money to charter the yacht, didn't know what was going on on it?

Another discussion will be held in Anatalia court in April. The accused in this case are those directly related to soliciting and trafficking women. Other businessmen who were on the yacht, including Mashkevich and his partners, Ibragimov and Shurayev, are not legally involved.

Attorney Ronel Fisher,  
Mashkevich's lawyer, said,

"Mashkevich was never interrogated by the Turkish police for a criminal offence. The Turkish authorities had not and have no claims against him, not even an insinuated one. Obviously, irresponsible parties with various interests are making great efforts to slander Mr. Mashkevich, but the truth helps him ward off all those lies".

Taufik Arif denied all the accusations against him.

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