



United National Movement Majoritarian Candidates Involved in Distribution of State Gifts

14 May, 2010

On 9 May, in the Shukhuta and Chochkhati villages of Lanchkhuti District, as well as the Akhalkalaki village of Kaspi District, United National Movement candidates presented World War Two veterans with medals dedicated to the 65th anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany signed by the Georgian president and a one-off cash benefit of 50 lari (the Georgian government order No 291 of 10 March 2010).

In the Chochkhati village, after 9 p.m. veterans Severian Zenaishvili, Bichiko Zenaishvili, Amiran Tughushi, Kakhi Dzimistarishvili and Pavle Khutsishvili were each given a certificate entitling them to 50 lari, along with the medals. Jumber Lomineishvili, the district administration's representative in the village, his deputy Gedevan Tsintsadze and **Dali Kverenchkhiladze, head of the local school and the United National Movement candidate in the village,** participated in the distribution of the gifts. Dali Kverenchkhiladze originally denied that she had been involved in the awarding of medals. "I did not go to those people together with them [local government representatives]. I congratulated the veterans on the 9 May anniversary after they had left," Kverenchkhiladze told a Guria News journalist over the phone. However, at 9 a.m. on 13 May, Dali Kverenchkhiladze met the Guria News journalist in Ozurgeti together with the district administration representative in the Chochkhati village and confirmed that she had, indeed, visited the aforementioned families because those people are her close friends. She denied, however, that she had presented them with gifts.

There are secret audio records in which the veterans of war from Chochkhati confirm that the majoritarian candidate participated in the distribution of gifts.

According to Alliance for Georgia Lanchkhuti district chapter chief Elguja Chkhaidze, in the Shukhuti village, **United National Movement majoritarian candidate Revaz Chitidze** awarded the veterans of war with the same kind of medals and gifts together with Energo-Pro Lanchkhuti service center employee Giga Apkhadze. A resident of the village confirmed confidentially that the candidate traveled in a car and visited the families of veterans. Revaz Chitidze told a Guria News journalist that the district administration representative in the village frequently uses his car but he himself does not usually accompany him.

In the Akhalkalaki village of Kaspi District, United National Movement majoritarian candidate in the village Giorgi Iremashvili was involved in awarding the medals together with



Mamuka Mamasakhlishi, the district administration representative in the village. He personally delivered the president's gift to village resident Nadena Okruashvili and other veterans in the evening. The fact that the veterans were awarded the medals was recorded by Khatuna Elisabedashvili, the Alliance for Georgia bloc's majoritarian candidate in the same village. The district administration representative in the village told Elisabedashvili over the phone that he was the only person traveling in a car and Iremashvili had not been involved in this activity.

Instances of United National Movement candidates handing over the president's gifts to veterans were recorded in other villages too.

The engagement of a majoritarian candidate in this type of activities qualifies, under Article 73 Paragraph 9 of the Georgian Electoral Code, as an attempt to bribe voters, which constitutes, under Paragraph 9(1) of the same article, a sufficient ground for revoking a candidate's registration. At the same time, it constitutes a violation of Article 5.4 of the OSCE Copenhagen Document whereby there must be "a clear separation between the State and political parties; in particular, political parties will not be merged with the State."

Transparency International Georgia informed the Central Electoral Commission and the Interagency Task Force about these incidents on 13 May, so that they can react accordingly.