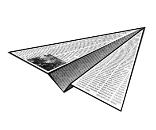
******

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

***ON THE STATUS OF THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN ARMENIA AND THE VIOLATION OF MASS MEDIA RIGHTS***

**2019 third quarter report by the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression**

*The Committee to Protect the Freedom of Expression regularly submits to the public its reports on working environment and issues of Armenian media and its personnel, on the status of the freedom of expression and on the violations of the rights of the media and the journalists. This report reflects the data from the third quarter of 2019.*

*The sources of facts included in the report are the following:*

*- phone calls to CPFE “hot line”,*

*- meetings and conversations of the CPFE experts with mass media journalists,*

*- replies to official inquiries sent to public bodies,*

*- materials from court cases with media involvement,*

*- materials disseminated by partner journalistic organizations,*

*- publications by the mass media.*

***BRIEF OVERVIEW***

The third quarter of 2019 has been marked by an unprecedented stream of new lawsuits with the involvement of journalists and the media. Within the monitoring period, 33 cases took proceedings in different courts. Out of the abovementioned cases 30 were based on insult and slander under article 1087.1 of the RA Civil Code, 2 cases were on violations of the right to receive and disseminate information and one was a lawsuit of a media outlet against a politician. The number of new lawsuits against media and journalists based on insult and slander in the first and second quarters of this year was 28 and 25, respectively. So, during the 9 months of 2019, 83 such cases were recorded indicating a number higher than the total of the previous two years combined.

In 13 out of the abovementioned 30 cases the lawsuits were filed by incumbent and former officials, 9 by ordinary citizens, 5 by businessmen, 1 by a politician, 1 by a show business representative and 1 case by a journalist against the media. This unprecedented rise in lawsuits is due to the fact that most media outlets continue to be plagued by hate speech, fake news, biased comments and manipulations. In the post-revolutionary period, when the polarization and division of the media into political and financial camps became more acute, many media outlets turned into propaganda machines primarily serving the interests of their political sponsors and ignoring the public interest. A striking example was the news published by “Hayeli.am” and “Armlur.am” about the circumstances of former police chief Hayk Harutyunyan’s suicide, which will be presented in detail in the “Media Activities Environment” section.

This situation compels people of different social groups to file lawsuits against the content of media outlets. In 13 out of the abovementioned 30 cases the plaintiffs are former and incumbent officials and their associates, 9 ordinary citizens, 5 businessmen, 1 politician, 1 show business representative and 1 journalist.

The tendency of high-ranking officials, politicians, businessmen and other public figures going spare, getting offended or displaying contempt for the journalists, when asked annoying questions, continued throughout the third quarter as well. 5 such cases were recorded in July-September. In particular, Hrayr Tovmasyan, President of the Constitutional Court, Lena Nazaryan, Vice Speaker of the National Assembly, as well as the participants of the action in support of Robert Kocharyan were notable for showing disrespect towards journalists.

In general, within the monitoring period, the CPFE recorded 35 cases of repression against mass media and their representatives. As for the other types of violations of journalists and media rights, in the third quarter only one case of physical violence was recorded, perpetrated by the bodyguard of former Director of National Security Service Arthur Vanetsyan, and 11 violations of the right to receive and disseminate information, which is twice as small as the indicator for the same period of the previous year. However, state authorities still abuse their right to provide the answer within 30 days, which makes the publication of the required information chronologically inconsistent.

The third quarter of 2019 was marked by the active discussion of several bills drafted by the CPFE on the activities of the media outlets. One of the documents, the bill “On Amending the Law On Local Self-Government System of Yerevan”, was fully adopted by the National Assembly at the second reading on September 10. Now, journalists have proper access to the Municipality premises, can attend elders’ council meetings, and cover them without restraint.

Earlier, on July 11, a new bill “On Television and Radio”, drafted by the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, Yerevan Press Club and Media Initiatives Center, was presented to the RA NA Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Diaspora, Youth and Sport. The Parliamentary Committee has set up a working group to organize discussions and improve the bill. Through ongoing discussions on three other CPFE bills, new amendments to the RA Laws “On Procurement”, “On Protection of Personal Data”, “On the Mass Media” are proposed.

Within the monitoring period, some of the bills, drafted by the Ministry of Justice, caused dissatisfaction among journalists. Thus, on June 28, the Ministry uploaded a legislative package, containing the Law “On Mass Media” and bills envisaging amendments to three other RA Laws on e-draft.am website, according to which, in order to get free information from the State Register, the media outlet should be registered there, too. On this occasion, on July 1 media organizations issued a statement, expressing concern over the threat to freedom of speech, demanding the government to withdraw the provisions on media registration from the abovementioned package and not to link it with the provision of free information from the State Register[[1]](#footnote-1).

Media organizations were also concerned over the bill “On Amendments to the Criminal Code”, prescribing liability for public calls for acts of violence threatening people’s lives and health, public justification or propaganda of violence threatening people’s lives and health. This document, according to media organizations, is devoid of legal certainty, which leads to an unjustified limitation to the right to freedom of expression[[2]](#footnote-2).

In the third quarter of 2019, the CPFE continued to keep a close eye on two criminal cases, “Electric Yerevan” and “Sari Tagh”, during which over 40 journalists and cameramen were identified as victims. If in the case of “Sari Tagh” it was possible to overturn the suspension decision by the Special Investigation Service and reopen the investigation (partly through the efforts of the CPFE), a similar decision by SIS regarding “Electric Yerevan” case is still pending in court.

***MEDIA ACTIVITIES ENVIRONMENT***

The third quarter of 2019 was a period of active discussions on a number of legislative reforms related to media activity. The most controversial of all was probably the process related to the amendments to the Law “On Local Self-Government System in Yerevan”. The CPFE draft law, suggesting provisions on improving the working conditions of journalists in Yerevan Municipality, was presented to the three factions at the NA spring hearing, and Bright Armenia faction put it into circulation. On June 4, the Parliament adopted the document at the first reading, and already at the fall session, on September 10, it was fully adopted at the second reading.

It is worthwhile to remind that the hasty legislative changes and artificial restrictions introduced by the previous authorities in 2018 unduly hindered the work of journalists, forbidding them to be present at Yerevan Elders’ Council meetings, while mandatory accreditation was required for access to the Municipality. When the new government came into power, the journalists got easier access to Yerevan Municipality, however, it was necessary to prescribe this by the law so that journalist’s right to receive information was not subject to the whims of this or that authority. Now journalists have access to the Municipality, freely attend council meetings and provide coverage.

The Parliament, however, did not demonstrate willingness to adopt several other legislative changes. In particular, the CPFE, in line with the abovementioned bill, submitted proposals to amend the Laws “On Procurement” and “On the Protection of Personal Data” to the National Assembly. In case of the first law it was intended to abolish limitations to the freedom of information on procedural and representative expenses of the RA President, Prime Minister and Speaker of the National Assembly and not to consider the data state secrets, as was the case with the previous government. Whereas the proposal related to the Law “On Protection of Personal Data” envisaged a revision of the amendment, adopted by the Parliament on December 16, 2016, according to which the collection and processing of personal data is not an exception for journalistic, literary and artistic works. “My Step” faction raised objections on both bills, which, according to the CPFE, are not convincing, and discussions on these documents are still in motion.

Amendments are necessary to the Law “On Freedom of Information” in order to ensure access to official information. One of the many problems is that inquiry for information through the websites of government agencies is accompanied by an electronic signature, which is a very difficult requirement for an ordinary citizen. Discussions of the Freedom of Information Center and the Ministry of Justice over the proposal to eliminate the demand, which was enforced months ago, are currently delayed for an indefinite period. Meanwhile, journalists’ complaints indicate the need for legislative amendments, as some agencies refuse to provide information without an authentic electronic signature, whereas the latter requires additional expenses and registrations.

Journalists were also surprised by the new order on receiving information set forth by the NA Staff, according to which journalists should write electronic letters to the Speaker of the National Assembly, MPs, committees and factions on the specific platform of the NA website.

Furthermore, according to the new order, “letters sent electronically cannot be considered official; they are merely informative and are not subject to formal consideration.”

The expert community asked for clarification in this regard as the RA Government has put electronic inquiries and applications into action since 2015 in accordance with its own Decree N 1204. According to the clarification provided by some MPs, the new order can be a supplementary procedure and, in response to FIC inquiry, the NA stated that this was not a final decision.

Another legislative initiative on the media, proposed by the Ministry of Justice, was heavily criticized by journalistic organizations. On June 28, the Ministry released a package of bills of amendments to the Laws of the RA “On Mass Media”, “On State Registration of Legal Entities, Separated Divisions of Legal Entities, Enterprises and Individual Entreprneurs”, as well as “On State Duty”, which provides that the media, through preliminary registration, can obtain free information from the Unified State Register of Legal Entities.

On this occasion, media organizations issued a statement on July 1, expressing concern over the retrospective initiative considering it a threat to freedom of speech, demanding the government to withdraw the provisions on media registration from the abovementioned package and not to relate it with the provision of free information from the State Register[[3]](#footnote-3). In addition, the Ombudsman responded to these concerns and made a statement, noting that he would look into the bills for Media state registration system to evaluate compliance with international standards, experience and practice.[[4]](#footnote-4) On August 10, a number of media outlets expressed their concerns over the issue as well, noting that no amendments were needed: “The proposed bill is of no need for immediate adoption... At the same time, we do not deny the fact that legislation, regulating the sector, needs extensive and substantive reforms”[[5]](#footnote-5).

One of the most significant events of this quarter is the submission of a new bill “On Television and Radio” to the NA Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Diaspora, Youth and Sport. The bill was developed by the working group of experts on the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, Yerevan Press Club and Media Initiatives Center. The document was posted on the websites of all three organizations, and at a press conference on July 12, the authors announced launching an extended discussion on the bill.

CPFE has repeatedly pointed out the need for urgent amendmends in the sector. The new bill provides a) replacement of the outdated and controversial licensing procedure with a simple registration or authorization; b) creation of new, favorable conditions for the establishment of private multiplexes instead of the unrealistic requirements of the current law; c) involvement of 10 local TV companies in the provinces, which were left out of the digitalization process by the current law, in the digital broadcasting network; d) legal stipulation of the need for ownership and financial transparency of TV companies; e) implementation of the “social package” concept for television programs; f) introduction of an Ombudsman institution at Public Television.

In addtion, extended discussions and various commentaries and analyses help us understand that upcoming debates with the participation of broadcasters, industry regulators and other stakeholders are going to be very heated. In particular, several members of the Committee for Television and Radio have expressed views that are fundamentally different from the basic ideas of the bill, whereas the representatives of the Broadcasters Association do not see any need for legislative change.

As for the immediate adoption of the Law, it is conditioned by the new licensing tender scheduled for the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021. If the law continues to be in force in its current form and the licensing of television activities are held according to the established old procedure, no development in the sector can be observed. Furthermore, the lack of private multiplexes and the focus of broadcast media in a single state-owned digital network can contribute to the intensification of regressive trends.

In the third quarter, mass media polarization following respective political and financial camps is still one of the main concerns. The overwhelming majority of the media outlets became tools of propaganda and serve the interests of their sponsors. Becoming a tool of political strife many media outlets disseminate fake news, manipulation, hate speech under the name of freedom of expression. Thus, on September 24, publications on “Hayeli.am” and “Armlur.am” websites about the circumstances of the former police chief Hayk Harutyunya’s suicide were scandalous. Shortly after the incident, these websites reported that they “are aware of” who was with Hayk Harutyunyan and what the former police chief said before his death. These websites published articles under the heading “I am forced to give false testimonies, but Robert Kocharyan and Gegham Petrosyan are not guilty. These were Hayk Harutyunyan’s last words before his suicide” and “Hayk Harutyunyan was not alone at the time of the incident; his last words are known”. However, the information was soon refuted.

In order to find the authors of the articles and interrogate them about the circumstances of the case, the Investigative Committee sent a written notice to “Hayeli.am” and “Armlur.am”, which the media outlet and its supporters called pressure on the press. The Investigative Committee issued a clarification on this occasion, which specifically stated: “Procedural and investigative actions carried out in accordance with the law should not be viewed as pressure on the media.” On the one hand, the media reminded of their right not to disclose their sources. On the other hand, Law Enforcement Officials referred to the materials of the criminal case and insisted that Hayk Harutyunyan did not utter the abovementioned words, and the dissiminated information about the “conversation” between Hayk Harutyunyan and the Prosecutor General does not reflect the reality. On this occasion, Gor Abrahamyan, advisor to the Prosecutor General, posted on his Facebook page: “It turns out that in our times disgrace and immorality have no boundaries for individual media outlets... The strangest and most striking thing is that such false, immoral information, is disseminated by media, that solves a specific propaganda problem with an attempt to discredit the leaders of criminal prosecution by such harsh methods”.

It is worthwhile to mention that after disseminating this disinformation, Angela Tovmasyan, the editor-in-chief of “Hayeli.am”, lost her position as the anchor for “In Front of the Mirror” program, broadcast on Kentron TV. The journalist refrained from commenting on this ocassion, while the TV company explained that they shut down “In Front of the Mirror” due to changes in broadcasting schedule and the need for streaming football.

Perhaps the wide dissemination of disinformation, manipulation and hatred is the reason why a large number of new cases involving mass media were registered not only in the previous six months, but in the third quarter as well. Moreover, almost all of them are based on insult and slander under Article 1087.1 of the RA Civil Code. The number of such appeals is 30, which is 10 times more than the same period of the previous year. The number of new lawsuits against media and journalists based on insult and slander in the first and second quarters of this year was 28 and 25, respectively. So, during the 9 months of 2019, 83 such cases were recorded indicating a number higher than the sum total of the past two years combined.

In general, within the monitoring period, 33 cases took proceedings in different courts. Apart from the abovementioned 30 cases of insult and slander, two more cases were recorded related to the violations of the right to receive and disseminate information, and one lawsuit was filed by a media outlet against a politician.

In fact, one case was recorded during this qaurter when after the violation of the right to receive informarion, an appeal was filed to the Personal Data Protection Agency to verify the grounds for dismissal. This is an important precedent, which should become a common practice for the media to protect their rights.

The continuous hate speech and political-information warfare in the media may have led the Ministry of Justice to publish a bill “On Amendments to the Criminal Code” on August 14, prescribing liability for public calls for acts of violence threatening people’s lives and health, public justification or propaganda of violence threatening people’s lives and health. While the bill was available on e-draft.am, media organizations issued a statement calling this legislative proposal highly controversial, devoid of legal certainty, which could lead to an unjustified limitation of the right to freedom of expression. In addition, according to the authors of the statement, the main aim of the proposed regulation should be the provision of a clear and comprehensive definition for “hate speech” in compliance with the RA Legislation, which is not carried out. In this case, the limitations to the freedom of expression, in particular the norm stipulating imprisonment should be as specific as possible in order to exclude the possibility of expansive or arbitrary subjective interpretation[[6]](#footnote-6).

Within the monitoring period, the activity of the Committee for Television and Radio was noticeable, in particular with regard to punitive actions against a number of broadcast media outlets. Thus, on July 4, an administrative pentalty was imposed on “ARTGAR” LLC (founder of “Vanadzor TV”). The fine in the amount of five hundred times the minimum wage was imposed for not maintaining recordings. While the administrative penalty against the “Second Armenian TV Channel” LLC was caused by the broadcast of advertisements of various companies, including tobacco manufacturers, which violated the requirement of Part 5 Article 15 of the RA Law “On Advertising”. The TV company was fined a thousand times the minimum wage.

On the same day, August 14, the NCTR adopted two documents: “Criteria for the identification of television and radio programs (films) and other audiovisual materials with possible negative impact on health, mental and physical development, and the upbringing of minors” and “Criteria for the identification of television and radio programs (films) and other audiovisual materials containing pornography, horror and blatant violence”. And already on September 11, administrative penalty was imposed on “Armenia TV” for the scenes of blatant violence, torture, physical and mental suffering, shown in the television series “Born Without Address”. According to Clause 2, Article 22 of the RA Law “On Television and Radio”, the company was fined 500 times the minimum wage.

Abstaining from the assessment of sanctions imposed by the NCTR, it should be noted that the abovementioned criteria became subject of expert discussion already in the summer of 2018 and were highly criticized by specialists as they were very unspecific and contained a wide range of subjective approaches. However, this year the aforementioned criteria were approved by the NCTR almost without any changes.

In the third quarter of 2019, the CPFE continued to keep a close eye on criminal cases related to the events in Baghramyan Avenue (#ElectricYerevan) on June 23, 2015, in Khorenatsi Street and Sari Tagh in the second half of July, 2016, accompanied by large-scale violence and hindrances to professional activity of media representatives. On each of the abovementioned cases over 20 journalists were identified as victims and the CPFE lawyers act as advocates for 5 of them.

It is worthwhile to remind that the criminal case of “Electric Yerevan” was suspended by the SIS on March 4, 2019, on the grounds that the “persons to be involved as defendants were unknown.” With the support of the CPFE, three victim journalists, namely Hakob Karapetyan, Gevorg Ghazaryan and Tehmine Yenoqyan, filed an appeal against the SIS's decision to the RA Prosecutor’s Office on April 2, the latter abolished the decision of the SIS and assigned them to restart preliminary investigation. On July 26, the SIS decided to suspend the criminal proceedings. On August 26, the CPFE appealed the decision to the prosecutor, who ruled to dismiss the appeal on September 4. As of September 30, materials have been prepared to apply to court.

As for the criminal case of “Sari Tagh”, the decision of the SIS to suspend the case was appealed to the Court of Appeal within the monitoring period. Court hearings were held on July 3rd and August 23rd. At the last hearing, the SIS prosecutor stated that the suspension decision had already been abolished, and on those grounds the appeal filed had become inoperative. As the preliminary investigation has resumed, CPFE will continue keeping a close eye on the case.

***VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHTS OF JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA OUTLETS***

Violations of the rights of journalists and media outlets during the third quarter of 2019 are introduced according to the following classification by CPFE:

• physical violence against journalists,

• pressure on media outlets and their personnel,

• violations of the right to receive and disseminate information.

This classification by CPFE is to some extent conventional. In particular, sometimes impeding the receipt and dissemination of information is accompanied by violence against journalists. Such facts are attributed to the type of violation which they are closer to, according to the authors of the report. Nevertheless, the applied classification enables introducing in a comprehensive and vivid way the general picture of violations of the rights of journalists and the media.

The relevant subsections of the report contain facts about violations of the rights of journalists and the media during the third quarter of 2019, as well as developments related to the incidents that took place during the previous periods.

**On the whole, as it was mentioned, 47 cases of violations of the right of journalists and media outlets, including a case of physical violence, 35 cases of Pressure on media outlets and their personnel and 11 cases of violations of the right to receive and disseminate information were recorded in the third quarter of 2019.**

In the tables below we introduce these data according to their quarterly distribution and the comparative data for 2018-2019.

**Quantitative data on the violations in 2019 by quarters**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 2019 1st quarter | 2019 2nd quarter | 2019 3rd quarter | Total |
| Physical violence against journalists | **2** | **0** | **1** | **3** |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | **41** | **42** | **35** | **118** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | **51** | **15** | **11** | **77** |

**Quantitative data on the violations in the 3rd quarters of 2018 and 2019**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 2018 3rd quarter | 2019 3rd quarter |
| Physical violence against journalists | **2** | **1** |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | **13** | **35** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | **22** | **11** |

As in previous reports, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression states that the data introduced in the table might not be exhaustive and do not claim to be absolutely true. Sometimes media representatives do not consider it necessary to make public the facts of impediments to their professional activity, they ignore various threats or prefer to settle the problems on their own and overcome illegal restrictions. Therefore, CPFE is sure, that the true number of impediments is more than is recorded in this report. Below we shall introduce the most significant facts.

***1. Physical violence against journalists***

*In the third quarter of 2019 one case of physical violence against a media representative by the NSS employee was recorded. CPFE recorded two cases in the same period of 2018, while no case of physical violence was recorded in the previous quarter of this year. Below we shall introduce the cases, recorded in the third quarter of 2019, as well as the developments of past cases in chronological order.*

**On July 2,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held a regular court hearing on the case of Ani Keshishyan, reporter from “168.am” website and Liana Yeghiazaryan, correspondent from the Public Radio against Levon Yeranosyan, former commander of RA Police.

It is worthwhile to remind that as a result of using special means by the police against the protesters on Baghramyan Avenue in Yerevan, injuries were caused to Ani Keshishyan on April 16, 2018, and to Liana Ghazaryan on April 22 at the intersection of Artsakh-Erebouni streets. (Details in CPFE 2018 annual and 2019 quarterly reports, see www.khosq.am, “Reports” section).

Levon Yeranosyan was charged for applying special means and intentionally implementing actions that were obviously beyond the scope of his powers and caused substantial damage to citizens’ rights and legitimate interests, as well as resulted negligently in grave consequences.

A court hearing on the case was held on July 9, and the next hearing is scheduled on October 4.

**On July 9**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor regions (based in Yeghegnadzor) held a regular court hearing on the case of physical violence against the journalists who were carrying out their professional obligations in Shatin community in Vayots Dzor region.

It is worthwhile to remind that on September 12, 2018 Syune Hambardzumyan and Knar Manukyan, employees of the *Zhoghovurd* daily, were subjected to violence by the residents of Shatin[[7]](#footnote-7). Based on the evidence obtained, charges were brought against 4 people, Zhanna Isughoyan, Zvart Smbatyan, Geghanush Yeghoyan, Shirak Harunyan under Article 164, Part 1 of the RA Criminal code. As a measure of restraint, they signed the order not to leave the country.

Court hearings on the case were also held on August 15 and September 30. The next hearing is scheduled on October 29.

**On July 9,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held the hearing of the criminal case filed on the occasion of exerting physical violence against Artak Khulyan, correspondent from “Shantnews.am” news website and Hovhannes Sargsyan, cameraman from “Factor.am” news website.

It is worthwhile to remind that on April 22, 2018, Artak Khulyan, a correspondent from “Shantnews.am”, was exposed to violence while covering protests in Erebouni district[[8]](#footnote-8). On the same day Hovhannes Sargsyan, a cameraman from “Factor.am” news website, was also subjected to violence in the same district[[9]](#footnote-9): The criminal case on these two incidents was investigated in one proceeding. On June 14, 2019 the criminal case initiated under Article 225 of the RA Criminal Code was sent to Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction with an indictment charging 8 persons.

The court hearing on the case was held on August 29 and September 12; the next hearing is scheduled on October 3.

**On July 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Kotayk region held a regular court hearing on the case of journalist Tirayr Mouradyan against Arsen Arzumanyan, head of Kotayk Division of the RA Police.

It is worthwhile to remind that on April 20, 2018 Tirayr Mouradyan,journalist from “Union of informed citizens” NGOwas apprehended from Yerevan-Abovyan highway although he had showed the journalist’s ID[[10]](#footnote-10). The pre-investigation revealed that Arsen Arzumanyan, head of Kotayk division of the RA Police impeded the journalist’s professional legal activities through abusing his power for which he was charged under Article 164, Part 2 of the RA Criminal code

According to the virdict of the Court of First Instance on February 27, Arsen Arzumanyan was acquitted on the ground of the absence of corpus delicti in his actions. On April 10 the plaintiff appealed the decision to the Court of Appeal. During the court hearings on June 5 the Court of Appeal upheld the appeal and overturned the decision by the Court of First Instance. Arsen Arzumanyan was charged under Article 164, Part 2 of the RA Criminal Code: a fine of 500,000 AMD was imposed without depriving of the right to hold certain positions or be engaged in certain activities. However, the plaintiff was not satisfied by this decision.

**On July 25,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori region continued the investigation of the criminal case filed on the occasion of impeding the professional legal activities of Narine Avetisyan, editor-in-chief of “Lori TV” TV company.

It is worthwhile to remind that on September 28, 2017, after receiving information that the bridge adjacent to Holy Mother church was being paved in heavy rain, Narine Avetisyan went to that site to cover the activities. While videotaping, Tigran Nazaryan, head of the “ShinPlus” LLC construction company, together with his employees, attacked Narine Avetisyan, twisted her arms, slammed her down to the ground, seized her phone and deleted the photos[[11]](#footnote-11).

The court hearing on the case was held on September 18, and the next hearing is scheduled on October 22.

**On August 9,** the Special Investigative Service suspended the proceedings of the criminal case filed on the occasion of impeding the professional legal activities through violence and threat against journalists Alina Nikoghosyan, Anatoly Yeghiazaryan, Hambardzum Papoyan, Armen Petrosyan, Naira Bulghadaryan and Narek Kirakosyan for the second time, on the grounds of the perpetrator being unknown.

It is worthwhile to remind that this case concerns the incidents of impeding the professional legal activities of journalists covering the rallies in Baghramyan Avenue, Artsakh, Erebouni and other streets (…) of Yerevan by the RA police and other employees of law enforcement bodies implementing public service, as well as by other officials during April 16-23, 2018. (Details can be found in CPFE 2018 second quarterly and annual, as well as 2019 quarterly reports, see [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) site, “Reports” section).

The case was suspended on November 16, 2018 for the first time, and after the appeal the proceedings were resumed. However, according to the information provided by the RA Prosecutor’s Office, after undertaking the necessary investigative and procedural actions, it was impossible to identify the perpetrators, and, thus the criminal proceedings were suspended on the same ground.

**On August 16,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction (seat in Kentron and Norq-Marash administrative districts) held a regular court hearing on the case of Levon Gasparyan and Julietta Kokolyan who impeded the professional activity of Sisak Gabrielyan, journalist from radio “Liberty” and Shoghik Galstyanand, correspondent from “Araratnews.am” news website.

It is worthwhile to remind that on April 2, 2017, on the day of elections of the National Assembly, Sisak Gabrielyan, journalist from radio “Liberty” and Shoghik Galstyan, correspondent from “Araratnews.am” news website were exposed to violence at the campaign office of Hakob Beglaryan, deputy candidate from the RPA, at 15 Roustaveli street in Kond district (details in CPFE 2017-2018 annual report, see [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) website, “Reports” section). A CPFE lawyer defended Shoghik Galstyan’s interests in court.

On February 5, 2018, the court issued an arrest warrant for Julietta Kokolyan, charged with impeding Shoghik Galstyan’s professional activity[[12]](#footnote-12). Before finding Julietta Kokolyan, the court decided to suspend the proceeding of her case and to investigate in a separate proceeding the case of the other defendant, Levon Gasparyan. The next court hearing on this case is scheduled on October 31.

**On September 4,** during the event dedicated to Emergency Worker's Day, one of the bodyguards of Artur Vanetsyan, the director of the National Security Service, pushed Arthur Harutyunayn, operator from “24News.am” news website slamming him down to the ground.[[13]](#footnote-13)

***2. Pressure on Media Outlets and Their Personnel***

*In the monitoring period, a total of 35 cases of pressure on the media outlets and their personnel were recorded, which exceeds the indicator for the same period of last year with 22 cases and falls 7 cases short of the indicator for the second quarter of 2019. 30 cases out of 35 are new lawsuits involving journalists and the media, based on insult and slander under Article 1087.1 of the RA Civil Code.*

*The plaintiffs in 13 out of the abovementioned 30 cases are incumbent and former officials, citizens in 9, business people in 5, a politician in 1, a show business representative in 1, and in one case a journalist filed a lawsuit against a media outlet. In 5 other cases pressure was exerted by government officials and politicians.*

*Besides the facts recorded in the third quarter of 2019, this subsection of the report also includes developments and solutions related to the cases of various types of pressure on the media outlets and journalists, recorded during the previous years. Below we introduce all the details in chronological order*

**On July 1,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held the first court hearing on the case of Andranik Kocharyan, Head of the Standing Committee on Defense and Security, against *Hraparak daily* LLC. The plaintiff demands from the media outlet to publicly apologize for the insult, pay a compensation of 1 million drams and publicly refute the information containing defamation. The cause of the lawsuit is the material published in the newspaper and in the eponymous website under the heading “Who is Andarik Kocharyan in Reality?”[[14]](#footnote-14) The author of the article Hasmik Melkonyan wrote that whoever cooperated with Andranik Kocharyan in the 1990s either died or lost their memory, and she presented a number of details from his life in an unfavorable light.

The court hearing on the case was held also on July 15, and the next hearing is scheduled on November 1.

**On July 1,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held a regular court hearing on the case of Vahe Makaryan, reporter from the *Hraparak* daily against Rubik Hakobyan, a former NA deputy.

It is worthwhile to remind that after using violence in the NA hall against the correspondent of the *Hraparak* daily newspaper Vahe Makaryan on December 7, 2016, the National Assembly MP Rubik Hakobyan made offensive remarks against the journalist in various interviews and posts calling him a hooligan, an illiterate and a criminal. Vahe Makaryan filed a lawsuit in the court in relation to the incident by appeal of the protection of honor and dignity (details can be found in the annual reports of CPFE of 2016, 2017, 2018, see “Reports” section, in the website khosq.am).

A court hearing on the case was held also on September 12, and the next hearing is scheduled on November 27.

**On July 1,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held a preliminary hearing on the case of “Skizb Media Kentron” LLC filed by the former Armavir Governor Gagik Mirijanyan against the founder of the *Zhamanak* newspaper to force them refute the information damaging his honor, dignity and business reputation.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of the lawsuit, filed on February 11, was the article published on February 6 in the *Zhamanak* newspaper: “Corruption: Gagik Mirijanyan Managed to Open a Private Clinic in 4 Months”[[15]](#footnote-15).

A court hearing on the case was held also on September 20, and the court verdict is scheduled to be announced on October 11.

**On July 1,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held the first court hearing on the case of Daniel Ioannisyan, Program Coordinator of “Union of Informed Citizens” NGO, against blogger Narek Malyan for the compensation of damage caused to his honor and dignity (300,000 AMD). The cause for the lawsuit was Narek Malyan’s live-stream on Facebook, where he called Daniel Ioannisyan a liar and urged everyone to add that word every time before Daniel Ioannisyan’s name[[16]](#footnote-16).

A court hearing on the case was held also on July 16 and August 5, a decision was made to reject Daniel Ioannisyan's lawsuit against Narek Malyan. The court found that the plaintiff's arguments on the inadmissibility of the evidence were not substantiated. The verdict took effect.

**On July 1,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction continued the court hearing on the case of attorneys Lusine Sahakyan, Aramazd Kiviryan, Armen Poghosyan and Armine Poghosyan against the founder of “Lakmoes.am”, “Lakmus” human rights national activist NGO and the founder of “1in.am” news website of “Skizb Media Center” LLC, demanding compensation for the damage caused to the honor, dignity, business reputation and the right to personal and family life immunity. The court made a decision to dismiss the “Lakmus” human rights national activist NGO representative Elmira Martirosyan’s motion on leaving the case without investigation.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of the lawsuit , filed by the abovementioned attorneys on January 15, was the article published in “Lakmoes.am” and “1in.am” on December 3 and 4, 2018 under the heading “Military Doctor’s Son Kidnapped by ‘Hunters’ for Diaspora Armenians”.

On February 4, the motion of the lawsuit was partially upheld, and “Lakmus” NGO and Elmira Martirosyan, as well as “Skizb Media Center” company and Arman Babajanyan were obliged to completely remove the aforementioned article.

On July 3, Elmira Martirosyan filed a counter lawsuit, demanding compensation for the moral damage caused as a result of the violation of her right to freedom of expression, which was returned. After the second lawsuit, by the decision made on July 19, the counter lawsuit took proceedings and the payment of the state penalty was deferred.

Court hearings on the case were held also on September 3, 11, and 23. The next hearing is scheduled on October 17.

**On July 2,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held a preliminary hearing on the case of “Nor Serund” NGO against the *Hraparak* daily, demanding to refute the information considered as slander and claiming 500,000 AMD in compensation.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of the lawsuit , filed on February 11, is the article under the heading “LGBT Forum will Nevertheless Take Place” published on December 3, 2018[[17]](#footnote-17)։

A court hearing on the case was held also on September 6, and on September 9 the court made a decision to drop the investigation, and to seize 200,000 drams from “Nor Serund” NGO in favor of *Hraparak Daily* LLC as a lawyer's remuneration.

**On July 3,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held a preliminary hearing on the case of “Tigran Mets” Publishing House against “Iravunk Media” LLC on monetary confiscations.

It is worthwhile to remind that the plaintiff demands 3 845 517 AMD as debt for services and 77,000 AMD as advance payment for the state fee. On February 1, the lawsuit took proceedings.

The next court hearing is scheduled on November 7.

**On July 3,** the lawsuit ofEduard Harutyunyan, former Colonel of the National Security Service (NSS) against Taron Sahakyan, former deputy of the National Assembly (third party, founder of “1in.am” website, “First News” LLC) with the claim to publicly apologize, as well as refute the defamatory information and pay compensation, took proceedings in Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction.

The cause of the lawsuit was an article published on the website on May 29, under the heading “The Harutyunyan Dynasty is Still Rooted in the State System. Where are They and What Positions Do They Occupy?”, which specifically states: “Eduard Harutyunyan who held several positions at YSU years ago - Deputy Head of International Cooperation Department, Head of Department, Deputy Head of the Staff of Rector”, was actually the NSS representative at YSU. (...) Eduard Harutyunyan owns a huge capital: gas stations in Arzni and in other places, a number of other businesses”[[18]](#footnote-18).

On July 3, the court upheld the motion of the lawsuit. The preliminary hearing is scheduled on November 1.

**On July 3,** the ruling of the Court of General Jurisdiction in the regions of Ararat and Vayots Dzor partially upheld thelawsuit ofthe RA Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan against Boris Tamoyan (the editor of the website Politik.am).

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of the lawsuit were the articles, titled “The Deputy Prime Minister Avinyan Used Marijuana in the Government” published on October 26, 2018, “Avinyan is Afraid. Marijuana will Cause Him a Lot of Trouble”, published on October 27. The plaintiff demanded to publicly refute the information and pay a compensation of 2 million drams for defamation.

By the court ruling the defendant is obliged to publicly refute information, 1 million AMD will be seized in favor of the plaintiff Tigran Avinyan as compensation for defamation as well as 24 thousand AMD as state fee.

**On July 4,** the General Jurisdiction Court of Shirak region held a regular hearing of the lawsuit of citizen Shoghik Aleksanyan against citizens Mariam Poghosyan, Narine Sargsyan and “Asparez” Journalists Club to enforce them to refute the defamatory information about her and pay compensation for damage.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of the lawsuit is the article, under the heading “Follow-up on Complaints by Gyumri School N18”, published on the “Asparez.am” website on November 6[[19]](#footnote-19). According to Ani Mkrtchyan, the author of the article, the lawsuit is based on Narine Sargsyan’s words, the teacher and deputy principal of the school, published verbatim on the website. Narine Sargsyan and her daughter Mariam Poghosyan, claimed in court that they had no objection to the words published in the article, as the journalist quoted their words.

At the court hearing on July 4, a counter lawsuit was filed with the claim to apologize, which was returned on July 15.

The next court hearing is scheduled on October 15.

**On July 4,** during the protest actions in front of the Government buliding Robert Kocharyan’s supporters insulted Nelly Babayan, journalist from “Aravot.am”.In particular, Menua Harutyunyan, the founder of “Slaq.am”, did not approve of the questions by the journalist, in response to which he attacked with: “You are the ones who are instructed and sent here by Nikol”. Some protesters also tried "to teach journalists a lesson” by making disrespectful remarks to them[[20]](#footnote-20).

**On July 8,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held the first hearing on the case of businessman Vahe Hakobyan against the attorney Hovik Arsenyan and “Yerkir Media” TV channel with a claim of enforcing refutation and 2 million drams as compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity. The cause of lawsuit was the question raised on October 18, 2018 by the attorney during the talk show “Yerkri Harts” as to why the former Governor of Syunik Vahe Hakobyan has not been subject to criminal prosecution until now[[21]](#footnote-21).

The next court hearing is scheduled on November 5.

**On July 8,** Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly Vanadzor Office appealed to Criminal Court of Appeal against the court's decision to terminate the appeal against the criminal case initiated by the threats against the editor-in-chief of “Medialab.am” website filed by the Investigative Committee.

HCAV appealed the decision of the Investigative Committee on terminating the proceedings of the criminal case, addressing it to the inspecting prosecutor on March 11 and after it was dismissed, HCAV appealed to the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan, and on May 22 the appeal was dismissed again by the court.

It is worthwhile to remind that on January 28, 2018 the editorial of Medialab.am website received serious threats on Facebook social network from a user named “Hayk Berman Ohanyan”. The cause was a caricature published in the media outlet on the same day, depicting flowers at the value of 7 million drams bought by the RA Minister of Defense in December, 2017, and referred to corruption risks in army. (Details can be found in CPFE 2018 annual and 2019 quarterly reports, see www.khosq.am, “Reports” section).

On September 9, the Court of Appeal dismissed HCAV’s appeal. The organization appealed to the Court of Cassation on September 27.

**On July 9,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held a regular hearing on the case of “News AM” LLC the founder of “News.am” against Sona (Sirush) Harutyunyan, journalist from “1in.am”.

It is worthwhile to remind that on September 26, 2018, “News AM” LLC filed a lawsuit against the journalist, which was caused by a post on her Facebook page where Sona Harutyunyan linked “News.am” website with Robert Kocharyan[[22]](#footnote-22). The founder of “News.am” demands 200,000 AMD as compensation from the journalist, in addition to publishing a refutation, public apology, and a publication of the court ruling on the journalist’s Facebook page.

On July 24, the lawsuit was partially upheld, the court enforced the defendant to post a refutation on her Facebook page, as well as to pay 50,000 AMD to “News AM” LLC as compensation of non-pecuniary damage from defamation.

On August 21, the defendant filed a lawsuit to the Court of Appeal. On September 12 the lawsuit took hearing, and the court hearing is scheduled on November 5.

**On July 9,** YerevanCourt of General Jurisdictionheld the first court hearing on the case of citizen Armen Khachatryan against Piruza Meliksetyan, the editor-in-chief of the *Irates* newspaper with a claim of public refutation of defamation.

The lawsuit was filed on September 10, 2018, and the cause was an article, under the heading “The Aim is to See a Homosexual Catholicos on Gregory the Enlightener’s Throne, Who will Both Destroy the Church, and Put an End to the Armenian Gene”, published on the website “Irates.am” on July 17, 2018[[23]](#footnote-23).

The next court hearing is scheduled on October 7.

**On July 9,** Sahak Gaginyan, representative of NA deputy from “Bright Armenia” Arman Babajanyan, filed a lawsuit against Andranik Tevanyan, owner of “7or.am” website, to Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction with a claim to publicly apologize, as well as refute the slanderous information and pay compensation.The cause of the lawsuit is the article, under the heading “Whom does Arman Babajanyan Serve?” published on the same website on May 27, which states that the deputy “had many owners, jumped off one’s lap into another, and just like the one taken and dumped, came back and then jumped into another lap and so on.”[[24]](#footnote-24) On July 23, the lawsuit was returned and re-filed on July 30.

**On July 11,** Citizen Yura Adyan filed the second lawsuit to Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction against “Mitk media” LLC demanding refutation of slander and compensation in the amount of 2 mln AMD. The reason was an article published in the *Zhamanak* newspaper on May 9, under the heading “The “old bird” of Old and New Armenia”, reprinted by the Website. The first lawsuit was filed on July 12 and was returned for correcting deficiencies.

On July 22 the new lawsuit took proceedings. The preliminary hearing is scheduled on November 11.

**On July 12,** YerevanCourt of General Jurisdictionheld a regular court hearing on the case of citizen Samvel Hakobyan against “Shamshyan Media” with a claim to refute information regarded as defamation, publicly apologize for the insult and pay compensation for non-pecuniary damage. The cause of the lawsuit is the post, under the heading “Emergency in Yerevan: Drunk Driver of Mercedes Introduces Himself as Colonel and Makes Fun of Road Police and Pees. Photo Report, Video”, published on “Shamshyan.com” website on October 5, 2018.

On July 4, at a court hearing the court made a decision to dismiss the case as the plaintiff dropped the lawsuit.

**On July 12,** Ashot Gevorgyan filed a lawsuit toYerevan Court of General Jurisdiction against *Hraparak* daily LLC with the claim to refute information regarded as defamation, and pay compensation. The cause of the lawsuit is the news published on the first page of the daily newspaper on July 11, which states “... Community representatives with non-traditional sexual orientation targeted the “traditionalist deputies of the National Assembly.”” The newspaper cited a Facebook post by “Gevorgyan Ashot”, in which he offered to “burn”, “slaughter” and “expel” Prosperous Armenia Deputy Naira Zohrabyan.

On July 23, the lawsuit took proceedings. The first court hearing is scheduled on October 3.

**On July 15,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction dismissed the case of Gagik Tsarukyan against the founder of “Mamul.am” website “Social Media” LLC with the claim of refutation of defamatory information.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of the lawsuit were the following articles published on “Mamul.am” website, under the headlines: “Compulsory, but Not Obligatory” “Niva Cars, Work in Stables, Construction Areas, and Gardens: Modern Feudalism in Gas Stations of Tsarukyan’s “Kingdom””[[25]](#footnote-25) and “Tsarukyan’s Employees were Forced to Buy Niva Cars at Prices Higher than in the Regular Market by Monthly Payroll Deductions”[[26]](#footnote-26).

The grounds for the court verdict was that the plaintiff failed to appear at two consecutive hearings and did not file motion to adjourn the trial or resolve the case in absentia and the defendant did not file a petition to continue the proceedings.

The court decision also settled the issues of allocation of court expenses between the parties and the elimination of measures to secure the complaint.

**On July 15,** Yerevan Court ofGeneral Jurisdiction held the first court hearing on the case of Mher Derdzyan, head of the “Under One Roof” housing project, against the “Editorial Office of the Zhoghovurd Newspaper” LLC with a claim of public apology and compensation of 1.5 million drams for insult and defamation.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of the lawsuit was the newspaper’s concern that the project could be a well-thought-out scam[[27]](#footnote-27).

A court hearing on the case was also held on September 12, and the next hearing is scheduled on November 26.

**On July 16,** Narek Abrahamyan, Senior Investigator of Syunik Regional Investigative Department filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Syunik Province (Sisian seat) against Arshavir Hovhannisyan, former Mayor of Meghri with a claim of refutation of defamatory information, public apology for insult and defamation, compensation for harm to his honor, dignity and good reputation. The third party to this case is “Syuniats Ashkharh” LLC, founder of the *Syuniats Yerkir* newspaper. The cause of the lawsuit are the insulting statements addressed by Arshavir Hovhannisyan to Narek Abgaryan which were published in the *Syunyats Ashkharh* regional newspaper, on June 16.

On July 30 the lawsuit was returned for correcting deficiencies. It was refiled on August 7, and on August 29 it took proceedings.

The preliminary hearing on the case is scheduled on December 19.

**On July 16,** “Skizb Media Center” LLC, founder of “1in.am” news website filed a lawsuit to the Court of Cassation appealing the decision of the Court of Appeal in favor of Robert Kocharyan on keeping the decision of the Court of General Jurisdication unchanged.

It is worthwhile to remind that on January 18, Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction partially upheld the claim of the RA second President Robert Kocharyan against “Skizb Media Center” LLC to publicly refute the defamatory information and pay compensation. “Skizb Media Center” LLC appealed the verdict on February 20, and on June 12 the Civil Court of Appeal decided to dismiss it.

The cause of the lawsuit was the article published on “1in.am” news website owned by the LLC on June 7, 2018, under the headline “Grigor Grigoryan Gave Evidence against Kocharyan, He Can Be Arrested”[[28]](#footnote-28). Then two publications by the same media followed on June 23 and 24 (by Sargis Artsruni), namely “Robert Kocharyan’s Panic. The Second President on His Way to Prison”[[29]](#footnote-29) and “Robert Kocharyan, the Bloody Symbol of the Revolution”[[30]](#footnote-30). Later on June 28, another analytical article by the same author was posted on “1in.am”: “Kocharyan-Sargsyan. Beneficiaries of Twenty Bloody Years”[[31]](#footnote-31). (Details can be found in CPFE 2019 quarterly reports, see www.khosq.am, “Reports” section).

On July 31 the cassation appeal was returned to correct deficiencies and was re-filed on August 27.

**On July 19,** the Investigative Committee decided to suspend the court hearing of the criminal case filed by the TV host Hamlet Ghushchyan on the report of his abduction and threats against him.

It is worthwhile to remind that on March 4 in his conversation with “Hraparak.am”, in response to the question whether it was true that after mentioning the “Lusastgh” vodka on air Aleksanyan’s people beat him up, Hamlet Ghushchyan said: “What do you mean by beating up? Who is that imbecile to beat me up; they just kidnapped me and took me at night and putting a gun on my forehead told me. “You will say whatever we tell you to”. I have gone through it all, I looked death straight in the eye and I said “Come on, shoot! If you’ve brought me here, then shoot, because God will punish you, even if he doesn’t punish anyone else[[32]](#footnote-32).” On that same day, the media reports were sent to the RA General Criminal Investigation Department of the Police with the aim of clarifying the circumstances presented therein. (Details can be found in CPFE 2019 quarterly reports, see www.khosq.am, “Reports” section).

The RA Prosecutor’s Office informed CPFE that all the necessary procedural and investigative actions were carried out during the preliminary investigation of the criminal case; however, no combination of evidence that would have confirmed the information provided by Hamlet Ghushchyan was revealed. Thus, the criminal proceedings were suspended on the grounds of the perpetrator being unknown.

**On July 19,** Yerevan Court ofGeneral Jurisdiction dismissed the lawsuit of Daniel Ioannisyan, Program Coordinator of “Union of Informed Citizens” NGO against inaction of prosecutor on the criminal case of illegally collecting personal and family-related secret information and disseminating it through the media.

It is worthwhile to remind that on March 25, 2017 “Iravunk.com” website published an article, under the headline “Remarkable Details from the Biography of Civil Activist Daniel Ioannisyan”, which contained data on Daniel Ioannisyan’s personal life and his family, exclusively known by the RA Police and the Investigative Committee. The criminal case initiated on the basis of Ioannisyan’s report was suspended. (Details can be found in CPFE 2017-2018 annual and 2019 quarterly reports, see www.khosq.am, section “Reports”).

The plaintiff filed a lawsuit on September 15, which did not take proceedings as of September 30.

**On July 22,** Yerevan Court ofGeneral Jurisdiction held a regular court hearing on the case of citizens Marat Grigoryan, Sargis Kelyan, Levon Harutyunyan, Liana Manukyan, Ester Manukyan, Tatevik Boyakhchyan against the *Hraparak daily* LLC with the claim for compensation for insult and slander.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of lawsuit is an article, titled “Scandal at YSU: New ‘Sashik’ There?” and published on the website as of October 8, 2018. According to a letter, Marat Grigoryan, the Dean of the Faculty of Geography and Geology, is accused of embezzling 50 percent of the salaries of faculty researchers[[33]](#footnote-33). Additionally, the website has also published Marat Grigoryan’s comment regarding the letter, and his comment on the researchers’ refutation of the facts was published in the previous article as of October 19, but that did not satisfy the plaintiffs[[34]](#footnote-34).

In addition, the plaintiffs have applied to the court requesting to investigate the case in their absence in the future.

The next court hearing is scheduled on October 24, 2019.

**On July 23,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held the first court hearing on the case of “Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Museum-Reservations” SNCO against “Dareskizb” LLC, publisher of the *Armenian Times* daily.

It is worthwhile to remind that the lawsuit was filed with the claims of enforcing to compensate non-pecuniary damage caused by release of personal information considered as slander and refute that information. The cause of lawsuit is the article “Beaten, Persecuted and Fired for Giving an Interview. An Employee, who has Worked for 30 Years, is Deprived of his Store in Garni”, where the author presented a dispute between the head of SNCO and the former head of Garni museum-reservation.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Court hearings on the case were held also on September 9 and 30. The next hearing is not scheduled yet.

**On July 24,** citizen Gagik Gevorkyan filed a lawsuit against “Dareskizb” LLC, founder of the daily newspaper *Armenian Times* and 3 more citizens in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan with claims of refuting information smearing honor and dignity and paying compensation for insult and slander. The cause of lawsuit is the article under the heading ““They are Trying to Take Advantage of Our Patriotism and Deceive us”; Serzh Sargsyan has “Dumped” a Canadian-Armenian Businessman”.[[36]](#footnote-36)

On August 7, the application was returned in order to correct deficiencies. Finally, the application took proceedings on September 30.

**On July 24,** the first court hearing on the case of citizen Emma Kirakosyan against “ATV” TV Company LLC was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan by claims of enforcing refutation and compensation for damage caused to honor and dignity. The application took proceedings on April 2.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of the lawsuit was the February 22 issue of the talk show “Half-Open Windows”. The topic was legal runaround going on for 20 years, the reason for which according to expressed opinions is Emma Kirakosyan.[[37]](#footnote-37)

The next court hearing is scheduled on November 18.

**On July 25,** the first court hearing of journalists Liana Karapetyan and Siranush Muradyan against the Council of Public TV and Radio Company of Armenia was held in the RA Administrative Court on December 25, 2018 with the claim of annulling number 46-L administrative act. The act refers to termination of employment contracts of journalists.

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled on November 18.

**On July 29,** a regular court hearing on the case of Alina Gyulumyan against “Dareskizb” LLC, founder of the daily newspaper *Armenian Times* was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of lawsuit is an article published in the newspaper about the fact, that when Gyulumyan was representing Armenia as a judge in ECHR, she spared no effort for the investigation of one of the cases to be delayed, which was filed to the court related to the known incidents of March 1, 2008 in Yerevan.

Alina Gyulumyan demanded refutation from the media without monetary compensation. The next court hearing is scheduled on October 28.

**On July 31,** Arshak Hakobyan, Head of the Former RA Police Chief Vladimir Gasparyan’s bodyguard squad, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against Daniel Iohannisyan, project coordinator of “Union of Informed Citizens” NGO by claims of refuting information considered as slander and paying compensation. The cause of lawsuit was the announcement made by Daniel Ionnaisyan at Media Centre, on May 22 in which he accused Arthur Vanetsyan, Head of National Security Service, of having close ties with Arshak Hakobyan, Aram Vardanyan famous by the nickname “Vstrechi Aper” and Babken Khazaryan nicknamed “Tokhmakhi Babo” mentioning them as “criminal personas”[[38]](#footnote-38). This is Arshak Hakobyan’s second lawsuit on the same matter; the first one was filed on June 6, and the court returned the application on June 20.

On August 12, the second application took proceedings.

**On August 1,** “AnRiva-Tour” tourism LLC filed a lawsuit in Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction against Ani Aleksanyan (the third party was “Educational Planet” LLC and “Public TV Company of Armenia” CJSC) about a claim of preserving business reputation. The cause of the lawsuit was announcements addressed to “AnRiva-Tour” during one of the issues of the TV show “One Window” of Public TV Company, which were considered defamatory by the LLC. On August 9, the application took proceedings.

**On August 1,** citizen Khachatur Khachatryan filed a lawsuit in Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction against “Shamshyan Media” LLC by claims of enforcing public apology for smearing honor and dignity and payment of 1 million AMD in compensation. The cause of the lawsuit was the article “Regular Police Operation in Shirak region against Drug Addicts. Two of the Detainees have Just been Amnestied; the Deputy Director of One of the SNCO-s of the Ministry of Diaspora was in the Group” published in “Shamshyan.con” on March 13[[39]](#footnote-39). This is the second lawsuit for this cause; the first was filed on April 17, and on April 29, the court ruled to return the documents to the plaintiff.

On September 2, the application took proceedings. The court hearing is not scheduled yet.

**On August 2,** NA Deputy Hayk Sargsyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against the founder of the website “Armday.am”, “Armday.am” LLC with the claim of compensating damage caused to honor, dignity and good reputation by means of slander and insult. The cause of lawsuit was the article ““From Kicking Ass” to Night Revelries: What is Happening “Inside “La Scala”” published in the website, where information about night revelries is attributed to the deputy, as well as the fact that “Hayk Sargsyan and Pzo are quite close, and thus Sargsyan tries to live by “the gang ideology””[[40]](#footnote-40).

On August 13, the application was returned in order to correct deficiencies. The application was filed again on August 26 and took proceedings on September 6. The court hearing is not scheduled yet.

**On August 2,** Karen Karapetyan,former head of Inquiry and Operations Search Department, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against the founder of the *Zhamanak* daily newspaper “Skizb Media Centre” LLC about the claim of compensating damage caused to honor and dignity by means of slander. The cause of lawsuit is the article “SRC Deputy Head’s “Confidant” was Appointed Head of Inquiry and Operations Search Department” published in the *Zhamanak* newspaper on July 5, particularly due to the following idea: “….Before this appointment the head of SRC Inquiry and Operations Search Department was Karen Karapetyan, who is Valeri Osipyan’s godfather. He was dismissed because of a corruption scandal.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

On August 14, the application took proceedings, and the preliminary court hearing is scheduled on November 12.

**On August 9,** Special Investigation Service suspended the proceedings on the criminal case of persecution of journalist Narek Kirakosyan for the second time again on the grounds of the perpetrator being unknown.

It is worthwhile to remind that on April 18, 2018, the correspondent of the daily newspaper *Armenian Times* Narek Kirakosyan was persecuted for taking pictures of armor in Baghramyan Avenue of the capital city by the order of the first deputy head of police Hunan Poghosyan.[[42]](#footnote-42) However, the police officer did not manage to catch up with the journalist. During the preliminary investigation of the criminal case in RA Special Investigation Service according to the Part 3 of Article 164, Part 1 of Article 308, and Part 2 of Article 309 of the RA Criminal Code it has been decided to identify Narek Kirakosyan as a victim. (Details can be found in CPFE 2018 annual and 2019 quarterly reports, see [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) website, “Reports” section). On January 14, 2019, the journalist appealed the SIS decision, and the appeal was upheld in the Court of Appeal and the case retook proceedings. However, according to the information provided by RA Prosecutor’s Office, this time again “as a result of implementing necessary investigative and legal actions it was impossible to find the perpetrators”.

**On August 12,** citizen Nelly Mikaelyan filed an application in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against Anna Gevorgyan, head of the media outlet *Armenian Times*/ “Hzham.am” and the website “7or.am” about the claims of enforcing them to publicly apologize for slander, refute and confiscate 2000 times the minimum wage from each person qualifiying for it. The cause of the lawsuit was the articles “Who is This “Mysterious Beauty”[[43]](#footnote-43) and “How is she Related to Pedophilia?” and “This is the Number one Activist of Anti-Kocharyan Movement”[[44]](#footnote-44) published in the above-mentioned media outlet on May 14.

On August 21, the application was returned in order to correct deficiencies.

**On August 13,** a regular court hearing on the case of “Television and Radio Broadcasting Network of Armenia” CJSC against “Ijevan Studio” LLC was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Tavush region. It is claimed by the lawsuit to confiscate debt in 2 599 000 AMD from the foundation of the TV Company, which was generated from the outstanding payments of “Ijevan Studio” for broadcasting TV programs. The former head of “Ijevan Studio” Naira Khachikyan stated in the conversation with CPFE that she made the payments properly till 2015, but since 2016, as a result of the state policy implemented in the field, the company has dropped out of the process of digital broadcasting and continued analog broadcasting, losing audience and advertisers; thus it had found itself in a dire financial situation and stopped payments.

By the judgment passed on August 28, 2 650 000 AMD shall be confiscated from defendant “Ijevan Studio” LLC in favor of “Television and Radio Broadcasting Network of Armenia” CJSC as debt due to violation of contractual obligations.

**On August 12,** citizen Yura Avetisyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against “NEWS.AM” LLC, founder of the website “News.am”, with the claim of refuting slander and paying 2 million AMD in compensation. The cause of lawsuit is the article ““The Old Fox” of Old and New Armenia” published in the issue of May 9 of the daily newspaper *Zhamanak*, which was copied by the website. On August 16, the lawsuit took proceedings. The first court hearing is scheduled on October 11.

**On August 12,** citizen Arusyak Mkrtchyan filed a lawsuit against the newspaper *Zhoghovurd* with the claims of refuting information considered as slander and compensation of damage in the Court of General Jurisdiction. The cause of lawsuit is the article “DJ in Healthcare. Nearly 20 thousand USD to a Minister’s Acquaintance”[[45]](#footnote-45) published in the website “Armlur.am” on July 12. The author states that the RA Ministry of Health has allocated more than 9.5 million AMD from the State budget to the company “In Progress Production” founded by Arusyak Mkrtchyan, also known as DJ Vaktsina, for making social videos. “It is worthwhile to state that DJ Vaktsina, being a friend of the Minister of Health Arsen Torosyan’s (anyway, their joined photos come to prove it), is making use of the state budget”. In addition, the website article contained commentary taken from Arusyak Mkrtchyan herself.

On August 16, the application took proceedings. The court hearing is scheduled on November 25.

**On August 14,** the RA General Prosecutor’s Office ruled to annul the decision of not conducting criminal prosecution on the case of the February 19, 2019 incident involving journalists and “Yerkir Tsirani” party chair Zaruhi Postanjyan in Yerevan City Council and terminating the proceedings on the criminal case. During the preliminary investigation restarted based on this decision, Zaruhi Postanjyan was identified as a victim, and she underwent necessary investigative and other court procedures.

It is worthwhile to remind that on February 19, 2018 the professional activities of Ruzanna Stepanyan and Susanna Poghosyan, correspondents of “Azatutyun” radio station and “A1+” TV company, were hindered[[46]](#footnote-46). (Details can be found in CPFE 2018 annual and 2019 quarterly reports, see [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) website, “Reports” section).

Currently preliminary investigation on the case is in motion and at the final stage.

**On August 15** citizen Vahe Parazyan filed an application in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan, against the founder of the media outlet “Tert.am”, “Tert.am” LLC on the claims of publicly refuting information considered as slander and compensating damage caused to honor and dignity. The cause of lawsuit was the article “Vahe Parazyan, who has presented a program against Samvel Karapetyan’s nephew, has criminal past”, published on the website on July 16[[47]](#footnote-47).

On August 26, the application took proceedings, and the preliminary court hearing is scheduled on November 27.

**On August 16,** Vahe Parazyan’s father Ashot Parazyan filed an application concerning the same article in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan with the same claim. On August 28, the application took proceedings. The preliminary court hearing is scheduled on December 2.

**On August 16,** Vahe Parazyan filed 3 more lawsuits in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against different media outlets. First is against the owner of the website “Orer.am” Varuzhan Babajanyan and its editor Anahit Seyranyan with the claims of publicly refuting information considered as slander and compensating damage caused to honor and dignity. The cause of lawsuit was the article “Vahe Parazyan who Reported to the Police Abducts an Armenian jointly with Chechens”[[48]](#footnote-48), published on the website on July 16. On August 30, the application was returned, in order to correct deficiencies. By the way, on September 10 the website published a refutation.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Vahe Parazyan filed the second lawsuit against “Virtual Media” LLC, founder of the website “Slaq.am” and its founder Menua Haurtyunyan with claims of publicly apologizing and publicly refuting information considered as slander, as well as compensating damage caused to honor and dignity. The cause of lawsuit is the article under the heading “Following Scandalous Events. Narek Karapetyan Presents Details of the Incident” published in the website on July 17, with a video attached[[50]](#footnote-50). On August 27, the application was returned and filed again on September 9. On September 18, it took proceedings.

The third application was filed against “Armenia TV” CJSC, journalist Shaké Ghazaryan and attorney Armen Feroyan. The application took proceedings on August 28, the preliminary court hearing is scheduled on November 1.

**On August 19** the criminal case, initiated based on the editor of “Tivi1.am” Varduhi Simonyan’s program, was terminated.

It is worthwhile to remind that on January 14 Varduhi Simonyan stated that the website had been closed for 16 days without notifying the founding staff and the chief editor, all the locks in the workplace were changed and employees were not able to enter even to take their personal belongings and block personal computer data[[51]](#footnote-51).

On January 18, the head of the company “Number 1” LLC Edgar Babayan filed an application to the RA General Prosecutor on the incident, then gave an explanation that in December 2018 editor-in-chief of the website “Tiv1.am”, which belongs to “Number 1 Media” LLC, and other staff members have taken all the property of the company, then returned it, as a result of which pecuniary damage was caused to the company. On February 4, 2019, a criminal case was initiated on the incident in the Police department of Arabkir according to part 1 of Article 322 of the RA Criminal Code; the case was sent to RA Investigative Committee to the investigative division of Arabkir administrative district, Yerevan.

RA Prosecutor’s Office has informed CPFE that as a result of preliminary investigation, carried out in the above mentioned division, a decision has been made not only to terminate the proceedings on the criminal case, but also to stop criminal prosecution against Varduhi Simonyan and several staff members on the one hand, and Edgar Babayan, on the other, based on the fact that their deed has no Corpus delicti, is a civil offense and thus, should be solved by civil proceedings.

**On August 19,** a regular court hearing on the case of citizen Asya Khachatryan against the leader of the “National Security” party Garnik Isagulyan was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Ararat and Vayots Dzor regions with the claims of publicly refuting information considered as slander and compensating damage caused to honor and dignity.[[52]](#footnote-52) (The founders of the *Aravot* and *168 Zham* newspapers, as well as “Araratnews.am”, “Operativ.am” and “Henaran.am” media outlets were identified as the third party). The plaintiff litigated some ideas expressed during the press conference by Garnik Isagulyan, an advisor to Artsakh Republic Permanent Representation in Armenia in the “Mirror” club on March 28, 2018. Particularly, the plaintiff demanded evidence from Isagulyan about the fact that he had been to Baku several times claiming refutation and 0.5 million AMD in compensation. (Details can be found in CPFE 2018 annual and 2019 quarterly reports, see [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) website, “Reports” section).

On September 9, the court ruled to dismiss Asya Khachatryan’s lawsuit against Garnik Isagulyan.

**On August 21,** journalist from media outlet “Factor.am” Narek Kirakosyan reported that for over an hour, they were trying to enter the National Assembly with the cameraman, but they could not succeed for unknown reasons. “An hour ago I asked the deputy chief of NA staff to give me and the cameraman access to the Parliament building. He replied that he had sent a written notice to the NA chief of staff; we have been at the checkpoint for already 30 minutes, but we do not have the passes yet. Our badges are expired, NA has not given us a badge for 2 months, they will issue it in September, and until then we are supposed to enter the building with passes. The building does not have a head or an acting head of media department, who can be entitled to provide us with passes. To put it mildly, they hinder our professional activity”, stated the journalist, addressing CPFE.

**On August 22,** “Pargev” LLC filed a lawsuit against “Iravunq Media” LLC in the Court of General Jurisdiction to protect business reputation. The cause of lawsuit is unknown: even the editor-in-chief of the *Iravunq* newspaper Hovhannes Galajyan was not aware of such a lawsuit filed against the outlet. He did not know the name of this plaintiff party either. The application has not taken proceedings yet.

**On August 22,** journalist from media outlet “Factor.am” Narek Kirakosyan reported that police officers and NSS employees conducting service in the National Assembly Park did not allow “Factor.am” to videotape, explaining that the administration should be notified about the aim and the contents of the footage. [[53]](#footnote-53)

**On August 23,** head of the community of Ani, Shirak region, Artak Gevorgyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Shirak against a resident of Maralik town, Ani community Andranik Gevorgyan with the claims of refuting slander and paying compensation. Media outlet “Armlur.am” was identified as the third party to the case. The cause of lawsuit was the expression “He has plundered and ripped us off” in a video recording published on the website on August 10 and the attached text “the former head has ripped off the village college and fled. What do people from Maralik tell?”[[54]](#footnote-54) The plaintiff demands 2 000 000 AMD from the defendant.

On September 4, the application was returned and filed again on September 18, it took proceedings on September 30.

**On August 26** a regular court hearing took place on the case of Samvel Harutyunyan, head of the Science State Committee of RA Ministry of Science and Education, against Daniel Ioannisyan, project coordinator at “Union of Informed Citizens” NGO (with the claim of compensating damage caused to honor and dignity by paying 1 million AMD).

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of lawsuit was Daniel Ioannisyan’s post on his Facebook page on June 12, 2018[[55]](#footnote-55) and a follow-up interview published on the “Tert.am” website on June 13 (“Minister of Education and Science should answer the question on how his friendship with Samvel Harutyunyan’s son influenced his decision of appointing his friend’s father: D. Ioannisyan”[[56]](#footnote-56)). “Panarmenian Media Group” CJSC as the rightful owner of “Tert.am” website was identified as the third party to the case.

The next court hearing is scheduled on October 4.

**On August 28,** journalist from media outlet “Factor.am” Shoghik Galstyan expressed concern related to NA Deputy Speaker Lena Nazaryan’s behavior. When the journalist approached the latter, she demanded to ask questions only with preliminary arrangement[[57]](#footnote-57).

**On August 28,** a preliminary court hearing on the case of “Armenian Progressive Youth” NGO against Konstantin Ter-Nakalyan, editor-in-chief of the website “BlogNews.am”, and “SHARK” LLC, founder of the “5th Channel” TV Company, was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan with the claims of refuting slanderous information, apologizing for insult, paying compensation for smearing dignity and business reputation.

The lawsuit was filed on May 6; it took proceedings on May 17. The cause of lawsuit was an announcement made by Konstantin Ter-Nakalyan, editor-in-chief of the website “BlogNews.am” during 5TV program “Dem Dimats” (“Face to Face”) that “Armenian Progressive Youth” NGO conducted LGBT propaganda in a school in Kotayk region[[58]](#footnote-58). The next day the NGO posted an announcement on its Facebook page for a “Claim of Refutation” addressed to Konstantin Ter-Nakalyan. On April 12 a video was posted in a Facebook page called “ADEKVAD”, under the heading “I apologize to all gay-lover and pro-Azerbaijani step-makers”[[59]](#footnote-59). Artur Danielyan, co-author of #PseudoNikol movement, and Konstantin Ter-Nakalyan posted material in the video of a so-called “refutation”, which actually contained hate speech and insulting remarks. Two more such “refutations” addressing Grigor Yeritsyan, head of the NGO, who is also a Yerevan Elders’ Council member from “My Step” faction followed.

The next court hearing is scheduled on November 8.

**On August 29,** President of the Constitutional Court Hrayr Tovmasyan treated Anush Muradyan, journalist from “H1”, very disrespectfully. In answer to the journalist’s question, “When will the opinion of the Venice Commission and ECHR concerning Robert Kocharyan’s case reach Armenia?” the President of the Constitutional Court said that he had not agreed to be interviewed. Then he added, “If we haven’t arranged an intervirew, why would you create an awkward situation? You are not an ordinary journalist; you are a journalist who feeds off of my taxes, so try to behave like a journalist from Public TV Channel”. According to CPFE, this behavior on behalf of the President of Constitutional Court, who also feeds off of taxes, was an open pressure against the journalist.

**On September 4,** the first court hearing on the case of Andrey Ghukasyan, governor of Lori region, against Karine Vanesyan, journalist from “MIG” TV Channel, was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Lori region.

It is worthwhile to remind that this lawsuit contains a claim demanding the journalist to apologize to the plaintiff on Facebook for Facebook posts containing insult. Material claim is not put forth. The journalist said that she did not personally insult the governor in any post; she just expressed her opinion about the governor’s activity on the social media. In his turn, the governor’s attorney Karen Tumanyan stated, that the journalist, talking about the governor on the social media, used words like “hobo”, “gobble”, etc.

The next court hearing is scheduled on October 3.

**On September 5** the first court hearing on the case of businessman Vahe Hakobyan against “Mirror” media club was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan.

It is worthwhile to remind that the lawsuit was filed on March 5, according to which the plaintiff claims to force the defendant to pay 3 million AMD in compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, as well as publish refutation. CPFE did not manage to clarify the cause of lawsuit. Moreover, the defendant was not even aware, that a court hearing was held.

The next court hearing is scheduled on November 18.

**On September 5** the former head of the State Revenue Committee filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against “Investigative Journalists” NGO with claims for compensation of damage caused to honor and dignity and public refutation of slanderous information. The cause of lawsuit was the article “Cash Receipt Printers Bought at a Higher Price by Government Decree. A Criminal Case was Initiated”[[60]](#footnote-60) published in “Hetq.am” on August 7.

On September 12 the application took proceedings.

**On September 6,** the first court hearing on the case of citizen Lilit Martirosyan against “Tesaket” LLC was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan.

It is worthwhile to remind that the lawsuit filed on May 16 demanded from the website “Irates.am” belonging to “Tesaket” LLC to publicly apologize to Lilit Martirosyan for insulting remarks and pay 1 000 000 AMD in compensation.

The cause of lawsuit was an article published on the website on April 9, under the heading “A Sodomite Already Makes an Open Public Address from NA Platform”[[61]](#footnote-61).

The next court hearing is scheduled on November 5.

**On September 10,** a regular court hearing on the case of citizens Susanna Minasyan and Arkadi Boyajyan against “ATV” LLC was held in the Court of General Jurisdication in Shriak region with a claim of confiscating 2 000 000 AMD in compensation for violating the right to family privacy. The cause of lawsuit was a regular issue of the “Half-Open Windows” talk show, published on the Internet on October 1, which refers to a dispute over a flat among neighbors[[62]](#footnote-62).

The court suspended the proceedings of the case before implementing a final act on another case between parties.

**On September 10,** a regular court hearing on the case of citizen Narine Abrahamyan against journalist Kristine Aghalaryan was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan, in the seat of Avan and Nor Nork administrative districts.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of lawsuit is the article “Meghri Medical Centre against SRC” published on the “Lurer.com” website on May 17, 2017, which presents the fact of Narine Abrahamyan being in the spotlight of scandals during her professional activities[[63]](#footnote-63). (Details can be found in CPFE 2017-2019 reports, see [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) website, “Reports” section).

The next court hearing on this case is scheduled on December 26.

**On September 10,** a regular court hearing on the case of citizens Koryun Atoyan, Paruyr Kalantaryan, Lyuba Mehrabyan and Mihrdat Harutyunyan against citizen Norik Sargsyan was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction. The *Aravot* daily newspaper LLC and the *Hraparak* daily newspaper LLC were identified as the third party to the case.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of lawsuit isNorik Sargsyan’s “open letter to the rector of Armenian State University of Economics Mr. K. Atoyan” published in the *Hraparak* daily newspaper on April 15, 2016 and posts under the heading “That’s Where the Shoe Pinches” published in the *Aravot* daily newspaper on July 15 (Details can be found in CPFE 2018 annual and 2019 quarterly reports, see [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) website, “Reports” section).

On September 25 the judgment on this case was delivered by which the proceedings on the case were terminated on behalf of claims of Koryun Atoyan, Paruyr Kalantaryanm Mihrdat Harutyunyan and “Armenian State University of Economics” SNCO, presenting an independent claim; termination was based on drop of lawsuit.Thus the claim against the *Hraparak* daily newspaper was annulled, too. But Lyuba Mehrabyan’s lawsuit was upheld and the *Aravot* daily newspaper was forced to publish refutation. Besides, the judgment ruled that 208 thousand AMD should be confiscated from the plaintiffs and the third party as state penalty.

**On September 10,** the judgment on the case of attorney Gevorg Mkrtchyan against “News.am” LLC, founder of the website “News.am” was implemented in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan. Thus, Gevorg Mkrtchyan’s lawsuit with a claim of refuting information considered as slander and compensating non-pecuniary damage was partially upheld. By the judgment, “News.am” is enforced to publish refutation in the “News.am” website about defamatory information concerning Gevorg Mkrtchyan, namely “he evidently gives false testimony”[[64]](#footnote-64) sentence in the article “A Joke in the Chamber of Advocates-2. Revenge Continues”, published at 18:57 on March 18m 2016. Besides, 50 000 AMD should be confiscated from “News.am” in favor of Gevorg Mkrtchyan in compensation for non-pecuniary damage and 5000 AMD as state penalty paid in advance.

There are 4 more legal cases with the same plaintiff against “News.am” LLC, containing the claims of refuting information considered as slander and compensating non-pecuniary damage.

In the monitoring period, a court hearing on the first one (Article ““Victory of Tomfoolery” Armen Soghomonyan, beaten by CA officials, has been summoned to interrogation as an accused”[[65]](#footnote-65) published on June 23, 2017 at 17:06) was held on August 21. The next court hearing is scheduled on December 4.

Court hearings on the second one (“If they think that Atanesyan and Soghomonyan will drop their claims, they are absolutely wrong. Lusine Sahakyan”,[[66]](#footnote-66) an article published at 18:31 on June 23, 2017) were held on July 15; the next one is scheduled on November 12.

Court hearings on the third one ( “Total Shame and Open Unlawfulness. Tigran Atanesyan was summoned to an interrogation as a suspect”, an article published at 15:36 on June 23, 2017[[67]](#footnote-67)) were held on July 8 and 17. The next is scheduled on October 21.

The lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction on the fourth one (a news piece published by the Investigative Committee that “Atanesyan and Soghomonyan were Attacked and 5 People on the Case were Accused” at 17:46m on June 23, 2017, at the end of which the editorial made references to older materials[[68]](#footnote-68)) was dismissed, and the plaintiff Gevorg Mkrtchyan applied to the Court of Appeal. (Details can be found in CPFE 2018 annual and 2019 quarterly reports, see [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) website, “Reports” section). His appeal took proceedings on June 28, and on August 22 it was dismissed, and the legal act of the first instance court remained in legal effect.

**On September 16,** Governor of RA Vayots Dzor region filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against attorney Artak Galstyan with a claim of public apology. “Noyan Tapan” media center was identified as the third party to the case.

The cause of the lawsuit is an opinion expressed during a press conference organized by “Noyan Tapan”, according to which unlawfulness continues in the region, and the governor is not taking any action. The application has not taken proceedings yet.

**On September 18,** a regular court hearing on the case of the Penitentiary Service of the RA Ministry of Justice against the *Zhamanak* daily newspaper was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan.

It is worthwhile to remind that the lawsuit was filed on January 11th with a claim of public refutation of information considered as slander. The cause of the lawsuit was the article under the heading “Neglected Situation: Criminal-Executive Institutions Earn Money for Keeping the Doors of Cells Open”[[69]](#footnote-69) published in the *Zhamanak* daily newspaper on December 12, 2018.

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled on October 29.

**On September 18,** deputy Mayor of Edjmiatsin Arsen Petrosyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against Astghik Sapeyan, editor of the *Zhamanak* daily newspaper, and Arman Babajanyan, founder and publisher of the newspaper and editor-in-chief of “Skizb Media Center” LLC, with claims of publicly refution of information considered defamatory and smearing honor and dignity, on grounds that it did not correspond to reality. During conversation with CPFE Arsen Petrosyan stated that the cause of the lawsuit was a post on garbage recycling, in which the author presented inaccurate information about him. On September 25 the lawsuit was returned because of deficiencies in the documents.

**On September 18,** Eduard Harutyunyan, former colonel of NSS Investigation filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against former NA deputy Taron Sahakyan (the third party is “Meltex” LLC, founder of the website “A1plus.am”) by claims of publicly apologizing for insulting, refuting information considered as slander and paying compensation. The cause of lawsuit was the video posted in “A1plus.am” on August 14, where Taron Sahakyan was speaking about former NSS official, particularly accusing him of “being connected with drug delivery”, “alienating strategic objects for pennies through nepotism” and “exporting cheap resources from Armenia and importing expensive ones”[[70]](#footnote-70).

On September 23 the lawsuit was handed over to the judge.

**On September 19,** a preliminary court hearing on the case of Alina Nikoghosyan, press secretary of Minister of Health, against the *Hraparak* daily newspaper LLC was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan.

It is worthwhile to remind that the lawsuit was filed on June 3 by claims of public apology and confiscation of 1 000 000 AMD in compensation. The cause of the lawsuit was the article “Ministry of Health is Withholding Events and Patronizing Lfik”[[71]](#footnote-71) published on the website “Hraparak.am” on May 9. According to the plaintiff, it contains insulting remarks about him. The lawsuit took proceedings on June 13.

The next court hearing is scheduled on November 11.

**On September 20,** a regular court hearing on the case of citizen Azat Tovmasyan against “ATV” TV Company and citizen Sirvard Avoyan was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan with claims of identifying the fact of violating personal and family privacy rights and paying 2 000 000 AMD in compensation.

It is worthwhile to remind that the cause of the lawsuit is accusation of Azat Tovmasyan during the talk show “Half-Open Windows” on July 30, 2018. Sirvard Avoyan accuses Azat Tovmasyan, her daughter’s father, of kidnapping their daughter[[72]](#footnote-72).

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled on December 6.

**On September 23,** the first court hearing on the case of Nver Mnatsakanyan, journalist from “1in.am” website and a TV host, against “Mirror” club and Garnik Isagulyan was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction, Ararat and Vayots Dzor seat, with claims of public apology and publication of the court judgment in media outlets.

The cause of lawsuit is a video under the heading “Hey, Nver, aren’t you ashamed? Whoever pays you, you will serve them. Garnik Isagulyan”published on the “Hayeli.am” website on April 14, where Garnik Isagulyan voiced his judgments on a number of events taking place in Armenia, including references to Nver Mnatsakanyan’s activity[[73]](#footnote-73).

The next court hearing is scheduled on December 2.

**On September 24,** a court hearing on the case of Lara Aharonyan, head of “Women’s Resource Center” NGO, against “Mirror” club and “Live News Media” LLC was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan with a claim of compensating damage caused to honor and dignity by paying 2 000 000 AMD.

The cause of lawsuit was a video under the heading “Lara Aharonyan, Member of the Board of Trustees of Civil Contract, is Defiling Children. Hayk Ayvazyan” published on April 24, where one of the guests of “Mirror” club Hayk Ayvazyan expressed judgments about Aharonyan’s activity during a press conference. The video was published in “Hayeli.am” and “Livenews.am” media outlets. Particularly, according to the plaintiff, Hayk Ayvazyan’s opinion that Lara Aharonyan also does pedophilia propaganda, among children, too, as expressed in the video, is misinformation and slander and smears Lara Aharonyan’s honor and dignity.

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled on November 4.

**On September 24,** head of Yerevan Zoo Ruben Khachatryan filed a lawsuit against journalist Narine Kirakosyan in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan. The plaintiff claims refutation of information considered as slander and monetary compensation of non-pecuniary damage. The cause of lawsuit was journalist’s Facebook post made on August 25, where she announced that Ruben Khachatryan, proclaiming himself an absolute ruler, caused a huge damage to the wildlife. Besides, she mentioned that Khachatryan gave away rare animals that were considered our country’s wealth and state property to other countries, and secretly took a pair of breeding bearded vultures out of the zoo and transferred to a so-called animal shelter under his own foundation, which is located in the area of Urtsadzor community in Ararat region.

**On September 24** the first court hearing on the case of Mesrop Papikyan, former advisor to the RA Prime Minister, against Boris Tamoyan, editor of the “Politik.am” website was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction, Ararat and Vayots Dzor seat, with claims of compensation for damage caused to honor and dignity and public refutation of information considered as slander.

It is worthwhile to remind that the lawsuit was filed on January 24, and the cause is an article under the heading “Criminal Persona “Tuy” gave 10 000 USD to Pashinyan’s advisor”[[74]](#footnote-74) published on the website on January 17.

Delivery of the Court Act is scheduled on October 14.

**On September 25** the first court hearing on the case of Tehmine Yenokyan, correspondent at media outlet “Lragir.am”, against Hovsep Asoyan, employee at “Lidian Armenia” company was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan with claims of refutation of information considered as slander and provision of 1 000 000 AMD in compensation.

It is worthwhile to remind that on September 11, 2018, Tehimne Yenokyan published a Facebook post stating that staff members of “Lidian Armneia” cut her interview over the phone from the news broadcast by her colleagues, published it and wrote insulting remarks about her[[75]](#footnote-75). An investigation on this case was conducted from September 2018 to March 2019: Investigative Committee branch in Eghegnadzor and the Police Department in Jermuk interrogated the journalist’s neighbors, collected confessions testifying that Anna Nersisyan took photos of the journalist’s house and collected personal data. On February 25 RA Investigative Committee terminated the criminal case, initiated in relation to a journalist’s persecution, collection and dissemation of privacy information; termination was based on the fact that collected and published data concerned Tehimine Yenokyan’s public activities, and were not data about her private life. The journalist appealed this judgment in the Prosecutor’s Office in the established manner and applied to court on April 29.

The next court hearing is scheduled on November 13.

**On September 25** a regular court hearing on the case of “Lidian Armenia” company against journalist Tehmine Yenokyan was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction, seat in Ararat and Vayots Dzor regions.

The cause of lawsuit is Tehimne Yenokyan’s Facebook live form Mineral water drinking parlor made on August 12, 2018. According the the plaintiff, the journalist’s pubic statement contained expressions smearing the business reputation of the company, hence the plaintiff claimed 1 000 000 drams in compensation and refutation of information considered as slander in the same location through live streaming on Facebook.

The next court hearing is scheduled on December 24.

**On September 27** Inga Sarafyan, representative of “Lidian Armenia” CJSC, filed a lawsuit against economic commentator Atom Margaryan and the *Lragir* online newspaper with claims of compensation for expressions smearing business reputation. The cause of lawsuit is an interview with Atom Margaryan under the heading “In Case of Impartial Investigation “Lidian Armenia” will Face Problems”[[76]](#footnote-76) published on the “Lragir.am” website on September 15.

On October 8 the lawsuit was returned because of several ambiguous formulations, including the status the *Lragir* online newspaper bore when involved as defendant in the lawsuit by the plaintiff.

**On September 29** the first court hearing on the case of citizen Hayk Mkrtchyan against “Armnews TV Company” CJSC was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan.

It is worthwhile to remind the cause of the lawsuit, filed on May 13: it was a news piece published in the media outlet about the fact that Hayk Mkrtchyan, 32-year-old resident of Nor Nork administrative district in Yerevan, paid with counterfeit money. The plaintiff considers this slander and claims refutation.

The next court hearing is scheduled on October 29.

**On September 30** the Court of Appeal upheld the appeal of the founder of “Tsayg” TV Company and eponymous LLC against the judgment implemented by the Court of General Jurisdiction in Shirak region on the case of “Tsayg” TV Company against “Shant” TV Company. State Committee on Television and Radio Broadcasting was identified as third party to this case.

It is worthwhile to remind that on December 6, 2018, “Tsayg” LLC filed a lawsuit , which according to the plaintiff was caused by the implementation of non-licensed activity in Gyumri by “Shant” TV Company with nationwide coverage, particularly boradcasting local advertisements different from the TV production by the Yerevan-based headquarters, ordered footage and other programs. The claim made by “Tsayg” TV Company was meant for “Shant” TV Company to stop its activities that are otherwise characteristic of a regional broadcasting company in Gyumri. By the judgment made on May 10 the proceedings on the civil case were terminated based on not being subject to court investigation. The plaintiff party applied to the Court of Appeal on June 10.

According to the Court of Appeal, the plaintiff company’s right to freedom in disseminating information and ideas as a broadcaster is violated, as unequal and unfair competitive conditions cause financial damage to the company, which directly affects the company’s activities. As a legal substantiation, a reference is made to Articles 10, 42 and 59 of the RA Constitution, Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and Article 1 of the first protocol of the Convention, etc. The Court of Appeal ruled to send the case to the same court for a new investigation in full scope.

**On September 30** in reply to the CPFE inquiry, the Investigative Committee stated that the conclusion of computer-technical expertise on the confiscation of technical equipment of “Yerevan.today” media outlet scheduled on September 17, 2018, revealed no data that would impose interest for the investigation.

It is worthwhile to remind that on September 17, 2018, officers of the 6th department of RA Police and the Special Investigative Service conducted a search in the editorial office of “Yerevan.today” media outlet. Eavesdropping devices were searched for, computers were also checked to find out how the website obtained and published the YouTube link to the covert footage of NSS head Artur Vanetsyan and SIS head Sasun Khachatryan’s phone call 2 days before its leak on the Internet[[77]](#footnote-77). (Details can be found in CPFE 2018 annual and 2019 quarterly reports, [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) website, “Reports” section).

The results of the examination testify that the harsh methods of collecting data from the editorial office, particularly the search, confiscation of computer hardware and holding it for months, were groundless and are unequivocally assessed as pressure on the media outlet.

**On September 30** “Vega World” LLC filed a lawsuit against “Skizb Media Center” LLC, founder of the *Zhamanak* newspaper with a claim of publicly refuting information considered as slander without monetary compensation. The cause of the lawsuit is the article “Planned. Before the Fire SRC was Going to Conduct Check up in “Vega””[[78]](#footnote-78) published in the newspaper on August 30. The application has not taken proceedings yet.

***3. Violations of the Right to Receive and Disseminate Information***

*During the third quarter of 2019 CPFE recorded 11 cases of violating the right to receive and disseminate information. Only on 2 of those cases a lawsuit was filed to the court, and on one case an application to Personal Data Protection Agency was filed with the aim of checking grounds for dismissal.*

*As compared to the same time last year, the number of cases of violating the right to receive and spread information decreased by 11 cases, and as compared to the previous three months, it decreased by 4.*

*Below we are presenting the recorded facts in the given timeframe, as well as new developments of the previously registered in chronological order.*

**On July 2,** Freedom of Information Center applied to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Finance asking to give information about what electronic platforms are used by government departments for providing information. In both cases the answer was delayed.

**On July 8,** the“Union of Informed Citizens” NGO filed a lawsuit to the RA Administrative Court against the head of NSS Artur Vanetsyan with a claim of information provision. Particularly, Daniel Ioannisyan, project coordinator at the NGO, applied to NSS with letter N H-1717 on June 25, 2019, asking to provide the departmental list of information subject to eavesdropping (or a copy of the Minister’s relevant order and the attached list), except for those part of the list, which could be a state or service secret. Not getting an answer, the NGO applied to the court.

On July 16, the lawsuit was returned for corrections. After corrections the application was filed again on August 19 overdue, thus a motion to recover the missed period was attached. On August 23 the court ruled to dismiss both the motion and the lawsuit. The NGO is going to file a new lawsuit.

**On July 8,** “Investigative Journalists” NGO filed a lawsuit to the Administrative Court against “A. I. Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory (Yerevan Physics Institute)” foundation with the claim of providing copies of all decisions taken by the board of trustees in 2011-2019.

It is worthwhile to remind that on June 17 “Investigative Journalists” NGO applied to Nerses Yeritsyan, head of the board of trustees of the foundation asking to provide decisions taken by the board in 2011-2019. Within a 3-day paerid Nerses Yeritsyan stated that the decisions of the board were corporate documents, which contained information not subject to publication. The media outlet applied to Nerses Yeritsyan again proposing to him to black out the parts in the decisions containing secrets and provide the rest. Nerses Yeritsyan informed that in order to meet the request they would have to work overtime, which would cost 550 000 AMD.

On July 15 the case was readdressed to the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan, based on the fact that the dispute between the parties was based on the grounds of receipt of information about the activities of the foundation as a legal entity, which was not related to public law and is not subject to the RA Administrative Court. On August 7 the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan filed the case.

**On July 17,** the first court hearing on the case of “Investigative Journalists” NGO against the head of SRC Davit Ananyan was held in the RA Administrative Court with the claim of information provision.

It is worthwhile to remind that the NGO claimed the copies of all the contracts signed with Taiwanese company “Mitac Information Technology” and Chinese company “Pax Technology”, and if the contracts contained commercial secrets, the lines not subject to publishing could be blackened out. Besides, information on how SRC decided to cooperate with “Mitac Information Technology” and Chinese company “Pax Technology” was requested, whether a tender had been announced and how the competitiveness of price proposition was determined.

Although SRC asked the Administrative Court to dismiss the application, as measures were being taken to decrypt secret decrees of the Government, the application took proceedings on April 23.

On August 6 in a closed-door hearing the court ruled to partially uphold the application of “Investigative Journalists”, namely to enforce SRC to provide Diana Ghazaryan, journalist from “Investigative Journalists” NGO, with copies of all the contracts, signed with Taiwanese and Chinese companies, applied for on April 3, 2019, blackening out the points containing secrets, as well as with information if the defendant had got in touch with the companies by means of its Armenian representatives, and if so, reveal their identity.

On September 12 “Investigative Journalists” NGO, not satisfied with this judgment applied to the Administrative Court of Appeal. This court received the appeal on September 17.

**On August 5,** Shushanik Doydoyan, head of **“**Freedom of Information Center” NGO, applied to Personal Data Protection Agency asking to check if providing the staff list of the department of Forensic Medical Examination in Shriak region and the name list of the staff members by “Scientific-Practical Center of Forensic Medicine” SNCO based on a letter was against the provisions of the RA law on “Protection of Personal Data”.

According to the agency, publishing the abovementioned data by the SNCO in conformity with Article 7, Part 3, Clause 4 of the RA Law on “Freedom of Information” or providing information based on the application did not contradict the law on “Protection of Personal Data”. Therefore, the refusal of the SNCO to provide **“**Freedom of Information Center” with information was identified as groundless.

**On August 6,** Gevorg Tosunyan, journalist from “Civilnet.am” media outlet, reported that the NSS urges to send inquiries only by regular post or through their website. Only after a Facebook alert, the governmental agency approved the journalist’s inquiry sent by email.

**On August, 21** Petros Ghazaryan, head of “News” at Public TV, applied to Edgar Ghazaryan, head of staff at the RA Constitutional Court, with an inquiry regarding questions about an announcement posted on the website of the Constitutional Court, particularly which authorities at the Constitutional Court drafted the English versions of the applications, addressed to ECHR and Venice Commission, namely, how many members of the Constitutional Court had participated in taking that decision. First, the Constitutional Court asked for the 30-day period to answer the inquiry in conformity with the law, then it was stated that the inquiry contradicted the law on the protection of personal data, thus it could not be provided. However, the inquiry concerns the public activity of the given individuals, and not their personal life, and thus it could not qualify as protected personal data. The Public TV Company is going to apply to the Personal Data Protection Agency on this matter.

**On September 9,** Hayk Sahakyan, journalist from “Yerkir Media” TV Company, applied to Eduard Aghajanyan, head of staff at the RA Government, with an inquiry regarding the procedural aspects of upcoming events in Gyumri on September 21. Gegham Manukyan, head of news and socio-political programs at the TV Company, shared a Facebook post with this inquiry. Particularly, the journalist inquired whether a tender was announced for the organization of the event, who won the tender, etc. The staff had not answered these questions after 5 days and informed, that the questions would be answered within 30 days. “September 21 will definitely have passed, maybe hoping that we will no longer want to get an answer. But we will wait patiently to the end of 30-day term”, Gegham Manukyan wrote.

**On September 17,** Gegham Manukyan, head of news and socio-political programs at “Yerkir Media” TV Company, reported in a Facebook post about approaches to “The RA Freedom of Information” by the staff of the RA National Assembly[[79]](#footnote-79). He particularly stated that in response to a request for an interview, he was offered to send the questions in written form, and send in a written request for an interview after the NA would have received the question in writing.

**On September 17,** Freedom of Information Center applied to the National Assembly asking to inform who the official responsible for freedom of information in the National Assembly was, whether the information about this person was posted on the NA website, as well as to provide a copy of the legal act of the given official’s appointment. The National Assembly gave an incomplete answer, not touching upon all the questions.

**On September 23,** Freedom of Information Center applied to the National Assembly, asking to clarify why electronic signature is required when sending electronic letters addressed to the NA staff, whereas all electronic requests sent by e-request platform of the Government should be considered official. It turns out that the NA is bringing about a legal practice that differs from and even contradicts that of the RA Government. The NA gave an incomplete answer.

**On September 24,** the first court hearing on the case of Ani Mkrtchyan, journalist from the website “Asparez.am”, against Shoghik Aleksanyan, principal at “Secondary School N 18 in Gymri” SNCO, was held in the Gyumri seat of the Court of General Jurisdiction in Shirak region with a claim of answering the inquiry[[80]](#footnote-80). The journalist demanded the provision of the name list of the staff.

The next court hearing is scheduled October 24.

***OTHER EVENTS CONCERNING THE ACTIVITIES OF MASS MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS***

**On July 16,** detention placed on Gayane Manukyan, journalist from the media outlet *Armenian Time/Hzham.am*, accused of extortion, was replaced by bail.

It is worthwhile to remind that on June 19 the RA Investigative Committee spread notifications that the journalist from the *Armenian* *Time* was arrested by the suspicion of extortion in big sizes[[81]](#footnote-81). (Details can be found in CPFE 2019 quarterly reports, see [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) website, “Reports” section).

“Ghazaryan and Partners” law office stated that after paying 2 000 000 AMD and presenting evidence about it to the body taking proceedings, Gayane Manukyan would take part in the preliminary investigation of the case already in freedom.

**On August 28,** “News.am” LLC, founder of the media outlet “News.am”, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against political scientist Styopa Safaryan with a claim of compensating damage caused to business reputation. The cause of lawsuit was a Facebook post about the fact that the website got an order from Robert Kocharyan’s office in order to publish some articles about judges[[82]](#footnote-82). On September 5 the application was returned in order to abolish the violations it contained. On September 30 the application was filed again.

**On September 16,** the first court hearing on the case of Hayk Babukhanyan, founder of the newspaper *Iravunq* and former MP, against Larisa Minasyan, chief executive of the “Open Society Foundations-Armenia” organization, was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan.

It is worthwhile to remind that the lawsuit was filed on April 4 a the claim of refutation of information considered as slander, and the cause was an idea expressed by Larisa Minasyan, that Hayk Babukhanyan, too, received a grant from their foundation[[83]](#footnote-83).

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled on October 14.

**On September 26** a regular court hearing on the case of Samvel Aleksanyan, editor of the *Syunyats Yerkir* newspaper, against citizen Manya Tsatryan was held in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Syunik region (Meghri department). The plaintiff claims to refute defamatory information about him and compensate damage caused to honor, dignity and business reputation.

It is worthwhile to remind that on January 31 and February 1, 2018, three criminal cases were initiated against Samvel Aleksanyan, editor of the *Syunyats Yerkir* newspaper in the Kapan department of the RA Police. On February 5 the Investigative Committee ruled to combine 3 criminal cases and investigate them in one proceeding. (Details can be found in CPFE 2018-2019 annual and quarterly reports see [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) website, “Reports” section).

During the last court hearing the court ruled to schedule the civil case for trial. The next court hearing is scheduled on December 12.

By the way, in 2017 Vahe Hakobyan, governor of Syunik region, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Syunik region against “Syunyats Ashkharh” LLC, founder of the *Syunyats Yerkir* newspaper with claims of refutation and compensation of damage caused to honor and dignity. On August 3, 2018, already former governor of Syunik region, Vahe Hakobyan filed a new lawsuit with the same dispute in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan against Samvel Aleksanyan and “Noyan Tapan” LLC Compnay. (Details can be found in the CPFE 2017-2019 reports of CPFE, see [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am) website, “Reports” section).

By the judgment implemented on September 6, 2019 the court partially upheld Vahe Hakobyan’s lawsuit and enforced Samvel Aleksanyan and “Noyan Tapan” LLC Compnay to publish refutation on a number of announcements about Vahe Hakobyan contained in the video published on the same website at 19:17 on June 14, 2018, in the [www.noyan-tapan.am](http://www.noyan-tapan.am) media outlet within 5 working days after the judgment came into effect. Besides, it was ruled to confiscate 300 000 AMD from Samvel Aleksanyan in favor of Vahe Hakobyan in compensation for non-pecuniary damage[[84]](#footnote-84).

**\*\*\***

***This report was made within the scope of the project of Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression implemented with the support from National Endowment for Democracy (NED, USA). Opinions and assessments contained in the report belong to CPFE and might not be consistent with the opinions and dispositions of the NED.***

1. [**https://khosq.am/2019/07/01/%d5%b0%d5%a1%d5%b5%d5%bf%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%a9%d5%b5%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%b6-41/**](https://khosq.am/2019/07/01/%d5%b0%d5%a1%d5%b5%d5%bf%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%a9%d5%b5%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%b6-41/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [**http://www.foi.am/hy/news/item/1798/**](http://www.foi.am/hy/news/item/1798/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [**https://khosq.am/2019/07/01/%d5%b0%d5%a1%d5%b5%d5%bf%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%a9%d5%b5%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%b6-41/**](https://khosq.am/2019/07/01/%d5%b0%d5%a1%d5%b5%d5%bf%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%a9%d5%b5%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%b6-41/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [**https://factor.am/164196.html**](https://factor.am/164196.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [**https://www.aravot.am/2019/08/10/1059687/**](https://www.aravot.am/2019/08/10/1059687/)  [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [**http://www.foi.am/hy/news/item/1798/**](http://www.foi.am/hy/news/item/1798/) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fz7kW99aUj0**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fz7kW99aUj0) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [**https://www.aravot.am/2018/04/22/951984/**](https://www.aravot.am/2018/04/22/951984/) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [**https://www.aravot.am/2018/04/22/951984/**](https://www.aravot.am/2018/04/22/951984/) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. [**http://www.aravot.am/2018/04/20/951115/**](http://www.aravot.am/2018/04/20/951115/) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. [**https://www.azatutyun.am/a/28766203.html**](https://www.azatutyun.am/a/28766203.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. [**http://hetq.am/arm/news/85516/azh-yntrutyunneri-zhamanak-lragroxneri-ashkhatanqy-khochyndotelu-gortsov-tarec-knoj-nkatmamb-hetakhuzum-haytararvec.html**](http://hetq.am/arm/news/85516/azh-yntrutyunneri-zhamanak-lragroxneri-ashkhatanqy-khochyndotelu-gortsov-tarec-knoj-nkatmamb-hetakhuzum-haytararvec.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHixtooHgj0&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1tDMPW7ihCKMdeDFQmHY6CHSFq0YMQFKuH7DY2UtD9BFzs6OJuJ\_XBtys**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHixtooHgj0&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1tDMPW7ihCKMdeDFQmHY6CHSFq0YMQFKuH7DY2UtD9BFzs6OJuJ_XBtys) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. [**https://hraparak.am/post/2094192614**](https://hraparak.am/post/2094192614) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. [**https://www.1in.am/2503780.html**](https://www.1in.am/2503780.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. [**https://www.facebook.com/narek.malyan/videos/2434786706549546/**](https://www.facebook.com/narek.malyan/videos/2434786706549546/) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. [**https://hraparak.am/post/213409**](https://hraparak.am/post/213409) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. [**https://www.1in.am/2567780.html**](https://www.1in.am/2567780.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. [**http://www.asparez.am/gyumri-18-dproc-hy/?fbclid=IwAR0FFScVbHF2qHgC2GHGfCcmZjfscMp6RdNgz-eqifPcedKnwUKaj6eDgWI#.XScYVFQzaUl**](http://www.asparez.am/gyumri-18-dproc-hy/?fbclid=IwAR0FFScVbHF2qHgC2GHGfCcmZjfscMp6RdNgz-eqifPcedKnwUKaj6eDgWI#.XScYVFQzaUl) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. [**https://youtu.be/JCzYyhu2sGc**](https://youtu.be/JCzYyhu2sGc) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. [**https://youtu.be/AMQXDYmyGNI**](https://youtu.be/AMQXDYmyGNI) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. [**https://www.1in.am/2433433.html**](https://www.1in.am/2433433.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. [**http://www.irates.am/hy/1531782064**](http://www.irates.am/hy/1531782064) [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. [**https://www.7or.am/am/news/view/160941/**](https://www.7or.am/am/news/view/160941/) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. [**https://mamul.am/am/news/130071/**](https://mamul.am/am/news/130071/) [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. [**https://mamul.am/am/news/129899/**](https://mamul.am/am/news/129899/) [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. [**https://armlur.am/889450/**](https://armlur.am/889450/) [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. [**http://www.1in.am/2366928.html**](http://www.1in.am/2366928.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. [**https://www.1in.am/2377848.html**](https://www.1in.am/2377848.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. [**https://www.1in.am/2378232.html**](https://www.1in.am/2378232.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. [**https://www.1in.am/2381003.html**](https://www.1in.am/2381003.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. [**https://hraparak.am/post/1865133956?fbclid=IwAR1PTyIDnntLa4ePdT\_tM9BW-BygrkP9fcYXrN2WFc6t9B\_GxumGmNBfF\_Y**](https://hraparak.am/post/1865133956?fbclid=IwAR1PTyIDnntLa4ePdT_tM9BW-BygrkP9fcYXrN2WFc6t9B_GxumGmNBfF_Y) [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. [**https://hraparak.am/post/5bbb5b8bef999406dd155359?fbclid=IwAR2405YtdTIDGbcwT5b82eRqbvO0AIS6mT68qE3515BeFupiKGA0\_x1HvKM**](https://hraparak.am/post/5bbb5b8bef999406dd155359?fbclid=IwAR2405YtdTIDGbcwT5b82eRqbvO0AIS6mT68qE3515BeFupiKGA0_x1HvKM) [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. [**https://hraparak.am/post/5bc9ad3f5b5dd506a29bdd24?fbclid=IwAR0dfC9\_0BblWVqLRWM\_8jyx2dh182I83wJaNn7oxY3EE7hZoXi689stxNs**](https://hraparak.am/post/5bc9ad3f5b5dd506a29bdd24?fbclid=IwAR0dfC9_0BblWVqLRWM_8jyx2dh182I83wJaNn7oxY3EE7hZoXi689stxNs) [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. [**https://armtimes.com/hy/article/152069?fbclid=IwAR0Y2kd\_\_IF2aEpb36ajp2rTir0wTtrwL50NfjnbzIpxxnDQaWDJwkRDS7k**](https://armtimes.com/hy/article/152069?fbclid=IwAR0Y2kd__IF2aEpb36ajp2rTir0wTtrwL50NfjnbzIpxxnDQaWDJwkRDS7k) [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. [**https://armtimes.com/hy/article/160379**](https://armtimes.com/hy/article/160379) [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0U6iBEDbIWw**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0U6iBEDbIWw) [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. [**https://youtu.be/Tit\_LDYzOl0**](https://youtu.be/Tit_LDYzOl0) [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. [**https://shamshyan.com/hy/article/2019/03/13/1119637/#**](https://shamshyan.com/hy/article/2019/03/13/1119637/) [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. [**https://armday.am/post/89590/-asfaltin-prvelo-ts-minche-gisherajin-khrakhchanqner-inch-e-katarvo-m-la-skalajits-ners?fbclid=IwAR3g3y5BEyMat2eMAxLNKI67QauabmVNxJfoji7Ngfqq1Mj17uo1Fv6b0pw**](https://armday.am/post/89590/-asfaltin-prvelo-ts-minche-gisherajin-khrakhchanqner-inch-e-katarvo-m-la-skalajits-ners?fbclid=IwAR3g3y5BEyMat2eMAxLNKI67QauabmVNxJfoji7Ngfqq1Mj17uo1Fv6b0pw) [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. [**https://www.1in.am/2589936.html**](https://www.1in.am/2589936.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. [**http://armtimes.com/hy/article/135742**](http://armtimes.com/hy/article/135742) [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. [**http://hzham.am/articles/1633534814045147.html**](http://hzham.am/articles/1633534814045147.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. [**http://top-news.am/?p=50813&l=am**](http://top-news.am/?p=50813&l=am) [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. [**https://armlur.am/915337/**](https://armlur.am/915337/) [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. [**https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29048362.html**](https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29048362.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. [**https://www.tert.am/am/news/2019/07/16/vahe-parazyan/3050642?fbclid=IwAR0ba7xITNht0RCar7sYNqRU7ETgWWZfBTXrvboonHl1xzCyRhmm1nAn9zs**](https://www.tert.am/am/news/2019/07/16/vahe-parazyan/3050642?fbclid=IwAR0ba7xITNht0RCar7sYNqRU7ETgWWZfBTXrvboonHl1xzCyRhmm1nAn9zs) [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. [**https://orer.am/?p=383449&l=am&fbclid=IwAR03BXpYXoP5LCUDlmplA6EoIcIHYJjGDL9LMAoJmRP8EvJVGT5A\_cyTThs**](https://orer.am/?p=383449&l=am&fbclid=IwAR03BXpYXoP5LCUDlmplA6EoIcIHYJjGDL9LMAoJmRP8EvJVGT5A_cyTThs) [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. [**https://orer.am/?p=388176&l=am**](https://orer.am/?p=388176&l=am) [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. [**http://www.slaq.am/arm/news/1326539/**](http://www.slaq.am/arm/news/1326539/) [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. [**https://armtimes.com/hy/article/152338?fbclid=IwAR3uIWdLvigWyHQBcoqz1WlPkfDomVAKVvavD7waBQKz1yM\_6\_LEq32DSA**](https://armtimes.com/hy/article/152338?fbclid=IwAR3uIWdLvigWyHQBcoqz1WlPkfDomVAKVvavD7waBQKz1yM_6_LEq32DSA) [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. [**http://www.aravot.am/2018/05/07/955311/**](http://www.aravot.am/2018/05/07/955311/) [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. [**https://armlur.am/922256/**](https://armlur.am/922256/) [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. [**https://armlur.am/922256/**](https://armlur.am/922256/) [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. [**https://web.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10215471419755711&set=a.1828379706309.196864.1144813885&type=3&theater**](https://web.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10215471419755711&set=a.1828379706309.196864.1144813885&type=3&theater) [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. [**http://www.tert.am/am/news/2018/06/13/Daniel-Ioanisyan/2712532**](http://www.tert.am/am/news/2018/06/13/Daniel-Ioanisyan/2712532) [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMu6BQr\_vfM&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1pgXdAy2a4ETlLGtgJIv0bxUdxicpuA2aOKTTLaKqDPUpuHUk\_HlGd6-0&app=desktop**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMu6BQr_vfM&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1pgXdAy2a4ETlLGtgJIv0bxUdxicpuA2aOKTTLaKqDPUpuHUk_HlGd6-0&app=desktop) [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. [**https://youtu.be/5HI1iKl6ux4**](https://youtu.be/5HI1iKl6ux4) [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. [**https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=798144927215594**](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=798144927215594) [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. [**https://hetq.am/hy/article/106239**](https://hetq.am/hy/article/106239) [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. [**http://www.irates.am/hy/1554757966**](http://www.irates.am/hy/1554757966) [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. [**https://youtu.be/htHpdt35oT0**](https://youtu.be/htHpdt35oT0) [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. [**https://lurer.com/?p=255408&l=am**](https://lurer.com/?p=255408&l=am) [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. [**https://news.am/arm/news/317604.html**](https://news.am/arm/news/317604.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. [**https://news.am/arm/news/396878.html**](https://news.am/arm/news/396878.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. [**https://news.am/arm/news/396896.html**](https://news.am/arm/news/396896.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. [**https://news.am/arm/news/396861.html**](https://news.am/arm/news/396861.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. [**https://news.am/arm/news/397244.html**](https://news.am/arm/news/397244.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. [**https://www.1in.am/2475932.html**](https://www.1in.am/2475932.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. [**https://a1plus.am/hy/article/346145**](https://a1plus.am/hy/article/346145) [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. [**https://hraparak.am/post/1270717699**](https://hraparak.am/post/1270717699) [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mznz1XD6KEw**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mznz1XD6KEw) [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. [**https://hayeli.am/?p=130607&l=am%2F&fb\_comment\_id=2275903112504681\_2276035325824793**](https://hayeli.am/?p=130607&l=am%2F&fb_comment_id=2275903112504681_2276035325824793) [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. [**http://politik.am/%D6%84%D6%80%D5%A5%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6-%D5%B0%D5%A5%D5%B2%D5%AB%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9%D5%B5%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6-%D5%BF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B5%D5%A8-10-%D5%B0%D5%A1%D5%A6%D5%A1/**](http://politik.am/%D6%84%D6%80%D5%A5%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6-%D5%B0%D5%A5%D5%B2%D5%AB%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9%D5%B5%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6-%D5%BF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B5%D5%A8-10-%D5%B0%D5%A1%D5%A6%D5%A1/) [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. [**https://www.facebook.com/tehmine.yenoqyan/posts/1897779590268586?\_\_xts\_\_[0]=68.ARAz3VISA9F-cl2LvF5W0up00fdh7FXPaV134HIz6i\_SGZ7qXmcXEHLUd1HZn-H7rq-yaC-x9gRgDqkN6XoZgpJKmsgc94aI3Z0F6ZC4pv8RaArEEV2jvG2tH6jBFozkopQl370tuCwHPqYIvUvps\_e76B6MCvJ7tHxm3AEgsllfKsQZJ**](https://www.facebook.com/tehmine.yenoqyan/posts/1897779590268586?__xts__%5b0%5d=68.ARAz3VISA9F-cl2LvF5W0up00fdh7FXPaV134HIz6i_SGZ7qXmcXEHLUd1HZn-H7rq-yaC-x9gRgDqkN6XoZgpJKmsgc94aI3Z0F6ZC4pv8RaArEEV2jvG2tH6jBFozkopQl370tuCwHPqYIvUvps_e76B6MCvJ7tHxm3AEgsllfKsQZJ) [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. [**https://www.lragir.am/2019/09/15/475661/**](https://www.lragir.am/2019/09/15/475661/) **October 8 the lawsuit was returned**  [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. [**http://investigative.am/news/view/xuzarkutyun-gaxtnalsum.html**](http://investigative.am/news/view/xuzarkutyun-gaxtnalsum.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. [**https://www.1in.am/2616582.html**](https://www.1in.am/2616582.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. [**https://www.facebook.com/gegham.manukyan.16/posts/10217287735517741**](https://www.facebook.com/gegham.manukyan.16/posts/10217287735517741) [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. [**http://www.asparez.am/18-41-7-dproc-hy/?fbclid=IwAR16jVSOoxRQgA7y5VOClLAp45JLHUecixB\_2hIBsWw3X1LIr2UgYQY5Ljw#.XScdJVQzaUl**](http://www.asparez.am/18-41-7-dproc-hy/?fbclid=IwAR16jVSOoxRQgA7y5VOClLAp45JLHUecixB_2hIBsWw3X1LIr2UgYQY5Ljw#.XScdJVQzaUl) [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. [**http://www.investigative.am/news/view/lragrox-shortum.html**](http://www.investigative.am/news/view/lragrox-shortum.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. [**https://www.armdaily.am/?p=61205&l=am**](https://www.armdaily.am/?p=61205&l=am) [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. [**https://www.panorama.am/am/news/2019/03/05/%D4%BC%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%AB%D5%BD%D5%A1-%D5%84%D5%AB%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%BD%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%B6/2081488**](https://www.panorama.am/am/news/2019/03/05/%D4%BC%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%AB%D5%BD%D5%A1-%D5%84%D5%AB%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%BD%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%B6/2081488) [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. [**http://www.noyan-tapan.am/am/news/255438**](http://www.noyan-tapan.am/am/news/255438) [↑](#footnote-ref-84)