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COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

***ON SITUATION WITH FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND VIOLATIONS OF JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA RIGHTS IN ARMENIA***

**2021 second quarterly (April-June) report by the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression**

*The Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression regularly submits to the public its reports on the working environment and issues of Armenian media and its personnel, on the status of the freedom of expression and the violations of the rights of media outlets and those of journalists. This report reflects the data from the second quarter of 2021.*

*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 media personnel,*

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

*- materials from court cases with media involvement,*

*- materials disseminated by the partner journalist organization,*

*- publications by the media.*

***BRIEF SUMMARY***

 The second quarter of 2021 was a period of snap parliamentary elections in Armenia. This crucial political process was brought forward as a result of the heavy defeat of Armenia in the 44-day Artsakh war, and the deep socio-political crisis in the country afterwards. Both the extreme post-war tensions and the hot pre-election struggle were serious challenges for the media. The latter had to operate in extremely difficult conditions.

 Most often, the work of journalists and cameramen was hindered while covering mass events. In total, during the quarter, 14 cases of violations of their rights were observed during rallies, marches, protests and pre-election meetings: physical violence, harassment and threats, various manifestations of intolerance and ill-treatment.

Attacks and pressure, as a rule, were targeted. Amid the political polarization of the vast majority of the media, the presence of a media worker adhering to one camp in the event of the opposing camp was already creating tensions, and contacts were often escalated into heated arguments and conflicts. Moreover, both the pro-government and opposition figures and their supporters, as well as journalists serving specific political interests, were seen in the role of provocateurs.

The rhetoric of election campaign, filled with obscene language, hate speech and insults, was in many cases almost invariably published in the media. Even journalists often used the vocabulary and style of their political sponsors, including on social networks. These relations, which began long before the election, resulted in the sharp increase in lawsuits against the media and their personnel: 23 such cases were accepted for proceedings in April-June, which is almost twice as many as in the first quarter of the year.

In total, during the period under review, the CPFE observed 8 cases of physical violence against journalists (9 victims), 43 cases of various other pressures, 15 violations of the right to receive and disseminate information.

The situation in the field of journalism became even worse when during the pre-election period Media Initiatives Center, together with foreign partners, launched a program to expose false news and disinformation in media publications with the relevant criteria, which Facebook and Instagram use to block access to these materials. Dozens of media outlets vehemently protested against this process, calling it censorship. Meanwhile, the majority of journalistic NGOs believe that the implemented program can play a healing role in the information sphere.

The steps taken by the authorities to remedy the situation are still ineffective. They are mainly aimed at adopting new legislative restrictions and tightening sanctions. However, most of these state initiatives contradict international norms and are not in line with a democratic society, as they threaten freedom of speech rather than create an opportunity to solve the problem of abuse. Therefore, for example, the RA President, after consulting with journalistic NGOs, did not sign the law adopted by the National Assembly, according to which the maximum amount of monetary compensation for insult and defamation under Article 1087 Part 1 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Armenia should be tripled, and on April 15 the President sent it to the Constitutional Court to determine the compliance of the document with the RA Constitution.

 The draft law "On Making Amendments and Supplements to the RA Code on Administrative Offenses", developed by the RA Prosecutor General's Office and posted on the official e-draft.am website on April 7, caused some concerns.[[1]](#footnote-1) According to it, liability is envisaged for public swearing and insulting in an indecent form through speech, image, sign or other means via the media outlets or online websites. Meanwhile, the ambiguous wording and requirements of the bill can cause various interpretations and become an obstacle to sharp critical speech.

 International organizations published reports during the period under review, too. According to Freedom House, Armenia has maintained its position in the Press Freedom Index.[[2]](#footnote-2) “Diverse, but not independent,” is the assessment in the annual report, published on April 20 by Reporters Without Borders, according to which Armenia has fallen by 2 points in terms of press freedom, ranking 63rd out of 180 countries in the world.[[3]](#footnote-3)

***MEDIA ACTIVITIES ENVIRONMENT***

 During the June 20 snap parliamentary elections, 4 cases of impediment to the lawful professional activities of media workers were observed. The election campaign was also accompanied by violations of the rights of media outlets and journalists: 2 cases of physical violence and 5 cases of various other pressures were observed on June 7-18. For comparison, it should be noted that during the 2018 parliamentary elections, 3 cases of impediment to the work of the media without physical violence, and in 2017, 5 cases of physical violence and 14 other cases of pressure were observed.

 Although the launch of the snap elections significantly eased the post-war tensions, and the protests stopped, nevertheless, the intense political struggle continued with harsh rhetoric, use of incriminating evidence discrediting reputation, and obscene language. And all this was reflected in the media.

 On the very first day of the campaign, June 7, taking into account the overall tension and intolerance of political forces and hostile attitude towards one another, demonstrated by the parties of the political struggle, the RA President, the Central Electoral Commission, and the Human Rights Defender made statements calling to exclude hate speech, calls for violence, insults and defamatory expressions. Already on June 10, the international human rights organization Freedom House expressed its concern over the rhetoric of Armenian politicians during the pre-election period. According to a statement posted on the Facebook page of this prominent organization, the participants of the campaign were spreading polarization and hate speech in the society of the country, recovering from the war in Nagorno Karabakh and preparing for the parliamentary elections.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In the first days of the campaign, the police and the ombudsman called on all parties and alliances participating in the elections to exclude any measure aimed at hindering the professional activities of media representatives. In particular, the ombudsman's statement mentioned, “The state is obliged to guarantee the unhindered professional work of journalists throughout the electoral process for the media coverage of events. To this end, the political forces participating in the elections should do their best.”

 Nonetheless, the situation was not favorable for media activity. Throughout the campaign, journalists and cameramen worked extremely hard, resisting various obstacles to their professional activities. The CPFE has issued a number of statements together with partner organizations, urging law enforcement agencies to be watchful in preventing any violence or other pressure on members of the media covering the election campaign, as well as political forces to refrain from creating conflict situations and pressuring journalists, regardless of the media outlet they represented, and calling on to the heads of the media to take into account the possible complications and their consequences when covering the pre-election events, and instruct their employees to act exclusively in accordance with professional principles.

 However, in the conditions of an already polarized media field, both political forces and different layers of the society, based on their ideas and orientations, treated media outlets and their personnel as either their own people or complete strangers. Indeed, the vast majority of media outlets divided into political camps, in turn, became an integral part of the election campaign. Journalists, through their activities, including on social networks, often displayed the typical behavior of a politician, disregarding professional principles and ethical norms. All this led to a reality when the representative of this or that media outlet, covering rallies and pre-election meetings, was targeted by the participants of the events, identifying with the political force of the opposite camp.

Responding to the media situation, the acting Prime Minister, the leader of the Civil Contract party Nikol Pashinyan, during the campaign on June 11, stated that “Armenia's media field has turned into a real garbage dump” and that “there are people in the media field who are more like killers than journalists”. As a solution, he proposed to create rules of ethics through certain legislative mechanisms, and in case of violating them, to apply restrictions.

We should remind that since 2007 an initiative of media self-regulation has been operating in Armenia, 63 media outlets have signed the code of conduct of professional ethics. However, many are not even aware of its existence or ignore it altogether, considering that this system restricts journalistic freedom. Prior to this election campaign, on May 15, as in previous elections, representatives of the media and journalistic organizations that joined the Self-Regulation Initiative drafted a *Memorandum on Coverage of the 2021 National Assembly Snap Elections*, which, however, was signed only by the above mentioned 63 media outlets.

 The program implemented by Media Initiatives Center and its foreign partners during the period under review was also aimed against dissemination of disinformation and fake news, within the framework of which false information and manipulative materials are revealed in the media through fact checking, and by cooperation with Facebook and Instagram such publications are blocked in the given social networks. This program was especially important because it was launched in the run-up to the election campaign, when the volumes of disinformation and fake news disseminated were obviously increasing. And as soon as the above-mentioned social networks started to shut down the materials with “false” or “manipulative” remarks, a number of media outlets raised a wave of dissatisfaction and groundless accusations. Thus, the editor-in-chief of the *Hraparak* *daily* Armine Ohanyan made a statement, considering the initiative censorship and pressure against the press, which, according to her, was organized through pro-governmental NGOs. Meanwhile, the monitoring is based on criteria developed by Facebook, and anyone who spreads false or manipulative information has the opportunity to appeal the decision of fact-checkers, if they deem it unfair. Or, after making appropriate corrections, the social network restores the page of the given media outlet. According to the CPFE, this program can be the beginning of a process of healing the media field, contributing to the improvement of the work of the media and a significant reduction in the dissemination of fake news and disinformation.

*Factor.TV* came up with another initiative to heal the media field, launching a campaign against hate speech and removing insults, obscene language, calls for violence from its pages, meanwhile offering its readers cooperation in this regard.

 As the fight against fake news and manipulation is an urgent issue for the whole world today, on May 3, the International Day of Freedom of the Press, the UN proposed the idea of “Information as a Public Good”.

Fertile soil for spreading fake news is also created when the public bodies do not provide accurate and sufficient information to the media and the society. The dissatisfaction of the editorial offices with the complications in receiving official data continued during the period under review. 15 cases of violations of the right to receive and disseminate information were observed, exactly the same number as in the previous quarter.

Legislative changes are also necessary to remedy the situation in the media sector, but the authorities' initiatives to this end have been problematic with disproportionately strict approaches, which could have rather done harm to freedom of speech than eliminate the defects. That is why during this period the CPFE and partner organizations opposed to the circulating documents, making critical statements. Thus, after consulting with the heads of journalistic non-governmental organizations, the RA President did not sign the law “On Making Amendments to the RA Civil Code” already adopted by the National Assembly, which envisaged tripling the upper limit of monetary compensation for insult and defamation, and on April 15 the President applied to the Constitutional court to determine the compliance of the law with the Constitution.

Given that politicians, officials, and various layers of society often perceive criticism addressed to them as slander or insult, such legislative initiatives can create serious obstacles to the free operation of the media, and increase the number of lawsuits against the media outlets and journalists.

In this regard, the draft law “On Making Amendments and Addenda to the RA Code on Administrative Offenses” posted on the official e-draft.am website on April 7, which was developed by the RA Prosecutor General's Office, was also problematic. The document under discussion envisages prosecuting a person who has publicly cursed or insulted anyone by an indecent act in public places, via the media, or on Internet websites verbally, through images, signs or other means.

The Information Disputes Council has issued a conclusion in this regard, considering it controversial that the bill tries to define as an objective feature of the offense not the malicious intent of the offender, but the “cursing” or “indecent” nature of the public expression. According to the Council, this is not a substantive but a mechanical approach to the restriction of freedom of speech (See Ruling 997 of the Constitutional Court, according to which the intent of an act is considered as the main feature for insult and slander in international legal practice). Even a vulgar expression, made in public, however with no malicious intent, may contain a word of public significance and it must be allowed in the light of prevailing public interest.

By the way, even without the above-mentioned legislative tight measures, the flow of lawsuits against media and journalists drastically increased during the second quarter․ 23 such new cases were accepted for proceedings, which is almost twice as much as in the previous quarter. Moreover, only 12 lawsuits against various media outlets were filed by businessman Khachatur Sukiasyan and a company associated with him, who consider that the publications of those media outlets are slanderous and discredit their business reputation. The Information Disputes Council has issued a conclusion on these 12 cases, pointing out that the media outlets have not taken the necessary steps to check the facts. In other words, having no evidence, they created a basis to qualify the publication as slander.

In court practice, the opposite is often the case, when objective criticism is perceived by the addressee as an insult or slander, and the courts unjustly uphold such lawsuits against journalists and media outlets. The two judgments published by the European Court of Human Rights during this quarter come to prove this. Thus, on May 18, in the case of *Dareskizb LLC (Haykakan Zhamanak daily) v. Armenia*, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that there was a violation of the right to freedom of expression of the company representing the media under Article 10 of the European Convention. Due to the illegal acts of the judges investigating the case, the Republic of Armenia has to pay about 11 million 295 thousand AMD from its state budget in compensation for the material and moral damage caused to the company, as well as compensation for court costs.

According to the verdict on the case of *Investigative Journalists NGO v. Republic of Armenia* published on the same day, the state violated the right of the media to freedom of expression. Within three months the Armenian government has to pay 1,500 euros to the organization for the expenses incurred. According to the ECHR, the domestic courts did not take into account the defendant's status as an investigative journalism NGO, nor did they consider the latter's conscientiousness in publishing the article, the plaintiff's status as an elected official and body of public authority, the defendant's purpose in publishing the article, the fact of public interest, etc.. By not considering these components, domestic courts neglected the essential function of the press in a democratic society. In addition, they did not distinguish between statements of fact and value judgements.

 During the second quarter, the CPFE also observed an increase in cases of impediment to the work of the media by politicians, officials, as well as representatives of various layers of society, and indecent treatment of journalists. Compared to the 8 cases observed in the previous quarter, 20 such cases were registered. Representatives of media outlets associated with this or that force were often targeted by citizens during mass events, especially due to their political views, and as far as officials and politicians are concerned, MPs from the My Step parliamentary faction Andranik Kocharyan, Hayk Sargsyan, as well as former President Robert Kocharyan and others stood out. In connection with these cases, the CPFE together with partner organizations issued 5 statements, which also attracted the attention of law enforcement.

 The Office of the Human Rights Defender played an active role in the protection of the media during the period under review. Meanwhile, the Human Rights Defender sharply criticized the Public Television. And the latter described such criticism as an interference in its activity, and pressure. Thus, on May 30, the Sunday News of the Public Television in one of its reports referred to the Armenian-Azerbaijani enclaves. The journalist also visited the village of Tigranashen and reported that during the years of the Soviet Union it was part of Azerbaijan and was populated by Azerbaijanis. Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan described the highlights of the report as extremely reprehensible and criticized the Public Television, noting that the journalist's statements contradicted the rights of residents, living at the border, and contributed to the violation of security. On June 2, this was followed by a statement from the Council of Public Broadcaster of Armenia, in which the body expressed surprise, in turn criticizing the Human Rights Defender, noting that he was exceeding his authority, as well as his right to evaluate journalistic work and was openly interfering with the work of the media. In this regard, based on the application of the Public Television, the Media Ethics Observatory also expressed its standpoint. Accordingly, the Human Rights Defender had grounds to pay special attention to the disputed report of the Public Television and disagree with the information and terms used in it. However, the Ombudsman's assessments of a comprehensive and in-depth coverage of the topic can be perceived as interfering with the editorial policy of the media outlet. Consequently, the Observatory called on the Office of the Human Rights Defender and the Public Television to agree upon an advisory format to discuss issues of common interest and develop common approaches.

 In another case, the Public Television applied to the Human Rights Defender, the Central Electoral Commission, and the Commission on Television and Radio, alleging pressure from one of the political forces, urging them to uphold the Public Broadcaster's commitment to impartiality and non-discriminatory treatment. This refers to the legally controversial videos provided to the Public Television during the election campaign, which contained calls and scenes of violence, copyright infringement, insult and slander. In this regard, the Human Rights Defender noted that the Public Television and Radio Company was a public body, with a regulatory body in the person of the Commission on Television and Radio; therefore, he advised to apply to the Media Self-Regulation Initiative – the Ethics Observatory, as the Public TV was a member, too. The issue could be resolved through the regulations of the election coverage memorandum. The observatory, however, did not receive an application from the public broadcaster.

 Despite these problems, according to the results of the monitoring, conducted by Yerevan Press Club, the Public Television showed the greatest activity in terms of covering the June 20, 2021 snap elections of the National Assembly. In addition, Public TV made great efforts to meet the requirement set in the law, organizing the debate among the leaders of parties and alliances participating in the elections, and before that, debates of a different format took place among the representatives of those forces. All this was aimed at facilitating the voters to make a more conscious choice.

 All in all, according to a report released by Freedom House international watchdog organization on April 28, “Nations in Transition 2021”, Armenia has maintained its position in terms of media freedom index.[[5]](#footnote-5) “Diverse, but not independent”: this is how Reporters Without Borders described the current state of the Armenian media in its April 20 annual report.[[6]](#footnote-6) This definition is exactly the same as in last year's report, but in contrast, this time Armenia has registered a decline of 2 points in the level of press freedom, being the 63rd among 180 countries in the world. The authors of the report once again expressed concern that the government formed as a result of the “velvet revolution” in the spring of 2018 has not been able to reduce the media polarization. As for the complete lack of information on media owners mentioned in the document, the CPFE and partner organizationsrepeatedly raised this issue; moreover, a joint working group developed a package of proposals and submitted it to the National Assembly to amend the obsolete laws on the media.

The Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression continued to follow the criminal cases initiated in connection with the June 23, 2015 events of “Electric Yerevan” on Baghramyan Avenue and the July 17-30, 2016 events of “Sari Tagh” in Yerevan, within the framework of which more than 40 journalists and cameramen were recognized as victims. On March 4, 2021 the case of “Sari Tagh” was suspended again, for the second time in recent years, on the grounds that the person involved as an accused was unknown. However, the issue has not been finally resolved yet and is under discussion.

As for “Electric Yerevan”, the decision of the Special Investigation Service to suspend the pre-investigation of this case for the second time with the support of the CPFE was appealed to the Prosecutor's Office last year, and after being rejected, it was filed with the Court of General Jurisdiction. The latter upheld the complaint on January 22, in connection with which the Prosecutor's Office applied to the Court of Appeal, which upheld the complaint of the Prosecutor's Office on May 17. On June 30, the victim journalists filed an appeal to the Court of Cassation with the support of the CPFE.

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

We report the violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the second quarter of 2021 by the following CPFE classification:

* physical violence against journalists,
* pressures on the media and their personnel,
* violations of the right to receive and disseminate information.

This classification of CPFE is somewhat conditional. In particular, sometimes hindering the access and dissemination of information is accompanied by violence against the journalist. Such facts are attributed to the type of violation that the authors of the report consider to be the closest. Nonetheless, the classification used allows for a more concise and prominent picture of the violations of journalists’ and media rights.

The relevant sections of the report list the facts on the violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the second quarter of 2021, as well as developments related to the previous incidents.

***In total, there were 66 reported violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the second quarter of 2021. 8 were cases of physical violence, 43 were cases of pressure against the media and staff members, 15 were cases of violations of the right to receive and disseminate information.***

The table below presents these data, also in comparison with the indicators of the past year.

**Quantiative data on violations in the quarters of 2021**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 1st quarter of 2021  | 2nd quarter of 2021  | Total |
| Physical violence against journalists | **7 (8 victims)** | **8(9 victims)** | **15(17 victims)** |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | **20** | **43** | **63** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | **15** | **15** | **30** |

**Number of reported violations in the 2nd quarters of 2020 and 2021**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 2nd quarter of 2020  | 2nd quarter of 2021  |
| Physical violence against journalists | **2** | **8(9 victims)** |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | **34** | **43** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | **26** | **15** |

**Lawsuits, involving media and journalists accprding to quarters**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 1st quarter of 2021  | 2nd quarter of 2021  | Total |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 10 | 23 | 33 |
| Economic and other disputes | 2 | 0 | 2 |

**Lawsuits, involving media and journalists in the 2nd quarters of 2020-2021**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 2nd quarter of 2020  | 2nd quarter of 2021  |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 22 | 23 |
| Economic and other disputes | 0 | 0 |

As in the previous reports, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression would like to note that the data in the table may not be comprehensive and do not claim absolute accuracy. Media representatives sometimes find it unnecessary to publicize facts on the events that impeded their professional activities, ignore various threats to them, or prefer to solve problems themselves and overcome illegal restrictions on their own. Therefore, CPFE is convinced that the real number of obstacles is greater than stated in this report. The following are the most significant facts.

1. ***Physical Violence Against Journalists***

*In the second quarter of 2021 there were 8 cases (with 9 victims) of physical violence against media workers, one more than the cases in the previous quarter. Below we present facts and developments related to both those cases and past instances of use of violence in chronological order.*

**On April 1,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor Marzes (Masis residence) held a regular court hearing on the criminal case of attacking Kentron TV journalist Artur Hakobyan and cameraman Simik Mailyan and hindering their professional activities.

We should remind that on December 24, 2019, dozens of residents in Hovtashen community in Ararat marz attacked Kentron TV employees, hitting them and damaging the camera.[[7]](#footnote-7) The case launched on May 21, 2020 with the indictment of one person, namely the perpetrator Samvel Minasyan, within a separate action was sent to the court, and on May 26 was accepted for proceedings.
 On April 20, the court dismissed the case on the grounds that the accused had taken part in the last Artsakh war, had been wounded in the spine, and had ceased to be dangerous to the public. Thus, on the basis of a change in the situation provided for in Article 74 of the RA Criminal Code, Samvel Minasyan was released from criminal liability.

**On April 1,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a trial on the fact of using violence against Artak Khulyan, Shantnews.am news site reporter, and Hovhannes Sargsyan, Factor.am news site cameraman. That criminal case was initiated in connection with the incident that took place during the days of the April Revolution in 2018, and was sent to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan with the indictment of 8 people. (For details see CPFE’s annual and quarterly reports for 2018-2021 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

Court hearings on the case were also held on April 15, 29, May 13, 27, and June 24; the next hearing is scheduled for August 19.

**On April 12,** the Special Investigation Service decided to reject the initiation of a criminal case in connection with the incident of Minister of High Tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan and journalist Paylak Fahradyan on the grounds of lack of corpus delicti. We should remind that on March 18**,** Minister Hakob Arshakyan used violence against Paylak Fahradyan, the editor of *Irakanum.am* website, damaged his computer and phone in one of the cafes in Yerevan.[[8]](#footnote-8) Afterwards, the RA Prosecutor's Office sent the publications related to the incident to the Special Investigation Service for inspection. Following the latter's decision, on April 22, the Prosecutor General's Office itself initiated a criminal case in connection with the incident, according to Article 185, Part 2, Clause 3 of the RA Criminal Code (“Willful destruction of or damage to property”), revoking the SIS decision. The criminal case was again submitted to the Special Investigation Service.

As the SIS informed the CPFE, Paylak Fahradyan was recognized as a victim in the case, there was no person with the status of a defendant. The pre-trial investigation is underway.

We should remind that on the same day a journalist had formulated her question in writing at the suggestion of the RA Prime Minister, preferring to present it with a poster, which was not to the liking of the citizens supporting Nikol Pashinyan. A woman snatched it, tore the poster, and pushed the journalist.[[9]](#footnote-9) Based on the video, publications and posts concerning the incident, a criminal case was initiated in the Police under Article 164, Part 1 of the RA Criminal Code, and on February 26 it was sent to the Investigative Committee for pre-trial investigation.

**On April 22,** during a rally organized by the opposition forces near the RA Prosecutor General's Office, Yerkir Media TV cameraman Paruyr Nersisyan fell and injured his leg. The camera was damaged, too.[[10]](#footnote-10) The participants of the rally provided first aid. The editorial office did not file a complaint.

**On April 26,** the Investigative Committee suspended the criminal case initiated on February 24 concerning the incident of hindering the lawful activity of Yerkir.am website reporter Liana Sargsyan on the grounds that the person to be involved as an accused was unknown.
We should remind that the journalist had reported to the police that two people had hindered her work while performing her professional activity in Freedom Square in Yerevan, and one of them had hit her.[[11]](#footnote-11) On March 3, the RA Prosecutor's Office informed that a criminal case was initiated based on the prepared materials, in accordance with Article 164, Part 1 of the RA Criminal Code, and on February 26, it was sent to the Investigative Committee, where a pre-trial investigation was carried out.

**On May 9,** Ani Gevorgyan, correspondent of Tert.am news site and ArmNews TV, asked a question to the acting Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, when the latter was paying tribute to the grave of the killed soldier in Yerablur Military Pantheon. While asking the question, the journalist tried to approach the Prime Minister and was prevented by law enforcement officers who caught her, jointly with Nikol Pashinyan's press secretary Mane Gevorgyan.[[12]](#footnote-12) Later, the police restricted her and News.am employees' free movement in the pantheon.

Journalistic organizations issued a statement in this regard.[[13]](#footnote-13)

**On May 9,** during the rally of the Armenia Alliance led by the second president of the Republic of Armenia Robert Kocharyan, the work of the film crew of the Civic.am news website was hindered. Kocharyan's supporters, probably realizing that the media outlet was “not one of their own”, approached journalist Vova Hakobyan and cameraman Petros Petrosyan, threatened to use violence, pushed them and hindered the filming, forcing them to leave Freedom Square. This action was repeated with the participation of the same individuals. The police officers in the square intervened in the incident, but did not draw up a report.[[14]](#footnote-14)

**On May 15,** Liana Sargsyan, a correspondent for *Yerkir.am* news website, asked those present to comment on the government propaganda posters on the walls of the Etchmiadzin office of Yerkrapah Volunteers Union NGO. Hearing the question, some people attacked the journalist, pushed and shook her, hit her phone, insulted, calling her a “traitor”, an “expatriate”, a “blackmailer” and kicked her out with vulgar expressions. According to Liana Sargsyan, the attack was carried out by a certain Armen Shahbazyan, who introduced himself as the chairman of the Echmiadzin office of Yerkrapah Volunteers Union, and a certain Arthur who was responsible for some issues at the office. The editorial office applied to the police in regard to the incident.

In response to the pre-trial investigation of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, the Police informed that on May 25, based on the materials prepared in the Vagharshapat department, a decision was made to reject the initiation of a criminal case on the basis of Article 35, Part 1, Clause 2 of the RA Criminal Procedure Code.

**On June 3,** Criminal Court of Appeals held a trial on the case of *Narine Avetisyan, Editor-in-Chief of Lori TV*, *v. Tigran Nazaryan, head of Shinplus construction company, and employee Vrezh Khachatryan*, initiated on the event of hindering the lawful professional activity and using physical violence.

We should remind that on September 28, 2017, Narine Avetisyan was informed that asphalt was being laid in the heavy rain, and she left for the site to cover the ongoing works. When she was shooting some footage, the head of Shinplus construction company Tigran Nazaryan and his staff attacked Narine Avetisyan, twisted her arms, threw her onto the ground, snatched her phone, and deleted the photos.[[15]](#footnote-15)

On August 25, 2020 the Court of First Instance passed the verdict on the criminal case, according to which Tigran Nazaryan was found not guilty and was acquitted on the grounds that his involvement in the crime was not proven. And the employee of the organization Vrezh Khachatryan was released from criminal liability due to the expiration of the statute of limitations. Narine Avetisyan appealed the verdict at the Criminal Court of Appeals on September 28
 The next court hearing has not been scheduled as of June 30.

**On June 4,** during the coverage of the meetings of the acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in the city of Artashat, Ararat region, one of the citizens snatched the phone of *Tert.am* correspondent Ani Gevorgyan, insulted and slapped her. The phone was returned to the journalist with the intervention of the police only after the issue became a topic of potential publication. Ani Gevorgyan filed a complaint to the Human Rights Defender, emphasizing that the police officers on duty did not intervene to stop the obstruction to her activity.[[16]](#footnote-16)

The Investigative Committee informed the CPFE that a criminal case had been initiated on this case in accordance with Article 164 of the RA Criminal Code, and the bodies conducting the proceedings were taking measures envisaged by the RA Criminal Procedure Code to comprehensively investigate the circumstances.

**On June 4,** during the meetings of the acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Ararat region, the citizens took *Yerevan.today* correspondent Suzy Badoyan's journalistic badge, then the police returned it. The journalist addressed a complaint to the Human Rights Defender, emphasizing that the police officers on duty did not ensure her safety.[[17]](#footnote-17)

 **On June 14**, Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction held a regular court hearing on the case of *168.am* *website correspondent Ani Keshishyan, Public radio correspondent Liana Yeghiazaryan and others v. former commander of RA Police armed forces Levon Yeranosyan*.
 We should remind that Levon Yeranosyan was charged for intentionally committing acts that were manifestly outside his powers and caused substantial damage to citizens' rights and negligently brought about severe consequences. Ani Keshishyan was injured in Baghramyan Avenue, Yerevan, on April 16, 2018, and Liana Yeghiazaryan was injured at the intersection of Artsakh-Erebuni Streets, on April 22, while covering protests and police activities (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2018-2020, in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).
 The next court hearing is scheduled for September 3.

In response to the inquiry sent by the CPFE **on June 30,** the Investigative Committee said that the pre-trial investigation into the case of physical violence against Radio Liberty staff was underway at the Serious Crimes Unit of the Yerevan Investigation Department.

We should remind that during the opposition march that took place on February 23, the demonstrators targeted the personnel of Radio Liberty, insulted, cursed and threatened to close the radio station. Then they kicked journalist Artak Khulyan and cameraman Karen Chilingaryan, damaging the camera.

The Prosecutor's Office initiated a criminal case according to Article 164, Part 1 of the RA Criminal Code and sent to the RA Investigative Committee for a pre-trial investigation, in order to identify the circumstances of the cases. On March 3, the case was accepted for proceedings in the Investigative Committee. The Investigative Committee informed that all the measures set in the RA Criminal Procedure Code had been taken, aimed at comprehensive, complete and objective investigation of the circumstances of the case.

*Cases of physical violence during June 20, 2021 snap parliamentary election campaign*

**On June 8,** a group of people in Aparan supporting Nikol Pashinyan as a candidate for Prime Minister insulted *Yerevan.today* reporter Suzy Badoyan, hindered her work, and one of them used violence against the journalist. Police in the area did not take appropriate measures to ensure her safety.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The Investigative Committee informed the CPFE that a criminal case had been initiated on this case in accordance with Article 164 of the RA Criminal Code, and the bodies conducting the proceedings were taking measures set in the RA Criminal Procedure Code to comprehensively investigate the circumstances.

**On June 14** during the campaign of Prime Minister candidate Nikol Pashinyan in Vedi, a group of citizens made insulting remarks addressed to *Yerevan.today* reporter Suzy Badoyan, shook her and dropped the microphone.[[19]](#footnote-19) The journalist was identified with a specific political force, which, according to the citizens, paid her for providing biased information.

1. ***Pressure on Media and Their Personnel***

*In the second quarter of 2021, there was a total of 43 cases of pressures on the media and their staff, with 9 cases more than the number recorded last year. They were carried out through lawsuits, impediment of professional activities, insulting attitude and display of hatred towards journalists, including during the election campaign and the actual election day.Those pressures are presented below, in this subsection of the report, along with the developments and outcomes of similar facts, registered in the previous years, in chronological order.*

**On April 1,** the case of *Lyova Abrahamyan, head of Sarukhan Community in Gegharkunik Marz, v. Narine Hasratyan, a reporter at the* *Haykakan Zham* *news site*, claiming refutation of the information discrediting his honor, dignity and business reputation was accepted for proceedings.The lawsuit was filed on February 13, 2019 and the lawsuit was caused by an article titled “Who Sponsors Sarukhan Mayor and Has Prevented Pre-Trial Investigation Since August”, published on the website on January 10 and containing villagers’ complaints about their mayor.[[20]](#footnote-20)
 A trial is scheduled for August 10.

**On April 1,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of the Swedish company *GN Tobacco Sweden AB v. Golos Ltd.,* claiming refutation and compensation for the damage (3 million AMD) caused to its business reputation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed **on June 22**, and was caused by an article, published on *Golosarmenii.am* website on May 23, titled “A bowl of press cake, or why Swedish snus was brought to Armenia”. The author referred to the Swedish product called “snus”, a tobacco substitute that, in the opinion of the author, is of dubious reputation and is sold in the supermarket chain belonging to businessman Samvel Aleksanyan. Its sale is prohibited in the European Union (except Sweden) and in the Russian Federation.

A court hearing on the case was also held on May 25, the next one is scheduled for August 31.

**On April 2**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to reject citizen Yura Adyan’s lawsuit against *News.am* Ltd., founder of *News.am* website, claiming refutation of slander and 2 million AMD in compensation. The lawsuit, accepted for proceedings on August 16, 2019 was caused by the article titled “The Old Fox of Old and New Armenia”, published in the May 9 issue of the *Zhamanak* daily, which the website published.

In the court decision it was concluded that the defendant should be released from liability, as he had made a proper reference to the source of information, i.e. the *Zhamanak* newspaper; therefore the claim was groundless and subject to rejection. The court ruled to confiscate 150,000 AMD from *News.am* Ltd. in favor of Yura Adyan as attorney's reasonable fee.

On April 12, the defendant filed a complaint to the Civil Court of Appeal, which was accepted for proceedings on May 4, and on May 5, the plaintiff filed a complaint to the same court, which was accepted for proceedings on May 26. A court hearing was held on June 17, publication of the judicial act was scheduled for July 1.

As for the lawsuit filed by Yura Adyan against *Skizb Media Kentron* LLC, the founder of the *Zhamanak* newspaper, on May 31 the case was reappointed on the grounds of a new judge taking over the case.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed to the Court of General Jurisdiction on June 10, 2019. The plaintiff seeks to deny that he is the uncle of the Adyans, who occupy posts in the State Control Service, who, during the times of the former authorities, was considered an “old fox” in the field of procurements and participated in tenders beyond his field of specialization and sold the contract to other companies having been awarded the contract.

After reappointment, the case was accepted for proceedings on June 11.

 **On April 2,** the Civil Court of Appeal ruled to reject citizen Azat Tovmasyan’s complaint against the decision of Court of First Instance, which rejected his lawsuit against *A-TV* and citizen Sirvard Avoyan, demanding recognition of the violation of personal and family rights, refutation of defamatory information, and compensation of 2 million AMD.

We should remind that the lawsuit was caused by an accusation against Azat Tovmasyan of an alleged obduction of his own daughter, made during the *Semi-Open Windows* TV show of July 30, 2018.[[21]](#footnote-21) (For details see CPFE’s annual and quarterly reports for 2018-2021 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website)։

On May 5, the plaintiff filed a complaint to the Court of Cassation, which received the application on June 16.

**On April 2,** the Administrative Court rejected the lawsuit filed by *Armenian Second TV Channel* LLC against the Television and Radio Commission (third party *Armenia TV* CJSC, *Husaber* CJSC, *Shant* Ltd., *A-TV* Ltd. and *Multi Media-Kentron TV* CJSC), demanding abolition of Decision N 2-A of January 8 “On the Change of the Number of Slots in the State-Metropolitan Broadcast Competitions for Licensing the Use of Slots in the Public Multiplex.” And the lawsuit filed demanding abolition of Decision No. 14-A of January 15, “On Issuing a License to Recognize the Winners of the Competition of State Broadcast for Licensing the Use of Slots in the Public Multiplex” was upheld.

In addition, the court decided to confiscate 4,000 AMD in favor of the plaintiff *Armenian Second TV Channel* LLC as a compensation for the state fee and 300,000 AMD as attorney's fee.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on February 3 demanding to abolish the above-mentioned decisions. On February 8, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the court involved the founders of the mentioned 5 TV companies as a third party. On May 5, the defendant filed an appeal, which was returned on the 24th. On June 23, the complaint was refiled.

**On April 2,** Styopa Safaryan, Chairman of the Public Council, filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Igor Khachaturov and *168 Zham* Ltd., demanding a public apology for insulting expressions and confiscation of 500,000 AMD in compensation from each respondent.

The lawsuit was caused by March 2 publication in the *Blog.168.am* website belonging to *168 Hours* Ltd., with the caption “Khachaturov's son's tough response to Styopa Safaryan”, where it says in particular: “Baghanis Ayrum's drunken Turkish kirva's bastard, do not dare delete your meaningless long text that you will give an answer for, line by line. One thing is for sure, you will not be allowed on that Ankara flight. Go and find something under the skirt of your schizophrenic master, play, enjoy the last pleasures of power, and stay out of my sight”. On April 15, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 27.

**On April 5,** *Armenian National Interests Fund* CJSC filed an appeal in the Court of General Jurisdiction against the decision made on March 9, which rejected the motion to apply injunction, concerning the seizure of 3 million AMD on property and financial means belonging to respondent journalist Oleg Safonov and *168 hours* Ltd.. On April 29 the appeal was accepted for proceedings and on May 13 it was upheld.

We should remind that on January 25,*Armenian National Interests Fund* CJSC filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against journalist Oleg Safonov and *168 Hours* Ltd., demanding refutation of information discrediting their business reputation and claiming a monetary compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the article published by Oleg Safonov on *168.am* website on December 31, 2020, titled “On Anticipated Sharp Increase in Electricity Tariffs in 2022 and Corruption Risks in the Development of Solar Electricity․ Why is Everyone Silent?”.[[22]](#footnote-22) The author of the article described the activity of the plaintiff company as suspicious, accusing it of entering into a corrupt deal with the RA government through the mediation of the RA President.

The next hearing on the case in the Court of General Jurisdiction is scheduled for July 8.

**On April 5**, Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *citizen Arusyak Mkrtchyan v.* the *Zhoghovurd* *daily*, demanding refutation of defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused.

The lawsuitwas filed on August 12, 2019, and the cause of the lawsuit was an article published on *Armlur.am* website on July 12, titled “A DJ in Healthcare Sector: Circa $ 20,000 to the Minister's Acquaintance”.[[23]](#footnote-23) The author notes that the RA Ministry of Health has allocated over 9.5 million drams from the state budget to In Progress Production Company, founded by Arusyak Mkrtchyan, i.e. DJ Vaccina, to shoot social ads.

A court hearing on the case was held on June 28, the next one was scheduled for October 25.

**On April 6,** Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Armdaily News Agency Ltd*., demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor, dignity and good reputation through slander and insult.
 The lawsuit was filed on November 25, 2020 and was caused by an article, titled “URGENT. Criminal authorities Ara and Alik Banduryans from Noratus intimidate My Step MPs. Mediaport” and published on *Armdaily.am* website on November 20, in particular, the phrase “the one who held bottles”, used about the MP.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Court hearings on the case were held on June 23 and 25, the next one is scheduled for October 4.

**On April 6,** Civil Court of Appeal accepted the plaintiff Vahe Parazyan’s complaint against *Slaq.am* website’s founder *Virtual Media* LLC and founder of another company Menua Harutyunyan against the March 1 decision, which rejected the lawsuit. The court found that the media did not initially seek to discredit the plaintiff's honor, dignity or business reputation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 16, 2019, was caused by an article titled “Tracing the Scandalous Incident: Narek Karapetyan Gives Details”, and a video attached to it and published on the website on July 17, 2019.[[25]](#footnote-25) The plaintiff demands a public apology, refutation of defamatory information, and compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

A hearing on the case was held on May 25, the publication of the judicial act was scheduled for July 2.

**On April 6,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the investigation concerning the execution of the judicial act on the criminal case of *the second President of the Republic of Armenia Robert Kocharyan v. Skizb Media Kentron Ltd.*.

We should remind that on July 6, 2020 the court received a criminal case from the Prosecutor’s Office of Kentron and Nork-Marash administrative districts against Hasmik Martirosyan, director of *Skizb Media Kentron* Ltd. who was charged for the deliberate failure of the execution of a legally effective judicial act in the prescribed period. Thus, on January 18, 2019, the court partially settled the claim, filed by Robert Kocharyan against the company, to publicly refute the information considered as slander and receive compensation. The lawsuit was caused by following articles about Kocharyan, published on 1in.am news website owned by the company on June 7, 23 and 24 of 2018 respectively: “Grigor Grigoryan Testified Against Kocharyan, He May Be Arrested”[[26]](#footnote-26), “Robert Kocharyan is in Panic: the Second President is on His Way to Prison”[[27]](#footnote-27) and “Robert Kocharyan is the Bloody Symbol of the Anti-Revolution”.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Skizb Media Kentron appealed the judgment on February 20, 2019, according to which 400,000 AMD should be seized in favor of Robert Kocharyan and a refutation should have to be published. Both the Court of Appeals and the Court of Cassation rejected the appeals of Skizb Media Kentron Ltd. And on July 6, 2020 the criminal case on non-execution of the judicial act entered the court.

On April 7, 2021, the court ruled in favor of Hasmik Martirosyan's lawyer's motion to dismiss the presiding judge on the grounds of biased attitude. On April 13, the case was accepted for proceedings with another judge presiding. On May 7, a regular hearing on the case was held. No other developments have been reported as of June 30.

**On April 8,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevanheld a regular court hearing on the case of *citizen Narine Abrahamyan v. journalist Kristine Aghalaryan* with a claim to refute publicly the data considered slander and to pay compensation. We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on June 2, 2017, was caused by the article titled “Meghri medical center vs. SRS” published on the *Lurer.com* site, in which reference is made to Narine Abrahamyan appearing in the hot spot of a number of incidents and scandals during her professional activity.[[29]](#footnote-29)

 A court hearing was held on May 24, the next one is scheduled for September 30.

**On April 8,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Naira Karapetyan, an employee of the Hayastani Hanrapetutyun daily, v. Armenpress State News Agency CJSC*, with claims to repeal the orders on imposing a disciplinary sanction, restore them to their previous job, and confiscate the money for the forced leave. A hearing on the case was held on June 4, the next one is scheduled for July 2.

We should remind that 6 more employees filed a lawsuit against the CJSC with the same claim on November 23, 2020. Thus, a court hearing was also held on Lusine Mesropyan's case on April 8 and June 8, the next one was scheduled for July 2. Court hearings on the cases of Gayane Antonyan, Khachik Sargsyan, Marine Kyureghyan were held on June 18, and the verdict was announced on the 28th. Court hearings on Tatevik Hambardzumyan's case were held on May 20 and June 18, the verdict was announced on the 28th. During the quarter, there was no development regarding Emil Sargsyan's case.

**On April 9**, NA Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan appealed the judgement, made by the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, which rejected his lawsuit against Gegham Simonyan, the owner of *Alternativ.am* website domain with claims of compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

The lawsuit, filed on September 8, 2020, was caused by an article, titled “Close Relations between Vivaro and Alen Simonyan that Cost $ 300,000. Why aren't the violations by Vivaro properly investigated?" and published on *Alternativ.am* website on August 20. The article particularly states that Alen Simonyan took $ 300,000 from Vivaro company and promised to use his ties in the government to keep the company out of scandals and away from accountability for violations.[[30]](#footnote-30) By the decision made on March 10, 2021, the court found that the plaintiff did not substantiate the fact that the defendant Gegham Simonyan is the author of the disputed article in *Alternativ.am*, the alleged slanderer, the proper defendant, and this circumstance alone was sufficient to reject the claim.

On April 30, the Court of Appeal accepted the plaintiff’s appeal for proceedings, the judicial act will be published on July 14.

**On April 9,** the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan accepted for proceedings the lawuist filed by David Galstyan, advisor to the RA former minister of defense, against Radio Liberty and its director Hrayr Tamrazyan, demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity, as well as public refutation of defamatory information. The lawsuit, filed on March 9, was caused by the publications on the media outlet about the official duties of Davit Galstyan, particularly the trade of weapons and various deals.

The preliminary court hearing is scheduled for July 20.

**On April 9,** Andranik Kocharyan, Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defense and Security, in response to a question from Channel 5 TV correspondent Karine Mangasaryan about the POWs, said: “I cut your electricity off”.[[31]](#footnote-31) Therefore, the official displayed discriminatory and contemptuous attitude towards the journalist.

**On April 12,** the Court of General Jurisdication of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the citizens Marat Grigoryan, Sargis Kelyan, Levon Harutyunyan, Liana Manukyan, Esther Manukyan, Tatevik Boyakhchyan v.* *the Hraparak* *newspaper*, with claims of compensation for insult and slander.

We should remind that the lawsuit was caused by October 8, 2018 article, titled “A Scandal at YSU? Has a New “Sashik" Appeared?” which, based on a letter, accused the dean of YSU Faculty of Geography and Geology Marat Grigoryan, of embezzling 50 percent of the academic staff’s salaries.[[32]](#footnote-32) The claim was partially settled by a judgment passed on February 28, 2020. The *Hraparak* was obligated to refute the defamatory information published in the above-mentioned article and publicly apologize. Besides, according to the court judgment, a compensation of 100,000 AMD for defamation and 100,000 AMD for insult should have been confiscated from the newspaper in favor of Marat Grigoryan.

On March 27, the defendant appealed the judgment to a higher instance, and on July 24 the appeal was upheld. By the decision of Civil Court of Appeal the case was sent to the same Court of General Jurisdiction for a retrial.

On May 3, the court decided to partially settle the claim, in fact repeating the previous judgement. The defendant appealed the judgement on June 4, and on June 23 it was accepted for proceedings in the Civil Court of Appeal.

**On April 12,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan upheld the lawsuit of the MPs of the NA Bright Armenia faction – Edmon Marukyan, Taron Simonyan and Armen Yeghiazaryan against Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., the founder of *1in.am* news website, claiming publication of refutation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on September 2, 2020, was caused by a news piece, titled “Bright Armenia met with Serzh Sargsyan in the latter's house” and published on *1in.am* on June 19, which stated that the above-mentioned MPs discussed a number of events and issues of domestic policy with Serzh Sargsyan.[[33]](#footnote-33)

The court obliged the defendant *Skizb Media Kentron* Ltd. to publish the refutation of the above-mentioned information on *1in.am* website. No monetary claim was submitted. On May 31, the defendant filed an appeal, which was received on June 26.

**On April 12,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Armenian Television and Radio Broadcasting Network CJSC v. the founder of Shant TV, the homonymous LLC*, demanding a monetary confiscation.

The lawsuit was filed on December 30, 2020, and accepted for proceedings on January 18, 2021. The motion of the CJSC to apply an injunction (to seize the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim) was rejected, then was appealed by an interim act in the Court of Appeal and was left unchanged. And the CJSC's motion to postpone the payment of the state fee was upheld.

A hearing on the case was held on June 7, and on the 15th the plaintiff again filed a motion to seize the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of 162380000 AMD, which was again rejected on June 16. The next court hearing is scheduled for July 23.

**On April 13**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NA Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan v. Iravunk Media Ltd.*, claiming a compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity. The lawsuit, filed on August 4, 2020, was caused by a publication in the *Iravunk* newspaper, where thoughts were attributed to Alen Simonyan. He allegedly said that the ruling political team was not ready to work if no bonuses were to be paid.

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 16.

**On April 13,** the defendant in the case of *NA Deputy Hayk Sargsyan v. Hraparak Daily Ltd*. applied to the Court of Cassation, appealing the judgement of the Civil Court of Appeal, which partially settled Hayk Sargsyan’s claim.

We should remind that on June 21, 2019 the MP filed **3** **lawsuits** against the founder of the media outlet. The first lawsuit was caused by an article, titled “A New Schmeiss has Appeared in the Parliament”[[34]](#footnote-34), and on September 16, 2020 the judgement was ruled in favor of Hayk Sargsyan, the claim being partially settled. The newspaper was obligated to refute the defamatory information. Besides, it was ruled to confiscate 50.000 AMD in favor of Hayk Sargsyan as compensation for non-pecuniary damage and 150000 AMD as an attorney’s reasonable fee.

The defendant filed an appeal on October 16, which was again partially upheld. The Court of Appeal found that the part “evaluating” the expression "New Schmeiss appeared in the parliament" as an insult should be removed from the refutation text, and the confiscated amount in favor of the MP should be 40,000 AMD for defamatory expressions. The judgement was not changed on the remaining part.

On June 2, the Court of Cassation rejected the proceedings of the appeal, considering the presented substantiations insufficient.

**The second lawsuit** was caused by a June 19, 2019 article, titled “Pashinyan Showed a Yellow Card to Hayk Sargsyan” where the MP is portrayed as “an odious figure”, notorious for scandals**.**[[35]](#footnote-35) During this quarter, a court hearing was held on June 25, the next one is scheduled for September 17.

**The third lawsuit** was caused by an article, titled “Hayk Sargsyan "made a row" on the Yerevan-Moscow plane”, published on May 26, 2019**.**[[36]](#footnote-36) On February 28, 2020, the court decided to dismiss the claim without examination, on the grounds that the plaintiff and the defendant had failed to attend two successive hearings. The plaintiff filed an appeal against this judgment with the Civil Court of Appeal. However, after rejection, the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Cassation. On February 26, 2021, the Court of Cassation upheld the claim, revoking the decision of the Court of Appeal.

On April 1, the Court of Appeal received the case after the annulment of the interim judicial act, on April 6, it accepted the case for proceedings, and upheld it on June 30, revoking the decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction.

**On April 14,** the defendant on the case of the head of Ani community *Artak Gevorgyan v. Andranik Gevorgyan*, a resident of Maralik town in the same community, appealed against the March 30 decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction to dismiss the motion to suspend the proceedings of the civil case. The third party to the case was *Zhoghovurd newspaper edition* LLC (founder of *Armlur.am* news site).

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Shirak on August 23, 2019, demanding refutation of slander and 2 million AMD compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the phrase “ate it up, robbed it all”, used in the video and the accompanying text posted on the site on August 10: “The former head robbed the village college and fled. What do people in Maralik have to share?**”.** [[37]](#footnote-37)

On April 29, 2021, the appeal was rejected, as the Civil Procedure Code does not provide for an appeal against the act.

At the hearing held on June 2, the Court of General Jurisdiction made a decision on the distribution of the burden of proof. The next court hearing is scheduled for July 8.

**On April 14**, the plaintiff on the case of *Vahe Parazyan v. Armenia TV CJSC*, journalist Shake´ Ghazaryan and lawyer Armen Feroyan filed an appeal for the second time against the judgement of the Court of General Jurisdiction, which rejected the claim.

This lawsuit, filed on August 16, 2019, was also caused by publications about the incidents between businessmen Vahe Parazyan and Samvel Karapetyan. On January 21, this lawsuit was also rejected on the same grounds. On March 1, the plaintiff filed an appeal, which was received on March 16.

On May 4, the appeal was accepted for proceedings, no other developments have been reported as of June 30.

**On April 14,** the Court of General Jurisdication of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of citizen *Erik Yeghinyan v. Factinfo news website* with claims one million AMD confiscated in his favor, a written apology and a published refutation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on February 14, 2019, was caused by the September 10, 2018 publication on the website, titled “The Prisoner Attempted a Suicide Because He Was Not Taken to the Dentist”. [[38]](#footnote-38) (For details see CPFE’s annual and quarterly reports for 2019-2020 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

On May 5 the lawsuit was completely rejected. The judgement was not appealed and entered into legal effect.

**On April 14,** *Tert.am* journalist Ani Gevorgyan applied to the Human Rights Defender, informing that she had received threats related to her professional activities from unknown people. Thus, by targeting various pages of social networks, these users shared her photo with her child on it with insulting and humiliating texts.

The Yerevan City Prosecutor's Office sent the respective publications to Yerevan City Police Department of the Republic of Armenia with the instruction to check the data mentioned in the publications and the journalist's note, finding out the relevant circumstances. Journalistic organizations also issued a statement in connection with the incident.[[39]](#footnote-39) In response to the inquiry of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, the Police informed that a criminal case was initiated on April 26, in accordance with Article 164, Part 1 of the RA Criminal Code, and was sent to the Investigative Committee, where a preliminary investigation was underway.

**On April 14,** the editor-in-chief of *Antifake.am* website Astghik Matevosyan informed on her Facebook page that the website journalist Marie Amirjanyan had been targeted by a group of users in connection with her journalistic activities. Insulting remarks were addressed to her on Facebook.

**On April 15,** *Spayka* LLC filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Zhamanak Daily* Ltd. and *First Armenian* (*1in.am* website), demanding refutation of the defamation, discrediting business reputation and publication of its reply, public apology and confiscation of compensation for the damage caused. The lawsuit was caused by the article published in the *Zhamanak* daily and *1in.am* website on March 11, “Slavery in Spayka: Employees work on Sundays without pay”. On April 23, the lawsuit was returned for corrections, refiled on May 10, and accepted for proceedings on the 25th. As of June 30, there were no other developments.

**On April 15**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NA deputy Hayk Sargsyan v. Irates* *newspaper*, with claims of compensation of damage caused to honor and dignity through slander and insult.

The lawsuit, filed on October 1, 2019, was caused by the article published in the September 6 issue of the newspaper, titled “You Only Used to Hold the Water Bottle for Nikol: Anna Hakobyan”, which particularly states “When Hayk Sargsyan, who is getting angry with the expression “Nikol’s bottle holder” and suing media, talked against the use of Amulsar, Anna Hakobyan reminded him again of his position. “You only used to hold the water bottle for Nikol”.

Court hearings on the case were held on May 25, the next one is scheduled for July 21.

**On April 15**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to drop the proceedings on the case of *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Andradardz Press Club NGO and Armenuhi Hovsepyan*.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on June 19, 2019, with claims of compensation of the damage caused to honor, dignity and good reputation through defamation and insult. The lawsuit was caused by an article, titled “Who donated an expensive car to Hayk Sargsyan and why: all is known” published on *Newspress.am* website of Andradardz Press Club.[[40]](#footnote-40)

The decision of dropping the case was made on the same day, as a result of the plaintiff’s withdrawal of the claim.

**On April 16**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Gegham Vardanyan, Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission, v. Yerkir Editorial Office Ltd*. with claims of public refutation of the information considered defamatory and insulting, an apology and confiscation of a compensation.

The lawsuit was filed on September 9, 2020 and was caused by an article, titled “Whatever the result of the investigation initiated by Myasnikovich, the consequences will not be particularly severe for Gegham Vardanyan. REX” and published on *Yerkir.am* website on September 2, which accuses Gegham Vardanyan of corrupt deals**.**[[41]](#footnote-41)

On May 6, the court decided to partially uphold the lawsuit, namely oblige Yerkir editorial office Ltd. to publicly refute the information about Gegham Vardanyan, considered defamatory, apologize to the plaintiff, confiscate 300,000 AMD in favor of the latter as compensation for insult and 700,000 AMD for defamation, as well as 28,000 AMD as a state fee.

On June 3, the defendant appealed the verdict, and on June 15, the appeal was assigned to the judge in the Court of Appeal.

On June 21, another court hearing on the case of the same plaintiff against *Pastinfo* Ltd. was held, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article, titled “The Armenian Representative in the Eurasian Economic Commission is Suspected of Abuse” and published on *Pastinfo.am* website on August 31, 2020.[[42]](#footnote-42)

On June 23, a decision was made to distribute the burden of proof. The next court hearing is scheduled for October 28.

**On April 16,** NA deputy Vahe Enfiajyan filed a lawsuit against *Social Media LLC*, the founder of *Mamul.am* website, demanding public refutation of the information discrediting his honor and dignity and compensation for defamation. The lawsuit was caused by the article published on *Mamul.am* website on December 9, 2020, titled “Vahe Enfiajyan's Assistant Offers to Write Praises about Tsarukyan in Exchange for Money and Discredit Pashinyan”. This is the plaintiff’s second lawsuit on the same matter, as the first one was returned.

On April 28, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. A preliminary court hearing is scheduled for July 20.

**On April 16,** Artak Mkhitaryan, Deputy Director for Protection of Khosrov Forest State Reserve SNCO, filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Econews.am environmental website, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity through insult and slander, and publication of refutation. The lawsuit was caused by the article published on that website on March 9, titled “"Environmental officials" engaged in illegal hunting in Syunik”.[[43]](#footnote-43) On April 22, the lawsuit was returned for corrections and was refiled on May 27, being accepted for proceedings on June 14.

**On April 19,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Gevorg Gorgisyan, MP of the National Assembly, v. the Power of Speech NGO* (*founder of 4rd.am website)* with claims of apology, a compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity and business reputation and confiscation of 1 million AMD.

The lawsuit, filed on April 2, 2020, was caused by an article published on *4rd.am* on Feburay 29, titled “Gorgisyan could be a pickpocket”.[[44]](#footnote-44) “We officially declare that unless Michael Minasyan has established the Bright Armenia Party and but for Georgisyan’s surname as his competitive advantage, the latter would definitely be a pickpocket”, the website wrote in particular.

A court hearing was also held on May 18, and on May 31 the lawsuit was rejected, moreover, the plaintiff was obliged to pay 100,000 AMD to the defendant as attorney's reasonable fee. As of June 30, no other developments have been reported.

**On April 19,** *Iravunk Media* LLCand journalist Ilona Azaryanas defendants and on April 30, NA MP Hayk Sargsyanas plaintiff applied to Civil Court of Appeal, appealing the judgement on their case made by the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan on March 2.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on June 13, 2019, and was caused by an article published in the *Iravunk* newspaper on May 14, stating that “the entire information package against David Sanasaryan (former head of the State Control Service- **CPFE**) reached the NSS with Hayk Sargsyan’s help”. The plaintiff is claiming 1 million AMD in compensation for damage caused to honor, dignity and good reputation through insult and slander.

The court partially upheld the claim. Accordingly, the defendant was obligated to pay 90,000 AMD in compensation for the damage caused to the plaintiff's honor and dignity. In addition, it was decided to confiscate 200,000 AMD from the plaintiff in favor of the defendant Ilona Azaryan and 48,200 AMD in favor of *Iravunk Media* LLC, as an attorney’s reasonable fee.

On May 14, the defendant's appeal was accepted for proceedings, and on May 7, the plaintiff's appeal was returned by the court for corrections, at the same time satisfying the motion to consider the reasons for missing the period of appealing viable. On June 18, the plaintiff refiled the complaint, which was accepted for proceedings on June 28.

**On April 19**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister Eduard Aghajanyan v. the founder of 168.am website 168 Zham Ltd*., claiming refutation of defamatory information and a compensation for defamation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on July 10, 2020, was caused by an article, titled “A Party in the Government-owned Fermata Club” and published on the website on June 7.[[45]](#footnote-45) The article narrated that the club, owned by Eduard Aghajanyan, violated the Commandant’s decisions by organizing a night-club style party with the participation of several dozen people in a closed space, such as his club, which is an act prohibited during the state of emergency caused by COVID-19. By the way, Eduard Aghajanyan sent a refutation text to the editorial office, but the latter did not publish it due to disagreement with the presented arguments. The first lawsuit was returned, and the plaintiff filed a new application on August 11.

A court hearing on the case also was held on June 1, the next one is scheduled for September 15.

**On April 19,** businessman Khachatur Sukiasyan filed **seven lawsuits** against media outlets in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, demanding a public apology, publication of the court judgement, refutation of factual information considered defamatory, as well as payment of compensation. All the lawsuits were caused by the article with the same title and contents, published on different websites on March 25: “Beware. Khachatur Sukiasyan's Petrolium Spoils Cars. Déjà vu”. Moreover, all of them are published with a link to unidentified sources. **The first lawsuit** is against Spartak Seyranyan (*Yerkir.am* website).[[46]](#footnote-46) On May 12, this lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the motion to seize the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim was rejected. As of June 30, no other developments were reported.

**The second lawsuit** is against *Asekose LLC*, founder of *Asekose.am* website.[[47]](#footnote-47) On May 3, this lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, and a preliminary hearing was scheduled for September 14. **The third lawsuit** is against *Armday.am LLC*, founder of *Armday.am* website.[[48]](#footnote-48) On April 30, this lawsuit was returned for corrections, and refiled on May 14, and on May 25, it was accepted for proceedings. On the same day, the motion to apply injunction, i.e. seizure on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was upheld until the execution of the final judicial act on this case. As of June 30, no other developments were reported. **The fourth lawsuit** was against *Media Plus LLC*, the founder of *Yerevan.Today* website.[[49]](#footnote-49) In this case, the plaintiff stated the amount of compensation - 3 million AMD. On May 5, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the motion to apply injunction, i.e. seizure of the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 27. **The** **fifth lawsuit** is against *168 Zham LLC*, the founder of *Blog.168.am* website, with claims of 2 million AMD of compensation.[[50]](#footnote-50) The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on May 3, the motion to apply injunction, i.e. seizure of the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 27. **The sixth lawsuit** is against *News AM LLC*, the founder of *News.am* website.[[51]](#footnote-51) On April 28, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the motion to apply injunction, i.e. seizure of the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. As of June 30, no other developments have been reported.

On the same day, because of the same article *Mega Trade* LLC, owned by the businessman, filed **5 lawsuits** against the founders of *Armday.am, Yerevan.today, Blog.168.am, Asekose.am, and News.am*, demanding public refutation of the data considered defamatory, as well as compensation. On April 27, the case with **the first lawsuit** was reappointed, on May 6 it was accepted for proceedings, the motion to apply injunction, i.e. seizure of the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. **The second lawsuit** was accepted for proceedings on April 29. The motion to apply injunction, i.e. seizure of the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. **The third lawsuit** was accepted for proceedings on May 3, and a court hearing is scheduled for September 14. **The fourth lawsuit** was accepted for proceedings on April 28, the motion to apply injunction, i.e. seizure of the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. A court hearing is scheduled for July 12. **The fifth lawsuit** was accepted for proceedings on April 28; the motion to apply injunction, i.e. seizure of the property belonging to the defendant, including money, in the amount of the claim, was rejected. A court hearing is scheduled for July 12.

**On April 19,** businessman Khachatur Sukiasyan filed another lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Pastinfo LLC, demanding public refutation of the factual data considered defamatory and a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article, titled “Khachatur Sukiasyan summoned journalist Nairi Hokhikyan and demanded not to criticize Nikol Pashinyan” published on *Pastinfo.am* website on March 22.[[52]](#footnote-52) On April 30, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the motion to seize the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim was rejected. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 29.

**On April 20**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Shirak Marz held a regular hearing on the case of *citizens of Susanna Minasyan and Arkadi Boyajyan v. ATV Ltd.*, claiming confiscation of 2 million AMD in compensation for violating the right to privacy of personal and family life. We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on October 30, 2018, caused by a regular edition of the Semi-Open Window program on the aforementioned TV channel, uploaded onto the Internet on October 1, 2018, about a housing dispute between neighbors.[[53]](#footnote-53)

On September 10, 2019, the court suspended the proceedings until a final ruling was reached on another case between the parties. The proceedings were resumed on February 25, 2020. The case was reappointed on April 20, the case was handed over to another judge, being accepted for proceedings on April 23.

Court hearings on the case were held on May 12 and June 16. The next one is scheduled for August 4.

**On April 20**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *Sona Budaghyan, Head of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports of Armavir Regional Administration, against Hzham.am and its founder, Anna Gevorgyan Private Entrepreneur*, claiming refutation of information, discrediting the honor, dignity and business reputation, and compensation. The lawsuit, filed on December 21, 2020, was caused by an article, titled “Scandal! A bribe in exchange for position. Corruption, flavoured with revolution”[[54]](#footnote-54) and published on the website on December 19. According to the article, Sona Budaghyan took a bribe from a citizen for an appointment in the position of a school principal.

A court hearing on the case was held on June 8, the next one is scheduled for October 5.

**On April 21,** during the visit of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Kapan, Syunik, the professional activity of 5 TV correspondent Anush Mirzoyan was hindered. According to the journalist, she was prevented from working by the Prime Minister's spokesperson Mane Gevorgyan, the police and the NA Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan, constantly “getting in her way” and trying to take the phone.[[55]](#footnote-55) The video of what happened was posted on the Internet.

**On April 21**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *Yerevan Zoo Director Ruben Khachatryan v. journalist Narine Kirakosyan*, claiming refutation of information considered slander and monetary compensation for non-pecuniary damage. The lawsuit was first filed on September 24, 2019, then returned by plaintiff’s request and refiled on November 13. The lawsuit was caused by the journalist's Facebook post on August 25, where she stated that Ruben Khachatryan had inflicted great damage to the animals by declaring himself a sole leader. (For details see CPFE’s annual and quarterly reports for 2019-2021 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

A court hearing on the case was also held on June 8, the next one is scheduled for October 5.

**On April 21**, the plaintiff on the case of *Vahe Parazyan v. Tert.am LLC*, the founder of Tert.am news website, applied to the Court of Appeal, appealing the March 9 decision of the First Instance on rejecting the lawsuit.

The lawsuit, filed by Vahe Parazyan on August 15, 2019, was caused by an article titled “Vahe Parazyan, Who reported Against Samvel Karapetyan’s Nephew, Has a Criminal Backgound”, and published on the aforementioned website on July 16.[[56]](#footnote-56) The plaintiff is demanding public refutation of defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity. Rejecting the claim, the court found that the defendant did not intend to discredit or tarnish the plaintiff's honor and dignity when making the impugned statements, therefore, they were value judgments.

The appeal was accepted for proceedings on May 24, a hearing on the case was held on June 24, and publication of the judicial act was scheduled for July 15.

**On April 21, the** Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *journalist Arthur Hovhannisyan v. the RA Ministry of Health* (*Aravot daily* Ltd was recognized as a third party).

We should remind that the lawuist, filed on June 11, 2018, was caused by the information published on the *Moh.am* site of the ministry under heading “One should not rely on falsification: there was no attempt of vaccination at Aygabats school in Shirak province”.[[57]](#footnote-57) According to the plaintiff, that publication contains insult and slander addressed to him. (For details see CPFE’s annual and quarterly reports for 2018-2021 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

During the hearing held on May 12, the lawsuit was completely rejected. As of June 30, no appeal has been filed.

**On April 21,** citizen Ashot Parazyan’s appeal on the case against *Tert AM* LLC, founder of *Tert.am* new site, was refiled for the second time and accepted for proceedings in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan on 29th.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed by Vahe Parazyan on August 16, 2019, was caused by an article titled “Vahe Parazyan, who reported Against Samvel Karapetyan’s Nephew, Has a Criminal Backgound”, and published on the website on July 16.[[58]](#footnote-58) The plaintiff is demanding public refutation of defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity. On January 21, 2021 the court dismissed the lawsuit on the grounds that the impugned expressions were value judgments. On February 24, the plaintiff applied to the Court of Appeal, which returned the appeal on March 17.

The publication of judicial act is scheduled for July 14.

**On April 21**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *citizen Edgar Janibekyan v. Gagik Shamshyan, the founder of Shamshyan Media Ltd.*, with claims of refutation of information considered defamation and compensation for non-pecuniary damage.

The lawsuit, filed on July 14, 2020, was caused by an article, titled “Arabkir District Police Discover Another Large Batch of Drugs in Yerevan: the 26-year-old suspect bought it over Telegram App: A Photo Report” and published on Shamshyan.com website on June 14. In the article the website, referring to the information it availed of, wrote that Edgar Janibekyan was among the detained.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Court hearings on the case were held on May 13 and June 15. During the last hearing, the court rejected Edgar Janibekyan's motion to dismiss the judge on the grounds of biased attitude. The next court hearing is scheduled for July 19.

**On April 22**, Ararat and Vayots Dzor Marz Court of General Jurisdiction (Artashat residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of *Ararat Governor Garik Sargsyan v. 168 Zham LLC* with claims of public refutation of factual data considered slander and compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

The lawsuit, filed on December 20, 2019, was caused by the article, titled “Again an Incident with the Participation of Governor of Ararat” published on the *168.am* website, which states that again there was a fight with Garik Sargsyan’s participation and that the hairdresser Serob was beaten for not cutting the governor's hair asking him to wait for his turn and was not allowed to continue working in Nor Kyank community.[[60]](#footnote-60)

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 12.

**On April 23,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *lawyer Aram Orbelyan v. the Republic of Armenia*, in the person of the National Security Service and the Public Television of Armenia CJSC, claiming a refutation of the defamatory information and a compensation of the damage caused.

The lawsuit, filed on March, 2020, was caused by the report within the main news program on the Public Television on January 30, which, according to its author Gevorg Tosunyan, was based on official explanations. The report contained information provided by the NSS, stating that lawyer Aram Orbelyan regularly visited the Constitutional Court without presenting an ID, and his entries were not logged.[[61]](#footnote-61)

A court hearing on the case was also held on June 11, the next one is scheduled on July 2.

**On April 26,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor marzes (Masis residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of *Nver Mnatsakanyan, a journalist and anchor at 1in.am website, v. Hayeli Club and Garnik Isagulyan*, with claims of public apology and publication of the judgment in the media.

The lawsuit was caused by a video, titled “Hey, Nver, aren’t you ashamed: you will serve whoever pays you: Garnik Isagulyan” published on *Hayeli.am* website on April 14, 2019, where the latter made his assessment on Nver Mnatsakanyan's activities.[[62]](#footnote-62)

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 26.

**On April 28**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Anriva Tour LLC v. Ani Alexanyan* (with *Public Television of Armenia* CJSC, *Educational Planet* LLC as third party) with claims for the protection of business reputation. We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 1, 2019, was caused by the statements made on the “One Window” program about *Anriva-Tour* on the public television channel on July 1, which the plaintiff considers to be defamatory.[[63]](#footnote-63)

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 19.

**On April 30,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *citizen Boris Gasparyan v. Armen Abroyan, Hraparak Daily Ltd. and Factor Information Center NGO* claiming for protection of honor and dignity and a confiscation of a compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on July 29,2020, was caused by the articles about the archeologist Boris Gasparyan published on *Hraparak.am* and *Factor.am* websites. Thus, the article, titled “Tomato and pepper seedlings are planted in Areni Cave under the disguise of viticulture development” and published on *hraparak.am* website on June 19, stated that according to Armen Abroyan, former head of the History and Monuments Protection Agency, Boris Gasparyan was allowed to lease out the cave, where tomato and pepper seedlings are planted under the disguise of viticulture development in Areni, moreover, specifically in the reserve area.[[64]](#footnote-64) . *Factor.am*, too, published an article with the same content on June 27, titled “Who planted tomatoes and peppers in the area of ​​Areni cave? Abroyan blames the archeologist, the latter names the offender”.[[65]](#footnote-65)

The next court hearing is scheduled for August 3.

**On April 30,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Armenian Progressive Youth NGO v. Konstantin Ter-Nakalyan*, *Editor-in-Chief of BlogNews.am and the founder of Channel 5 TV Company, SHARK LLC*, with claims of refuting a defamatory statement, apologizing for insult and seeking compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on May 6, 2019, was caused by a statement made by Konstantin Ter-Nakalian in the Channel 5's *Face to Face* program on April 5 that Progressive Youth NGO implemented LGBT campaign in a Kotayk region school.[[66]](#footnote-66) (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2019-2020 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 7.

**On April 30,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Alvina Gyulumyan, a former member of the Constitutional Court, v. Dareskizb LTD., the founder of the Armenian Times daily*, with claims of refutation of defamation and compensation.

We should remind that lawsuit, filed on August 22, 2018, was caused by the article published in the newspaper, according to which in her position of an ECHR judge representing Armenia, Gyulumyan spared no effort to postpone the trial of one of the cases, filed to the ECHR and related to the well-known events in Yerevan dated to March 1, 2008.

On December 6, 2019 Alvina Gyulumyan’s lawsuit was rejected in the Court of First Instance, on the grounds of statute of limitations, and on December 30, the plaintiff filed an appeal. On April 15, 2020 the Court of Appeal made a judgment to uphold Alvina Gyulumyan’s appeal against the First Instance Court judgment, overturning it and sending the case to the same court for a new trial.

Court hearing on the case was also held on June 14, and the next one is scheduled for September 8.

**On May 4,** in the second part of the hearing on the case of *former RA President Robert Kocharyan v. politician Aram Manukyan* in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, the judge, at the request of the plaintiff, banned *1in.am* website operator Hrant Badunts from continuing filming and live broadcasting. The defendant did not agree to the ban. If we take into account that in the first part of the hearing the media were allowed to film, while in the second part only the mentioned media outlet was present, the work of which was hindered, we can state that discrimination was displayed. Especially if we also take into account that the plaintiff has several lawsuits against *1in.am*. In addition, the ban was not substantiated, which contradicts the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the relevant decision of the RA Supreme Judicial Council.

**On May 5,** Artak Mkhitaryan, Deputy Director for Protection of Khosrov Forest State Reserve SNCO, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General jurisdiction of Yerevan against journalist Narine Kirakosyan, demanding compensation for the damages caused to his honor and dignity through slander, and public refutation. The lawsuit was caused by the journalist's Facebook post that some officials, including Artak Mkhitaryan, carried out illegal hunting in Syunik. After filing the lawsuit, the post was removed from Facebook.

On May 14, the lawsuit was returned for corrections. As of June 30, no new lawsuit was filed.

**On May 5,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *politician Vahan Babayan v. journalist and publicist Lisa Jagharyan*.

The lawsuit was filed on May 10, 2019, and was caused by Liza Jagharyan's Facebook post on April 13: “One by the name vahan babayan may claim the first place in global slobber competition”.The next court hearing is scheduled for July 19.

**On May 6,** the defendant on the case of *Alvina Gyulumyan, member of the Constitutional Court v. lawyer Tigran Hayrapetyan* *and Skizb Media Kentron Ltd*., *the founder of* the *Zhamanak* *daily*, applied to the Civil Court of Appeal, appealing the March 10 judgement of the First Instance Court, which partially upheld Alvina Gyulumyan’s claim.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 7, 2018, was caused by the interview by Tigran Hayrapetyan, titled “We should Send a Lawyer to ECHR, who will not Exchange Impartiality with an Order”.[[67]](#footnote-67) The publication touched upon the activities of Alvina Gyulumyan in her capacity as ECHR judge, in particular stating that she had made a cunning move to prevent cases against Armenia to be heard at ECHR. The plaintiff rendered this statement to be slander.

By the decision of March 10, the media outlet was obliged to refute information, discrediting Alvina Gyulumyan's honor and dignity, Tigran Hayrapetyan was obliged to pay 500,000 AMD in compensation for the damage caused, and *Skizb Media Kentron* Ltd. and Tigran Hayrapetyan had to pay 18,000 AMD by principle of liability in solido as a state fee and 500,000 AMD as an attorney’s fee.

On May 27, the court rejected the defendant's motion to reinstate the deadline set by law for filing an appeal, as well as acceptance of the appeal. As of June 30, no other developments were reported.

**On May 7**, the Court of Appeal rejected the defendant’s appeal against the judgement of the Court of General Jurisdiction, which partially upheld the lawsuit on the case of *citizen Babken Ghazaryan v. Daniel Ioannisyan, Program Director of the Union of Informed Citizens*.

The lawsuit, filed on May 31, 2019, was caused by Daniel Ioannisyan's statement accusing NSS Director Arthur Vanetsyan of having a close relationship with Arshak Hakobyan, Aram Vardanyan known as “Vestrechi Aper” and Babken Ghazaryan known as “Tokhmakhi Babo”, calling them “criminal authorities” at Media Center on May 22.[[68]](#footnote-68) The plaintiff claims refutation of information considered defamatory and compensation.

On December 24 the court partially upheld the claim. Accordingly, Daniel Ioannisyan was obligated to refute the information about Babken Ghazaryan in the presence of the media, pay 200,000 AMD to the plaintiff as compensation for damage to his honor and dignity through slander, 8,000 AMD as state duty, and 100,000 AMD as an attorney’s reasonable fee. On February 2, the defendant filed an appeal in the Court of Appeal. After rejection no cassation appeal was filed.

**On May 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular corut hearing on the case of *citizen Roman Baghdasaryan v. Media Plus Ltd.*, claiming refutation of slander and a compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on August 19, 2020, was caused by an article published on *Yerevan.Today* website on August 7: “Russian special services take interest in the editors of the “Bagramyan 26” channel that spreads disinformation”.[[69]](#footnote-69) It stated that one of the admins of the mentioned Telegram channel was Roman Baghdasaryan, who lived in Russia, and had been targeted by the Russian special services. The federal government had decided to expel them from Russia. And the reason was that, according to the website, they were hiding behind secret accounts and were actually targeting Russia, a strategic ally of Armenia.

On June 1, the court terminated the proceedings on the case on the grounds of agreement between the parties.

**On May 12,** Andranik Kocharyan, a member of the My Step faction and chairman of the NA Committee on Defense and Security, expressed disrespect towards Hripsime Jebejyan, a journalist in the *Aravot.am* website. Crossing the boundaries of ethics, the official insulted the journalist by asking very personal questions.[[70]](#footnote-70)

**On May 13,** *the Armenia National Interests Fund* CJSC filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *168 Zham* LLC, demanding refutation of the information discrediting business reputation and monetary compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the article published on *168․am* website on April 12, titled “Waiting for Investments”, which particularly states that the promised investments are not made by the fund, instead the government provided large grants to the fund without organizing a tender.[[71]](#footnote-71)

On May 27, the lawsuit was returned for corrections and refiled on June 23.

**On May 13,** NA Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Tert.am* journalist Ani Gevorgyan demanding public refutation of information considered defamatory.

The lawsuit was caused by the interview given by Ani Gevorgyan at the *Mirror* club on April 16, where the latter accused Alen Simonyan of organizing a campaign against her with threats and insults.[[72]](#footnote-72)

On May 27, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. As of June 30, no other developments were reported.

**On May 17,** Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction resumed the trial on the case of *citizen Gagik Gevorkyan v. Armenian Times* *daily, its founder Dareskibz LLC and two other citizens* with claims of refuting the information damaging honor and dignity and paying a compensation for insult and slander. The lawsuit was filed on July 24, 2019, accepted for proceedings on September 30 and caused by the article “They try to use our patriotism and deceive us. Serzh Sargsyan's adviser “dumped” a Canadian-Armenian businessman**”**[[73]](#footnote-73) published in the *Armenian Times* on May 22 and on *Armtimes.com* website on May 24.

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 7.

**On May 19,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor held a regular court hearing on the case of *Lydian Armenia company v. journalist Tehmine Yenokyan*.

The lawsuit was filed on September 5, 2018, and caused by live-streaming on Tehmine Yenokyan’s Facebook page and in the mineral water drinking hall of Jermuk city on August 12. According to the plaintiff, the journalist uttered expressions discrediting the business reputation of the company made during her public speech, for which compensation of 1 million AMD, and refutation of the defamatory information in the same place through a Facebook live stream is demanded. (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2018-2020 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

A court hearing on the case was held on June 24, the next one is scheduled for July 28.

After the **May 20** session of the Government, in response to the question of *Hraparak* daily journalist Vahe Makaryan, whether it would be possible to sign such a document in the rule of the previous authorities, which Nikol Pashinyan is going to do, Diaspora Commissioner Zareh Sinanyan answered․ “Yes, it would have happened during the time of your masters”. The official also stated that “the masters” pay the journalist to ask questions.[[74]](#footnote-74) By the way, the journalist answered the official in the same indecent way.

**On May 21,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Ara Harutyunyan, a former employee of the National Security Service, v. the founder of 1in.am website Skizb Media Kentron Ltd*., claiming refutation of defamatory facts, publication of the refutation text and a compensation of the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

The lawsuit, filed on August 31, 2020, was caused by an article published on *1in.am* on July 31, which stated that the plaintiff had served in the RA NSS for more than 20 years, and according to rumors, was paid cash in envelopes for years by the chief accountant of South Caucasus Railway company in exchange for “turning a blind eye” to the robberies along the railways, the organized smuggling of goods․ He also engaged in protectionism.[[75]](#footnote-75)

A court hearing on the case was held on June 30, the next one is scheduled on July 6.

**On May 24**, the Court of General Jurisdiction Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *former Vayots Dzor governor Trdat Sargsyan v. Hraparak Daily LLC*, claiming a confiscation of a compensation in the amount of 2 million AMD and obligation for refutation of data considered slander.

We should remind thet the lawsuit was filed on October 30, 2019, and was caused by a publication in the newspaper, according to which Governor Trdat Sargsyan was present at the brutal beating of Lieutenant Colonel Ara Mkhitaryan.[[76]](#footnote-76)

As of June 30, the next hearing has not been scheduled yet.

**On May 25**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Exclusive Store Ltd. v. the journalist, actress Arus Tigranyan*, with claims of refutation of the false information that discredited business reputation and without monetary compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on April 10, 2020, was caused by Arus Tigranyan's post on her Instagram, where she addressed the public with a message not to buy phones or accessories in the shops belonging to the company because of the poor quality of service. Before filing a lawsuit, Arus Tigranyan was offered to publish refutation, which she refused.

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled for July 8.

**On May 25**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the first court hearing on the case of *the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Suren Papikyan v. “Anna Gevorgyan” Private Entrepreneur (founder of HZham news website)*.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on June 22, 2020, claiming public refutation of the defamatory data and payment of compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article published on *Hzham.am* on May 15, titled “My Step party members are interested in the real estate market”, which states in particular that the governors, led by Minister Suren Papikyan, are buying houses in the capital “without paying”, as they provide services, demanding an apartment as a donation.[[77]](#footnote-77) On December 17, the motion to apply injunction, i.e. seizure on the property, was upheld.

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 27.

**On May 25**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the first court hearing on the case of *Vardan Badasyan (the father of the RA Minister of Justice Rustam Badasyan-* ***CPFE****) v. Alternative NGO co-chair Narek Mantashyan and News.am, Analitik.am, 168.am, Iravunk.com, Blognews.am, Alternativ.am, Ipress.am websites*.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on July 10, 2020, with claims to publicly refute the defamatory factual data, publish the refutation in the relevant media, compensate the damage caused to the honor, dignity and business reputation. The lawsuit was caused by articles about Vardan Badasyan's activity of many years, published on the above-mentioned websites, according to which he assigned positions for money.[[78]](#footnote-78)

The next court hearing is scheduled for September 28.

**On May 27,** acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's security guards prevented PARA TV employees from filming.[[79]](#footnote-79) According to the media outlet, the film crew was not only forbidden to cover the meeting with the voters, but also to enter the village of Kut, where Pashinyan was.

On the same day, the film crew of *168․am* website also reported that they were not allowed to enter Kut village to talk to the village mayor.[[80]](#footnote-80) The employee of the Ministry of Defense substantiated the ban by security related issues.

**On May 28,** on the occasion of the Republic Day, the acting Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan visited the Memorial Complex of Sardarapat Battle, and the entrance of the media employees there was restricted. No official explanation was provided on this occasion.

The issue was also addressed by the Human Rights Defender. It turned out later that only the Public Television received the right to cover the event.[[81]](#footnote-81)

**On May 31**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan made a reappointment on the case of *the successors of the 9 victims of March 1 events v. Shark Ltd., founder of Channel 5 TV and Narek Mantashyan, co-founder of Alternative NGO*.

 We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on June 16, 2020, with claims of compensation for the damage caused to their honor and dignity. The lawsuit was caused by an interview on Channel 5 set with Mantashyan's participation, during which he made slanderous and insulting remarks about the legal successors of the March 1 victims. In particular, as the plaintiffs' representative Tigran Yegoryan clarified, the statements contained declarations on hooliganism, mass disorders, and bribery.[[82]](#footnote-82) The plaintiffs demand that both defendants jointly compensate each legal successor in the amount of 2 million AMD for defamation and 1 million AMD for insult.

The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings after reappointment on June 10.

**On June 1,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Armavir held a regular court hearing on the case of *the head of Arshaluys community of Armavir marz, Zarzand Grigoryan v. citizen Virab Shahbazyan and Bats TV Plus Ltd.*, seeking a refutation of slander, a public apology and confiscation of a sum as compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on July 24, 2020, was caused by the broadcast on Bats TV, dated October 29, 2019, during which Virab Shahbazyan, a resident of Arshaluys village, spoke about Zarzand Grigoryan's activities, in particular, noting that the latter was still continuing his illegal activities even after the revolution. “He has been persecuting, robbing and oppressing the people for 12 years, he manages the village alone, sells the lands at a high price, and the authorities and law-enforcers do not interfere in all this”.[[83]](#footnote-83)

The next court hearing is scheduled for August 12.

**On June 1,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of citizen *Artur Vardanyan v.* *168 Zham* Ltd. *and citizen David Pirumyan* with claims of obligating the defendant to apologize, refute the defamatory data and confiscating a compensation.

We should remind that the first lawsuit on the case was filed on April 6, 2020, and the second one was filed on July 10. The lawsuit was caused by an article, titled “Nikol Pashinyan talked to Artur Vardanyan during his campaign” and published on March 6.[[84]](#footnote-84) The website wrote: “In the course of the campaign, as noted by the active Facebook user David Pirumyan, Nikol Pashinyan greeted and talked to Artur Vardanyan, who was the leader of the group neutralized in 2015”, and they quoted Pirumyan: “The Prime-Minister warmly greeted the terrorist Artur Vardanyan who was incomprehensibly released by the court during the former’s rule.”

On June 15, the court decided to reject the claim on the grounds that the claim was statute-barred, for which the defendant filed a motion.

**On June 2,** in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Gegharkunik Marz (Martuni residence), the trial on the criminal case of hindering the professional activities of the employees of *Radio Liberty* by the former Chief of Police of the Republic of Armenia Vladimir Gasparyan continued.

We should remind that the incident happened on August 8, 2020, near the former official’s private house on the shore of lake Sevan, where noticing that the reporters were filming, Gasparyan drove the car in their direction, threatening to run over them, physically destroy them, “shoot” them, “kill them”, swearing and demanding not to publish the video. On September 17, Vladimir Gasparyan was charged by the General Department of Investigation of Particularly Important Cases at the Central Office of the the RA Investigative Committee, and recognizance was chosen as a precautionary measure. On October 15, the Court received the criminal case from the RA Prosecutor's Office with an indictment.

 On February 19, 2021, the court decided to satisfy the motion of Vladimir Gasparyan's lawyer and to abolish the above-mentioned precautionary measure. The next hearing on the case is scheduled for July 30.

**On June 3,** *Hraparak* daily correspondent Anush Dashtents tried to ask NA MP Hayk Sargsyan a question when he was walking down the street with friends. In response, the MP took the phone and left, saying that he would not return it until “the journalist comes to her senses”.[[85]](#footnote-85) Hours after the incident, the phone was returned decrypted, and the video was deleted. The police invited the journalist to the department to submit a report.

On June 18, the Special Investigation Service decided to reject the initiation of a criminal case on the grounds of lack of corpus delicti. In connection with this and the actual incident, the CPFE issued statements with partner organizations, condemning both the MP's behavior and the strange decision of the SIS, which did not consider the act as an obstacle to the journalist's lawful professional activity, as they neglected the facts about seizing the phone, decrypting it and deleting the videos.

**On June 7**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan made a reappointment on the case of *Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan v. Anna Gevorgyan, the director of the* *Haykakan Zham* *news website*, changing the presiding judge.

 The lawsuit was caused by an article, titled “Did he pay for silence?” published on *Hzham.am* on April 20 which stated that Alen Simonyan had made a row in the restaurant, cursed, broke the table and the dishes, then paid the restaurant owner to keep silent.[[86]](#footnote-86) The plaintiff claims public refutation of factual data deemed defamatory and compensation of damage.

**On February 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori Marz (Vanadzor residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of *teacher Susanna Sargsyan v. Shushanna Grigoryan, the correspondent of Hraparak.am website.*

The case is being re-examined in the court of first instance. The lawsuit was caused by articles, titled “Head of Vanadzor School N8 was Fired” (October 4, 2013)[[87]](#footnote-87) and “A Teacher in Vanadzor Received 12 Million AMD for Forced Idle Time” (December 5, 2013) [[88]](#footnote-88) and published on *Hraparak.am* (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2016-2020 in the *Reports* section on the khosq.am website).

The next court hearing is scheduled for October 12.

**On June 8**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan made a reappointment on the case of *businessman Levon Marcos v. 24News Ltd*., changing the presiding judge.

The lawsuit, filed on May 26, 2020 with claims of refutation of the information discrediting honor, dignity and business reputation, was caused by the article published on *24news.am* website on May 21, titled “Fraud of 300 million dollars. How was the biggest financial fraud attempt in the country prevented?”[[89]](#footnote-89) The article, in particular, refers to the criminal case initiated against Marcos in Armenia, and states the certificate issued by the World Bank helped to reveal that Levon Marcos had issued $ 300 million counterfeit bonds, thus trying to fulfill the biggest financial fraud in the history of Armenia.

After the reappointment, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on June 22. A court hearing is scheduled for October 19.

**On June 9,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *Chambarak Mayor Vazgen Adamyan v. the founder of the Zhamanak newspaper Skizb Media Kentron Ltd*., demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity. During the hearing, a decision was made to distribute the burden of proof and define the facts to be proved, as well as set a deadline for their submission – July 8.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on January 14 and was caused by the article published in the newspaper and *1in.am* website on December 11, 2020, titled “Chambarak Mayor Suspected of Selling Military Aid”.[[90]](#footnote-90) On January 25, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings.

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 9.

**On June 10**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *citizen Hayk Mkrtchyan v. Armnews TV CJSC,* demanding refutation of information considered slander and compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on May 13, 2019, was caused by the news that 32-year-old Hayk Mkrtchyan, a resident of Nor Nork administrative district of Yerevan, used counterfeit banknotes, published in the mentioned media. The plaintiff considers this slander and demands refutation.

On June 25, the court rejected the lawsuit.

**On June 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan decided to reject citizen Khachatur Khachatryan’s lawsuit against *Shamshyan Media* LLC with claims of public apology for damage caused to honor and dignity and compensation of damage at 1 million AMD.

The lawsuit, filed on April 17, 2019, was caused by an article titled “Shirak marz police operation against drug addicts. Two of the detained have just been released under amnesty. Deputy Director of one of the Diaspora Ministry's SNCOs is among the Detained”, published in *Shamshyan.com* on March 13.[[91]](#footnote-91)

The court found that the defendant had not intended to tarnish the plaintiff's reputation, and had not originally intended to discredit his honor, dignity or business reputation.

As of June 30, no appeal against the lawsuit has been filed.

**On June 10,** *Demi Pharm* LLC filed a lawsuit against *Hetq* LLC, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory and seeking compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the article published on *Hetq.am* website on May 6, titled “National Institute of Health registers children's vitamins with violations.”[[92]](#footnote-92) The article mentions that *Demi Pharm* assured the website that children's vitamins had to have a state registration, and it was trying buy some time to make up for the inexistent registration document, which was granted by the National Institute of Health in a suspiciously short period and with various violations. On May 15, the media outlet wrote that based on the previous article, the Food Safety Inspection Body would conduct a monitoring check in *Demi Pharm* company.[[93]](#footnote-93)

As of June 30, the lawsuit was not accepted for proceedings.

**On June 11**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of citizen *Zaven Hakobyan v.* *Zhamanak* *daily*, claiming a compensation for the non-pecuniary damage caused to his business reputation, a public apology and a refutation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on July 13, 2020, was caused by an article, published in the daily on June 13, titled “What Vanetsyan Left Behind? Who are Zaven and Sos Hakobyans?” where it was particularly mentioned that when the former head of the NSS Artur Vanetsyan was in office, “his godson Zaven Hakobyan who was notorious for being extremely corrupt was promoted from an operative inspector to the head of the super profitable Araratyan Customs, however, after Vanetsyan’s dismissal, he also managed to escape the system by a near miss”.[[94]](#footnote-94)

A hearing on the case was held on June 25, and the publication of the judicial act was scheduled for July 19.

**On June 11**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the first court hearing with the newly initiated proceedings on the case of *journalists Liana Karapetyan and Siranush Muradyan v. the Public Television and Radio Company Council*.

We should remind that on January 24, 2019, the journalists filed a lawsuit in the RA Administrative Court against the Public Television and Radio Company Council with a claim for repealing Administrative Act No. 46-L of December 25, 2018. This act concerns the termination of these journalists’ employment contracts. On December 9, the court settled the journalists’ claim.

The defendant appealed the judgement, and on October 13, 2020 the Court of Appeal ruled to uphold the appeal and send the case for a new trial. On January 20, the Court of Cassation decided to reject the plaintiffs' appeal against the decision of the Administrative Court of Appeal. As a result, by the decision of the RA Administrative Court of February 18, a new proceeding was initiated, the case was redirected to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, and on March 15, proceedings were accepted here.

The publication of the judicial act is scheduled for July 1.

**On June 16,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan made reappointment on the case of *St. Gregory the Illuminator Medical Center v. Hraparak Daily LLC*, on the grounds of termination of powers of the judge.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on January 11, demanding refutation and compensation for defamatory information discrediting business reputation.

The lawsuit was caused by an article, titled “One of the Deputy Directors of St. Gregory the Illuminator MC Lost 1 billion AMD in Toto” published in the December 9, 2020 issue of the *Hraparak Daily*. The article stated, “One of the deputy directors made bets at the Toto bookmaker's office, using the hospital's cash register and lost a great amount of money, over 1 billion AMD. As a result, the hospital staff has not been paid the salary…”. On the day of the publication of the article, the medical center refuted the information of the media on its Facebook page, considering it an absolute lie, which was aimed at discrediting the reputation of the medical center.[[95]](#footnote-95) The *Hraparak* was offered to publish a refutation, which was not done.

On June 22, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. A preliminary court hearing is scheduled for October.

**On June 16,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of the *former NSS colonel Eduard Harutyunyan v. former MP Taron Sahakyan* (founder of *A1plus.am* website *Meltex* LLC is third person to the case), with claims of public apology, as well as a refutation of the information considered slander and payment of compensation.

The lawsuit was filed on September 18, 2019 and caused by a video released on *A1plus.am* on August 14 in which Taron Sahakyan talks about a former NSS official, in particular accusing him of “being related to drug supply”, “alienating strategic objects at the cost of a penny to his immediate surroundings”, “in exporting cheap resources from Armenia and importing expensive ones”.[[96]](#footnote-96)

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled for October 13.

**On the same day with the same claim,** a court hearing on plaintiff’s another lawsuit against former MP Taron Sahakyan was held (with the involvement of *Skizb Media Kentron* Ltd., the founder of *Times Daily*).

The lawsuit was caused by the May 29, 2019 article, titled “The Harutyunyans dynasty is still rooted in the state administration system: who occupies a post, what post and where?”, printed in the newspaper and published on *1in.am* website.[[97]](#footnote-97)

The next court hearing is scheduled for October 13.

**On June 17,** the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Suren Papikyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Media Plus* LLC, demanding public refutation of the defamatory data contained in an article, published on June 11 on its website *Yerevan.today*, titled “Armenia's New Millionaires. Papikyan became a dollar millionaire on the incomes from asphalt in 3 years”.[[98]](#footnote-98) On June 28, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings.

**On June 18**, Arayik Arakelyan, the former head of the Shirak Regional Department of the Cadastre, filed **two lawsuits** in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *168 Zham* LLC, demanding compensation of damages caused to his honor and dignity, and public refutation of the information considered defamatory. The first lawsuit was caused by the article published on the website *168.am* belonging to the LLC on April 14: “The mysterious person wearing a cap and glasses. Who is behind the next personnel related mess in the Shirak region?”[[99]](#footnote-99), which states in particular, that Arayik Arakelyan, known for corruption scandals, is being tried for a post, while he is involved in several criminal cases. The second lawsuit is based on an article on the same topic titled “Is Karen Sarukhanyan from My Step, the “godfather” of the former head of the cadastre involved in a corruption case?”, published on April 24, which mentions that the MP is engaged in the “profitable” case of returning Arayik Arakelyan to his old position.[[100]](#footnote-100) Besides, according to the publication, “Arayik Arakelyan is in a corruption scandal, by the way, together with his family”.

The lawsuits was not accepted for proceedings as of June 30.

**On June 18**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the father of the Minister of Justice Rustam Badasyan, Vardan Badasyan, v. Alternativ.am* *news website*, with claims of confiscation of money and publication of a refutation.

The lawsuit, filed on July 13, 2020, was caused by an article, published on the above-mentioned website on June 9, titled “The apple does not fall far from the tree. Rustam Badasyan should start the vetting process from his own father”. It was particularly mentioned that Vardan Badasyan used to be the Deputy Head of the Legal Department of the Police, the First Deputy Head of the 6th Department and “the appointments in positions below his level of hierarchy were made on one condition– appointment for money”.[[101]](#footnote-101)

The next court hearing is scheduled for October 21.

**On June 25,** *Europe in Law* NGO, lawyers Lousine Hakobyan, Tigran Yegoryan, human rights activist Zhanna Aleksanyan, *Skizb Media Kentron* Ltd., NA deputy Arman Babajanyan filed a lawsuit for the second time in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Veto* social -political movement, Narek Malyan, *ArmNews TV* CJSC and *Yerevan.today* website, claiming compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

The lawsuit was filed for the first time on January 29. It was caused by an article published on *Yerevan.today* on October 24, 2020 titled “Working Hand in Hand in the Interests of the Turks” addressed to human rights organizations as “Sorosians” who lay the cornerstone of Armenia's downfall[[102]](#footnote-102), as well as Narek Malyan's film with the same content shown on December 5 on *ArmNews TV*.[[103]](#footnote-103)։ On February 11, the lawsuit was returned for corrections.

As of June 30, the second lawsuit has not been accepted for proceedings yet.

**On January 29,** the Civil Court of Appeal upheld the plaintiff’s claim against the judgement of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan on the case of *Van-Charter LLC v. Armenia TV CJSC* .

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on May 12, 2020, and the reason for the lawsuit was an opinion about the company in relation to the wrong declarations and insufficient quality of alcohol-based sanitizer production, expressed during the *Acute Angle* program on the TV channel on April 12.[[104]](#footnote-104) On January 29, 2021 the court rejected the claim of *Van-Charter* LLC for refuting the defamation and paying compensation. The court made the decision based on the fact that the defendant did not seek to discredit the plaintiff's business reputation with his publication, therefore, the disputed expressions were qualified as a value judgment. On March 5, the plaintiff appealed to the Civil Court of Appeal, where the case was accepted for proceedings on March 29. According to the decision of this instance, the case was sent for a new trial.

 **On June 29,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Armenuhi Hovsepyan, the founder of Newspress.am website*, with claims of compensation for the damage to his honor, dignity, and reputation through slander and insult.

The lawsuit, filed on April 13, 2020, was caused by posts and live broadcasts on the defendant's Facebook page, dated March 20, where, according to the lawsuit, a number of expressions were made in the plaintiff’s address in an ironic and insulting tone, slang and jargon. In particular, “Tell little Hayk, who used to hold the water bottle for Nikol, that I have collected good bottles for him to hold”, etc.

The next court hearing is scheduled for October 26.

*Cases of Pressure During the June 20, 2021 Snap Parliamentary Election Campaign and on the Actual Election Day*

**On June 7,** during the parliamentary election campaign in Etchmiadzin, a group of citizens pressured Lia Sargsyan, a correspondent of the Yerkir.am news website, hindering her professional activities, threatening her and snatching the microphone.[[105]](#footnote-105) Judging by what happened, the citizens targeted the journalist for the political orientation of the media outlet.

**On June 8,** during a briefing, organized at an election campaign in Sisian, Robert Kocharyan was disrespectful to *Radio Liberty* correspondent Artak Khulyan. The journalist tried to ask a question several times, but Kocharyan ignored his question, then added, “Have you heard of ethics?” By the way, Robert Kocharyan showed a selective approach and answered the questions of only 3 media outlets.

**On June 14,** during the campaign of Prime Minister candidate Nikol Pashinyan in Artashat, the citizens showed disrespect to the journalist of *Yerkir.am* website Lia Sargsyan. They insulted her, calling her corrupt, and some people snatched the microphone.[[106]](#footnote-106)

**On June 14,** during the campaign of Prime Minister candidate Nikol Pashinyan in Vedi, a group of citizens made insulting remarks to *Yerkir.am* correspondent Lia Sargsyan.[[107]](#footnote-107) The journalist was being identified with a specific political force, which, according to the citizens, paid her for providing biased information.

**On June 15,** during the campaign of Prime Minister candidate Nikol Pashinyan in Meghri, NA Deputy Speaker, MP candidate from My Step party Alen Simonyan interfered in the work of *Tert.am* correspondent Ani Gevorgyan, speaking in parallel and urging people next to him not to pay attention to the journalist's questions. Then Simonyan urged the journalist to leave․ “Please leave the area. You are provoking people.”[[108]](#footnote-108)

**On June 20,** at 29/45 polling station, where former RA President Serzh Sargsyan was to vote, the secretariat of the commission tried to hinder the work of David Machkalyan, the cameraman of Public Television, and Henrik Sargsyan cameramen of *168․am* website, on the grounds that besides the Central Electoral Commission badge, availability of passport was also compulsory. In fact, the cameramen had photocopies of passports, but it was not considered enough. The CPFE received a call about this, contacted the head of the commission, reminded them of the requirement of the Electoral Code, according to which the availability of a passport was not required, and after submitting the accreditation certificate issued by the CEC, the employees of the media outlet should be registered by the commission and do their duties. Eventually the problem was solved, and the cameramen were able to film. The Kotayk Regional Department of the Police informed the CPFE that a decision was made to refuse to initiate a criminal case on the occasion of the incident related to the impediment of the cameramen's work due to lack of corpus delicti.

**On June 20,** during the filming of voters in military uniform in front of 34/03 polling station in Goris, the work of *ParaTV* journalist Grigor Gevorgyan was hindered. He was also banned from filming ballot boxes in the polling station yard.[[109]](#footnote-109) At the request of a high-ranking military police officer, the video filming was stopped, after which a young man in civilian clothes and another high-ranking serviceman started behaving aggressively towards the journalist. The media outlet alerted the Police about the incident. As the CPFE was informed by the Police, the report was registered in the Goris department, and no facts of impediment of the journalist's activity were found, and the journalist refused to submit a report.

**On June 20,** at 35/37 polling station in Kapan, Vache Harutyunyan, the proxy of the Civil Contract party, hindered the work of *Zangezur TV* journalist Anush Mirzoyan by taking pictures of the journalist over the phone.[[110]](#footnote-110) This was reported by *ParaTV* on its Facebook page.

The police informed that a pre-trial investigation was launched on this occasion after the announcement of the CPFE and partner organizations. The initiation of a criminal case on the materials prepared by the Kapan Police Department was rejected under Article 35, Part 1, Clause 1 of the RA Criminal Procedure Code, on the grounds of lack of case of crime. Besides, the director of *Zangezur TV* Alexan Grigoryan informed the police that both the TV company and Anush Mirzoyan had no complaints against anyone and refused to give an explanation.

**On June 20,** at the 9/21 polling station in Yerevan, the proxies of the Armenia Alliance showed disrespectful attitude towards *FreeNews.am* reporter Diana Davtyan, insulting her.[[111]](#footnote-111) One of the citizens also joined the insulters, saying that the journalist did not understand Armenian, she should be spoken to in Azerbaijani. Then, a pronounced contemptuous attitude was shown towards *FreeNews.am* as a media outlet belonging to NA Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan.

Materials on the fact were prepared in the Central Department of the RA Police in accordance with Articles 180-181 of the RA Criminal Procedure Code.

***Violations of Right to Receive and Disseminate Information***

*In the second quarter of 2021 the CPFE recorded 15 facts on the violation of the right to receive and disseminate information, exactly as many as in the previous quarter. In only 1 of these cases a lawsuit was filed with the court. Compared to the situation in the same period of 2020, the violations of the right to receive and disseminate information decreased by 11.*

*We present the facts recorded during the period under review, as well as new developments in relation to the events from past periods, in chronological order.*

**On April 6,** the Administrative Court held the first court hearing on the case of *the Union of Informed Citizens NGO v. the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports*, demanding to obligate it to provide information.

The lawsuit was filed on February 17. The NGO expected the agency to receive the departmental list of information subject to encryption. On February 25, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. In this quarter, court hearings were also held on April 26, June 21 and 25. Publication of judgement is scheduled for July 9.

**On April 6,** the *Hetq.am* website wrote that a number of inquiries had been sent to Suren Papikyan, Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, and Suren Machyan, Director General of the Road Department SNCO, to verify the information on the appointment of friends and relatives of Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan to various positions. After three months of correspondence, it was not possible to get essential information from either Suren Papikyan or Stepan Machyan. The latter even refused to provide information about his biography.

**On April 9,** the Freedom of Information Center sent a request to the Civil Aviation Committee asking for figures on the period following the reopening of flights with Russia. In particular, how many RA citizens left Armenia for Russia from February 1 to March 31, 2021, and how many RA citizens came to Armenia from Russia in the same period. The FOICA considered the response, provided by the Civil Aviation Committee on the lack of maintenance such statistics, inappropriate.

**On April 12,** the *168.am* website wrote that on March 26, it sent a written inquiry to the Executive Director of *the Armenian National Interests Fund* CJSC, David Papazyan, asking for clarification on the activities the fund had carried out so far and how it supported investments.

The answer to the questions was never received. The media outlet tried to contact the phone number mentioned on the fund's website. In response, they informed that they had not received a letter from the mentioned address, after sending it again, it was no longer possible to contact the only phone number mentioned on the official website.

**On April 14,** the Freedom of Information Center sent a request for information to the RA National Assembly Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan, asking to provide the list of legislative initiatives he (co) authored during his parliamentary activity, noting their status as of April 14. The request remained unanswered.

**On the same day,** the FOICA also addressed the same question to the NA deputy Gor Gevorgyan. This request also remained unanswered.

**On April 14,** the Freedom of Information Center applied to the Water Committee, requesting information on agreement N13 signed between the Water Committee and *Veolia Water* CJSC on July 25, 2019, as well as the investments made. By the way, the FOICA sent an inquiry of almost the same content on March 11, which remained unanswered, so it sent a double inquiry to the Committee. The latter also remained unanswered.

**On April 19,** journalist of *Infocom.am* website Hayarpi Baghdasaryan asked the Ministry of Defense for information on a document signed by the Minister of Defense in 1999, according to which the political leadership of Artsakh had no right to interfere in the issues of the army. The Ministry of Defense first asked for a 30-day period, then refused to provide the information, substantiating that the issue is of military-political nature, thus it is beyond the competence of the Ministry of Defense.

**On April 20,** journalist of *Infocom.am* website Hayarpi Baghdasaryan sent a request to the Ministry of Defense asking for information on the veracity of some statements made by Artsakh Security Council Secretary Samvel Babayan. The Ministry of Defense asked for a 30-day period, but in the end did not answer the inquiry. The journalist concludes that the Ministry of Defense mostly refuses to answer the questions, but it is done in violation of the terms provided by the law. Besides, if a 30-day period is required to do additional work and to provide information, the Ministry of Defense requests this 30-day period for refusal.

**Another inquiry** of the journalist about the reasons for the suspension of an investment program was addressed to the Ministry of Economy on March 9. Violating the norms defined by the RA Law on Freedom of Information, without asking for an additional term, in a month after numerous calls, the inquiry was finally answered.

**On April 20,** the Freedom of Information Center requested the Ministry of Defense to provide a list of documents under the supervision of the the agency's staff that were declassified in 2020, as well as a link to the page of the official website where the declassified documents or information on their absence were published. The Ministry of Defense delayed the answer without asking for additional time.

**On May 6,** *Infocom.am* journalist Hayarpi Baghdasaryan applied to the Ministry of Defense with a request to provide information on the increase of fortifications in the army and other similar activities in the periods of 2016-18, 2018-2020. On May 14, she received an answer that the requested information had already been published. The journalist reminded that according to Article 9, Clause 7, Part 2 of the RA Law on Freedom of Information, “if the information mentioned in the written request is published, the applicant of the request should be given information on the means, the place and period of the publication within 5 days after receiving the request”, according to Article 12 Clause 3, “the information holder is obliged to provide the information seeker with reliable, complete information under his/her control in the manner prescribed by law”. After this reminder, the journalist received a notification that the letter was sent to the Secretariat of the Ministry of Defense, and tried to contact the executor by phone, but failed. Attempts to get clarification from the media department of the Ministry of Defense were also in vain․ No response was received by the end of the quarter.

**On May 10,** the Administrative Court held a regular court hearing on the case of*the Union of Informed Citizens NGO (Fip.am) v. RA National Security Service* with a demand to obligate it to provide information.

We should remind that by the lawsuit, filed on January 29, the NGO specifically requested the following information: in the period from November 10 to December 20, 2020, in the cases under investigation of the NSS Investigation Department, how many motions for choosing detention as a measure of restraint were upheld by the court? How many were rejected? Also, how many previously detained individuals were set free by the court?

On June 1, the lawsuit was rejected on the grounds that the National Security Service is not the subject controlling the requested information.

**On May 25,** the *Yerevanlur.am* website sent a letter to the RA Prosecutor General Arthur Davtyan, asking him to provide information on the activities of Vahe Hakobyan, a representative of Armenia Alliance and former governor of Syunik, in particular, about the abuses related to his company revealed as a result of the audits of the Audit Chamber. All the deadlines set by law have passed, and no answer was given to the inquiry.

**On May 31,** the Freedom of Information Center, at the request of citizen Alyona Muzhikyan, applied to the Chambarak municipality, requesting to provide the legal grounds for rejecting the application for the privatization of the land used by the citizen. In a reply letter on June 1, the municipality informed that it had already answered the citizen, but did not provide the answers to the FOICA questions. The FOICA considers the answer incomplete.

**On June 2,** the correspondent of *Hetq.am* website Tirayr Muradyan sent a written inquiry to the State Supervision Service regarding the SSS investigation related to the activities of the SNCO of the Ministry of Economy. The journalist was not able to contact the spokesman of the service for 15 days to find out the fate of the letter. The head of the service ignored the journalist's clarifying inquiries. Only after making a post on Facebook did Tirayr Muradyan receive the answer to the inquiry, violating the term defined by law.

**On June 14,** the Union of Informed Citizens NGO filed a lawsuit in the Administrative Court against the Central Electoral Commission, demanding to oblige the commission to provide the information required by letter No. H-1864 of June 4, 2021. On the same day the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the court hearing is scheduled for August 23.

***Other Events on Activity of Media and Journalists***

**On April 2**, the founder of the *Iravunk* newspaper, former MP Hayk Babukhanyan filed an appeal against the judgement of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan on his lawsuit against LarisaMinasyan*,* the Executive Director of Open Society Foundations-Armenia.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on April 4, 2019, with claims of refuting the information considered defamatory, and it was caused by Larissa Minasyan's statement that Hayk Babukhanyan, too, received a grant from their foundation[[112]](#footnote-112). On March 5, 2020 Hayk Babukhanyan's lawsuit was rejected by the court judgement, because the plaintiff did not substantiate the fact that the defendant's statements were defamatory or insulting, neither did he prove her intention to discredit and humiliate the plaintiff's honor and dignity. It was also decided to confiscate 300,000 AMD from Hayk Babukhanyan in favor of Larissa Minasyan as an attorney's reasonable fee.

On April 30, the Court of Appeal accepted the appeal for proceedings, and on June 30 it was rejected.

**On April 6,** the Court of Appeal held trial onthe chairman of Armenian Institute of International and Security Issues Styopa Safaryan’s appeal on the decision of the Court of First Instance on the case of Taguhi *Aslananyan v. Styopa Safaryan.*

We should remind that on October 29, 2019, the above mentioned Institute banned a number of media outlets from participating in its event, and Styopa Safaryan asked Channel 5 and *LiveNews.am* reporters to leave the event, adding that they could not invite him “either to the sauna, or to their place”.[[113]](#footnote-113) On this occasion, journalist Taguhi Aslanyan filed a lawsuit on November 14, 2019, which was partially upheld: the court obligated the defendant to apologize to the journalist for the insulting expressions and to pay 600.000 AMD (the plaintiff demanded 1 million) in compensation. On January 25, Styopa Safaryan applied to the Court of Appeal, appealing the decision of the Court of First Instance of December 4, 2020.

On April 23, the Court of Appeal partially upheld the defendant's appeal, changing only the text of the apology, which according to the verdict should be published in the press. On the remaining part, the act of the first instance was left unchanged. On May 31, the defendant applied to the Court of Cassation, where the appeal was received on June 15.

**On April 6**, the Administrative Court rejected the lawsuit of the founder of *A1 + TV* company *MELTEX* LLC against the RA Government and the Commission on Television and Radio (third party- *Armenia TV* CJSC, *Mo TV Media Holding* CJSC, *ArmenAkob* LLC, *AR TV* LLC and *Husaber* CJSC) in relation to the annulment of acts from 7 broadcast licensing competitions held in 2003. The lawsuit was filed on December 18, 2019.

On May 10, the plaintiff applied to the Court of Appeal; on June 17, the appeal was accepted for proceedings, a court hearing is scheduled for July 21.

**On April 15,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the Investigative Journalists NGO v. the National Security Service*, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on August 26, 2020, and was caused by the video released by the NSS on July 15, in which the publication of the *Hetq.am* website belonging to the NGO, about the shelling of the Tavush border village of Aygepar was presented as misinformation among the posts of Azerbaijani media materials and social media users.[[114]](#footnote-114) The website considers this an unfounded accusation, as the information provided by *Hetq.am* from the site was confirmed by the representative of the Ministry of Defense, and the Human Rights Defender.

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 20.

**On April 15**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing o the case of *168 Zham Ltd. and its founder Satik Seyranyan v. the Chairman of the Public Council Styopa Safaryan*, claiming public refutation of the defamatory information, an apology for insult, obligation to remove the article and compensation of damage caused to the honor, dignity and business reputation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on November 2, 2020, was caused by Styopa Safaryan's post on Facebook, dated October 13, according to which *168.am* website, belonging to the company, attributed insulting remarks addressed to Styopa Safaryan, to the Russian journalist Vladimir Solovyov, which, however, the latter had not made. The plaintiff considers some expressions as an insult and slander, particularly: “it goes without saying that the website run by the woman holding the chair of the President of the Union of Journalists of Armenia is engaged in criminal activities”, and so on. The plaintiff claims 2 million AMD as compensation for defamation and 1 million AMD as compensation for insult.

A court hearing on the case was held on June 21, the next one was scheduled for August 23.

**On June 4,** *Armenian Second TV Channel* LLC filed a lawsuit with the Administrative Court against the Commission on Television and Radio for imposing an administrative penalty with the demand to annul the decision No. 86-A of May 27, 2021. On June 9, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, a court hearing was scheduled for August 11.

On June 24, the same plaintiff filed another lawsuit against the Commission on Television and Radio with the demand to annul the decision No. 93-A of June 4, 2021 regarding the rating assessment of the participants of the Capital Broadcast Competition. As of June 30, the lawsuit has not been accepted for proceedings.

**On June 18**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *News.am LLC v. political scientist Styopa Safaryan*, seeking compensation for the damage to its business reputation.

We should remind that lawsuit, filed on August 28, 2019, was caused by a Facebook post by the defendant saying that the site had received an order from Robert Kocharyan's office to publish some articles about the judges.[[115]](#footnote-115)

The next court hearing is scheduled for October 21.

*\*\*\**

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