The Ministry of the Interior has prepared amendments to the Criminal Law aimed at protecting the honor and dignity of state officials.

The draft law provides for the addition of the Criminal Law with a new Article 271.1 “Insult to the Honor and Dignity of a Representative of Power”, thus providing for criminal liability for insulting the honor and dignity of a representative of power while performing official duties in the field of public order, security and state border protection.

Signe Bole, Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, emphasizes: “The purpose of the draft law is to take care of the interior officials to protect them during their duties, as well as to motivate and attract new employees to the interior services, who would also know that the state cares about them. In turn, the public needs to know that permissiveness may be called to justice.”

Recently, in their official duties in connection with the control of national restrictions on the spread of Covid-19, officials have been increasingly confronted with cases of contempt, law enforcement and dignity in public. For example, officials are abused with rude and uncensored words, and there is a threat of being infected with Covid-19. In particular, these actions took the form of national anti-epidemiological precautionary measures, protests and protests against Covid-19 vaccination.

Such activities endanger the normal operation of public administration institutions of the Republic of Latvia. In insulting the honor and dignity of a representative of power, a person primarily addresses the public administration represented by that official. In the opinion of the Ministry of the Interior, such a situation is not acceptable.
The norm included in the draft law envisages to impose a punishment with the term of imprisonment for up to one year or with temporary deprivation of liberty, or with forced labor, or with a fine for the said criminal offense.

At the same time, the Ministry of the Interior points out that the prepared norm does not restrict a person's right to freely express an opinion or express criticism. In drawing the line between the right to freedom of expression and the right to the protection of honor and dignity, a balance must be struck so that none of these rights is disproportionately restricted.

The bill will be submitted to the government for consideration and must be passed by the Saeima.

Prepared

The Ministry of the Interior