

Billionaire businessman 'failed to pay for ex-wife's two luxury homes and private chef and cut down on her servants' because he said Muslim second marriage was not valid

- **Maha Shagroon argues that her husband Adnan Sharbatly has failed to keep his side of the bargain in their divorce settlement**
- **But he claims they were never lawfully married in England as he already had a wife under Islamic law**
- **He therefore believes their dispute is private and nothing to do with the courts**
- **Judges ruled their marriage was valid, but the father has now taken his case it to the Court of Appeal**

By Keith Gladdis



Maha Shagroon, pictured outside court, is arguing that her seven-year marriage was valid

When a couple divorce, a row over who gets the family home, pets or even the record collection is to be expected.

But for Maha Shagroon and her billionaire ex-husband Adnan Sharbatly, the stakes are a little higher.

She claims he has breached their divorce settlement by failing to maintain her two luxury homes, cutting her number of servants and refusing to pay her head chef's salary.

Now she is demanding her Saudi Arabian ex increase her maintenance payments, improve their £5million London mansion and replace her fleet of cars every three years.

Mr Sharbatly, 66, married Mrs Shagroon, 47, at London's Intercontinental Hotel in 1994 in an Islamic ceremony presided over by an imam.

They were together for seven years and had three children but the relationship broke down in 2001, leading to acrimonious divorce proceedings.

Their differences appeared to have been resolved by a 'compromise' hammered out in 2002, which made financial provision for Mrs Shagroon.

It also guaranteed her home in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, would be well maintained, allowed her the run of the couple's Regent's Park mansion in the summer and agreed some of her staff costs would be paid.



The luxurious Regent's Park property that Mrs Shagroon uses when in London

But the Court of Appeal heard a list of complaints from Mrs Shagroon including claims Mr Sharbatly had not dealt with septic tank leaks or maintained the air conditioning at her Jeddah home. She also claims he refused to pay the salaries of the house's watchman and head chef and cut the assistant chef's pay and the number of housemaids.

Nicholas Cusworth QC, for Mrs Shagroon, said her ex-husband was 'enormously wealthy' although the true scale of his riches had never been probed.

He added that she had estimated her husband's wealth, from his thriving Saudi Arabian business empire, as anywhere between £100m and £1billion in 2001.

Their dispute hinges on Mr Sharbatly's claims that both their Islamic marriage and divorce were invalid under English law, which he says means English courts have no business intervening in their affairs.

But a family judge rejected this claim in March this year.

Mrs Shagroon says her marriage ended in March 2002 when her husband 'pronounced talaq', the equivalent of divorce proceedings under Islamic law.

But James Turner QC, for Mr Sharbatly, said their wedding could not be recognised because he was already married at the time under Islamic law and therefore the talaq dissolving it was also void.

In effect, there was 'never a marriage', he claimed.

Mr Cusworth said Mrs Shagroon was not trying to get a bigger slice of her ex-husband's fortune but was trying to 'regularise' her position.

The three judges hearing the case have now reserved their decision until a later date.