

'She Will Flee to Russia': Portugal Freezes Accounts of Africa's Richest Woman

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Isabel dos Santos, who was born in Soviet Azerbaijan, told Russian media last month that she “always kept” her Russian citizenship. **Valery Sharifulin / TASS**

Portugal has frozen the bank accounts of Africa’s richest woman Isabel dos Santos, who claims Russian citizenship by birth and is suspected of fraud in her native Angola.

Dos Santos, whose net worth Forbes [estimates](#) at \$2 billion, was born in Azerbaijan 46 years ago when it was still part of the Soviet Union. The daughter of Angola’s former president, dos Santos [told](#) Russian media last month that she “always kept” her Russian citizenship.

Portugal's public prosecutor said Tuesday it had ordered the seizure of dos Santos' Portuguese bank accounts in response to Angola’s request. Last month, Angola named dos Santos a formal suspect over allegations of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds during her time as chairwoman of state oil company Sonangol.

Angolan authorities froze her assets in the African country in December. Dos Santos has repeatedly denied wrongdoing in past weeks.

Experts noted that dos Santos could take advantage of her Soviet-era birthright to avoid prosecution in either Portugal or its former colony of Angola.

“Once the international pressure gets too big, many experts in Angola believe she will flee to Russia,” Angolan journalist Rafael Marques told The Moscow Times recently.

Some outlets have [questioned](#) the accuracy of dos Santos’ citizenship claim, saying she would have had to exchange her Soviet passport for a Russian passport in order to retain citizenship there.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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