

Four people, including a priest, sent to the dock in the case investigated by the NAC regarding bribery for places in the "Saint Lazar" cemetery in the capital



Prosecutors announce the completion of the criminal investigation and the sending to court of a criminal case accusing 4 men aged between 40 and 70, including three public figures and a church cleric, of committing the crimes of passive corruption, fraud and influence peddling. This is the case initiated by the National Anti-corruption Centre (NAC) in which, on September 1, 2020, six people from the administration of the Saint Lazar cemetery in Chisinau were detained, investigated for 142 charges. At that time, the NAC officers conducted searches at 22 addresses – at the headquarters of the Saint Lazar cemetery administration, at the residences and in the work offices of the suspects – and found evidence relevant to the case, including sums of money in different currencies (around 700,000 lei).

According to the evidence, one of the accused, working as a brigade chief of a branch of the Saint Lazar cemetery administration in the capital, contrary to the obligations and prohibitions imposed by the position held, committed over 70 criminal acts, both personally and in complicity with the deputy director of the branch, with whom he shared the illegally obtained money. Specifically, in one of the episodes committed on June 17, 2020, the man received from a woman, who intended to bury her deceased father-in-law, money that exceeded twice the amount that was to be paid for the funeral service, established under decision no. 6/10 of 14.05.2009 of the Chisinau Municipal Council. On the same date, taking advantage of the ignorance of the tariffs approved by another person, but also of the state of stress caused by the death of the victim's mother, the defendant also received from the woman in question money in an amount greater than that required by law, of which the money remaining after paying official fees and appropriated it, later dividing it with the accomplice.

Between February 27, 2020 and August 8, 2020, through the same scheme — either by artificially increasing legal fees through deception or by claiming additional remuneration — the defendants obtained undue money from over 70 people, in similar circumstances, whose close relatives (spouses, parents or other relatives) had died.

The amounts claimed as illicit remuneration ranged between 500 lei and 500 euros, and in the case of unjustified increases in legal fees, the amounts reached between 3,000 and 20,000 lei per victim, causing damages of over 200,000 lei in total to the victims. The former head of the respective branch is also accused of a similar act of passive corruption.

The fourth defendant is a priest, accused of two episodes of influence peddling. He is accused of demanding 10,000 and 20,000 lei, respectively, claiming to have influence over public figures within the cemetery administration, in order to obtain authorizations for burial sites, including reserving an additional site. Three of the defendants have fully admitted their guilt, and the head of the branch, accused of a criminal episode of passive corruption, has refused to make statements.

Previously, the NAC's Criminal Assets Recovery Agency (CARA) has seized over 2 million lei in criminal cases targeting the illicit actions of several individuals within the administration of the Saint Lazarus cemetery in Chisinau. Seizures were placed on residential and non-residential premises and buildings, on means of transport, and also on a construction site. Also, over half a million lei, of the total seizure, was in cash.