

Press release: Illegal booze sees bans for East London convenience store bosses

Mohammad Akbar (61) and Sheraz Ahmad (29) now of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, together ran Shiraz Food & Wine, a convenience store incorporated in August 2012 and located on the Hackney Road close to Hoxton in East London.

In December 2014 Shiraz Food & Wine was raided by Trading Standards, HMRC and the police, who found 351 bottles of illegal alcohol.

This was the largest seizure of illegal booze in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for many years and led to the store's licence being revoked by the local authority. However, this caused a significant reduction in Shiraz Food & Wine's turnover, eventually leading to the convenience store's closure in 2016.

After the company went into liquidation, an investigation by the Insolvency Service discovered that Mohammad Akbar was the sole director of the company before the raids took place and failed to prevent Sheraz Ahmad from purchasing the illegal wine and spirits from a van driver before selling them in the store.

As a result, the Secretary of State accepted disqualification undertakings from both Mohammad Akbar and Sheraz Ahmad.

In his undertaking, Mohammad Akbar did not dispute that his inaction facilitated Sheraz Ahmad, who was not a shareholder or a formally appointed director, to cause Shiraz Food & Wine to trade with a lack of commercial probity.

And Sheraz Ahmad did not dispute in his undertaking that he caused Shiraz Food & Wine to trade with a lack of commercial probity.

Effective from 6 August, Mohammad Akbar is disqualified for 7 years and Sheraz Ahmad is banned for 11 years, and the pair cannot directly or indirectly be involved, without the permission of the court, in the promotion, formation or management of a company.

A spokesperson from Tower Hamlets Council said:

Whilst the potential health risks of fake alcohol are well known, businesses who sell cheap smuggled goods also create unfair competition for the majority of law abiding businesses in the borough.

Tower Hamlets Environmental Health and Trading Standards team works closely with our partners in HMRC and the Metropolitan Police to seize illegal product from the market place and take action against those who flout the law. This latest action by the Insolvency Service follows one such successful joint operation against shops that were found to be trading illegally and shows our ongoing commitment to protect residents and honest traders alike.

Anthony Hannon, Official Receiver at Public Interest Unit, said:

Sheraz Ahmad thought he could cut a few corners when he bought the illegal booze and Mohammad Akbar did nothing to stop him. But this could have led to serious consequences as there was no guarantee the alcohol was safe to sell to the public.

Thanks to the joint working with our colleagues from the various agencies involved, we have secured substantial bans for the two bosses, preventing them from setting up another business and possibly doing the same again.

Shiraz Food & Wine Ltd (08171650) traded from 178 Hackney Road, London, E2 7QL.

Sheraz Ahmad is of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. At the time of the company's trading he was of London E2. His date of birth is October 1988. He was appointed a director of Shiraz Food & Wine in October 2015 but when he bought the illegal alcohol he was not a shareholder or formally appointed director.

Mohammad Akbar is of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. At the time of the company's trading he was of London E2. His date of birth is February 1957.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

The Insolvency Service administers the insolvency regime, investigating all compulsory liquidations and individual insolvencies (bankruptcies) through the Official Receiver to establish why they became insolvent. It may also use

powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK. In addition, the agency authorises and regulates the insolvency profession, deals with disqualification of directors in corporate failures, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

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