



Azeri children still being sold

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Investigation of the facts of trafficking in minors during adoption continues. Employees of women consultation service are arrested.

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The law enforcement bodies of the country have started an investigation on child trafficking. Police detained several suspects. It was announced yesterday that employees of Head Police Department (HPD) of Baku arrested a doctor of women consultation service of Surakhani district suspecting her in trafficking in minors. HPD informed Echo that Sevda Abdullayeva, 42-year old doctor of women consultation service has been arrested. She is charged under Article 173 (trafficking of minors). HPD also stated that two other employees of this institution were brought under investigation for charges of selling 3-year old named "Vusal". Investigator also ordered some persons not to leave the country but they refused to provide names of those persons. We reported last Friday that employees of Management on fighting organized crime detained a woman who attempted to sell her 14-year old nephew for 3 000 dollars. According to one source, the boy could have faced death and his body could be cut into parts and sold. Some time ago, as was written in Echo already, even British press published 'Price-list' for Azeri children. According to Daily Telegraph, an Azeri child costs around 19 000...

Concerning Abdullayeva and 2 other employees of women consultation service, they were implicated once Mehriban Aslanova, mother of Vusal, addressed to police with a letter on her son being missing. During the preliminary investigation it was found that Aslanova who was raising the child alone had to go abroad to support her family and there she bought goods to be sold in Azerbaijan. She did not have time to look after the child and therefore hired a nanny Nargiz Aliyeva. During the last commercial trip

Aslanova stayed abroad a little longer. Upon arrival in Baku in early April she did not see Vusal at home and asked Nargiz about it. The nanny told her that allegedly Vusal got ill and she took him to the doctor. According to Nargiz, the child was under doctor's control. The nanny also told Mehriban that Sevda, the doctor gave Vusal to her close relative who never had children. Later during the investigation Nargiz testified that the child was given to adoption with the consent of his mother, Mehriban. However, investigation later found that she did not know about the intentions of nanny. In spite of demands of Mehriban, Nargiz and Sevda refused to inform her about the location of Vusal. Meanwhile, the investigation did not prove that Vusal was adopted by the relative of the arrested doctor. The investigation determined that the child was sold to foreigner. Currently police can not find the location of Vusal. Nothing is known about his whereabouts.

There is also information about an Azeri girl, Sevinc Badalova. American couple Denis and Deyron Eddingtons from Illinois at the end of last week left Azerbaijan. On Friday Azeri girl for which they traveled to Azerbaijan got acquainted with her new sister Lindsay. Little Sevinc received a new name- Maia.

As our newspaper wrote last week, because of this girl there was a serious scandal that resulted in launching criminal case by Prosecutor General's Office and Ministry of National Security on the finding of fact of violations of legislation made during adoptions in 2000-2003. The activity of all institutions that somehow are linked to the process of adoption is being looked into. A US Newspaper "State Journal" published in Illinois said that taking the Azeri girl was rather difficult for the American family: "There was a danger that Maia could return to dirty Azeri orphanage".

Problems of Eddingtons started after their adoption documents were reportedly lost. State Journal stated that the loss happened during sending from US Embassy in Baku to US representation in Moscow. "The situation touched upon governmental bodies of five (!) states – Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russian, Italy and USA". "The most terrible moment for me, says Denis, was when we received first message from embassy (in Baku) that we could not leave". Only because office of Department of National Security of USA in Roma and Embassy of USA in Moscow agreed to grant a visa to Maia the family managed to leave.

Eddingtons say that normally the adoption process in Azerbaijan goes smoothly. "When they got caught in the web of bureaucracy, they observed other couples not having any problems". The family faced big expenses in Azerbaijan and now through local American newspaper they are asking for financial help. For this purpose a special account was opened in bank for them to receive donations. "Eddingtons did not choose Azerbaijan for adoption. They chose Maia", says State Journal. "We saw her photo on one of the web-pages in Internet and did not know where from she was".

When Key Rayt, mother of Denis, understood that Eddingtons are having trouble with adoption, she started calling State Secretary Colin Powell, Tom Ridge, secretary of national security, but they did not respond to her. More success was found in office of the senator from Illinois, Dick Durban whose employees started bombarding US embassies in Baku and Moscow. Thanks to this Eddingtons feel they managed to leave Azerbaijan.

However, as our newspaper already informed via advocate of law firm VIZA, Agalar Agashirinov, now the Eddingtons are named in a criminal case launched by Prosecutor General's Office and Ministry of National Security of Azerbaijan. Agashirinov reported that a letter of couple Tom and Carol Zelezny are also part of the criminal case. In this letter, the other Americans had previously reported illegalities as part of the adoption. The letter which was sent to MNS lists names who demanded money from Zelezny for adopting the girl which they requested to adopt November 2002. As a result of the violations, Zelezny's were deprived of right to adopt the girl Sevinc Badalova. Azeri authorities permitted her to be adopted by the Eddingtons even after Zelezny's application. Eddingtons removed the child from Azerbaijan at the end of the last week before the prosecutor could prevent it and only after interference of Embassies of USA (State Journal).

Echo contacted on Investigation Department on Heavy Crimes of Prosecutor's Office in which criminal case on adoption was launched. This institution confirmed the information on launching criminal case but refused to give any further details.

Agalar Agashirinov informed Echo that when representing interests of Zelezny in came out that Sevinc Badalova had physical defect which requires surgical and medical treatment by doctors. According to him, Azeri legislation stipulates that a child can be adopted only by families financially capable of providing for their needs. Agashirinov says that American advocate Orson Mozes, submitting documents of Eddingtons for adoption had to provide documentation providing financial capability of this family to care for this particular child's needs. "I am not sure that Eddingtons will be able to cover treatment of Badalova".

Concerning the statement made in State Journal ("There was a danger that Maia could return to dirty Azeri orphanage") the advocate said that this does not reflect reality. According to him, Badalova was kept and had treatment in normal conditions. "Sevinc was adopted by family that published advertisement requesting financial help".

Zelezny's, the other family, have the means to care for Sevinc properly. "In light of the financial concerns the question arises: why did Eddingtons request a child and a child with a medical problem requiring further resources?".

Respecting this, the advocate was bothered by words of Eddingtons concerning expenses of this family in Azerbaijan. "I don't know to whom and how much money Eddingtons spent. But I know that the head of the American adoption company, Orson Mozes says that fees for his adoption require 11-15 thousand dollars.

Advocate also said that family of Zelezny submitted a complaint to Appeal court with demand to appoint new court investigation on the subject of adoption of Sevinc with participation of Zelezny. According to him, if Zelezny's application is granted and a ruling on giving Sevinc to this family is reversed, then Eddingtons will have to return

the child to Azerbaijan. The advocate concluded that Eddingtons would refuse to return Sevinc because the process was determined by the migration service of the state department of USA.