

Attorney-in-law: The identical testimonies given by the employees of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) fuel suspicions of inadequate investigation process

The fact that all the employees of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) have given identical testimonies at the court hearings of the criminal investigation involving Ināra Vilkaste's 80-year-old housekeeper has fuelled suspicion that the investigator has approached this case formally, says the sworn attorney-in-law Aivars Bērziņš.

The next court hearing of this case is set to take place in half a year's time – at the beginning of October – in which the defence, in order to clarify the situation, is planning to bring in as a witness the investigator who collected the said testimonies during the pre-trial investigation.

“Upon examining the testimonies of the witnesses – all of them KNAB employees – I came to the conclusion that they are literally identical, word by word. That is, both the content and the phrasing. The witnesses themselves were unable to explain it. I believe that this points to the likelihood that a comprehensive investigation and a full examination of the situation has not taken place – it is more likely that the investigator has presented all witnesses with the same text, slightly modified each time, which they have then all signed. This makes it look as if this court process is nothing but KNAB's gesture to demonstrate their power, so that nobody would dare not to let KNAB inside their house,” Bērziņš points out.

Bērziņš also explained that in this situation the case is brought to court on rather dubitable grounds, that is, it was based on the claim that delaying of the execution of a court order has taken place. Actually, the employees of KNAB did not present the court order, according to which they were granted a permission to search Vilkaste's residence on the year 2008, until after they had entered the house.

“This court ruling appears to be more about whether Latvia is a police state, where certain institutions have placed themselves above the law, or a judicial state, where the same law is appropriated to everyone. At the moment the employees of KNAB apparently believe that it is enough to simply state that they have a search warrant and all the traffic lights will immediately turn green in their way. Otherwise it will be deemed a conscious delaying of the implementation of a court order,” Bērziņš concludes.

All in all two such cases, based on the same clause (number 296) of the Criminal Law related to alleged delaying of the execution of a court order, have been commenced against persons close to Vilkaste.

A similar fate has fallen upon an employee of SIA “REE” in 2008. SIA “REE” is renting office space belonging to Vilkaste. The employees of KNAB in this case, just in the situation discussed before, instead of searching the premises had started discussing the opening of the door with a scared employee, who was later on accused of delaying the execution of a court order.

In the case against the employee of SIA "REE" the court ruled in the first instance that the charges are insubstantial, however, the district attorney appealed to this decision afterwards. "Next Tuesday, on the 19th of March the second instance decision will be made, which will show what the opinion of the regional court is in this controversial case," thinks Bērziņš.

Entrepreneur Ināra Vilkaste says that she turned to the Prosecutor General Office regarding these two cases with a request that the pursuit of her and the people close to her is stopped. "Regardless of the fact that my housekeeper does not open the door to my house when KNAB comes to search it in my absence and then starts a criminal process regarding this visit, the Prosecutor Office claims that none of this is my business," Vilkaste explains.