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**COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

***2021 ANNUAL REPORT
ON SITUATION WITH FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND VIOLATIONS OF RIGHTS OF JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA IN ARMENIA***

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*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 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.*

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***The views and assessments expressed in the report belong to the CPFE and may not coincide with the international views and opinions of the National Endowment for Democracy.***

***BRIEF SUMMARY***

 2021 was an extremely difficult year for the media due to the deep socio-political crisis in post-war Armenia, the fierce struggle for snap Parliamentary elections, and the numerous cases of pressure on and constraints against reporters, covering those processes, which included the use of legal mechanisms.

In this extremely tense situation, the polarization of the media outlets and the involvement of most of them in political processes became more vivid, a fact that was documented by reputable international organizations in their reports. Serving the interests of a specific party or an alliance, the representatives of some media outlets often demonstrated conduct that was not typical of journalists and ignored the norms of professional ethics. Many of them, identifying themselves with the sponsoring political force, were attacked. Such manifestations have more often taken place during mass events – demonstrations, rallies, and marches, including in the period of National Assembly snap elections campaign. Especially in the first and second quarters, when large-scale protest actions were taking place in the country, the number of occasions of physical violence against journalists was growing with 7 (8 victims) and 8 cases (9 victims) respectively. The number of such cases in the this quarter has grown, amounting to 3, and they all happened not only in the street, but in the premises of the National Assembly, too, as a result of intolerance against the media outlets by law-enforcement bodies and MPs. No such occasion has been recorded in the fourth quarter. Thus, during the year, the CPFE recorded **18 cases** of physical violence. As for various other instances of pressure put on journalists, those amounted to **108.**

The cases of violence and various pressures applied against journalists are presented in the respective sections of this report, including the scandalous actions and conduct of top public officials and famous political figures. In particular, the NA Speaker Alen Simonyan, the Minister of High Technology Industry Hakob Arshakyan, MPs Andranik Kocharyan, Hayk Sargsyan, and the ex-President of the RA Robert Kocharyan stood out in this regard.

The significant flow of cases – **61 new lawsuits –** filed against journalists and media outlets on the grounds of slander and insult sustained: as much as in 2020. This tendency especially causes concern against the background of legislative amendments, undertaken by the authorities. Thus, on March 24 the National Assembly adopted the draft law proposed by the NA Speaker Alen Simonyan, according to which the caps for pecuniary compensation for insult and slander, stipulated in Article 1087.1 of the RA Civil Code, were tripled. This was followed by another regressive process – the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Making Amendments and Supplements to the RA Criminal Code entered into force on August 30th, criminalizing the so-called “serious insults,” namely swearing. By the way, public and state figures and a number of other groups enjoyed a higher level of protection, and insulting them would lead to more severe punishment, than in the case of an ordinary citizen, which is a manifestation of a discriminatory attitude. These legislative amendments are dangerous in the sense, that the representatives of the authorities and political figures often perceive the criticism and sharp language against them as slander or insult and go to court, attempting at pressure on critics, speaking against them. It should be noted that 25 percent of such lawsuits were filed by state or political figures. Reputable international organizations harshly criticized these new laws.

On December 10th the NA passed a draft law on making amendments and supplements to the Law on Media, which was criticized by the journalistic community, too. Even though the authors of this legislative initiative had, to some extent, considered the recommendations, proposed by the CPFE and the experts from other organizations, a number of important issues did not get solved, including the revocation or refusal of accreditation to state bodies, held by media outlets.

 The situation is not beneficial for the protection of the right to receive and dissemination information either. **99 violations** of that right were recorded during the year. The decree of the RA Government, dated December 9, also caused concern, stipulating the removal of information on the flights of officials from govtravel.am website. Another draft law, which proposes not to publish information and details on the business trips of officials, as well as the details of single-source procurements, along with other kinds of information, is under discussion.

Among the most remarkable events during the year was the joint project of Media Initiatives Center and other partner organizations, aiming at the detection of fake news and disinformation in the media. Based on the outcomes of this exercise, Facebook and Instagram blocked access to the publications, containing fake news or disinformation. Dozens of media outlets called this process censorship. Whereas such projects can play a healing role in the media sector.

***MEDIA ACTIVITIES ENVIRONMENT***

 In 2021 Armenian media outlets were still generally diverse, however, not fully independent. This evaluation was provided back in April by *Reporters without Borders* international organization, reiterating the evaluation from the year before, that the government formed in Armenia as a result of the “Velvet Revolution” in spring 2018 did not succeed in the decrease of media polarization.[[1]](#footnote-1) The consequence was that in terms of press freedom, Armenia registered a 2-digit decline, ranking 63rd out of 180 countries in the world. In the same month Freedom House international human rights organization published its “Nations in Transit 2021” report where Armenia maintained its position in terms of freedom of information index.[[2]](#footnote-2) The authors of the document gave Armenia a score of 2.95 (33%) and grouped Armenia as a semi-consolidated authoritarian regime, which was a consequence of the war with Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh as the main cause of the crisis of democracy in Armenia, endangering the achievements of the Velvet Revolution in 2018.

 The Internet in the RA is free, the Government does not interfere with the online content: this conclusion is taken from the US State Department’s Country Human Rights Report which was published in March 2021. The document also contains information on the cases of violations of journalists’ rights with reference to the 2020 annual report of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression. Physical violence against journalists during the protest actions of the opposition was recorded, too.[[3]](#footnote-3)

 Before the 2021 snap Parliamentary elections on June 10th, Freedom House expressed its concern in relation to the Armenian political figures՛ campaign rhetoric. As it was mentioned in the statement, those running in the campaign were disseminating polarization and hate speech among the public of a country that was trying to recover itself after the 44-day war and was preparing for Parliamentary elections.[[4]](#footnote-4) But already on September 21st, the same organization published its Internet Freedom 2021 report, covering the period from June 1st, 2020 to May 31st, 2021, according to which Armenia was grouped with the countries, having free Internet.[[5]](#footnote-5) However, regardless of this positive evaluation, Armenia was 4 points down compared to the previous year with a total score of 71. According to the report, this was caused by “the restrictions on the free flow of information the government adopted during the armed conflict between ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh” “demanding content removal and mandating fines for noncompliance.”

 According to the observation of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, the year 2021 was generally quite tense for the media and journalists which was conditioned by the extremely tense post-war socio-political situation, the related snap Parliamentary elections, various limitations of the journalistic activity and pressures applied against them.

 One of the most scandalous cases during the year was the physical violence against journalist Paylak Fahradyan by the Minister of High Technologies Industry Hakob Arshakyan. Throughout the whole period of CPFE’s observations, this case with a member of the Cabinet using fists when interacting with a media representative was unprecedented. After months of examination and inquiry in relation to the case, the criminal proceedings were dismissed with a cliché statement – due to the lack of corpus delicti. The incident that took place between the MP Hayk Sargsyan from the Civil Contract Party and Anush Dashtents, a reporter from the *Hraparak* newspaper was unusual, too, when in response to the question posed to him, the MP grabbed the journalist’s telephone and left, returning the device only having decoded it and deleted the video recording he deemed unpleasant. In relation to this case, the Special Investigative Service decided to refuse the initiation of the criminal case with the same justification, due to lack of corpus delicti. In relation to both the decisions of the law-enforcement bodies, and the incidents per se, the CPFE, jointly with partner organizations, made statements, condemning the officials’ conduct, and the decisions of the law-enforcement bodies.

 Covering the campaign for snap Parliamentary elections, as well as the voting and post-election developments was a serious ordeal for journalists. In the conditions of the already polarized media, both political forces and various groups in the society, based on their ideas and orientations, treated the media outlets and their employees as members as either insiders or outsiders. Most media outlets were divided into political camps, and in their turn, they became an inseparable part of the electoral campaign. In response to the situation in the media sector, during the campaign, on June 11, the acting Prime Minister and the leader of the Civil Contract Party Nikol Pashinyan declared that “the media sector in Armenia had turned into a real dump” and that “in the media industry there are people who are more like killers than reporters.”

 He proposed the solution of promoting compliance with the rules of professional ethics legislatively and using limitations in case of incompliance.

 It is noteworthy that Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland, SOC) and Boriana Åberg (Sweden, EPP/CD), co-rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) for the monitoring of obligations and commitments by Armenia, who were in Yerevan from November 3 to 5, 2021, also mentioned that there is too much disinformation and hate speech in the Armenian media after the 44-day Artsakh war. They called for paying special attention to the transparency of beneficial ownership and self-regulation mechanisms of media.

 We should remind that since 2007 a media self-regulation initiative has been underway in Armenia, and as of the end of the year, 69 media outlets had signed the Code of Ethics for the RA media outlets and journalists. Whereas many were not even aware of the existence of such a process, or, even if they were aware of it, they ignored it with contempt, considering that the system was limiting journalistic freedom. Even before the campaign for the snap elections, on May 15, according to the already established tradition, the representatives of media and journalistic organizations drafted a Memorandum for Covering 2021 Snap NA Elections, which, however, was signed by only 63 media outlets that joined the Self-Regulation Initiative.

 In the pre-election campaign period, the joint project implemented by Media Initiatives Center and the foreign partners of the organization was directed against the dissemination of disinformation and fake news, within the framework of which by means of fact-checking, fake information and manipulative pieces were detected in the media outlets, and via cooperation with Facebook and Instagram those publications were blocked on those social media platforms. Several media outlets raised a wave of discontent and groundless accusations in this regard. Particularly, Armine Ohanyan, the editor-in-chief of the *Hraparak* daily, made a statement, qualifying the initiative as censorship and pressure on the media, which, according to her, was being organized by means of pro-governmental NGOs. However, the monitoring was implemented based on the criteria developed by Facebook and provided an opportunity for appealing against the fact-checker’s decision.

 “Factor.TV”, too, undertook another remarkable initiative as it declared a struggle against hate speech and started to delete insults, swearing, and calls for violence from its social media pages, inviting its readers to cooperate.

 These are important processes aimed at the healing of the media, and it is necessary to actively support them, promoting the development and expansion of such projects.

 The fight against fake news and manipulations could be more effective if state bodies provided accurate and sufficient volumes of information to the media and the public without undue delays. However, the reality is different: the media outlets continued to complain of the difficulties, linked to the receipt of official information in the reporting period. The inquiries made to state bodies were often left unanswered or contained incomplete information.

 In the second half of the year, the journalists and media outlets faced new challenges. The fierce political struggle in the eighth convocation Parliament, shaped as a result of snap elections, was accompanied by harsh pressures and initiatives, endangering the freedom of expression and information in the media.

 One of the worrisome events was the unexpected decision of the National Assembly leadership on limiting journalists’ movement in the building of the Parliament. This “novelty” was accompanied by power abuse by the NA President, whenever the situation in the hall of the meetings escalated, he instructed to turn off the live broadcast, and the security guards would immediately take the journalists away from their work area – the press balcony, prohibiting shooting. All this not only hindered the lawful professional activity of the media but was also a gross violation of the public’s right to information.

 The CPFE, jointly with its partner journalistic organizations, made 4 statements in relation to the above-described events, considering the enforced limitations and pressures as unacceptable and condemnable. In response to this criticism, the NA President invited the authors of those statements to a meeting on August 23 to discuss the issue. However, as a result, the problematic decisions were not amended. On August 30th the Standing Committee of the National Assembly on Protection of Human Rights and Public Affairs organized a meeting to discuss the newly emerged issues, too. In practice, this did not yield any fruit either.

 As a matter of fact, on October 22 the RA Ombudsman filed a case with the Constitutional Court on the unconstitutionality of the restrictions against the journalists accredited in the NA. Whereas the Union of Informed Citizens NGO filed 6 lawsuits with the Administrative Court, demanding the annulment of the above-mentioned decrees.

 During the year both the previous and the current Parliaments acted out with a number of legislative initiatives, which were mainly aimed at the application of new restrictions and toughening punishment. Even though the authorities were justifying their approaches with the need to counteract fake news, disinformation, insult, and slander, the draft laws, as a rule, contained provisions that were in contradiction with international norms and were not aligned with the values of a democratic society. These initiatives were rather a threat to the freedom of speech and expression than created a possibility for solving the issue with abuse.

 Thus, on February 11, the Parliament, in the first reading, passed the draft law, authored by the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan, which was put into circulation back in September 2020. Accordingly, Article 1087.1 of the RA Civil Code was to increase the monetary compensation cap for insult and slander five times, amounting to 5 million and 10 million AMD respectively. As a result of discussions, however, it was decided that tripling those caps would suffice, which, however, cannot be seen as a compromise. On March 24, the National Assembly, in a second reading and in its entirety, adopted the draft law. The CPFE and 10 other journalistic organizations published another statement, to reaffirm that this law would compromise the balance between Article 10 of the European Convention, i.e. the right to expression and Article 8 of the same Convention, i.e. the protected dignity of the human being as a constituent of private live. Besides, the most important ptovision of Ruling N 997 of the Constitutional Court, dated November 15, 2011, was ignored, too, according to which, when appointing compensation for insult and slander, contained in publications, it was necessary to consider the financial situation of the media outlet, so that the fine does not lead to their insolvency and collapse.

 After his meeting with the leaders of a number of journalistic organizations, the RA President sent the law to the Constitutional Court, to verify its compliance with the RA Constitution. However, on October 5 the supreme court passed a ruling according to which the Law on Making Amendments and Supplements to the RA Civil Code was considered as in conformity with the Constitution. This legislative step was criticized by the expert community, Freedom House international human rights organization and Reporters without Borders, the authorities were called to cancel this change. Not pursuing the goal of protecting insulters and slanderers whatsoever, the critics of this law simply feel concerned that in the media sector the solution of the existing issues was sought in the domain of repressive legislative amendments and the implementation thereof.

 The regressive process continued, growing into an initiative of criminalization of the so-called “serious insult” and taking public and state figures under a higher degree of protection than ordinary citizens. On February 17th, a draft law on Making Amendments and Supplements to the RA Criminal Code, developed by the RA Prosecutor’s Office and the Ministry of Justice, was uploaded onto the official “edraft.am” website which envisaged a fine ranging from 100 – 500 thousand AMD for insulting or slandering persons, working in state and local self-government bodies. And if the act was committed via media or any other means of publishing information on the performance of one’s official duties, it was proposed to enforce a fine from 500 thousand to 3 million AMD or imprisonment for a maxiumum term of up to two years.

Along with this, the RA General Prosecutor’s office developed the draft law on Making Amendments and Supplements to the RA Code of Administrative Offenses and uploaded it onto the “e-draft.am” official website on Arpil 7th.[[6]](#footnote-6) According to it, liability is envisaged for swearing and indecent and public insults in the media or the online domain through swear words, speech, images, signs or other means. The amount of the administrative fine was defined within the range of 100 thousand to 150 thousand AMD, and in case of recurrence within one year, it is stipulated to grow and range from 150 – 300 thousand AMD. The authors of this initiative justified it with reference to the fact that swearing is disseminated via media and on social media and undermines natural social relations, solidarity and public order, thus leading to a need for implementing regulations by the state.

The Local Disputes Council, too, addressed this issue, with a dissenting conclusion, mentioning that: “…According to the contemporary principles on freedom of expression, the vulgar speech did not constitute clearly unlawful speech” ([Magyar Tartalomszolgáltatók Egyesülete and Index.hu ZRT](http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre?i=001-160314)-ն against Hungary, 22947/13, 02/02/2016, Paragraph 76). That means that in some cases important information and publicly significant content may be combined with swear words and vulgar speech, hence it is necessary for such speech to have the right to exist. The insult can be exempt from the protection of free expression only when “the only aim of the insulting remark is to insult.”

Nonetheless, on July 30th, the NA passed a package of legislative amendments that entered into force on August 30th. This package was assessed by journalistic organizations as a regression from decriminalization to criminalization, among other vulnerable approaches, stressing obvious discrimination towards various groups of citizens. The authors of the amendments disregarded the requirement of the Council of Europe and the case law and judgments of the European Court on this matter, which are binding for Armenia as a member of these organizations. Particularly, Clause 17.6 of PACE’s Resolution 1577(2007) requires the removal of legislative clauses, stipulating additional protection for officials, according to the ECHR case law.

Besides, the unclear formulations included in the law may cause subjective perceptions and lead to unjustified lawsuits against media outlets. For example, such terms as “serious insult” or “swearing” may cover some sharp words, even more so, according to numerous lawsuits filed against media outlets, many public figures are even insulted by sharp criticism. Consequently, the danger of depriving journalists of the opportunity to act without restraint, increases.

As a matter of fact, during 2021, as well as during the previous years, we recorded a great inflow of lawsuits against media outlets and journalists on the grounds of slander and insult: **61** **new insults** were filed. In relation to this question, the US State Department also expressed concern in its annual Country Report on Human Rights, making reference to the data provided by the CPFE.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The above-mentioned legislative amendments were also criticized in a statement, published by Freedom House international organization on September 28, calling the authorities in Armenia to immediately cease their application. The occasion for this statement was the criminal case, initiated by the law-enforcement bodies of Armenia, for writing an insulting remark to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s photo on Facebook. “This symbolizes a clear decline in democratic norms in Armenia, including freedom of speech”, the statement made by Freedom House reads.[[8]](#footnote-8)

However, law-enforcement bodies were actively implementing the new legislative provision. In response to the inquiry made of CPFE, the RA Prosecutor’s Office informed that from August 30, 2021 to December 31, 2021, 418 cases were recorded in relation to actions qualifying as “serious insult” as provided for by Article 137.1 of the RA Criminal Code, and criminal cases have been initiated in relation to 263 of them. As for 25 out of the latter, a decision was made to dismiss the proceedings for 5 cases, 11 cases were combined with others. Preliminary investigation on 214 criminal cases was underway, and 8 criminal cases were sent to the court with indictments, and trials were underway on those cases. A total of 31 people were charged with committing criminal acts under Article 137.1 of the RA Criminal Code. Only one of the criminal cases was related to an allegedly committed act by a media representative. This case is presented in the "*Pressures*" section of the report.

On October 13, the Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan applied to the Constitutional Court to check the compliance of the criminalization of insult with the RA Constitution, also asking to suspend the law.

One of the problematic processes was the adoption of amendments and supplements to the Law on Media as well as the RA Code on Administrative Offenses. The package was originally intended to prohibit the media from using and making reference to anonymous sources of information and it proposed to impose a fine of 500,000 AMD for incompliance with that prohibition, with a potential increase to 1 million AMD in case of recurrence. Facing quite sharp professional criticism by both Armenian and international experts, the authors of this legislative initiative replaced the phrase "anonymous sources" with "non-identifiable sources", which, however, did not solve the problem, it could seriously impede journalists’ professional activity and restrict the operations of media outlets. Moreover, it did not help overcome the phenomenon of disturbing the public, namely the spread of false news and disinformation. The provision was removed after a series of discussions with the authors of the bill, representatives of journalistic organizations, as well as experts from the Council of Europe. On December 10, in the second reading, the National Assembly fully adopted the law, which enshrined the proposal of the professional entities, stating that a media outlet could use any sources, including those without any identification data, taking responsibility for the published information. The amendments, however, did not fully address the issue of beneficial media ownership and transparency of funding sources. Besides, the provisions on the grounds for the revocation or refusal of a journalist’s accreditation to state bodies are still problematic.

 One of the significant events of the year was the summing up of TV licensing competitions for broadcasting on public multiplex after the adoption of the new Law on Audio-Visual Media. We should remind you that the broadcast media submitted applications for 6 republican-, 9 capital-, and 8 regional-coverage packages. On January 15, the Commission on TV and Radio of Armenia announced the names of the winning companies through a rating evaluation. "A1 +" and "Armenian TV Channel 2" were not awarded licenses. The latter made a statement describing the whole process of the competition as unfair: "Our TV channel considers this decision as illegal and discriminatory, and will fight by all legal means to restore over-the-air broadcasting." On this basis, the TV company applied to the Administrative Court, filing 5 different lawsuits against the Commission on TV and Radio, demanding the annulment of the decisions made.

According to independent media experts, neither the new law nor these competitions succeeded in fulfilling the government's promise to clean up the Armenian television domain. A number of private TV stations, especially in the post-war period and during the parliamentary election campaign, continued to spread hate speech and manipulation, insults, and slander, displaying extreme bias. The new law, in fact, preserved the order for licensing as well as the complex competitions procedure which still had major bottlenecks for subjective assessments and injustice. In addition, not only did the law fail to encourage the involvement of a number of local TV stations in the field of digital broadcasting, but also effectively blocked that possibility, leaving them in the analog domain. Though the possibility of creating a private multiplex is provided for in the law, the mechanisms for the implementation of that idea and realistic conditions have not been developed yet.

The steps taken by the authorities to restrict freedom of information were also a matter of serious concern during the year under review. In particular, on July 2, two draft laws developed by the Ministry of High Technology Industry and the National Security Service were uploaded onto the official e-draft.am platform for discussion. One of these drafts was banning the practice of publishing on e-gov.am platform any information about the purposes of officials’ business trips, the topics discussed, the meetings held, the speeches delivered, the information underpinning the adoption of decisions, details on single source procurements, and some other data on geological studies by companies entitled to subsoil use for mining minerals and extracting groundwater, along with some other data, too. The second draft proposed to remove from “govtravel.am” website the information on air carriers, flights, their cost, booking codes, and the number of passengers.

The vast majority of the provisions in documents under discussion contradict Article 51 of the Constitution, the RA Law on Freedom of Information, as well as the commitments undertaken by the RA within the framework of the International Open Government Partnership.

It is confusing to take note of the fact that the political force that came to power through a revolution in 2018 and won the snap parliamentary elections of June 20, 2021, put forward restrictions, inappropriate for a democratic society and fraught with corruption risks, contradicting the RA legislation and international norms, transparent activities of the authorities, public accountability and democratic principles. At the initiative of the CPFE, 11 journalistic organizations made a joint statement on this matter.[[9]](#footnote-9) On July 16, the heads of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Information Center, Media Initiatives Center, and other NGOs expressed their concerns at a meeting with the Minister of High-Tech Industry.

However, in response to the CPFE's inquiry, the Government of the Republic of Armenia informed that on December 9, the Government made a decision to remove the details on air carriers, flights, booking codes, number of passengers, cost of transportation as well as the information about plane tickets purchased by the members of the National Security Council and the NSS under the government of Armenia from the “govtravel.am” website. The other planned changes are still at the stage of professional discussions with beneficiary state bodies.

 Another mdia-related legislative initiative proposed amendments to the Law on Advertising. On September 16, a decree adopted by the Government of the Republic of Armenia approved a draft law, which envisages banning TV, radio, online, and outdoor advertisement of lotteries, internet totalizators, and internet games with prizes. The draft law was submitted to the National Assembly. On this occasion, the heads of various TV and radio companies and news organizations operating in the territory of the Republic of Armenia sent an open letter to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, the Speaker of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan, the Minister of Finance Tigran Khachatryan, the Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan, the Chairman of the Television and Radio Commission Tigran Hakobyan, and the Chairman of the State Commission of the Protection of Economic Competition. At a session of the NA Standing Committee on Economic Affairs held on November 10, it was decided to postpone the discussion of the draft law for two months. The media outlets opposing the above-mentioned ban substantiate their position with the already dire financial state of media outlets. But there is another side to this problem, too․ From a social point of view, the rapid spread of gambling leads to alarming consequences.

 The Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression continued to monitor the criminal cases on the “Electric Yerevan” campaign incidents in Baghramyan Avenue, Yerevan, on June 23 and the criminal cases initiated in connection with the events of July 17 – 30, 2016, in Sari Tagh, where 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, due to the unidentified offender. As before, the CPFE intends to assist the injured journalists to appeal the SIS decision to ensure the resumption of the preliminary investigation.

The criminal case in relation to "Electric Yerevan" had been suspended by the Special Investigation Service for the second time, too. With assistance from the CPFE, the victims appealed against that decision to the Prosecutor’s office in 2020. After receiving a refusal, they went to Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction. The latter upheld the appeal on January 22, 2021, in connection with which the prosecutor's office applied to the appellate court, which on May 17 upheld the appeal of the prosecutor's office. On June 30, the journalists who were recognized as victims filed a complaint with the Court of Cassation. This court rejected their complaint on August 30. As the victims have thus exhausted all domestic instances for justice, materials are being prepared to apply to international instances.

 ***18 cases of physical violence, 108 cases of pressure against the media representatives, and 99 violations of the right to receive and disseminate information were recorded during the year.***

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

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

* 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 2021, as well as developments related to the previous incidents.

***In total, there were 225 reported violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the 2021. 18 were cases of physical abuse, 108 were cases of pressure against the media and staff members, and 99 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 2021 per quarter**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 1st quarter, 2021 | 2nd quarter, 2021 | 3rd quarter, 2021 | 4th quarter, 2021 | Total |
| Physical violence against journalists | 7 (8 victims) | 8(9 victims) | 3(3 victims) | 0 | 18(20 victims) |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel  | 20 | 44 | 23 | 21 | 108 |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information  | 15 | 15 | 37 | 32 | 99 |

**Quantitative data on the violations in 2020 – 2021**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 2020  | 2021 |
| Physical violence against journalists | 6(11 victims) | 18(20 victims) |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel  | 177 | 108 |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information  | 90 | 99 |

**Lawsuits, involving media and journalists in 2021**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 1st quarter, 2021 | 2nd quarter, 2021 | 3rd quarter, 2021 | 4th quarter, 2021 | Total |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 10 | 23 | 17 | 11 | 61 |
| On the grounds on the right to receive information  | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

**Lawsuits, involving media and journalists in 2020 and 2021**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Types of court cases | 2020  | 2021  |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 61 | 61 |
| On the grounds on the right to receive information | 11 | 2 |

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 that impede 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 2021 there were 18 cases (with 20 victims) of physical violence against media workers, which is 12 more than last year. Moreover, 1/3 of the violence- 6 cases, was committed by Government officials. Below we present facts and developments related to both those cases and past instances of use of violence in chronological order.*

 **On January 13,** Hayk Sargsyan, a member of the ruling party in the National Assembly, pushed Suzy Badoyan, journalist in *Yerevan.today*, impeding her work. Then the MP announced that he would not answer the journalist's questions, snatched the microphone and took it with him to the office, returning it shortly after.[[10]](#footnote-10)

 The information related to the incident was sent by the Prosecutor's Office to the Special Investigation Service, where on February 1 a decision was made to refuse to initiate a criminal case on the grounds of absence of corpus delicti.

**On January 18,** the Criminal Court of Appeal rejected the appeal of journalist Sisak Gabrielyan against the verdict of the Court of First Instance, according to which the accusation against defendant Levon Gasparyan under Article 149, Part 2, Clause 3 of the RA Criminal Code was requalified into Part 1 of the same article, to terminate the prosecution against him on the grounds that the statute of limitations for criminal liability had expired, and the proceedings in this case were terminated. The victim had appealed the verdict, demanding a proportionate punishment.

We should remind that on April 2, 2017, on National Assembly election day Sisak Gabrielyan, journalist from Radio Liberty, and Shoghik Galstyan, correspondent of *Araratnews.am* news website, underwent violence at the campaign office of Hakob Beglaryan, candidate to the Parliament from the Republican party.

On February 5, 2018, the court declared Julietta Kokolyan, charged with impeding the work of Shoghik Galstyan wanted.[[11]](#footnote-11) Before finding Julietta Kokolyan, the court decided to stop the proceedings against her and to continue in a separate proceeding on the case of the other defendant Levon Gasparyan. (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2017-2020 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website). Thus, the Court of General Jurisdiction noted that within the scope of the criminal case no information was obtained that Sisak Gabrielyan's health had been harmed as a result of Levon Gasparyan's act or that he had undergone physical pain or mental suffering. The Court of Appeal, in its turn, considered the decision of the Court of First Instance to reject the plaintiff's appeal to be substantiated and rejected the plaintiff’s claim. Meanwhile, watching the video related to that incident, it becomes obvious that there were obstruction of journalistic activity, physical violence and psychological pressure. No appeal was filed to the Court of Cassation after the decision of the Court of Appeal.

**On January 22**, the Court of First Instance of Ararat and Vayots Dzor Marzes (Yeghegnadzor residence) made a decision on the case of violence used against journalists when they were performing their professional duties in Shatin community.

We should remind that when the employees of the *Zhoghovurd* daily Syune Hambardzumyan and Knar Manukyan visited Shatin community to learn more about the tense situation after the local government elections in 2017, to be assaulted by some residents of the community. They snatched the journalists’ certificates, hit the cameraman on the hand and pushed them.[[12]](#footnote-12) (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2018-2020 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

According to the judgment of the court, 4 residents were found guilty under Article 164, Part 1 of the RA Criminal Code. On February 20, the defendant filed an appeal to the Criminal Court of Appeal against the decision of the Court of First Instance. On March 2, the appeal was accepted for proceedings, with several court hearings, initially scheduled for July 10, September 22, October 28, November 26 and postponed for different reasons. No other developments were registered as of December 31.

 **On January 29,** a woman attacked *Yerkir.am* correspondent Liana Sargsyan in front of the RA Government building, hindering her work. At the suggestion of the RA Prime Minister, the journalist formulated her question in writing, preferring to present it with a poster, which was not to the liking of the citizens supporting Nikol Pashinyan. The above-mentioned woman forcibly took it, tore the poster, and pushed the journalist.[[13]](#footnote-13)
 Based on the materials on the event, the Police initiated a criminal case on the grounds of Article 164, Part 1 of the RA Criminal Code and filed to the Investigative Committee on February 26, with the aim to conduct pre-investigation and identify circumstances of the case. On April 14, the criminal case was suspended on the grounds that the person to be involved as a defendant was unknown.

 **On February 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a trial on the fact of violence against Artak Khulyan, correspondent in *Shantnews.am* news website, and Hovhannes Sargsyan, cameraman in *Factor.am* news website.

We should remind that the criminal case was initiated in connection with the violence that took place during the days of the April Revolution in 2018, including against representatives of media outlets, and 8 people with indictments were sent to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan.(For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2018-2020 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

This year court hearings on the case were also held on March 18, April 1, 15, 29, May 13, 27, June 24, August 19, September 2, October 21, November 4, 18, December 16; the next one is scheduled for January 20, 2022.

 **On February 23** Aram Nersisyan, cameraman of *Sputnik Armenia* website, was hit during a protest rally organized by opposition forces in Yerevan, because of which he fell down.[[14]](#footnote-14)

An official investigation was carried out in the RA Police in connection with the incident, the examination of the video revealed that the journalist fell down not being pushed by the police officers, but by a citizen's leg touching his abdomen at the exact moment. No criminal proceedings have been initiated in this regard.

During the opposition march that took place **on the same day**, 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 CPFE and partner journalistic organizations issued a joint statement on the incident, to which the RA Police responded on March 1, informing that the document had been sent to the central division of the Yerevan City Police Department for processing. The Prosecutor's Office also informed that a criminal case was initiated according to Article 164, Part 1 of the RA Criminal Code and sent to the RA Investigative Committee for a pre-investigation, in order to identify the circumstances of the cases.

On August 16, the Investigative Committee suspended the proceedings on the grounds that the person to be involved in the case was unknown.

 **On February 24,** *Yerkir.am* journalist Liana Sargsyan reported to the police that two people had impeded her work while performing her professional activities in Yerevan Freedom Square, and one of them had hit her.[[15]](#footnote-15) On March 3, the RA Prosecutor's Office informed that a criminal case had been initiated on the prepared materials according to Article 164, Part 1 of the RA Criminal Code; on February 26, it was sent to the RA Investigative Committee, where a pre-investigation is being conducted.

On April 26, the Investigative Committee suspended the proceedings on that case on the grounds that the person to be involved was unknown.

**On February 26,** during a protest rally organized by opposition forces on Baghramyan Avenue in Yerevan, some citizens first insulted and then physically assaulted Vahe Makaryan, journalist of *Hraparak* daily, as he tried to support colleagues of Radio Liberty by protecting them from insulting remarks by citizens.[[16]](#footnote-16)

**On March 18,** RA Minister of High-Tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan used violence against Paylak Fahradyan, the editor of *Irakanum.am* website, in one of the cafes in Yerevan. The latter, noticing a high-ranking official, approached and asked why he was in the cafe during working hours. According to media reports, the conversation was inappropriate on both sides, after which the minister hit the journalist, damaged his computer and phone.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The RA Prosecutor's Office sent the publications related to the incident to the Special Investigation Service for inspection. The latter decided to reject the initiation of a criminal case on the grounds of lack of corpus delicti on April 12. On April 22, the Prosecutor General's Office itself, abolishing the decision of the Special Investigation Service, 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”). The criminal case was refiled to the Special Investigation Service. On August 19, the SIS terminated the criminal case on the fact of violence on the grounds of lack of corpus delicti. According to the information provided by the RA Prosecutor's Office to the CPFE, the lawfulness of the SIS decision was checked, in fact, no violation was found, and no complaint was submitted from the victim.

 **On March 30,** the Criminal Court of Appeal held a trial on the complaint of Narine Avetisyan, the editor-in-chief of *Lori TV*, against Tigran Nazaryan, the head of *Shinplus* construction company, and employee Vrezh Khachatryan for impeding her lawful professional activities and using physical violence.

We should remind that on September 28, 2017Narine Avetisyan, after receiving information, that asphalting was being carried out in the conditions of heavy rain, went to that site to cover the implemented works. When filming, Tigran Nazaryan, head of the *Shinplus* construction company, along with his staff members attacked Narine Avetisyan, twisted her arms, dropped her on the ground and seized her phone, deleting the taken photos.[[18]](#footnote-18)
 On Augsut 25, 2020 the court 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. On September 28, Narine Avetisyan appealed the verdict at the Criminal Court of Appeals.

On September 28, Narine Avetisyan filed an appeal against the verdict to the Criminal Court of Appeal, where by the decision of June 3, 2021, the appeal was partially upheld. The verdict was overturned only on the part of Tigran Nazaryan being acquitted. According to that, the defendant Tigran Nazaryan was found guilty of committing a crime under Article 164, Part 1 of the RA Criminal Code, and was released from criminal liability on the grounds of expiration of the statute of limitations.

 On September 14, defendant Tigran Nazaryan applied to the Court of Cassation, where the proceedings of the appeal weres rejected due to lack of grounds.

**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.[[19]](#footnote-19) The case launched on May 21, 2020 with the indictment of one person, namely the perpetrator Samvel Minasyan, within the 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 envisaged under Article 74 of the RA Criminal Code, Samvel Minasyan was released from criminal liability.

**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 as a result of the jostle. The camera was also damaged.[[20]](#footnote-20) The participants of the rally provided first aid. The editorial office did not file an appeal.

**On May 9,** Ani Gevorgyan, correspondent of *Tert.am* news website 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, which was prevented by law enforcement officers by catching her, and by Nikol Pashinyan's press secretary Mane Gevorgyan.[[21]](#footnote-21) Later, the police restricted her and News.am employees' free movement in the pantheon.

Journalistic organizations have issued a statement in this regard.[[22]](#footnote-22)

**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, dragged them and hindered the filming, pushing and forcing them to leave Freedom Square. This was repeated twice with the participation of the same people. The police officers in the square intervened in the incident, but did not draw up a report.[[23]](#footnote-23)

**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, dragged and shook her, hit her phone, insulted, calling her a “traitor”, an “expatriate”, a “blackmailer” and kicked her out with street 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 some responsible person named Arthur. The editorial office applied to the police in regard to the incident.
 In response to the inquiry 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 the grounds of lack of corpus delicti in the act.

**On June 4,** during the coverage of the meetings of the acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in the city of Artashat, Ararat Marz, 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 noise raised about the issue.[[24]](#footnote-24)
 The Investigative Committee informed the CPFE that a criminal case was initiated on this case in accordance with Article 164 of the RA Criminal Code, and the bodies conducting the proceedings are taking measures to investigate the circumstances.

On September 3, the criminal case initiated on the fact of violence was presented to the court with an indictment against two persons, sister and brother Sona and Vahagn Hakobyans. The first is accused of seizing the journalist's phone, the second of hitting the journalist while filming. On September 6, the criminal case was accepted for proceedings. Court hearings were held on September 29 and November 12, the next one was scheduled for January 25, 2022.

**On June 4,** during the meetings of the acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Ararat Marz, 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.[[25]](#footnote-25)

In response to the CPFE’s inquiry, the RA Prosecutor's Office stated that Suzy Badoyan, despite the relevant notifications, refused to take part in the investigation, as on her part no criminal charges had been pressed against anyone.

***Cases of Physical Violence During the 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[[26]](#footnote-26).

The Investigative Committee informed the CPFE that on November 18 a decision was made to terminate the proceedings on the criminal case initiated in the Aparan Department of the RA Police on June 24, under Article 164, Part 1 of the RA Criminal Code, on the grounds of lack of corpus delicti in the act of the 2 persons.

**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, jostled her and dropped the microphone.[[27]](#footnote-27) The journalist was identified with a specific political force, which, according to the citizens, pays her for providing biased information.

 In response to the the CPFE’s inquiry, the RA Prosecutor's Office informed that no report or alarm had been received on the incident, no criminal proceedings had been initiated in this regard.

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**On August 24,** the activity of the representatives of the media in the National Assembly was restricted, using violence against them. At the moment when the heated debate between the MPs of different NA factions turned into a fistfight, the security officers broke into the press room, demanded that the journalists stopped coverage and forcibly removed them from the premises.[[28]](#footnote-28)

**On the same day,** during the fistfight in the NA session hall, when the journalists were removed from the press room and were trying to film from the entrance of the session hall, the MP of the Civil Contract faction Vahe Ghalumyan tried to remove the journalists from there by forcibly pushing and pulling them.[[29]](#footnote-29)

**On August 25,** in order not to witness the fistfight of the parliamentarians in the National Assembly and to prevent the filming, the media representatives were forcibly removed from the press room.[[30]](#footnote-30) Obstructions to professional activity continued at the entrance to the session hall.

The CPFE and partner journalistic organizations issued statements in connection with these incidents, condemning illegal restrictions and violence against representatives of the.[[31]](#footnote-31)
 In response to the CPFE's inquiry, the RA Prosecutor General's Office stated that on August 24 and 25, the media reports on hindering the activity of journalists were sent to the Special Investigation Service with an instruction to prepare materials. On September 6, the SIS made a decision to reject the initiation of a criminal case on the grounds of lack of corpus delicti. On September 28, Daniel Ioannisyan, program coordinator of the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO*, filed an appeal against this decision, asking to abolish it and initiate a criminal case.

On October 5, the Superior Prosecutor made a decision to reject the appeal and confirm the lawfulness of the rejection to initiate a criminal case. On November 10, Daniel Ioannisyan filed an appeal to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, the investigation of which was not completed.

**On September 3**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *168.am website correspondent Ani Keshishyan and Public radio correspondent Liana Yeghiazaryan and other citizens 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, using special measures, 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, covering the 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 January 10.

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

*In 2021, 108 cases of pressure against the media and their personnel were registered: new lawsuits, obstruction of professional activities, manifestations of insulting attitude and hate speech. All 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 January 9,** during a protest rally in front of Vazgen Sargsyan Military University, a high-ranking official of the Ministry of Defense banned media representatives from filming. The official showed aggressive behavior. He attacked the cameraman of *24news* website with insulting expressions, and hit the camera.[[32]](#footnote-32) In a letter to the CPFE on February 26, following a joint statement by news organizations, the Ministry of Defense said that an official investigation had been launched into the incident, and that it had been revealed that the media representative had violated the rules of filming in the area of military unit and special security facilities, not coordinating their actions with the command of the military unit in advance. Nonetheless, the officer of the military unit was warned.

**On January 11,** 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, against *Skizb Media Kentron* Ltd., founder of *1in.am* news website, demanding refutation of defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.
 The lawsuit was filed on August 31, 2020, and was caused by the article published in *1in.am* on July 31, where it is said about the plaintiff that he has served in the RA NSS for more than 20 years, and according to the rumors circulating: “For years, he was paid in an envelope by the chief accountant of the South Caucasus Railways Company for “turning a blind eye” to the robbery on the railways, organized goods smuggling, and engaged in sponsorship”.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Court hearings were also held on March 15, May 21, June 30, July 6, October 25, and December 28.

**On January 11,** citizen Azat Tovmasyan filed a complaint in the Civil Court of Appeal, against the decision of the Court of First Instance of Yerevan of December 10, 2020, 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 that he had kidnapped his own daughter, made during the TV program of *Semi-Open Windows* on July 30, 2018 .[[34]](#footnote-34) (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2018-2020 and 2021 quarterly reports in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The Court of Appeal accepted the plaintiff's appeal for proceedings on February 8. A hearing on the case was held on March 18, and on April 2 this court rejected the plaintiff’s appeal.

# First on May 5, then, after making corrections, on September 1, Azat Tovmasyan applied to the Court of Cassation. On October 13, the latter decided to leave the appeal without investigation on the grounds of violating the deadline for submission.

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 **On January 11,** St. Gregory the Illuminator Medical Center filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Hraparak Daily* LLC, demanding refutation and compensation for defamatory information discrediting business reputation.
 The lawsuit was caused by an article, entitled: “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 *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 great amount of money, over 1 billion AMD. As a result, the hospital staff is deprived of a 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 is discrediting the reputation of the medical center.[[35]](#footnote-35) *Hraparak* was offered to publish a refutation, which was not done.

On January 19, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. A preliminary court hearing is scheduled on June 3.

On June 16,a redistribution was made on the case on the grounds of termination of powers of the judge. After the redistribution, on June 22, the lawsuit was again accepted for proceedings. A court hearing was held on November 1, the next one is scheduled for February 11, 2022.

**On January 13,** NA MP 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, entitled: “Vahe Enfiajyan's Assistant Offers to Write Praises about Tsarukyan in Exchange for Money, to Discredit Pashinyan”. [[36]](#footnote-36) On January 27, the lawsuit was returned.

The case was handed over to the court archive. However, a new lawsuit was filed on April 16, which was accepted for proceedings on April 28. Court hearings were held on July 20, November 30, the next one was scheduled for February 21, 2022.

**On January 13,** *Hraparak Daily LLC* filed a second cassation appeal against the decision of the Court of Appeal, which rejected the appeal against the decision of the Court of First Instance on the grounds of unsubstantiated arguments, demanding the media outlet to apologize to plaintiff Alina Nikoghosyan, publishing the text provided by the plaintiff on the *Hraparak.am* website. Besides, it was decided to confiscate 200,000 AMD from *Hraparak Daily* *LLC* in favor of Alina Nikoghosyan as compensation for the insult and 200,000 AMD as an attorney’s reasonable fee.

The court dispute was caused by the article, entitled: “The Ministry of Health Hides what Happened, and Takes Lfik under Its Auspices” published on *Hraparak.am* website on May 9, 2020[[37]](#footnote-37), in connection with which the ministry's press secretary Alina Nikoghosyan filed a lawsuit against the founder of the media outlet.

The appeal was accepted for proceedings in the Court of Cassation on February 23. No other developments were recorded by the end of the year.

 **On January 13,** Zhanna Aleksanyan, President of the Journalists for Human Rights NGO, filed a lawsuit against *Media Plus LLC* (founder of Yerevan.today website), its editor Sevak Hakobyan, analyst Aharon Hambardzumyan, *News AM LLC* (founder of *News.am* website) and *Iravunk Media LLC* (founder of *Iravunk.com* website). The lawsuit was caused by the article, entitled: “They work for the interests of the Turks, hand in hand”, published on *Yerevan.today* website on October 24, on the picture published with which, Zhanna Aleksanyan is seen next to Turkish President Recep Erdogan, George Soros, Daniel Ioannisyan, and the Head of the *Open Society Foundations Armenia* Foundation Larisa Minasyan. The article, in particular, accuses the people in the picture of laying the cornerstones of Armenia's destruction.[[38]](#footnote-38) This article was also published by *News.am*[[39]](#footnote-39) and *Iravunk.com*[[40]](#footnote-40) websites.

 By the decision of January 25, the court returned the lawsuit for corrections. The lawsuit was not filed after that.

 **On January 14,** Styopa Safaryan, Chairman of the Public Council, filed a lawsuit against *168 Hours Ltd.* and its founder Satik Seyranyan, demanding public refutation of defamatory factual data, removal of the publication, and compensation for damage caused to his honor, dignity and business reputation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was returned twice for corrections in December, 2020. And the reason for applying to the court was the article, entitled: “Vladimir Solovyov's reaction to Styopa Safaryan's post” and published on *168.am*, owned by the company, on October 13, which attributed expressions insulting Styopa Safaryan to Solovyov.[[41]](#footnote-41) On January 25, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. A court hearing on the case was held on March 31. On the same day, the plaintiff filed a motion for the presiding judge's recusal, stating that he had reasonable doubts about the court's objectivity and impartiality

On July 23, the court rejected the lawsuit and also ordered to pay 100,000 AMD in favor of the defendant as an attorney's reasonable fee. The decision is based on the fact that the statute of limitations has expired. (For details see CPFE’s quarterly reports for 2021 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

On September 28, the plaintiff filed an appeal, and on October 29, it was returned for corrections. It was refiled on November 22 and accepted for proceedings on December 9. The day of the court hearing was not scheduled as of December 31.

 **On January 14,** Chambarak Mayor Vazgen Adamyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against the founder of *Zhamanak* newspaper *Skizb Media Kentron Ltd.*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity. The lawsuit was caused by the article published in the newspaper and *1in.am* website on December 11, 2020, entitled: “Chambarak Mayor Suspected of Selling Military Aid”.[[42]](#footnote-42)

On January 25, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings.

Court hearings on the case were held on June 9, July 9, August 17, and on September 7, the court partially upheld the lawsuit, obliging *Skizb Media Kentron Ltd*. to refute all the expressions on *1in.am* website, where the plaintiff was accused of corruption. The court rejected the demand to confiscate 2 million AMD from the defendant. The verdict was not appealed.

**On January 15,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Artur Vanetsyan, former head of NSS, v. Dareskizb Ltd., founder of Armenian Times daily and Armtimes.com website*, demanding public refutation of defamatory information, removal of the article from the above-mentioned website, publication of refutation statement, and compensation for the damage caused.
 We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on February 10, 2020, and was caused by a publication on *Armtimes.com* website and in the *Armenian Times* daily on January 12, entitled: “Do I or Don’t I Have Honor? Mishik, Arthur, Arik”, according to which the former Head of the National Security Service Arthur Vanetsyan and his supporters had organized a media campaign against Nikol Pashinyan's family.

Court hearings on the case were also held on January 22 and March 5, and on March 26, the court dismissed the case because the plaintiff withdrew the lawsuit.

**On January 15,** the Civil Court of Appeal rejected Davit Adyan's appeal against the decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, which partially upheld the plaintiff's claim against *Skizb Media Kentron Ltd.*, founder and publisher of *Zhamanak* daily.

We should remind that the lawsuit was caused by an article, entitled: “The Old Fox of Old and New Armenia” and published in the May 9, 2019 issue of the daily newspaper.[[43]](#footnote-43) The plaintiff is seeking a refutation of the information contained in the article, a public apology and a compensation of 2 million AMD for defamation, and 1 million AMD for insult.

By the court decision made on July 29, 2020, the claim was partially upheld. *Skizb Media Kentron Ltd.* was obligated to publish a refutation, it was ruled to confiscate 4,000 AMD, the amount of the state fee, in favor of David Adyan, along with 150,000 AMD as an attorney’s reasonable fee. But the plaintiff's claim for a compensation of 3 million AMD was rejected. The plaintiff appealed the judgment to a Court of Appeal because of it. This Instance considered all the arguments and substantiations of the appellant to establish material compensation groundless and found that the refutation of the data should be enough. The plaintiff did not appeal this decision, the case was handed over to the court archives.

**On January 15,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the first court hearing on the case of *citizen Edgar Janibekyan v. Shamshyan Media LLC and its founder Gagik Shamshyan*, demanding compensation for refutation of defamatory information and compensation of the damage caused. The lawsuit was filed on July 14, 2020, and was caused by an article on *Shamshyan.com*, entitled: “Discovery of Another Large Amount of Drugs by the Arabkir Police in Yerevan. The 26-year-old Suspect Acquired It Through Telegram․ Photographic Report”, published on June 14, where it was stated that Edgar Janibekyan was one of those detained.[[44]](#footnote-44)

On January 19, the court made a decision on the distribution of the burden of proof, on February 2, it rejected the plaintiff's motion to apply an injunction (to put a freezing order on the defendant's property). Court hearings were held on February 11 and March 3, May 13 and June 15.

On September 17, a decision was made, according to which the lawsuit was partially upheld*. Shamshyan Media LLC* was obliged to refute the disputed statements through *Shamshyan.com* website, to confiscate 100,000 AMD in favor of the plaintiff as attorney's reasonable fee. On November 22, the defendant applied to the Civil Court of Appeal, where the case was received on December 7. No other developments were registered by the end of the year.

**On January 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *citizen Arusyak Mkrtchyan v. Zhoghovurd Daily*, demanding refutation of defamatory information and compensation for damage. The lawsuit was filed on August 12, 2019, and was caused by an article published on *Armlur.am* website on July 12, entitled: “A DJ in Healthcare Sector: Circa $ 20,000 to the Minister's Acquaintance”.[[45]](#footnote-45) The author has noted that the RA Ministry of Health has allocated over 9.5 million AMD from the state budget to In Progress Production Company, founded by Arusyak Mkrtchyan, i.e. DJ Vaccina, to film social ads.

Court hearings were also held on April 5, June 28, the next one is scheduled for February 28, 2022.

**On January 18,** the lawsuit of *Television and Radio Broadcasting Network of Armenia CJSC* filed on December 30, 2020 against *Shant LLC*, demanding confiscation of money, was accepted for proceedings. The plaintiff's motion to apply an injunction was rejected, then appealed by an interim act to the Court of Appeal and left unchanged. The motion to postpone the payment of the state fee was upheld. Court hearings on the case were held on April 12, June 7, June 16, July 23, October 15, and November 29. On December 17, the court ruled to uphold the claim of *Television and Radio Broadcasting Network of Armenia CJSC*. 162,380,000 AMD was confiscated as a debt from *Shant LLC* in favor of *Television and Radio Broadcasting Network of Armenia CJSC,* and 3,247,600 AMD in favor of the Republic of Armenia as an unpaid state duty.

**On January 19,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of citizen Zaven Hakobyan v. Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., founder of Zhamanak Daily, demanding compensation for the damage caused to the business reputation, a public apology and a refutation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on July 13, 2020, and caused by an article, entitled: "What Vanetsyan Left Behind? Who are Zaven and Sos Hakobyans?", published in the daily on June 13, 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”.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Court hearings on the case were also held on February 11, March 3, April 7, June 11, 25, and on July 19 the court partially upheld the lawsuit. Zhamanak daily was obliged to publish an apology text in its next issue, to pay 200,000 AMD to the plaintiff as compensation for the non-pecuniary damage, 100,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee, and 8,000 AMD as a state duty on an upheld claim. The judicial act has entered into legal force.

**On January 19,** *Factor.am* journalist Lilit Shaboyan made an alarm that the decision of Supreme Judicial Council to restrict journalists' access to the courts was hindering the work of the media, creating unnecessary complications.[[47]](#footnote-47) Such a decision is conditioned by COVID-19, according to the official interpretation but, according to the journalist, the epidemic situation in our country allows lifting the restrictions in the courts by following the rules.

**On January 20,** the Court of Cassation ruled not to accept the appeal filed by journalists Liana Karapetyan and Siranush Muradyan against the decision of the Administrative Court of Appeal for proceedings. On January 24**,** 2019, the journalists filed a lawsuit to the RA Administrative Court against the Public Television and Radio Company Council (third party-Public Television Company of Armenia CJSC) with a claim for repealing Administrative Act No. 46-L of December 25, 2018, concerning the termination of these journalists’ employment contracts. On December 9, the court upheld the journalists’ lawsuit. The defendants appealed the decision made by court, and on October 13, 2020, the Court of Appeal ruled to uphold the appeal, to overturn the judgment of the Administrative Court, and send the case for a new trial.

By the decision of the RA Administrative Court of February 18, a new proceeding was initiated and the case was remitted to, and On March 15, the case was accepted for new proceedings in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan. On June 11 and July 1, court hearings were held, during which it was decided to reject the motion filed by the third party to apply the statute of limitations on the claims to invalidate the orders of the Director of the *Public Television Company of Armenia CJSC*.

A court hearing was held on November 16, the next one was was scheduled for January 21, 2022.

**On January 20,** theCourt of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *citizens Marat Grigoryan, Sargis Kelyan, Levon Harutyunyan, Liana Manukyan, Esther Manukyan, Tatevik Boyakhchyan v. Hraparak daily LLC*, demanding compensation for insult and slander

The lawsuit was caused by an article, entitled: “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.[[48]](#footnote-48) The claim was partially upheld by a judgment passed on February 28, 2020. *Hraparak daily* was obligated to refute the defamatory information published in the above-mentioned article and publicly apologize to him. Besides, according to the court judgment, a compensation of 100,000 AMD for defamation and 100,000 AMD for insult should be 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 it was upheld.

 According to the decision of the Civil Court of Appeal, the case was sent to the same Court of General Jurisdiction for a new trial.

This year, a hearing was held on March 3 and April 12, and on May 3, the court decided to partially uphold the lawsuit, essentially repeating the previous verdict. On June 4, the defendant appealed the verdict in the Civil Court of Appeal. On September 16, the appeal was rejected․ The Court of Appeal found that the journalist's judgments contained slander, were not in the public interest, were not based on facts, and were not value judgements.

On October 19, the defendant applied to the Court of Cassation, where the case was received on November 19. No other developments were registered as of the end of the year.

**On January 20**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Olymp Construction Ltd. v. Hetq Ltd.*, demanding refutation of defamatory information, and compensation.

The lawsuit was filed on June 29, 2020 and was caused by an article, entitled: “The Construction Company Developing a New Building Refuses to Hand Over the Pumping Station to the Water Committee: Residents are Complaining” and published on *Hetq.am*.[[49]](#footnote-49) Although the author of the article incorporated the comment from the representative of the construction company, too, the plaintiff does not agree to the residents’ complaint.

Court hearings on the case were also held on March 30 and November 29. The next one was scheduled for March 30, 2022.

**On January 21,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan made a redistribution on the case of *the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Suren Papikyan v. Anna Gevorgyan Private Entrepreneur* (founder Hzham.am news website).

The lawsuit was filed on June 22, 2020, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and payment of compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article published on *Hzham.am* website on May 15, entitled: “My Step Party Members are Interested in the Real Estate Market”, which states in particular that the province governors, led by Minister Suren Papikyan, are buying houses in the capital “without paying” as they provide services, demanding an apartment as a donation.[[50]](#footnote-50) On December 17, the motion to apply injunction of a freezing order on the property was upheld.

On January 26, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, presided over by another judge. Court hearings were held on May 25, July 27, Ocober 18, the next court hearing has not been scheduled as of the end of the year.

**On January 21,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan rejected the lawsuit of citizen Ashot Parazyan against the founder of *Tert.am* news website *Tert AM LLC*, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed by Vahe Parazyan on August 15, 2019, was caused by an article, entitled:: “Vahe Parazyan, Who Reported Against Samvel Karapetyan’s Nephew, Has a Criminal Backgound", and published on the website on July 16 of the same year.[[51]](#footnote-51)

The court based its decision on the assertion that the disputed expressions were value judgments. On February 24, the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Appeals, which upheld the appeal on July 14, finding that the Court of First Instance had not conducted a comprehensive, objective investigation of the evidence in the case.

On October 13, 2021, the case re-entered the Court of General Jurisdiction for a new trial, and on October 22 it was accepted for proceedings. As of December 31, no court hearing was held.

**On January 21,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan rejected the lawsuit filed by citizen Vahe Parazyan for the same cause on August 16, 2019, against *Armenia TV CJSC*, journalist Shake Ghazaryan and lawyer Armen Feroyan. The court found that the media outlet did not initially seek to discredit the plaintiff's honor, dignity or business reputation, that the disputed expressions were value judgments.

On March 1, the plaintiff filed an appeal, which was returned for corrections. On April 14, the plaintiff filed a second appeal, which was rejected on July 9. The Court of Appeal reaffirmed that the disputed expressions were made in compliance with the principles of freedom of speech and the requirements of the law. The case was handed over to the court archive.

**On January 29,** a trial on another lawsuit with the same cause, filed by citizen Vahe Parazyan against *Tert.am LLC*, the founder of the *Tert.am* news website, was held inthe Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, demanding public refutation of defamatory information and compensation of damage caused to honor and dignity.

A court hearing on the case was also held on February 15, and on March 9, the court decided to reject the lawsuit, considering it groundless. The rejection was based on the same formulations, made in the case of the previous lawsuits.

On April 21, the plaintiff appealed to the Civil Court of Appeal, and on July 15, the latter rejected the appeal, reaffirming the reasoning of the Court of General Jurisdiction. On August 18, the plaintiff applied to the Court of Cassation. On October 13, this instance returned the appeal for corrections. It was refiled on December 6.

**On March 1**, the plaintiff on the case of *Vahe Parazyan v. the founder of Slaq.am website Virtual Media LLC and the founder of that company Menua Harutyunyan* applied to the Civil Court of Appeal, appealing the decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan. The lawsuit was caused by the article published on the website on July 17, 2019, entitled: “In the Footsteps of a Scandalous Incident. Narek Karapetyan Presents the Details of the Incident” and the attached video.[[52]](#footnote-52) The plaintiff demands a public apology, refutation of the defamatory information, and compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity. The lawsuit was dismissed on November 4, 2020. The court found that the disputed expressions were value judgements.

On April 6,the appeal was accepted for proceedings a court hearing on the case was held on May 25, and on July 2, the Court of Appeal rejected the plaintiff's appeal, reaffirming the conclusion of the Court of General Jurisdiction. In addition, it was ruled to confiscate 100,000 AMD from the plaintiff in favor of the defendant as an attorney's reasonable fee. The case was handed over to the court archive.

**On January 21,** the staff of the National Assembly applied to the editorial office of *Yerevan.today* website, proposing to replace one of the 4 accredited journalists from that editorial office, Suzy Badoyan, with another journalist. This step of the parliament followed the incident that took place on January 13 between Suzy Badoyan and NA MP Hayk Sargsyan, which is described in the “Cases of Physical Violence” subsection of this report. On January 26, Suzy Badoyan was banned from entering the National Assembly. Journalistic organizations issued a condemning statement regarding these incidents.[[53]](#footnote-53)

**On January 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Iravunk Media LLC* *and Journalist Ilona Azaryan*, demanding 1 million AMD in compensation for insult and defamation.

The lawsuit was filed on June 13, 2019. It 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.”

A court hearing on the case was also held on February 9, and on March 2 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 April 19, the defendant and on April 30, the plaintiff appealed to the Civil Court of Appeal. At the September 28 hearing, this court decided to overturn the decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction regarding the claim against Iravunk Media LLC and to reject the lawsuit, to overturn the case regarding Ilona Azaryan, and to send it to the same court for a new trial. Besides, it was decided to confiscate 150,000 AMD from Hayk Sargsyan in favor of Iravunk Media LLC as an attorney's fee. On November 23, the plaintiff appealed the decision to the Court of Cassation. On December 16, this instance received the case.

**On January 22,** 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*, demanding refutation of slander and compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 22, 2018, was caused by the publication of an article stating that when Gyulumyan was representing Armenia at the European Court of Human Rights as a judge, she did not spare any effort to postpone the investigation of one of the cases in relation to the March 1, 2008, events in Yerevan. Alvina Gyulumyan’s lawsuit was rejected on December 6, 2019 on the grounds of applying statute of limitations, and the plaintiff filed an appeal on December 30.

On April 15, 2020, the Court of Appeal made a judgment to uphold Alvina Gyulumyan’s appeal against the judgment of the Court of First Instance, overturning it and sending the case to the same court for a new trial.

 In 2021, court hearings on the case wereheld on February 24, April 30, June 14, November 4, the next one was scheduled for January 26, 2022.

**On January 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *Leila Karina Ezgeguelyan Majaryan v. Noyan Tapan Information Analytical Center Ltd. and NT Holding Ltd*., with claims of acknowledging the publication of personal information as illegal and without consent and consequently remove it.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on August 26, 2020. In 2021, a court hearing was held on February 26, and on March 11, the court decided to leave the lawsuit without trial, as the notified plaintiff did not appear in two consecutive court hearings, and did not apply with a motion to postpone the trial or resolve the case in his absence, and the defendant did not insist that the investigation of the case continue.

**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 business reputation and monetary compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the article published by Oleg Safonov on *168.am* website on December 31, 2020, entitled: “On Expected Sharp Increase in Electricity Tariffs in 2022 and Corruption Risks in the Development of Solar Electricity․ Why is Everyone Silent?".[[54]](#footnote-54) 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 lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on February 9, 2021.

On April 5, the CJSC filed an appeal against the March 9 decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction, which rejected the motion to apply injunction of putting a freezing order on the property and funds belonging to the defendant journalist Oleg Safonov and *168 Hours LLC* in the amount of 3 million AMD. On May 13, the appeal was upheld. Court hearings on the case were held on July 8, November 22, the next one was scheduled for February 3, 2022.

**On January 26,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan made a redistribution on the case of *Vardan Badasyan (who is the father of the RA Minister of Justice Rustam Badasyan -* ***CPFE****) v. Narek Mantashyan, the co-chair of Alternative NGO, and News.am, Analitik.am, 168.am, Iravunk.com, Blognews.am, Alternativ.am, Ipress.am websites*.

We should remind that thelawsuitwasfiledon July 10, 2020, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information, publication of the refutation in the relevant media, compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity and business reputation. The lawsuit was caused by publications about Vardan Badasyan's activity of many years, published on the above-mentioned websites, according to which he assigned positions for money.[[55]](#footnote-55)

The case was accepted for proceedings on February 4, presided over by another judge, and court hearings were held on May 25, September 28, the next one is scheduled for January 27, 2022.

**On January 26,** the *Vanadzor office of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly NGO* filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against the *Antifake.am* website, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused. The lawsuit was caused by the article, entitled: “How Much Money did the NGOs Operating in Armenia Receive for Supporting the Handover of Artsakh”, published on the website on December 29, 2020, where, among other organizations, the name of the plaintiff was mentioned. On February 5, 2021, the lawsuit was returned on the grounds of not mentioning the name of the proper defendant. It was filed again on February 19 and returned again on March 1 for corrections. A new lawsuit was filed on March 17, which was taken for proceedings on March 26. The court hearings on June 11 and October 11 were postponed, a court hearing was scheduled for March 10, 2022.

**On January 27,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Shirak Marz held a regular court hearing on the case of *Artak Gevorgyan, head of Ani community, v. Andranik Gevorgyan, a resident of Maralik town in the same community*, demanding refutation of the slander and compensation. The third party to the case was declared *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Edition LLC* (founder of *Armlur.am* news website).

The lawsuit was filed on August 23, 2019 and was caused by the phrase “ate it up, robbed it all” in the video and the accompanying text posted on the website on August 10: “The former head robbed the village college and fled. What do the people of Maralik tell us?".[[56]](#footnote-56) The plaintiff demands 2 million AMD from the defendant.

Court hearings on the case were also held on March 17 and March 30, and on April 14, the defendant filed an appeal against the March 30 decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction to reject the motion to suspend the proceedings of the civil case. On April 29, the appeal was rejected, as the Civil Procedure Code does not envisage an appeal against the given act.

At the June 2 court hearing, the Court of General Jurisdiction made a decision on the distribution of the burden of proof. Court hearings were held on July 8, September 28, and November 4, the next one was scheduled for January 26, 2022.

**On January 27,** *Tsayg Ltd.* (the founder of the eponymous television company in Gyumri) filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Shirak Marz against *Shant LLC* (the founder of the eponymous television company), demanding confiscation of money. The lawsuit was returned on February 8 for corrections. A new lawsuit was filed on February 19, and was returned on March 1 for the same reason.

**On January 29,** *Europe of Law Union NGO*, lawyers Lousine Hakobyan, Tigran Yegoryan, human rights activist Zhanna Aleksanyan, Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., NA MP Arman Babajanyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Veto* social -political movement, Narek Malyan, *ArmNews TV CJSC* and *Yerevan.today* website, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity. The lawsuit was caused by an article published on *Yerevan.today* on October 24, 2020, entitled: “Working Hand in Hand in the Interests of the Turks”. Which targeted the human rights organizations, labeling them as “Sorosians” who lay the cornerstone of Armenia's downfall,[[57]](#footnote-57) as well as Narek Malyan's film with the same content shown on December 5 on *ArmNews TV*[[58]](#footnote-58).

On February 11, the lawsuit was returned for corrections. On June 25, it was refiled and returned for the second time on July 12. On August 2, the lawsuit was filed for the third time. No developments have been registered by the end of the year.

**On January 29,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan rejected the claim of *Van-Charter LLC* against *Armenia TV CJSC* for refuting the defamation and paying compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on May 12, 2020, and was caused by 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.[[59]](#footnote-59)

The court based its rejection 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 Court of Appeal, where the case was accepted for proceedings on March 29.

On June 29, this court upheld the plaintiff's appeal, and the case was sent for a new trial. On October 5, it was accepted for proceedings, the court hearing was scheduled for January 20, 2022.

**On February 2,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Armenuhi Hovsepyan, founder of Newspress.am website*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to the honor, dignity and good 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 Hayk Sargsyan, a number of expressions were made in the plaintiff’s address in an ironic and insulting tone, criminal slang and street 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.

Court hearings on the case were held on June 29, December 16, the next one is scheduled for March 15, 2022.

**On February 2,** the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia in Kazakhstan Hayk Terteryan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Hraparak Daily LLC,* demanding refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the expression discrediting his business reputation. **On the same day**, his son Mher Terteryan filed a lawsuit against the defendant with the same demand. The lawsuit was caused by an article, entitled: “The Pig Farm of the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia in Kazakhstan has Caused an Ecological Disaster”, published on December 9, 2020 on *Hraparak.am* website.[[60]](#footnote-60) The article particularly mentions that the bodies of sick pigs were buried in the land around the pig farm belonging to Hayk Terteryan, causing enormous damage to the communities around the city of Aktoba. As for his son, according to the website, he is a shareholder of the pig farm, and a criminal case has been initiated against him on fraud charges.

Although on January 21, 2021 the website published a refutation, correcting some of the information in the article that caused the lawsuit, it did not satisfy the plaintiffs.[[61]](#footnote-61) The first lawsuit was returned on February 11, re-filed on March 5, and accepted for proceedings on the 17th. A court hearing on the case was held on July 20, during which a decision was made on distribution of the burden of proof, then hearings were held on October 13, December 9, the next one was scheduled for March 9, 2022.

As for Mher Terteryan's lawsuit, it was returned on February 15, refiled on April 2, and accepted for proceedings on the 14th. The court rejected the motion to apply injunction of putting a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim. As of the end of the year, no other developments were registered.

**On February 2,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Gegharkunik Marz (Martuni residence) held 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 and recognizance was chosen as a pre-trial restraint. On October 15, the Court received the criminal case from the RA Prosecutor's Office with an indictment.

 On February 19, 2021 the court abolished the above-mentioned pre-trial restraint. Court hearings on the case were held on March 29, June 2, October 14, November 5 and 15. As of the end of the year, the next court hearing has not been scheduled.

**On February 2**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Exclusive Store LLC v. journalist, actress Arus Tigranyan*, demanding refutation of false information discrediting business reputation, without monetary compensation.

The lawsuit was filed on April 10, 2020, and was caused by Arus Tigranyan's post on her Instagram, where she called to the public 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.

Court hearings on the case were held on March 29, May 25, July 8, October 11, and Decemebr 1. On December 13, the court decided to terminate the case, as the plaintiff stated in the application that the parties intend to resolve the dispute out of court.

**On February 3,** *Armenian Second TV Channel LLC*, represented by Executive Director Samvel Mayrapetyan, filed a lawsuit in the Administrative Court against the Television and Radio Commission, demanding abolition of the decision N 2-A of January 8, 2021 “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 decision No. 14-A of January 15, 2021 “On Issuing a License to Recognize the Winners of the Competition of State Broadcast for Licensing the Use of Slots in the Public Multiplex”. On February 8, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings; *Armenia TV CJSC, Husaber CJSC* (founder of *Yerkir Media* TV company), *Shant CJSC* (founder of the eponymous television company), *A-TV LLC*, *Multi Media-Kentron TV CJSC* (founder of *Kentron* TV company) were involved as third party.

A court hearing was held on March 15, and on April 2 the court dismissed the lawsuit on the part of abolishing decision No. 2-A. Regarding the abolition of the decision No. 14-A of January 15, the demand was upheld - that act was declared invalid. In addition, the court decided to confiscate 4,000 AMD from the committee in compensation in favor of the plaintiff, and 300,000 AMD as attorney's fee. On May 5, the defendant filed an appeal, which was accepted for proceedings on July 2.

A court hearing was held on December 14, the next hearing has not been scheduled as of the end of the year.

**On March 15,** Armenian Second TV Channel LLC filed the second lawsuit in the Administrative Court against the Commission on Television and Radio, demanding to obligate it to make a decision on recognizing as a winner and granting a license to the given channel in the competition for licensing the use of slots in the Public Multiplex.

On March 22, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, and on July 22, on the initiative of the court, *ArmNews CJSC, Shark LLC, Multi Media Center TV CJSC, Armenia TV CJSC, A-TV LLC, Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., Free News LLC, Meltex LLC, Armenian Public Television CJSC, Husaber CJSC, Shant LLC*, the Ministry of High-Tech Industry were involved as a third party.

A preliminary court hearing was scheduled for January 25, 2022.

**On June 24**, the same plaintiff filed another lawsuit against the Commission on Television and Radio with the demand to abolish the decision No. 93-A dated June 4, 2021 regarding the rating assessment of the participants of the Capital Broadcast Competition.

On July 1, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the Armenian Public Television CJSC was involved as a third party, a court hearing on the case was held on August 17, and by the judgement of August 25, the lawsuit was upheld. The court found that the decision No. 93-A was made in violation of legal norms and should be abolished.

On September 29, the defendant appealed the verdict to a higher instance. On October 25, the appeal was accepted for proceedings. No court hearing has been held as of the end of the year.

**On February 3,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan dismissed the case of *the former RA Police Chief Vladimir Gasparyan's bodyguard Arshak Hakobyan v. Daniel Ioannisyan, Program Coordinator of the Union of Informed Citizens NGO*, with claims of refuting defamatory information and paying compensation.

The lawsuit was filed on June 6, based on a statement by Daniel Ioannisyan at *Media center* on May 22 wherein he accused NSS director Arthur Vanetsyan of being in close relations with Arshak Hakobyan, Aram Vardanyan, nicknamed “Vstrechi Apper” and Babken Ghazaryan, known as “Tokhmakhi Babo”, calling them all “criminal authorities”.[[62]](#footnote-62)

The court decision states that the plaintiff, having been duly notified of the time and place of the two consecutive court hearings, neither showed up, nor applied for the adjournment or resolution of the case in his absence.

**On February 4,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan terminated the case of *film director and former head of* *Yerevan Studio Tigran Khzmalyan v. Hraparak Daily LLC* on the grounds of the plaintiff's withdrawal of the lawsuit, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information, and compensation for it.

The lawsuit was filed on October 28, 2019, based on the newspaper's claim that the unique archive of the *Public Television and Radio Company*, i.e. the Soviet-era television films and TV shows that are the pride and wealth of any TV station, had been destroyed during his term in office, and very valuable tapes were sold away.[[63]](#footnote-63)

**On February 4,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NA MP Gevorg Gorgisyan v. Power of Speech NGO (4rd.am website),* demanding public apology, and confiscation of 1 million AMD in compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity, and business reputation.

The lawsuit was filed on April 2, 2020, caused by an article published on *4rd.am website* on Feburay 29, enentitled:: “Gorgisyan could have been a pickpocket”.[[64]](#footnote-64) “We officially declare that if not for the establishment of the Bright Armenia Party by Michael Minasyan and Gorgisyan’s surname as his competitive advantage, the latter would definitely be a pickpocket”, the website wrote.

On February 15, the court decided to reject the motion of the *Power of Speech NGO* to apply the statute of limitations. Court hearings were held on March 24, April 19, and May 18, while on May 31 the lawsuit was dismissed, and the plaintiff was ordered to pay 100,000 AMD to the defendant as an attorney’s reasonable fee. The court recorded that the disputed statement concerned rather the individual Gevorg Gorgisyan, than the politician Gevorg Gorgisyan. No appeal was filed against the verdict.

**On February 4,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Shirak Marz held a regular court hearing on the case of the founder of *Gyumri Tsayg TV LLC v. the founder of Shant TV LLC* *(with the Commission on Television and Radio as the third party).*

We should remind that on December 6, 2017, *Tsayg LLC* filed a lawsuit, which, as the plaintiff claimed, was caused by the unlicensed activities of *Shant TV* in Gyumri, implementing national broadcasting, particularly broadcasting local advertisements, sponsored reports and other programs different from those broadcast by the headquarters. *Tsayg TV* demanded to stop the activities of *Shant TV* as of the regional broadcaster in Gyumri. By the court decision of May 10, 2019, the case was terminated on the grounds that the dispute was not subject to trial. The plaintiff applied to the Court of Appeals, where on September 30 his appeal against the decision of the First Instance was upheld and the case was sent to the same court for a new trial.

The court held a case hearing on February 19, followed by the case dismissal on March 12, 2021, since this dispute is not subject to trial in the Court of General Jurisdiction. The court found that the legal relationship between the parties is public and the resulting dispute is subject to out-of-court settlement or trial by administrative proceedings. The court also obligated the plaintiff to compensate the court costs incurred by the defendant in the amount of 200,000 AMD.

On April 14, the plaintiff filed an appeal, which was accepted for proceedings on May 6 and consequently rejected on July 22. Besides, a decision was made to confiscate 100,000 AMD from *Tsayg LLC* in favor of *Shant TV* as an attorney’s reasonable fee in the Court of Appeal. On August 30, an appeal was filed to the Court of Cassation, submitted on September 15. As of the end of the year, no other developments were registered.

**On February 5,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the redistribution on the case of *Lara Aharonyan, head of Women's Resource Center NGO v. the Hayeli club and Live News Media LLC*; the case was handed over to another judge.

 We should remind that lawsuit, claiming compensation of damage to honor and dignity in the amount of 2 million AMD, was caused by a video, enentitled:: “Member of the CC Board of Trustees Lara Aharonyan is Involved in Sexual Profanity of Children: Hayk Ayvazyan” published on April 24. Hayk Ayvazyan made assessments of Aharonyan's activities during a press conference, held by the *Hayeli club*. The video was posted on *Hayeli.am* and *Livenews.am* news websites.

 On February 10, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, presided over by the new judge. The court hearing, scheduled on October 11 did not take place; the next one is scheduled for January 18, 2020.

**On February 8,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the first court hearing on the case of *the former NSS intelligence colonel Eduard Harutyunyan v. former NA MP Taron Sahakyan (with Meltex LLC, founder of A1plus.am website as the third party),* demanding a public apology for insult, refutation of defamatory information and a compensation.

 The lawsuit was filed on September 18, 2019, caused by a video released on *A1plus.am* on August 14 in which Taron Sahakyan talks about the 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.”[[65]](#footnote-65)

 Court hearings were held on March 17, June 16, October 13 and 20, November 3, and the verdict was announced on March 24, according to which the lawsuit was partially upheld. Taron Sahakyan was obliged to refute the defamatory information on the YouTube page of *A1 +* and an amount of 100,000 AMD was confiscated in favor of Eduard Harutyunyan as a an attorney’s reasonable fee. The verdict entered into force.

**On February 8**, a court hearing was held **with the same demand** and on another lawsuit, filed by *Eduard Harutyunyan against former NA MP Taron Sahakyan, where the third party was the founder of Zhamanak daily Skizb Media Center Ltd..* The lawsuit was caused by the article, published in the daily and republished on *1in.am* website, enentitled:: “The Harutyunyans Dynasty is Still Rooted in the State Administration System: Who Occupies a Post, What Post and Where?”[[66]](#footnote-66)

The Court made a decision to expel *First News LLC* from the third parties and incorporate *Skizb Media Kentron* *Ltd.*, the founder of the *Zhamanak daily* in that capacity.

Court hearings were held on March 17, June 16, October 13, the next one is scheduled for January 24, 2022.

**On February 8,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the investigation of the criminal case, related to the execution of the judicial act implemented by the lawsuit 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 of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan 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 of General Jurisdiction partially upheld the claim, filed by Robert Kocharyan against *Skizb Media Kentron Ltd.,* claiming a public refutation of the defamatory information, as well as compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the articles about R. Kocharyan, published on *1in.am news website*, which is owned by the company, on June 7, 23 and 24, respectively (For details see the annual and quarterly reports of CPFE, 2019-2021 on *www.khosq.am, Reports* section).

The court held a hearing on the criminal case on April 6, 2021, and on April 7, it 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. The regular court hearings took place on May 7, July 8, October 20, December 20, the next one is scheduled for February 14, 2022.

**On February 8,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the first court hearings on the case of *the Republic of Armenia daily employees Emil Sargsyan, Lusine Mesrobyan, Gayane Antonyan, Naira Karapetyan, Tatevik Hambardzumyan, Marine Kyureghyan, Khachik Sargsyan v. the legal successor of the daily, Armenpress State News Agency CJSC.*

We should remind that 7 lawsuits were filed on November 23, 2020, claiming the repeal of orders on imposing a disciplinary sanction, reinstitution in their previous jobs, and confiscation of the amount, lost due to forced idle time.

Separate court hearings were held on March 4, 18, 22, April 8, May 6, 20, 24, June 4, 18, July 2, 28.

Thus, the verdict on Emil Sargsyan's lawsuit was made on June 11, the verdict on the lawsuits, filed by Gayane Antonyan, Khachik Sargsyan, Marine Kyureghyan, Tatevik Hambardzumyanon was made on July 28, while the verdict on Lusine Mesrobyan and Naira Karapetyan's lawsuit was made on August 11. All the lawsuits were rejected.

**On February 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NA Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan v. Gegham Simonyan, the domain owner of Alternativ.am website*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

 We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on September 18, 2020, was caused by an article, enentitled:: “Close Relations between Vivaro and Alen Simonyan that cost $300,000. Why aren't the violations by Vivaro properly investigated?", which was published on *Alternativ.am* *website* on August 20. The article particularly stated 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.[[67]](#footnote-67)

By the verdict announced on March 10, Alen Simonyan's lawsuit was rejected. According to the court, the plaintiff did not substantiate the fact that the defendant Gegham Simonyan is the author of the disputed article, published on *Alternativ.am website,* the alleged slanderer and the proper defendant. On April 9, the plaintiff appealed the verdict, and on July 14, the Civil Court of Appeal upheld the appeal. The verdict, made by the Court of First Instance was completely overturned, the case was sent to the same court for a new trial. The court hearing was held on December 3, the next one was scheduled for February 11, 2022.

**On February 12,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of citizen *Yura Adyan v. News AM LLC* (the founder of the News.am website) demanding refutation of slander and payment of 2 million AMD in compensation.

 The cause of the lawsuit, accepted for proceedings on August 16, 2019, is an article, published in the May 9 issue of the *Zhamanak* *daily*, enentitled:: “The Fox of the Old and New Armenia,” which was republished on the website.

A court hearing was held on March 12, 2021, and on April 2, the court rejected the claim, concluding that the defendant had made a proper reference to the source of information, i.e. the *Zhamanak daily*; 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. The defendant and the plaintiff filed a complaint to the Civil Court of Appeal on April 12 and May 5, respectively. On July 1, this court rejected the appeals of both parties, finding them rather groundless to overturn the decision.

On August 11, 2022, the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Cassation. On September 23, this instance rejected the appeal, considering the reasons therein unsatisfactory.

**On May 31**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan reappointed the case of *Yura Adyan v. Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., the founder of the Zhamanak newspaper* on the grounds of a new judge taking over the case.

The lawsuit, filed on June 10, 2019, was caused by the aforementioned article, published by the *Zhamanak daily*. The plaintiff seeks to deny that he is the uncle of the Adyans, who occupy posts in the State Control Service, and who, during the times of the former authorities, was considered the “old fox” in the field of procurements and participated in tenders beyond his field of specialization and sold the contract to other companies, after winning the tenders. After the re-appointment, the case was accepted for proceedings on June 11. A court hearing was scheduled for February 23, 2022.

**On February 16,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of the *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v. The Irates newspaper*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to the honor and dignity through slander and insult.

The lawsuit was filed on October 1, 2019 and suit was caused by the article published in the September 6 issue of the newspaper, enentitled:: “You Only Used to Hold the Water Bottle for Nikol: Anna Hakobyan”.

Court hearings were also held on April 15, May 25, and on September 8, a re-appointment took place due to the termination of the judge's powers. The new judge chaired the court hearing on December 21, while the next one is scheduled for March 1, 2022.

**On February 17,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled that the claim of *Orsis Arms Ltd. v. the Public Television of Armenia*, demanding refutation of information, should be dismissed on the grounds that the plaintiff's representative had not appeared in court.

 We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on February 20, was caused by the news published on Public TV on February 11, according to which *ORSIS ARMS Ltd*. deceived the army and sold hunting weapons instead of combat arms.[[68]](#footnote-68) Moreover, as the author of the news piece Gevorg Tosunyan told the CPFE, the video contains the company’s clarification on the matter.[[69]](#footnote-69)

**On February 19,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan decided to terminate the case of *Lydian Armenia CJSC v. economic commentator Atom Margaryan*, as the plaintiff withdrew his claims.

 We should remind that the lawsuit was initially filed against economic commentator Atom Margaryan and *the Lragir e-newspaper* on September 27, 2019, seeking a refutation of defamatory information and claiming confiscation of compensation for expressions, discrediting business reputation. Then Atom Margaryan’s part was separated from the case. The lawsuit was caused by an interview with Atom Margaryan, enentitled:: “In Case of Impartial Investigation, Lydian's Leaders will Face a Problem” and published on *Lragir.am* on September 15.[[70]](#footnote-70) On June 15, 2020, a counterclaim was filed, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity, business reputation, and the pre-paid state duty. The counterclaim was accepted for proceedings on July 28.

This year a court hearing on the case was held on March 10, while on May 12, Atom Margaryan withdrew his counter-claim.

**On February 20**, during a rally in Yerevan one of the opposition figures, *Narek Samsonyan*, approached *Radio Liberty correspondent Artak Khulyan and cameraman Garik Azibekyan*, and asked a rhetorical question via live broadcast, “When are you going to hand over Yerevan to the Turks?”[[71]](#footnote-71) The journalist addressed the police officers in the area, informing that the activity of the media outlet was hindered, but the latter remained indifferent to what was happening.

**On February 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Armen Tavadyan, the owner of Channel 5 TV, and Ashot Melikyan, the chairman of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Speech NGO*, demanding refutation of the defamatory facts and a compensation of 2 million AMD.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on April 1, 2020, and was caused by an idea voiced by Ashot Melikyan during a discussion on the topic of “Transparency of Beneficial Owners in Media Sector,” held on March 4, as reported by *Aravot.am*: “I do not think that Armen Tavadyan was arrested for silencing *TV5*. We know how he hit the protester with a bottle, how he tried to bribe”.[[72]](#footnote-72) The defendant claimed that the quote was not accurate and that his statement was distorted.

According to the court judgement made on March 22, the case was terminated because the plaintiff admitted that before going to court he did not find out what Ashot Melikyan really meant, and at Tavadyan's suggestion a truce was signed.

 **On February 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the first court hearing on the case of *Alvina Gyulumyan v. lawyer Tigran Hayrapetyan and Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., the founder of the Zhamanak daily*, demanding refutation of defamation and confiscation of 1 million AMD in compensation from Tigran Hayrapetyan.

The lawsuit, filed on August 7, 2018, was caused by the interview by Tigran Hayrapetyan, enentitled:: “We should send a lawyer to ECHR, who will not exchange impartiality with an order”. 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[[73]](#footnote-73). The plaintiff rendered this statement to be slander.

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

On May 6, the defendant filed an appeal against the verdict to the Court of Appeal, which was partially upheld on August 27. The Court of Appeal ruled to oblige Tigran Hayrapetyan to refute the statements made about Alvina Gyulumyan on *1in.am* *website* on the one hand, and Alvina Gyulumyan to pay 10.000 AMD in favor of the budget as a state duty provided by law for an appeal, on the other hand. As of September 30, no appeal has been filed against this decision. On October 1, the defendant Tigran Hayrapetyan appealed to the Court of Cassation in connection with this decision. On November 10, his appeal was returned for corrections. No further developments were registered as of the end of the year.

 **On February 23**, 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 information and confiscating a compensation.

We should remind that the first lawsuit on the case was filed on April 6, 2020, which was returned, while the second one was filed on July 10. The lawsuit was caused by an article, enentitled:: “Nikol Pashinyan talked to Artur Vardanyan during his campaign” and published on March 6.[[74]](#footnote-74) The website quoted Pirumyan: “The Prime-Minister warmly greeted the terrorist Artur Vardanyan who was incomprehensibly released by the court during the former’s rule.”

Court hearing was held on June 1, and on June 15, the court decided to reject the claim on the grounds of statute of limitations, for which the defendant had filed a motion. On July 26, the plaintiff filed an appeal to the Civil Court of Appeal, where the case was heard on August 23, and on October 22, the appeal was upheld, the decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction was overturned, the case was sent to the same court for a new trial. The Court of Appeal found that due to the statute of limitations, the plaintiff's rights were restricted, in addition, the court had committed a number of violations of procedural and substantive norms. The new examination in the Court of General Jurisdiction has not started as of the end of the year.

During the protest rally organized by the opposition forces on Baghramyan Avenue **on February 26**, the employees of *Radio Liberty* were targeted. Protesters addressed offensive expressions to the journalist of *Radio Liberty* Gayane Saribekyan and the cameraman Davit Hovhannisyan.[[75]](#footnote-75)

**On March 1,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor Marzes (Artashat residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of the already former Governor of Ararat Marz *Garik Sargsyan v. 168 Zham Ltd.,* demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, and public refutation of defamatory information.

The lawsuit was filed on Decmeber 20, 2019, and was caused by the article, enentitled:: “Again an Incident with the Participation of Governor of Ararat” published on *168.am website*, which stated that Garik Sargsyan was again part of another fight and that the barber Serob was beaten for not cutting the governor's hair asking him to wait for his turn. Hence, the barber was not allowed to continue his business in Nor Kyank community.[[76]](#footnote-76)

The court hearings were held on April 22 and July 12, and on August 2, the court decided to partially uphold the lawsuit: to oblige *168 Zham LLC* to publish a refutation on *168.am website*, to confiscate 700,000 AMD as compensation in favor of the plaintiff, and 18,000 AMD as a pre-paid state fee.

On September 30, the defendant filed an appeal to the Court of Appeal, which was accepted for proceeding on November 10. No further developments were recorded as of the end of the year.

**On March 2,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of citizen *Hayk Mkrtchyan v. ArmNews TV CJSC*, demanding the refutation of the data considered as defamation and a compensation for the damage caused.

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

The court hearing was held on June 10, and on June 25, the lawsuit was rejected by the verdict of the court. No appeal was filed by the plaintiff.

**On March 2,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori Marz (Vanadzor residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of the 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, enentitled:: “The Head of Vanadzor School N8 was Fired”[[77]](#footnote-77) and “A Teacher in Vanadzor Received 12 Million AMD for Forced Idle Time.”[[78]](#footnote-78), which were published on the aforementioned website on October 4 and December 5. (For details see the annual reports of CPFE for 2016-2020 in the *Reports* *section on khosq.am website*).

Case hearings were held on June 8, October 12 and December 8, the next one was scheduled for April 5, 2022.

**On March 2,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NA Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan v. Ani Hovhannisyan, the founder of Analitik.am website*, demanding compensation for the damage caused.

 The lawsuit, filed on July 13, was caused by an article, enentitled:: “The Government Needs a Referendum to Ratify the Istanbul Convention. Was This Confirmed by Alen Simonyan?” and published on the website on February 11, stating that the present composition of the Constitutional Court would not give a positive opinion on the Istanbul Convention, hence it was crucial for the ruling power to change the composition of the RA Constitutional Court as soon as possible.[[79]](#footnote-79) (For details see CPFE’s annual report for 2020 in the *Reports* section on *khosq.am website*).

Court hearings were held on September 8, November 29. The next court hearing has not been scheduled as of the end of the year.

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

The lawsuit was filed on May 10, 2019, and was caused by Lisa Chagharyan's Facebook post on April 13: “this one, named vahan babayan, may claim the first place in global slobber competition.”

 The court hearings were held on May 5, July 19, November 22. The next court hearing was scheduled for February 21, 2022.

**On March 5,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of the *SOS Children's Villages Armenian Charitable Foundation v. Iravunk Media LLC*, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to the business reputation.

 The lawsuit, filed on May 14, 2020, was caused by the article, enentitled:: "What is Going on in the Ijevan Branch of SOS Children's Villages?" published on *Iravunk.com website* on January 8.[[80]](#footnote-80) The website, citing its own sources, stated that the foundation's employees were engaged in robbery․

Court hearing was held on September 1, and on October 13 the claim was partially upheld. *Iravunk Media* was obliged to deny the defamatory data, to pay compensation in the amount of 500.000 AMD in favor of the Foundation, and the court expenses in the amount of 314.000 AMD. On November 12, the defendant appealed the verdict to a higher court, from where it was returned on December 10.

**On March 5** *Yerkrapah president Sasun Mikayelyan* refused to answer *Tert.am journalist* *Ani Gevorgyan’s* questions at Yerablur Military Memorial Cemetery, offering to address the questions during the upcoming press conference. The journalist continued to voice out questions, and NA MP Andranik Kocharyan interfered with the dispute and shouted at the journalist, kicking her out.[[81]](#footnote-81)

**On March 5**, 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 website*, *and SHARK LLC, founder of 5th Channel TV*, with demands to refute the defamatory statement, apologize for the insult, and pay compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on May 6, 2019, was caused by a statement made by Constantin Ter-Nakalian on April 5 during *the* *Face to Face program on 5th Channel*, claiming that *Progressive Youth NGO* implemented LGBT propaganda in a Kotayk region school.[[82]](#footnote-82) (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2019-2020 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

**On March 5**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted the case proceeding of citizen *Emma Kirakosyan v. A-TV Television LLC* *and other citizens*, with the demand to pay compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

 We should remind that the cause of the lawsuit is the February 22, 2019 issue of *the Semi-open windows program* of the above-mentioned TV company about 20 years of litigation, the reason for which, according to the voiced opinion, is Emma Kirakosyan.[[83]](#footnote-83) On July 10, 2020 the lawsuit was rejected on the ground that the statements made during the broadcast were judgments that had been expressed in accordance with Article 10 of the European Convention on the Right to Freedom of ExpressionAs for Emma Kirakosyan's demand to oblige the TV company to deny the defamatory data, the court found that the statements were made by the respondent citizens, and in case of upholding the lawsuit, they should have denied it themselves. On August 17, 2020 the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Appeals, and the appeal was upheld by the decision of December 18․ The decision of the court of First Instance was overturned and sent to the same court for a new trial.

**On March 5,** 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 LLC*, demanding public refutation of the information and expressions considered as slander and insult, as well as an apology and a compensation.

 The lawsuit, filed on September 9, 2020, was caused by an article, entitled: “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.[[84]](#footnote-84)

The court hearing was held on April 16, 2021, and 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. On June 3, the defendant appealed to the Civil Court of Appeal, which was rejected on October 18. Besides, the media outlet was obliged to pay 50,000 AMD in favor of Gegham Vardanyan as an attorney’s reasonable fee. On November 22, the defendant appealed this decision to the Court of Cassation, which was filed on December 16.

**On April 21**, the court hearing was held on thelawsuit, filed by the same plaintiff against *Pastinfo Ltd.,* demanding that the latter be obligated to publicly refute the defamatory information and pay compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article, entitled: “The Armenian Representative in the Eurasian Economic Commission is Suspected of Abuse”.[[85]](#footnote-85) On June 23, the court ruled on the distribution of the burden of proof. The court hearing took place on October 28, the next one was scheduled for January 26, 2022.

**On March 9,** David Galstyan, advisor to the RA former minister of defense, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction in Yerevan 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 was caused by the publications on the media outlet about the official duties of Davit Galstyan, particularly the trade of weapons and various deals. On March 18, the lawsuit was returned for corrections, on March 31, it was refiled. On April 9, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. Several court hearings were postponed, the next one was scheduled for February 24, 2022.

**On March 9,** the Civil Court of Appeal held a court hearing on the case of Mher Derdzyan, the head of the *Under One Roof housing project*, against the plaintiff in the case of *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Ltd.* against the decision of the Court of First Instance, which rejected the lawsuit.

 We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on April 15, 2019, was caused by the newspaper’s concerns that the program could be a deliberate hoax.[[86]](#footnote-86) The plaintiff demands a public apology and 1,5 million AMD compensation for insult and slander. (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2019-2020 in the *Reports* section on *khosq.am website*).

 The Court of Appeals upheld the appeal on March 23, 2021, the verdict was overturned and the case was sent for a new trial. The Court of Appeal found that the evidence in the case was insufficient to substantiate the fact that the defendant had taken measures to verify the veracity and relevance of the information.

On July 30, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a new hearing on the case. Hearings were also held on October 6, November 16, December 6, the next one is scheduled for April 4, 2022.

**On March 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Yeghitsi Luys-BK Ltd. v. Public Television of Armenia and head of Charentsavan community Hakob Shahgaldyan*, demanding refutation of the information considered as slanderous.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on January 10, 2020, was caused by the broadcast of a report on issues related to the use of community owned territories during the news program on the *First Channel of Public TV* *– News in 60 Minutes* on November 30, 2019.[[87]](#footnote-87) The plaintiff considered Hakob Shahgaldyan’s comment on the quality of his work as slanderous. *Yeghitsi Luys-BK Ltd*. demanded from Public TV to publicly refute the slanderous information on air, and claimed from the head of Charentsavan community Hakob Shahgaldyan the payment of monetary compensation of 2 million AMD.

The court hearing was held on July 9, 2021, the next one was scheduled for March 16, 2022.

**On March 11,** the Civil Court of Appeal made a decision to partially uphold the appeal of *Hraparak Daily Ltd.* v. the judgement of the Court of First Instance, which upheld NA MP Hayk Sargsyan’s lawsuit against the daily newspsaper, demanding compensation of the damage caused to honor, dignity and business reputation through slander and insult.

We should remind that on June 21, 2019 Hayk Sargsyan filed **3 lawsuits** against the founder of the media outlet. The first lawsuit was caused by an article, entitled: “A New Schmeiss has Appeared in the Parliament,”[[88]](#footnote-88) and by the judgment of September 16, 2020, Hayk Sargsyan’s claim was partially upheld. The newspaper was obligated to refute the defamatory information, stating “Hayk Sargsyan is called New Schmeiss in the Parliament, as Hayk Sargsyan is dealing with human resources and business lobbying, he is doing clinker lobbying in the Parliament in favour of Mher Sedrakyan who he is interacting with.” Besides, it was ruled to confiscate 50.000 AMD in favor of Hayk Sargsyan as compensation for non-pecuniary damage and 150.000 AMD as an attorney’s reasonable fee. On October 16, the defendant filed an appeal which was again partially upheld. The Court of Appeal found that the part of the expression “A New Schmeiss has Appeared in the Parliament” being offensive should be extracted from the refutation, and the confiscated money in favor of the MP should amount to 40.000 AMD for defamatory expressions.

 On April 13, the defendant appealed to the Court of Cassation against this decision. On June 2, the Court of Cassation rejected to accept the appeal for proceeding, considering the submitted grounds unsatisfactory.

 **The second lawsuit** was caused by a June 19, 2019 article, entitled: “Pashinyan Showed a Yellow Card to Hayk Sargsyan” where the MP is portrayed as “an odious figure”, notorious for scandals.[[89]](#footnote-89) Court hearings were held on March 15, June 25, and September 17, 2021. On October 11, the court partially upheld the lawsuit, obliging the media outlet to publicly apologize for the insulting remarks, and to publish the final part of the verdict in *the Hraparak daily and on Hraparak.am website*, as well as to confiscate a total of 130,000 AMD in favor of Hayk Sargsyan as compensation for the insult and defamation, and 150,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee. The rest of the lawsuit was rejected. No appeal was filed against the verdict.

**The** **third lawsuit** was caused by an article, entitled: “Hayk Sargsyan “Made a Row” on the Yerevan-Moscow Plane.”[[90]](#footnote-90) At the hearing of 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. After rejection the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Cassation. On February 26, 2021 the Court of Cassation upheld the claim, annulling the decision of the Court of Appeal. The latter annulled the decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction on June 30. The case proceeding resumed on August 26. Court hearing took place on October 4, the next one was scheduled for February 2, 2022.

 **On March 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor Marzes (Vayk residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of *Lydian Armenia company v. journalist Tehmine Yenokyan.*

The lawsuit, filed on September 5, 2018, was caused by Tehmine Yenokyan’s live-stream on her Facebook page from the mineral water drinking hall of Jermuk city on August 12. According to the plaintiff, the journalist during her public speech made expressions discrediting the business reputation of the company, for which they demand 1 million AMD of compensation, as well as refutation of data considered as slanderous via a Facebook public live-stream from the same venue. (For details see CPFE’s annual report for 2018-2020 in the *Reports* section on *khosq.am website*).

Court hearings were also held on May 19, June 24, July 28, September 15, October 7, the next hearing has not been scheduled as of the end of the year.

**On March 11**, 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 information considered slander.

We should remind that 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.[[91]](#footnote-91)

 Court hearings were held on March 29, May 24, June 30, and on November 5, the court decided to leave the case without trial, as the plaintiff neither appeared in two consecutive hearings, nor filed a motion to postpone the hearing or continue the trial in his absence. Neither did the defendant file a motion to continue the trial of the case.

**On March 16,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Gagik Gevorkian v. Dareszkib Ltd., the founder of the* *Armenian Times* *daily*, and three other citizens, demanding refutation of information discrediting honor and dignity, as well as compensation for insult and slander. The lawsuit was filed on July 24, 2019, accepted for proceedings on September 30, and caused by the article, entitled: “They Try to Use Our Patriotism and Deceive Us. Serzh Sargsyan's Adviser “Dumped” a Canadian-Armenian Businessman,” published in the *Armenian Times* and on *Armtimes.com* website, owned by the aforementioned Ltd., on May 22 and 24, 2019, respectively.[[92]](#footnote-92)

Court hearings on the case were held on March 26, May 17, July 7, the next hearing is scheduled for January 25, 2022.

**On March 16,** Hrachya Papinyan, correspondent of Public Television, announced that the board of directors fired him for publishing unchecked information on his social media page.[[93]](#footnote-93)

**On March 16,** Andranik Kocharyan, the Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defense and Security, shouted at the *Tert.am* journalist Ani Gevorgyan when the latter asked a question referring to the *Deja Vu Telegram Channel*, according to which Kocharyan had applied to the former Minister of Defense Davit Tonoyan with a request regarding his son and that is why their relations have become tense. The official responded to the reporter: “Whatever you just said, should be said about your master's children. Go ask the *Deja Vu*. I am now cutting off the electricity of the fake accounts, you are without electricity now, Ani, I am cutting off the electricity to *Tert.am*, go, you are gone! All the morons, the deja vu people, all of them are without electricity.[[94]](#footnote-94)

 On March 19, the journalist addressed the NA Speaker Ararat Mirzoyan and Vice Speaker Vahe Enfiajian with a demand to discuss the fact of Andranik Kocharyan's gross violation of the rules of parliamentary ethics, but no steps were taken to address the issue.

**On March 17,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary hearing on the case of businessman *Levon Marcos v. 24News Ltd.*, demanding refutation of the information discrediting his honor, dignity and business reputation.

The lawsuit, filed on May 26, 2020, was caused by the article published on *24news.am* website on May 21, entitled: “Fraud of 300 Million Dollars. How was the Biggest Financial Fraud Attempt in the Country Prevented?”[[95]](#footnote-95) The article, in particular, refers to the criminal case, initiated against Marcos in Armenia, and states that the certificate issued by the World Bank helped to reveal that Levon Marcos had issued $ 300 million counterfeit banknotes, thus trying to fulfill the biggest financial fraud in the history of Armenia.

The case was reappointed on June 8 with the change of the judge, and afterwards accepted for proceedings on June 22. No court hearing has taken place as of the end of the year.

**On March 17,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted the lawsuit of the former police officer Vardan Ghukasyanagainst *ArmDaily.am* *news website*, demanding from lawyer Hrant Ananyan refutation of the slander and apology for the insult.

The lawsuit was filed on October 26, 2020, and was caused by an article, entitled: “Artur Gevorgyan was not Detained Within Any Criminal Case and is not in Any Detention Center: Lawyer Says” and published on the website on September 24.[[96]](#footnote-96) In the article, the lawyer's opinions and qualifications were used in response to the plaintiff's Facebook Live, where accusations were voiced against the former MP Arthur Gevorgyan. The lawyer said the following about the plaintiff: “․․․ I urge the reasonable groups of public not to be deceived by disinformation, especially when that information comes in the form of claims by a homosexual, the allegations of a discredited, condemned, failed homosexual, a person who is hostile, and he is hostile, as I understand it, certainly because of Vladimir Gasparyan, because he was kicked out of the police.”

 On December 22, the court decided to leave the lawsuit without examination. The plaintiff had been duly notified of the venue and time of the two consecutive hearings, but neither appeared, nor filed a motion to adjourn the case or resolve it in his absence, and the defendant did not file a motion to continue the case.

**On March 19,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Vardan Badasyan, the RA Minister of Justice Rustam Badasyan's father, v. Alternativ.am news website*, demanding 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, entitled: “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.”[[97]](#footnote-97)

Court hearings were held on June 18, October 21, the next one was scheduled for February 15, 2022.

**On March 23,** Davit Galstyan, Advisor to the former Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against the *First Armenian News Website Ltd.* and journalist Nver Mnatsakanyan, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, and public refutation of defamatory information. The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on April 1.

The court hearing was scheduled for February 17, 2022.

**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 website*, 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 entitled: “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.[[98]](#footnote-98)

The hearing took place on August 10. The next court hearing was scheduled for March 15, 2022.

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

We should remind that the lawsuit was filedon June 22, 2020, and was caused by an article, published on *Golosarmenii.am* website on May 23, entitled: “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.

The court hearing on the case was held on May 25, and on September 2 the case was reappointed due to the termination of the judge's powers. On September 20, the lawsuit was accepted presided over by a new judge, a hearing was held on December 24, and the next one was scheduled for March 18, 2022.

**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 defendant.

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. Court hearing was held on July 27, and on October 29, Styopa Safaryan rejected the lawsuit against *168 Zham* on the grounds that the source of the information was Igor Khachaturov, while the media outlet did not share the responsibility.

**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, entitled: “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.[[99]](#footnote-99)

Court hearings were held on June 23 and 25, October 4 and 12, November 11 and 16, the next one was scheduled for February 22, 2022.

**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 publicly refute the information considered slander and to pay compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on June 2, 2017, was caused by the article entitled: “Meghri Medical Center vs. SRS” published on *Lurer.com* website, in which reference is made to Narine Abrahamyan appearing in the hot spot of a number of incidents and scandals during her professional activity.[[100]](#footnote-100)

The court hearing was held on May 24, the next one was scheduled for January 27, 2022.

**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”.[[101]](#footnote-101) Therefore, the official displayed discriminatory and contemptuous attitude towards the journalist.

**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, entitled: “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.[[102]](#footnote-102)

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 to the Civil Court of Appeal. On July 1, this court rejected the defendant's motion to reinstate the deadline set by law for filing an appeal.

The case was sent to the court archives.

**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 court hearing was held on July 16, and on September 29, the court partially upheld Alen Simonyan's claim. *Iravunk Media Ltd*. was obliged to publicly refute the information considered defamatory, to pay 200,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee. The verdict was not appealed and it entered into legal force.

**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.[[103]](#footnote-103) 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. However, on August 2, that Committee decided to terminate the proceedings on the grounds of lack of corpus delicti in the act.

**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 the basis of the report submitted to the RA Prosecutor General's Office on April 29, materials were prepared in the Avan Department of the RA Police. On May 24, the criminal case was rejected.

 **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, entitled: “The Prisoner Attempted a Suicide Because He Was Not Taken to the Dentist”.[[104]](#footnote-104) (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 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, entitled: “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 May 25. Court hearing is scheduled for January 18, 2022.

 **On April 15**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to terminate 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, entitled: “Who Donated an Expensive Car to Hayk Sargsyan and Why: All is Known” published on *Newspress.am* website of *Andradardz Press Club*.[[105]](#footnote-105)

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

**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, entitled: “"Environmental officials" Engaged in Illegal Hunting in Syunik”.[[106]](#footnote-106) On April 22, the lawsuit was returned for corrections and was refiled on May 27, being accepted for proceedings on June 14. Court hearings were held on October 11, 25, November 19, December 3, and December 24. The court dismissed the case on the grounds that the plaintiff had withdrawn the lawsuit.

**On May 5,** the same official 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 a 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 July 8,** Artak Mkhitaryan filed a new lawsuit against the journalist. The lawsuit was accepted for proceeding on July 19. The court hearing was scheduled for January 20, 2020.

**On April 19**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan rejected the motion of the representative of the defendant in the case of *journalist Hasmik Arakelyan v. The Public Television of Armenia CJSC* to apply for statute of limitations and decided to resume the case investigation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed March 10, 2020, with the demand to invalidate the orders No 90-A, No 106-A, and No 147-A of the TV company leadership on imposing a penalty.

On November 3, 2021, the court left the lawsuit without examination, as the plaintiff's representative, having been notified, neither appeared in two consecutive court hearings, nor filed a motion to postpone the hearing or resolve the case in his absence.

 **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, entitled: “A Party in the Government-owned Fermata Club” and published on the website on June 7.[[107]](#footnote-107) 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.

Court hearings were held on June 1, September 15, November 23, 2021. The next hearing was not scheduled by the end of the year.

**On April 19,** businessman Khachatur Sukiasyan filed **7 lawsuits** against media outlets in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, demanding a public apology, publication of the court judgement, refutation of information considered defamatory, as well as payment of compensation.

**One of the lawsuits**, filed against *Pastinfo.am* website, was caused by an article, entitled: “Khachatur Sukiasyan Summoned Journalist Nairi Hokhikyan and Demanded not to Criticize Nikol Pashinyan” published on *Pastinfo.am* website on March 22.[[108]](#footnote-108) On April 30, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the motion to apply injunction of putting a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim was rejected. A preliminary hearing was scheduled for July 29, the next hearing was scheduled for February 2, 2022.

The other 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. Hence, **the second lawsuit** was filed against Spartak Seyranyan (*Yerkir.am* website)[[109]](#footnote-109). On May 12, this lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the motion to apply injunction of putting a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim was rejected. After the case was reappointed due to the change of the judge, the lawsuit was accepted again for proceeding on July 12. Court hearings were held on August 4, the next one was scheduled for January 19, 2022.

**The third lawsuit** is against *Asekose LLC*, founder of *Asekose.am* website.[[110]](#footnote-110) On May 3, this lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, and a preliminary hearing was scheduled for September 14. On October 18, the court terminated the case, as the defendant apologized to the businessman on October 4 on the website.[[111]](#footnote-111)

**The forth lawsuit** is against *Armday.am LLC*, founder of *Armday.am* website.[[112]](#footnote-112) 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. freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of 3 million AMD, was upheld until the execution of the final judicial act on this case.

**The fifth lawsuit** was against *Media Plus LLC*, the founder of *Yerevan.Today* website.[[113]](#footnote-113) 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. freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. Preliminary hearings took place on July 27 and December 16. The next court hearing has not been scheduled as of the end of the year.

**The** **sixth lawsuit** is against *168 Zham LLC*, the founder of *Blog.168.am* website, with claims of 2 million AMD of compensation.[[114]](#footnote-114) The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on May 3, the motion to apply injunction, i.e. freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. Preliminary hearings took place on July 27, December 16. The next court hearing was scheduled for February 8, 2022.

**The seventh lawsuit** is against *News AM LLC*, the founder of *News.am* website.[[115]](#footnote-115) On April 28, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the motion to apply injunction, i.e. freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. Court hearings were held on July 27, September 22, December 6, the next one was scheduled for March 7, 2022.

On the same day, April 19, *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. freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. On August 30, the court made a decision on the distribution of the burden of proof. The court hearing was held on November 5, the next one was scheduled for January 26, 2022.

**The second lawsuit** was accepted for proceedings on April 29. The motion to apply injunction, i.e. freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. Court hearing was held on September 29, the next one was scheduled for January 27, 2022.

**The third lawsuit** was accepted for proceedings on May 3, the court hearing was held on September 14, the next one was scheduled for March 2, 2022.

**The fourth lawsuit** was accepted for proceedings on April 28, the motion to apply injunction, i.e. freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. Court hearing was held on September 7, and on October 4, the plaintiff filed a motion to reject the claims, stating that the parties had reached an agreement through negotiations, as a result of which the defendant published the text of the denial previously agreed with the plaintiff. On October 22, the case proceeding was terminated.

**The fifth lawsuit** was accepted for proceedings on April 28; the motion to apply injunction, i.e. freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant, including money, in the amount of the claim, was rejected. Court hearings were held on on July 12, September 7, October 22, November 30, the next one was scheduled for February 14, 2022.

**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.[[116]](#footnote-116)

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 were held on May 12, June 16, August 4, September 8, October 6 and 27, 2021. As of the end of the year, no other developments were registered.

**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, v. 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, entitled: “Scandal! A bribe in exchange for position”.[[117]](#footnote-117) Corruption, flavoured with revolution” 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.

Court hearings were also held on June 8 and October 5. January 19, 2022 was set as the day of the announcement of the verdict.

**On April 21,** during the Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s visit to Kapan, Syunik, the professional activity of Anush Mirzoyan, correspondent of *5TV*, was hindered. As reported by the journalist, she was prevented from working by Prime Minister's spokesperson Mane Gevorgyan, the police and the NA Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan by constantly “standing in the way” and trying to take the phone.[[118]](#footnote-118)

**On April 21**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Armenia held a regular court hearing on the case of *journalist Arthur Hovhannisyan v. the RA Ministry of Health* (the third party is *Aravot newspaper* LLC).

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on January 11, 2018, was caused by the Ministry’s information: “One should not rely on falsification: there was no attempt of vaccination at Aygabats school in Shirak Marz”, published on the official website *Moh.am.*[[119]](#footnote-119) 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 on May 12, the lawsuit was fully rejected. The decision entered into legal force.

**On April 21**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the preliminary court hearing on the case of *former Zoo Director Ruben Khachatryan v. journalist Narine Kirakosyan*, demanding refutation of slander and compensation of non-pecuniary damage.

The lawsuit was first filed on September 24 of 2019, then it was returned upon the request of the plaintiff 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).

In 2021, court hearings on the case were also held on June 8, October 5, the next one was scheduled for February 17, 2022.

**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 for 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.[[120]](#footnote-120)

Court hearings on the case were also held on June 11, July 2, and on July 26 the Court decided to reject the lawsuit by regarding the judgements presented on TV as value judgements, to confiscae 100.000 AMD from Aram Orbelyan in favor of *Armenian Public TV* CJSC as the attorney’s fee.

The court judgement of August 30 was appealed, which was accepted for proceedings on September 29. On December 15, the Court of Civil Appeal upheld the appeal; the veridct of the Court of First Instance was completely overturned, the case was sent back to the same court for a new court hearing.

 **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 the video, entitled: “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.[[121]](#footnote-121)

A court hearing on the case was also held on July 26, 2021, and by the decision of August 16, the Court rejected Nver Mnatsakanyan’s lawsuit claiming that the plaintiff failed to substantiate the fact that the defendant was seeking to insult the plaintiff and to discredit his honor and dignity. On September 15, the plaintiff applied to the Court of Appeal, where the appeal was accepted for proceedings on October 7. As of the end of the year no development has been reported.

**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), demanding compensation for the damage caused to 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 TV Channel on July 1, which the plaintiff considers to be defamatory.[[122]](#footnote-122)

Court hearings on the case were also held on July 19, November 30, and the next one was scheduled for March 23, 2022.

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

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, entitled: “Tomato and Pepper Seedlings are Planted in Areni Cave under the Disguise of Viticulture Development”[[123]](#footnote-123) 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 to perform economic activity in the reserve area. *Factor.am*, too, published an article with the same content on June 27, entitled: “Who Planted Tomatoes and Peppers in the Area of ​​Areni Cave? Abroyan Blames the Archeologist, the Latter Names the Offender”.[[124]](#footnote-124)

In 2021, court hearings on the case were also held on August 3, and on November 17, the lawsuit was decided to leave without trial, as the the duly notified plaintiff neither appeared in two consecutive hearings, nor filed a motion to postpone the hearing or resolve the case in his absence. Neither did the defendant file a motion to continue the hearing of the case.

**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 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.[[125]](#footnote-125) 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 court 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, entitled: “Russian Special Services Take Interest in the Editors of the “Bagramyan 26” Channel that Spreads Disinformation”.[[126]](#footnote-126) 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 10**, *Araratnews.am* journalist Nane Arzumanyan applied to the Human Rights Defender, informing him that in connection with the video she filmed in Yerablur and posted on May 9, she had been targeted by fake and real social media users, who sent her personal threats, insults, and letters, humiliating her dignity.[[127]](#footnote-127) The journalist noted that her family members were targeted, too, as speculations were made about her brother who died in the war.

In regard to the case, the Police of the RA have prepared some files, Nane Arzumanyan has provided some explanations, too. On May 24, the authority in charge of the proceedings decided to reject the initiation of the criminal case because of the lack of corpus delicti. The decision has not been appealed.

**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.[[128]](#footnote-128)

**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, entitled: “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.[[129]](#footnote-129)

On May 27, the lawsuit was returned for corrections and refiled on June 23, and was accepted for proceedings on July 6. The motion to impose an embargo in the amount of claim on the property of the defendant was rejected.

Court hearings were held on September 27, October 19, November 11, and on December 2 upon the decision of the court the lawsuit was rejected because the statute of limitations had expired. The court obligated the plaintiff to confiscate 50 000 AMD in favor of *168 hour* as an attorney’s reasonable fee.

**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.[[130]](#footnote-130)

On May 27, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. On July 8, the court made a decision on distribution of burden of proof. Court hearings were held on August 19, September 3, and during the hearing on October 5 upon the decision of the court, *News.am LLC* was involved as a third party siding with the defendant. Hence, a decision was made to complete the lawsuit, i.e. to urge Ani Gevorgyan to refute the slander in public on *News.am*, and if impossible, on the Facebook page of the defendant. Besides, a sum of 2 000 000 AMD was to be confiscated from Ani Gevorgyan in favor of the plaintiff as compensation for slander.

Hearings on the case continued on October 29, November 19, and on December 15 the court set a range of time for presenting evidence, which is February 15 of 2022.

After the **May 20** sitting 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.[[131]](#footnote-131) By the way, the journalist answered the official in the same indecent way.

**On May 27**, the Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's security guards prevented *PARA TV* employees from filming.[[132]](#footnote-132) 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.[[133]](#footnote-133) 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.[[134]](#footnote-134)

**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.[[135]](#footnote-135) 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 September 28, the case was transferred into another court and accepted for proceedings on October 11. A court hearing was scheduled for February 7, 2022.

**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”.[[136]](#footnote-136)

Another court hearing was also held on August 12, the next hearing has not been scheduled yet as of December 31.

**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”.[[137]](#footnote-137) Hours after the incident, the phone was returned decrypted, and the video was deleted.

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[[138]](#footnote-138) and the strange decision of the SIS,[[139]](#footnote-139) 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, entitled: “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.[[140]](#footnote-140) The plaintiff claims public refutation of factual data deemed defamatory and compensation of damage.

After the reappointment the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on June 22, a court hearing was scheduled for February 7 of 2022.

***Cases of Pressure during the Campaign of Snap Parliamentary Elections of June 20 of 2021 and on the Very Day of Elections***

**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.[[141]](#footnote-141) 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 scornful to *Radio Liberty* correspondent Artak Khulyan.[[142]](#footnote-142) 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.[[143]](#footnote-143)

**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 Liana Sargsyan and Suzy Badoyan.[[144]](#footnote-144) The journalists were being identified with a specific political force, which, according to the citizens, paid them 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.”[[145]](#footnote-145)

**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. Eventually the problem was solved, and the cameramen were able to film.

**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.[[146]](#footnote-146) 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.[[147]](#footnote-147) 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 corpus delicti. 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.[[148]](#footnote-148) 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 the 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. Diana Davtyan, inter alia, also provided explanation, mentioning that her professional activity had not been obstructed. On July 3, the RA Police decided to refuse to initiate a case due to lack of corpus delicti.

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**On June 10**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing on the case of *News.am LLC v. Dareskizb LLC, founder of Armenian Times newspaper*. We should remind that the lawsuit was filed, caused by the article, entitled: “*Ararat, Armnews, H2, News.am, Yerkir Media*, fakes; which Media Outlets were “bought” by Kocharyan?”, published in *Armenian Times*[[149]](#footnote-149). According to the plaintiff, the publication encompassed a series of expressions in regard to News.am, besides, the title of the article itself caused damage to its business reputation. News.am LLC submitted a claim to the extent of 200 000 AMD to the founder of Haykakan Jamanak.

The next hearing on the case was scheduled for January 20, 2022.

**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, entitled: “National Institute of Health Registers Children's Vitamins with Violations.”[[150]](#footnote-150) The article mentions that *Demi Pharm* assured the website that children's vitamins had to have a state registration, and it was trying to 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.[[151]](#footnote-151)

On June 22, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. Court hearings on the case were conducted on October 29, November 3, December 6, the next one was scheduled for March 24 of 2022.

**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 entitled: “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 on *Shamshyan.com* on March 13.[[152]](#footnote-152)

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. No appeal against the decision has been filed.

**On June 16**, a redistribution was held on the ground of the judge’s substitution on the case of *NA MP Sophia Hovsepyan v. Anna Gevorgyan, editor of Haykakan Zham analytical agency*. The lawsuit was filed on July 29 of 2020, demanding refutation of slander and compensation for the damage to the business reputation. As the MP reported to the CPFE, the lawsuit was caused by an array of publications on *Hzham.am*. Thus, on March 13, it was mentioned in the article, entitled: “Concerned that Money Could be Allocated” that “The candidate, who Sophia Hovsepyan supports, will distribute “presents” in the form of money in Geghanist, prior to the local self-government bodies’ elections, to be held on Sunday”.[[153]](#footnote-153) On June 1, it was mentioned in the article, entitled: “Velvet Corruption” that “Sophia Hovsepyan, NA current MP, who used to hold the office of Shirak’s Deputy Governor, would extort presents from the heads of provincial infrastructures”.[[154]](#footnote-154) It was stated in the article “the MPs of Civil Contract about their own Accomplishments”, published on July 10, that the MP has bought two apartments thanks to the bonuses.[[155]](#footnote-155)

On June 23, after the redistribution, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, a court hearing was scheduled for March 15 of 2022.

**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 data considered defamatory presented in the article, published on June 11 on its website *Yerevan.today*, entitled: “Armenia's New Millionaires. Papikyan Became a Dollar Millionaire on the Incomes from Asphalt in 3 Years”.[[156]](#footnote-156) On June 28, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. A court hearing was held on December 23, the next one was scheduled for March 16 of 2022.

**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 for 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, entitled: “The Mysterious Person Wearing a Cap and Glasses. Who is Behind the Next Staff Mess in Shirak Marz?”[[157]](#footnote-157), 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, entitled: “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.[[158]](#footnote-158) Besides, according to the publication, “Arayik Arakelyan is in a corruption scandal, by the way, together with his family”.

The two lawsuits were accepted for proceedings on July 2. The court hearing on both cases was scheduled for March 16 of 2022.

**On July 2**, *Medisar LLC* filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *News AM LLC*, the founder of *News.am* news page, seeking compensation for the damage caused to its business reputation. The lawsuit was caused by an article published on May 29 on the above-mentioned website, entitled: “Did They Get Super Profit by Purchasing a DNA Identification Device for War Victims? New facts from a Suspicious Deal”. The website particularly stated that as a result of the tender conducted by the Scientific and Practical Center of Forensic Medicine SNCO of the RA Ministry of Justice, a contract worth 295.8 million AMD was signed with *Medisar LLC*, engaged in the supply and import of laboratory equipment and chemicals, which received a revenue (overhead) of at least 111 million AMD ($ 212,237) as a result of the procurement process.

The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on July 20, the plaintiff’s motion to apply injunction to obligate the defendant or other persons to perform certain actions related to the subject matter of the dispute, was rejected. A court hearing on the case was held on December 17, the next one was scheduled for April 12.

**On July 6,** by the decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, the claim of Tigran Seyranyan for compensation of damage to the honor, dignity and business reputation of a person was separated from the case of *businessman Ashot Grigoryan v. 24News LLC*, and Tigran Seyranyan, the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 27, 2018, was caused by a video, entitled: “Chance Comer in Yerevan: Who is the Big Schemer, Initiating the Restart of Nairit?” that was published on the YouTube channel of the website.[[159]](#footnote-159) (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2018-2020 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The separated part was filed to the court on August 19 of this year and was accepted for proceedings on the 30th. No new developments were recorded by the end of the year.

**On July 8,** the Court of First Instance of Yerevan decided to terminate the case of *journalist, founder of Medialab.am website Marianna Grigoryan v. Analitik LLC*, as the plaintiff withdrew the lawsuit.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on April 28, 2020, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to her honor, dignity and business reputation. The lawsuit was caused by an article, entitled: “What does Erik Grigoryan Have to Do with Soros's Open Society Foundation” and published on *Analitik.am* website on December 6, 2019.[[160]](#footnote-160) Referring to its own sources, the website wrote that the Soros Foundation, through Erik Grigoryan's sister Marianna Grigoryan, influences the policy projects, implemented by the Ministry of Environment, adapting them to the Foundation’s interests.

**On July 13**, Styopa Safaryan, chairman of the Public Council, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction against Taguhi Aslanyan, correspondent of *Livenews.am*, demanding public apology for insulting and confiscation of 1 000 000 AMD in compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the expressions of the journalist, posted on Facebook on June 20, stating: “You are not just rejected, but pissed…”.[[161]](#footnote-161) The journalist, making reference to an unidentified source, has written that the neighbors have pissed on Styopa Safaryan for serving the Prime Minister.

On July 27, the lawsuit was withdrawn in order to make some adjustments into the text. It was refiled on August 30, on September 10 it was accepted for proceedings. A court hearing was held on December 9, the next one was scheduled for February 23 of 2022.

**On July 19**, *Hraparak Daily* LLC filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against the *Media Initiatives Center* NGO, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory and a compensation.

The lawsuit was caused by the program initiated by the NGO, which reveals fake news and misinformation materials, and Facebook and Instagram block them. The media outlet thinks that no objective choice is made, and in general the initiative puts pressure on the press.

On July 28, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. On August 2, the court rejected the motion to apply injunction to seize the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim. A court hearing was held on December 13, and the next one was scheduled for April 3 of 2022.

**On August 2**, *Armenian National Interests Fund* CJSC and its Executive Director Davit Papazyan filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Hraparak Daily* LLC and journalist Suzan Simonyan, demanding refutation of information discrediting honor, dignity, and business reputation, and a monetary compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the article on Hraparak.am website, published on July 24, entitled: “State interest or business of a group of people?”, which particularly states that Davit Papazyan published a Q&A talk, addressing the deal signed with Air Arabia company on July 14.[[162]](#footnote-162) Then the journalist expressed a final thought, “The state invests, the businessman puts the money in his pocket...”

On August 12, the court accepted the lawsuit for proceedings, rejected the motion to apply injunction to put a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim. The plaintiff appealed the rejection in the Court of Appeal on September 22. It was accepted for proceedings on October 6 and was rejected on the grounds of not substantiating the difficulty or impossibility of implementing the injunction with the help of the arguments, referred to by the plaintiffs.

**On the same day, on the same occasion**, only *Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC* filed a lawsuit against *Hraparak Daily LLC* and Suzan Simonyan, demanding refutation of information discrediting business reputation and payment of a monetary compensation.

On August 10, the court accepted the lawsuit for proceedings, rejected the motion to apply injunction to put a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim. On September 8, the plaintiff filed an appeal against the rejection, which was returned on September 27 due to the lack of a signature on the document. On October 11, it was refiled for proceedings and was accepted on the 15th, and was rejected on the ground that means of lawsuit claim can be applied, if there is prudent suspicion on the fact that the implementation of the injunction can become impossible or difficult. And there is no such suspicion in this case.

A court hearing on the case was held also on December 28.

**On August 2**, the start of the work of the newly elected National Assembly was accompanied by severe restrictions on the movement of media representatives in the parliament.[[163]](#footnote-163) Journalists and cameramen were not allowed to enter the building where the committee sessions took place; they were not able to pass to the section where the offices of the parliament majority were located, as well as couldn't make use of some lobbies, where they usually took interviews and commentaries from the MPs. All this was done without the adoption of any normative-legal act, which would be a basis for such actions. Only on the same day, August 2, when the restrictions had already been applied, the relevant decision of the NA Speaker regarding them was published. Journalist organizations have condemned the authorities' obstruction of the lawful professional activities of the media.[[164]](#footnote-164)

**On August 5**, photo correspondent of *Panorama.am* news website Lilian Galstyan was banned from entering the NA building to do her job.[[165]](#footnote-165) Later it was revealed that she was completely deprived of the opportunity to cover the activities of the Parliament. The chief of the NA staff informed in the letter sent to the editorial office that the photographer, while carrying out her professional activity, took pictures of the employees of the security service, which is forbidden. The editorial office, in its turn, noted that the employees of the security service, who, according to the NA leadership, have a problem to hide their faces, in fact, look at the hall with an open face, from where a live broadcast is carried out. The CPFE and partner journalistic organizations issued a statement condemning another obstruction of the journalist's activities by the authorities.[[166]](#footnote-166) On August 17, Lilian Galstyan's entry permit to the National Assembly was renewed.

**On August 10**, Mher Terteryan, the leader of the United Homeland Party and an advisor to former Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against lawyer Hakob Charoyan (third party-*Live News Media*), demanding refutation of information considered defamatory and compensation of damages caused to honor, dignity and business reputation. The lawsuit was caused by the following allegations made in the authorial program *Ditaket* on *LIVEnews.am* website on June 30: “Leader of United Homeland Party Mher Terteryan tried to kill his wife”, as well as other details of his personal life, about which Terteryan's ex-wife Naira Terteryan spoke during the program, and his lawyer Hakob Charoyan.[[167]](#footnote-167)

On August 25, the lawsuit was returned for corrections, and was refiled in the form of a **new lawsuit** on October 22, then it was returned on November 4 and refiled on the 17th. It was accepted for proceedings on December 2. As for the end of the year, no developments have been registered.

**On September 3**, Mher Terteryan filed a lawsuit against Naira Terteryan (third party, *Live News Media LLC*) on the same occasion, demanding refutation of the information considered defamatory. On September 22, the lawsuit was returned and refiled on November 4. As for the end of the year, no other developments have been registered.

And **on September 27**, the same plaintiff already filed a lawsuit against *Live News Media LLC* demanding refutation of the information considered defamatory, and compensation for the damage caused to the dignity, honor and business reputation. On October 13, it was returned for corrections and refiled on November 5. The motion to apply injunction to put a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim was rejected on November 22. As of the end of the year, no further developments have been registered.

**On August 10,** lawyer Lusine Avagyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Naira Terteryan, (third party - *Live News Media LLC*), demanding refutation of the information considered defamatory, and compensation for the damage caused to her dignity, honor and business reputation. The lawsuit was caused by the allegations made by Naira Terteryan in the authorial program *Ditaket* of *LIVEnews.am* website, according to which the lawyer of her ex-husband Mher Terteryan Lusine Avagyan, aside from professional activities, interferes in their personal and family life.[[168]](#footnote-168)

On August 25, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. The plaintiff's motion to apply injunction to put a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim was rejected. No court hearing has been held by the end of the year.

After the heated argument between the political forces in the session hall of the National Assembly and the intervention of the security officers by the order of the NA Speaker **on August 11**, the media representatives were forbidden to work and film from the press room.[[169]](#footnote-169)

**On August 12,** *FDA Laboratory* LLC filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against the *Investigative Journalists* NGO, demanding to post the refutation of the published information, and the presented response. The lawsuit was caused by the article, entitled: "Two of the Vitamin D drugs registered as biologically active supplements" published in Hetq.am belonging to the NGO on June 30, which states that in order to avoid a costly and time-consuming process, medical vitamins are often registered in violation as a supplement, food.[[170]](#footnote-170) On August 20, the lawsuit was returned due to incomplete documents. It was filed again on September 14 and was accepted for proceedings on October 4. A court hearing was held on December 20.

**On August 19,** Arthur Vanetsyan, former Head of the National Security Service and leader of the I Have Honor Alliance of the National Assembly, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Gurgen (Gagik) Melkonyan, a member of the Civil Contract faction (third party: *Public Television of Armenia CJSC*), demanding refutation of the defamatory information, publication of the refutation text, and compensation for the damage caused to the honor and dignity. The lawsuit was caused by Melkonyan's thoughts on Arthur Vanetsyan' s activities during the last Artsakh war on July 20 expressed during an interview with Petros Ghazaryan on *Public TV*. He particularly said: “Vanetsyan went and ran away. He went and came back in the blink of an eye. They went and got there, collected the weapons, knew that there were a lot of weapons dumped there, collected them and brought them to Armenia. Their goal was to bring weapons”.[[171]](#footnote-171)

On August 27, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings; a preliminary court hearing was held on December 15, the next one was scheduled for March 18 of 2022.

**On August 23,** Aram Mamikonyan, a lawyer and former employee of the Control Chamber, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Karmen Davtyan (third party: *Zhoghovurd Daily Editorial Office LLC*), obliging to pay compensation for the damages caused to honor and dignity, refute information considered defamation and to apologize. The plaintiff also demands compensation of 2 million drams. The lawsuit was caused by Karmen Davtyan's article published on July 30 on *Armlur.am* website, entitled: “Immorality also has a limit”.[[172]](#footnote-172) The author accuses the plaintiff of corruption and bribery. By the way, at the end of the article, the editorial office states that it is not responsible for the author's opinion.

On September 6, the court rejected the plaintiff's motion to apply injunction to ban the defendant from taking certain actions. In addition, the court ruled to reject the motion to provide evidence. The decision was appealed on October 7 in the Court of Appeals, the complaint was accepted for proceedings on October 22, and it was rejected on November 5 on the ground that the plaintiff has not provided any evidence concerning not applying lawsuit claim means turning the implementation of the injunction impossible or difficult, or inflicting vital damage on the plaintiff. As for the end of the year, no further developments have been recorded.

**On August 24,** the activities of journalists and cameramen were hindered at the entrance to the Parliament session hall, where security officers even threatened *News.am* cameraman Hayk Tonoyan with deprivation of NA accreditation if he continued filming, and deleted his video of the fistfight in the session hall.[[173]](#footnote-173) The CPFE and 10 partner journalistic organizations issued a statement condemning the incident.[[174]](#footnote-174)

In response to the CPFE's inquiry, the RA Prosecutor General's Office stated that the media publications about this case had been sent to the Special Investigation Service with an assignment to prepare materials. On September 6, the SIS made a decision to refuse to initiate a criminal case on the grounds of lack of corpus delicti. On September 28, Daniel Ioannisyan, Program Coordinator of the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, filed a complaint against this decision, asking to abolish it and initiate a criminal case. On October 5, the Superior Prosecutor rejected the complaint, then Daniel Ioannisyan filed a complaint to the Court of General Jurisdiction on November 10. The investigation is in process.

 **On August 27**, Hovhannes Hovhannisyan, Acting Rector of YSU, filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Media Plus LLC* and *Platform of Free News* news and non-governmental organization, founders of *Yerevan.today* and *Politik.am,* demanding refutation of defamatory data, apology for the inflicted insult and compensation for slander and humiliation.

The lawsuit was caused by the article, published on *Yerevan.today* on August 18, entitled: “When are You Going to Name YSU after Soros?”[[175]](#footnote-175), which states if Hovhannes Hovhannisyan is ultimately appointed in the capacity of the Rector, “one step will remain, which is to name YSU after Soros…”. In the same lawsuit Hovhannisyan argues nickname, ascribed to him “Sorosian” in the feature, published on *Politik.am* on August 4, entitled: “Sorosian Hovhannes Hovhannisyan will be appointed as the Rector of YSU”.[[176]](#footnote-176)

 On September 16, the lawsuit was returned for corrections. This decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction was appealed on October 15 in the Court of Appeals. The lawsuit, which was filed twice on October 13, was returned on November 1. On November 15, the complaint was accepted for proceedings in the Court of Civil Appeals, and was upheld on the 24th. On December 22, the case was received in the Court of General Jurisdiction, the day of the court hearing has not been scheduled yet.

**On August 27,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to distribute the burden of proof on the case of *Vahe Keushgueryan v. Dareskizb Ltd.*.

The lawsuit was filed on October 12, 2020, demanding to refute the information considered insulting and slanderous. The lawsuit was caused by an article, published on *Armtimes.com* website (owned by the company) on September 7, which particularly stated that a semi-secret auction was an attempt to alienate the Chrran waterfall near the border village of Khachik, which is the most scenic place in the village, to the Armenian American Vahe Keushgueryan. The website also wrote that the businessman was still enjoying the privilege, granted to him by the former government, and was almost the only buyer of all the grapes grown in Khachik village, this being an exceptional raw material for producing his expensive wine.

A court hearing was held on December 7, and the next court hearing was scheduled for February 11.

**On August 31,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Livenews.am journalist Arthur Hovhannisyan v. Public TV journalist Levon Sardaryan*, demanding an apology for the insult and a public refutation of the information considered defamatory.

The lawsuit, filed on June 22, 2020, was caused by Levon Sardaryan's Facebook comment, dated May 21, on the article, entitled: “The Situation in Armenia is Terrible: some will Survive, the Rest will Die” published on *Livenews.am* website on the same day. Sardaryan quoted the title of the article and wrote: “If anyone proves that after all this the owner of this website is a human being, I will agree to live in a barn. But in my subjective opinion, I will let G.I. enjoy the life in the barn.” (G.I. is Garnik Isagulyan, who is identified as the site owner. *Comment by CPFE*). Arthur Hovhannisyan responded to Levon Sardaryan's post and warned that he intended to go to court.

A court hearing on the case was also held on September 23, the next one was scheduled for January 18, 2022.

**On August 31,** the RA General Prosecutor's Office made a decision to initiate a case under Article 164, Part 2 of the RA Criminal Code, in connection with the incident between Channel 5 journalist Karine Mangasaryan and NA MPs.The case was sent to the Special Investigation Service, where a preliminary investigation is underway.

We should remind that on October 6, 2020 NA MPs Kristine Poghosyan and Artur Hovhannisyan, in response to the question posed by the Channel 5 TV journalist Karine Mangasaryan, moved away the microphone pointed at them, then threatened that they would face a different kind of treatment, and all would be held accountable. The MPs meant the coverage policy of the TV company during the war.

On October 13, the Prosecutor's Office sent the case to the SIS, where on October 22 a decision was made to refuse to initiate a criminal case on the grounds of lack of corpus delicti in the MPs' act. On November 4, the journalist filed a complaint against this decision with the RA Prosecutor's Office, which was rejected. On December 15, Karine Mangasaryan applied to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, where on February 24, 2021 the appeal was upheld, and the decision to refuse to initiate a criminal case was abolished.

The case has been resent to the Special Investigation Service, where it was ruled to discontinue the criminal case on the ground of lack of corpus delicti.

**On September 3,** citizen Siranush Abelyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against the chief executive of *Politcom.am* news website Lilit Silanyan, demanding apology for the slander and publication of a refutation. According to the person in charge of the website Suren Surenyan, the lawsuit was caused by the coverage of the issue related to the provision of loans in one of the banks, which was posted on the website in August, which was carried out based on the citizens' alarm. After the publication of the article, the bank employee, the plaintiff, expressed his disagreement with the citizens' protest, as a result of which the news was removed from the website within hours. The person in charge of the website offered to also publish the viewpoint of the bank, but the plaintiff did not agree and applied to the court.

On September 22, the lawsuit was returned for corrections and was refiled on October 11. It was accepted for proceedings on the 22nd. By the end of the year no further developments have been recorded.

**On September 16,** former MP Nikolay Baghdasaryan filed a lawsuit against *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office*, demanding a public apology and a compensation for the damage caused to his honor, dignity and business reputation. The lawsuit was caused by the article published in the *Zhoghovurd newspaper* and on the website belonging to the same company on August 20, entitled: “The Chamber of Advocates is Targeted. The Government is Looking for a Candidate for the Post of Chairman of the Chamber of Advocates”, which was also printed by other media outlets.[[177]](#footnote-177) The media outlet, making reference to its sources, wrote that Nikolay Baghdasaryan, the former pro-government MP of the National Assembly, may be the candidate for the Chairman of the Chamber of Advocates, and that it is his childhood dream. Then added: “Back in April 2014, Ara Zohrabyan fired Nikolay Baghdasaryan from the post of the Chairman of the Chamber of Advocates, after which Baghdasaryan took every dirty step against Zohrabyan.”

On September 28, the lawsuit was returned for some corrections and was refiled on October 25. On November 5, it was accepted for proceedings. The motion to apply injunction to put a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim was rejected. By the end of the year not further developments have been recorded.

**On September 16,** health expert Samvel Kharazyan filed a lawsuit against *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity. The lawsuit was caused by the article published in the newspaper and on the website belonging to the same company on August 10, entitled: “The Government will Give a Post to the Corrupt Personnel Remaining from the "Former Authorities": it Has a Lack of Professionals”.[[178]](#footnote-178) The article narrated, “The name of a Samvel Kharazyan is circulating as the Deputy Minister of Health, who during the rule of "former authorities" worked as head of a department in the State Health Agency, known for its corruption scandals, and it is very peculiar that he even managed to get arrested with the then head of the State Health Agency Saro Tsaturyan...The only hope of the revolutionary authorities is the remaining personnel from the "former authorities", not real professionals, but corrupt personnel”. On October 1, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, a preliminary court hearing was held on December 29, as of the end of the year the next court hearing has not been scheduled.

**On September 21**, on the very day of the RA Independence, the activity of journalists and cameramen was restricted in the military pantheon Yerablur. The visit of high-profile officials to Yerablur particularly was forbidden to film. The Police and National Security Service have provided no explanation on which ground the activity of the media outlets was restricted. Nairi Sargsyan, Assistant to the Prime Minister, has later clarified that the action was intended to avoid the hindrances to the progress of the event since there were provocateurs among the journalists.[[179]](#footnote-179)

**On September 24,** Sasun Khachatryan, former Head of the RA Special Investigation Service and Chairman of the RA Corruption Prevention Commission, filed a lawsuit against *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office*, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity. The lawsuit was caused by the article published on September 11 in the newspaper and on the website belonging to the same company, entitled: “Sasun Khachatryan Has an Apartment in Moscow. He Signed His Indictment”,[[180]](#footnote-180) in which Sasun Khachatryan is attributed with real estate and money of great value, which the official did not declare.

By the way, the plaintiff demanded the media outlet to publish refutation, which was refused.[[181]](#footnote-181) The amount of compensation mentioned in Sasun Khachatryan's claim is 2 million AMD and in case the lawsuit is upheld, he intends to fully direct the money to the Rehabilitation Center for Soldiers Wounded and Disabled After the War for charity purposes.

On October 11, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, a preliminary court hearing was held on December 15, the next one was scheduled for January 21 of 2022.

**On September 28,** Sayat Shirinyan, a member of the opposition *Armenia* Alliance, wrote an insulting, swearing comment on the Facebook page of *Aravot.am* news website under the article of journalist Hripsime Jebejyan, at the same time addressing the same expressions to the administration of the editorial office. The article, which was published on September 26, referred to the march organized by the opposition that day, where the journalist mentioned the fact that the leader of Armenia Alliance Robert Kocharyan did not make the cross sign during the mourning ceremony in Yerablur Military Pantheon, as well as mentioned that years ago the RA First President Levon Ter-Petrosyan revealed that Kocharyan did not know “Lord's Prayer”.[[182]](#footnote-182) The site removed the swearing from the Facebook page.

In response to the CPFE's inquiry, the RA Prosecutor General's Office stated that the data on this had been sent to the RA Police to Vagharshapat Investigative Division of Armavir Regional Investigative Department to carry out inspections. Nevertheless, they failed to find the above-mentioned content since the comment under the article had not been available. Due to the failure to find features of crime and other offenses, the case was left inconclusive.

**On September 30,** by the decision ofthe Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, the proceedings on the case of citizen *Ara Sukiasyan v. Shamshyan.com* news website was terminated, on the grounds of plaintiff’s withdrawal of the lawsuit.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on February 19, 2020, demanding an apology for the data, considered defamatory and insulting. The lawsuit was caused by an article, entitled: “Police Officers, Investigators and Military Police Officers Tracked a 27-Year-Old Employee of the RA Ministry of Defense Down on Suspicion of Brutal Murder of a 16- Year-Old Girl in Yerevan”, published on the website on January 6, 2012, where based on his own information, the author published data about the plaintiff’s son, the person arrested under suspicion of murder.[[[183]](#footnote-183)](https://shamshyan.com/hy/article/2020/01/06/1144413/)

 **On October 4**, business Petros Tovmasyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Civic.am* website belonging to *Civil Contract*, demanding public refutation of defamatory information and a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the article, published on September 1, entitled: “Taguhi Tovmasyan’s “Superman” Brother Runs a Beer Factory “On His Own” and Manufactures 1000 Liter Beer Monthly: SRC of the RA Does not Consider the Hypothesis of Tax Evasion”.[[184]](#footnote-184)

On October 18, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, a court hearing is scheduled for February 11, 2022.

**On October 7**, *Europe Union of Law* NGO, Lousine Hakobyan, NGO chairman, and Tigran Yegoryan, superior legal councilor, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Hraparak Daily* LLC, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity. The lawsuit was caused by the article, published on August 27 on *Hraparak Daily* news page, entitled: “An open Network of Agencies Under the Disguise of the Community of Human Right Defenders”.[[185]](#footnote-185) The author of the article mentioned particularly that in addition to other advocating NGOs and human right defenders, the plaintiffs are also involved in the network of foreign agencies, whose hidden and at times evident motive is to change of Government in Armenia, and not to fight for human rights. By the end of the year no further developments on the case have been recorded.

**On October 14**, in Ashtarak Division of Aragatsotn Regional Department of the RA Police a criminal case was initiated by the article, published on *Haykakan Zham* news page on September 30, entitled: “Age Limit. Said to Have a Match”. [[186]](#footnote-186) The article states that Davit Gevorgyan, Governor of Aragatsotn, and Samvel Simonyan, Head of Regional Investigative Department, are engaged in plunder, besides “… it has been rumored in the region that the Head of Investigative Department and the Governor are secretly in LGBT relationship. Many of the heads of Local Self-Government Bodies and leading businessmen steer clear of the perverted match…”.

The Investigative Committee ruled on December 14 to terminate the proceedings of the criminal case due to lack of corpus delicti.

**On October 17**, while filming the building of the polling station during the Local Self-Government Body elections, held in Dilijan, Vanush Piloyan, proxy of *Civil Contract* party, disrespectfully demanded Satenik Hovsepyan, journalist of *Aravot.am* to stop filming since he does not want to appear in the footage.[[187]](#footnote-187) The journalist has reported that she was filing the public area, and if the latter did not want to appear in the footage, he could simply leave the area. Piloyan had warned the journalist if he turned up on the webpage, he would sue the media, he had also demanded to show him the footage. Later, the Elderly Council candidate from the party told the journalist that his proxy had not known that the filming journalist was a representative of an accredited media outlet.

**On October 20**, *Armenian National Interests Fund* CJSC filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Hraparak Daily* LLC and Hrant Bagratyan, former Prime Minister of the RA, demanding refutation of information discrediting business reputation and monetary compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the opinion of Hrant Bagratyan, published on *Hraparak.am* on September 28, which once more reestablishes the media’s standpoint that the deal concluded by the above-noted Fund on July 14, in line with which the Arabic company *Air Arabia* was granted the status of national airline, is not transparent for the public and contains many corruption risks.[[188]](#footnote-188)

On October 29, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the motion to apply injunction to put a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim is partially upheld. By the end of the year, no further developments have been recorded.

**On October 22**, citizen Arman Martirosyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Exclusive Media Holding* LLC (founder of *Exclusive.am* news page), demanding refutation of slander, apology for insult, compensation, publication of the conclusive part of the decision. The lawsuit is caused by the article, published on September 29, entitled: “Arayik Harutyunyan Rewarded the Owner of Entertainment Clubs with Weapon: for What Act of Heroism? For running the clubs during the war?”[[189]](#footnote-189)

On October 29, the lawsuit was returned for corrections, was refiled on November 8 and accepted for proceedings on the 18th. As of December 31, no further developments have been recorded.

**On October 26**, citizen Larisa Harutyunyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Shark LLC* (the legal person representing *5 TV*) demanding refutation. The lawsuit was caused by the news report for *Haylur* of *5 TV* on October 16, entitled: “She makes me grieve; the neighbor doesn’t allow to insert a khachkar in tribute to heroes”.[[190]](#footnote-190) The plaintiff suggests the media outlet that they publish refutation since the disagreement among fellow villagers has nothing to do with khachkar, but a routine argument, and the assertion in the title does not comply with the reality. According to the lawsuit, the media admitted that there had been an imprecision, but refused to publish appropriate refutation.

On November 9, the lawsuit was returned for corrections and was refiled on the 18th. It was assigned to the judge on December 1.

**On November 11**, in regard with the same report, citizen Gevorg Harutyunyan filed a lawsuit against citizen Larisa Harutyunyan and *Shark LLC* (the legal entity representing *5 TV*) demanding refutation of the defamatory information, discrediting honor and dignity, public apology and monetary compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the assertion, stated in the above-mentioned report, that Gevorg Harutyunyan had lashed out at Larisa Harutyunyan with a knife, besides, had intended to burn the woman with petrol.

On November 24, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the motion to apply injunction to put a freezing order on the property of the defendant Larisa Harutyunyan in the amount of 9 000 000 AMD, was upheld. As of December 31, no further developments have been recorded.

**On November 5**, Razmik Tevonyan, Governor of Ararat, exposed disrespectful attitude towards journalists in the National Assembly.[[191]](#footnote-191) In particular, Ani Gevorgyan, correspondent of *Tert.am* news website, asked questions concerning the price of the mansion belonging to the Governor in Tigranashen, which was labelled by the official as “an indiscreet question”. In response to *Hraparak.am* correspondent Vahe Makaryan’s question, why the latter took that indecent tone with the journalists, Tevonyan replied, “Because I don’t like you, dude”.

**On November 16**, Lusine Shahverdyan, journalist of *Hraparak.am* news page, asked some questions concerning the clashes along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border to Gurgen Arsenyan, MP of Civil Contract Alliance in the NA, then added that the latter had been believed to be one of the founders of electoral fraud and bribery. Afterwards, the MP called the journalist ‘indecent’ and added that he is a ‘fraud’ whose main mission is to brainwash people and disseminate slander. Then the MP threatened to ‘give them hell’.[[192]](#footnote-192)

**On November 16**, *Armtimes.com* news page was exposed to hacking attack.[[193]](#footnote-193) The activity of the page was thwarted and restored several hours afterwards.

**On November 17**, Sevak Hakobyan, the editor-in-chief of *Yerevan.Today* news website published news, according to which Andranik Kocharyan, Chairman of Standing Committee on Defense and Security of the NA, had insulted Suzy Badoyan, correspondent of the news page when the latter asked a question regarding the number of victims on the border, conditions of ceasing the war and the like.[[194]](#footnote-194) In response to the question, the official recommended the journalist to ‘go to the hairdresser’s’.[[195]](#footnote-195)

**On November 30**, Andranik Kocharyan, Chairman of Standing Committee on Defense and Security of the NA, demonstrated discriminatory attitude towards *5 TV* by telling the journalist during the briefing of the NA, ‘Take the camera of *5 TV* away, I won’t answer the question as it is *5 TV’*. The official has exposed such treatment more than once.[[196]](#footnote-196)

 **On December 7**, Ara Mkrtchyan, the Head of Kasakh Community in Kotayk Marz, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction against Elena Zohrabyan, the Head of the Public Affairs Department of the Urban Development, Technical Standards and Fire Safety Inspectorate, as well as against the *Public Television of Armenia CJSC*, demanding a public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity. The lawsuit was caused by a report aired on the TV company’s news program *Lurer* on November 2, entitled: “MP Anna Mkrtchyan’s father, the Head of Kasakh Community, “donated” a part of the community to his son.” The report presented the plaintiff’s possible corrupt transactions, found out by the inspection body.[[197]](#footnote-197) On December 20, the lawsuit was returned for corrections.

**On December 8**, journalist Tatul Hakobyan alerted that his lectures in the United States were accompanied by threats, calls for revenge and even death.[[198]](#footnote-198) According to the journalist, the campaign is directed from Armenia and some Armenian circles in the United States. The threats are based on the following words he recently said on one of the Armenian TV companies’ programs: “Armenia is where the Armenian soldier is.” The journalist turned to law enforcement officers, journalistic organizations, the Human Rights Defender, and the US Embassy in Armenia. The CPFE, along with partner organizations, issued a statement condemning the incident.[[199]](#footnote-199) In response to the CPFE inquiry, the RA Prosecutor’s Office informed that the publications on Tatul Hakobyan’s alert were sent to the RA Department of Criminal Police, with an instruction to check the circumstances mentioned in it. As a result of the inspection actions, including the written explanation received from Tatul Hakobyan, the given circumstances were not confirmed and left with no consequences.

**On December 10**, Karen Melik-Tangyan, the Director of the Mother Armenia Museum of Military History at the RA Ministry of Defense, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Social Media LLC*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity. The lawsuit was caused by the article, entitled: “Military or Mafioso? The Head of the Museum is Out of Order” and published on the page “Spokesperson” in *Mamul.am* (which belongs to *Social Media LLC*) on November 11. The article was later removed from the page.

The lawsuit is in progress.

**On December 10,** the NA MP Hayk Sargsyan filed a lawsuit with Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction ahainst *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office LLC* claiming compensaton for the damage caused to his dignity and good reputation through slander. The lawsuit was caused by an article, published in the *Zhoghovurd* newspaper owned by the Company as well as on Armlur.am news website on November 17. The article was titled “On the Day of the Murder MP Hayk Sargsyan Was Near the Former MP’s House, Waiting for Tuy.” On the next day, the MP submitted a refuation text to the editorial house, claiming he was not in Armenia on the say of the scnadlous murder and indicated to the stamps, testifying to the fact that he head left and later returned to Armenia. However, the editorial house found controversies in the invoked facts and included this information in the comments published along with the text of refutation.

The lawsuit is in progress.

 **On December 16**, Hripsime Jebejyan, the journalist of *Aravot.am* news website, alerted on Facebook that the chairs were removed from the area near the session hall of the National Assembly, where journalists and cameramen work, by the order of NA Speaker Alen Simonyan.[[200]](#footnote-200) As a result, the journalists had to work sitting on the floor. As it turned out later, the reason for Simonyan’s decision was that he did not like the way the cameramen were sitting on those chairs when he was walking by. Besides, the NA Speaker later stated that the journalists are obliged to stand up when they see the MPs. At the end of the day, after the journalists’ complaints, the chairs were returned.

 **On December 27**, Agnesa Khamoyan, the coordinator of the press conference of the RA second president Robert Kocharyan and an MP from the opposition faction Armenia Alliance discriminated by refusing to accredit the journalist of the website *Civic.am* of the ruling Civil Contract party. She substantiated her decision by saying: “*Civic.am* operates under the auspices of Civil Contract. Vova, one of the journalists working there, was a candidate for the Council of Elders on the Civil Contract list. *Civic.am* is not a media outlet to be accredited.”[[201]](#footnote-201) It should be noted that before becoming an MP, Khamoyan hosted a talk show on Channel 5, associated with Robert Kocharyan. And before that, she was the editor of the website *Yerkir.am*, Kocharyan’s political supporter, which operates under the aegis of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

**On December 27**, Arthur Vardanyan, the leader of All-Armenian National Statehood Party, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Zhoghovurd Newspaper’s Editorial Office LLC* and Sevak Vardumyan, the journalist at the same newspaper, demanding the refutation of the defamatory information and compensation. The cause of the lawsuit was the article, entitled: “How the Accused in Terrorism Entered the National Assembly” and published on the website *Armlur.am* (which belongs to *Zhoghovurd Newspaper’s Editorial Office LLC*). In the article, the author Sevak Vardumyan raised the question of how Arthur Vardanyan, who is accused of “seizing power by force” and is on a criminal case, appeared at the NA sessions.[[202]](#footnote-202)

**On December 30**, the same plaintiff filed a lawsuit with the same claims in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Hraparak Daily LLC*. The lawsuit was caused by the article, entitled: “The Gang Leader in the National Assembly” and published in the newspaper and on the website of *Hraparak Daily LLC* on December 3.[[203]](#footnote-203)

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

*In 2021, the CPFE recorded 99 facts on the violation of the right to receive and disseminate information, which outnumbers the previous year’s results by 9. In only 6 of these cases a lawsuit was filed with the court.*

*The facts recorded during the period under review, as well as the new developments related to the events from past periods are presented below in chronological order.*

**On January 7**, *Pastinfo* agency sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense, requesting information on the number of killed soldiers as of January 7. A reply was sent to the media outlet, according to which the department does not think it expedient to publish the data, as Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan and other officials have regularly published information and the relevant data. According to the CPFE, this is an unsubstantiated refusal to provide the requested information.

**On January 8**, the Freedom of Information Center sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense, requesting information on the RA Ministers of Defense for the period of 2017-2021. The answer was submitted with a delay on January 18.

**On January 9**, *Pastinfo* agency sent a written inquiry to the Chief of Staff of the RA Prime Minister, requesting to provide information on the interdepartmental working group, organizing the demarcation and delimitation of the state border, as well as asking for the provision of the copies of the Government decree on the matter and the annexes attached to it. According to the Government, no interdepartmental working group was established, while earlier the RA Ministry of Defense officially announced the establishment of the working group.[[204]](#footnote-204) The government claimed it had not established an interdepartmental working group. With this contradictory information, the RA Government and the Ministry of Defense have misled both the media and the public.

**On January 14**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan initiated new proceedings on the case of *Hetq.am* *online periodical (founded by Investigative Journalists NGO) v. The Board of Trustees of A.I. Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory (Yerevan Physics Institute) foundation*, demanding to oblige the Board to provide copies of all decisions made in the period of 2011-2019.

We should remind that after the refusal from the Foundation, *Investigative Journalists NGO* filed a lawsuit in the Administrative Court on July 8, 2019, and on July 15, the case was remitted to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, where the case was accepted for proceedings on August 14.

By the verdict of May 22, 2020, the claim of *Investigative Journalists NGO* was partially upheld. The Foundation was obligated to provide the copies of all decisions passed by the Board of Trustees in the period of 2011-2019, in compliance with the requirements set in Article 8, Part 1, Clauses 1-5 of the RA Law on Freedom of Information. On June 19, the defendant appealed to the Court of Appeal. On October 23, the appeal was upheld, the May 22 verdict was overturned, and the case was sent to the same court for a retrial.

A court hearing is scheduled for February 10, 2022.

**On January 15**, the Freedom of Information Center sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense, requesting to inform what legal document, agreement, and statement served as a basis for the units of the RA Armed Forces to make positional changes in Syunik and Gegharkunik provinces after the war. The Ministry of Defense responded that they had made changes in the positions of the Armed Forces, based on the provisions of the trilateral statement of November 9, 2020. The response, however, does not specify which points of the statement include those positional changes. The Freedom of Information Center also requested to provide copies of the relevant documents, in response to which the link to the trilateral statement was sent again. Thus, the Ministry of Defense, in fact, avoided providing the requested information.

**On January 21**, Taguhi Aslanyan, a journalist of the website *Livenews.am*, sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Health, requesting information on the tests administered during the Coronavirus pandemic. The delayed response was incomplete: the required digital and content information was missing.

**On January 22**, the Freedom of Information Center of Armenia sent an inquiry to the central authorities and local self-government bodies, requesting to provide information on how many inquiries the given entity had rejected in 2020, to clarify how many of them were rejected with reference to the confidentiality of personal data or the protection of state and/or official secrets. The State Revenue Committee did not provide statistics on the grounds for rejection. FOICA assessed the answer as incomplete.

**On January 22**, the website *168.am* wrote that back on December 30, 2020, it sent a written inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense to find out the number of the victims, wounded, MIA, and POWs in the recent war. On January 22, a letter was received from the agency with a delay, stating that the clarification of the numbers was in progress; therefore, they considered it inexpedient to provide information. The website qualified the answer as late and unfounded, especially when various officials regularly publish data on the number of victims.

 **On January 29**, the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO* (*Fip.am*) filed a lawsuit in the Administrative Court against the RA National Security Service with a demand to obligate it to provide information. The NGO specifically requested the following information: in the period of 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? And how many previously detained individuals were set free by the court?

The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on February 5; the first court hearing was held on March 30 and May 10. On June 1, the lawsuit was rejected on the grounds that the National Security Service is not in control of the requested information. The verdict entered into legal force.

 **On January 29**, *Zhoghovurd daily* sent an inquiry to Vagharshak Harutyunyan, the RA Minister of Defense, about the military drills to be held in Turkey on February 1-12, as well as the probability of military drills to be held in Armenia. The ministry demanded a 30-day period to answer these questions, in response to which the newspaper wrote that the period expired on March 1, that is, 16 days after the end of the military drills, which means the answer to the question would no longer be topical. Moreover, the possibility of a 30-day period, which is established by law for additional work related to the provision of information, is often abused by state bodies and even used in case of answering very simple questions.

 **On February 2**, the website *Hetq.am* sent a written inquiry to the Football Federation of Armenia, requesting to inform which company was entrusted with the project for the reconstruction of the Abovyan City Stadium, by what procedure it was selected, and how much money was allocated. They responded on February 9, stating that the project was prepared by *AVN Group LLC*, but it was not mentioned by what procedure it was selected, and how much money was allocated.

On February 11, the media outlet sent the second inquiry to the FFA with the same questions, which remained unanswered. The same inquiry was sent once again on February 24, but it again remained unanswered. On March 11, the journalist called Hayk Karapetyan, the Head of the FFA Public Relations and Press Unit, hoping to receive clarification. The latter noted that they had provided all possible information about that process and “did not find it expedient to answer the remaining questions,” as the requested information was “a trade secret.” The website reminded that the Football Federation of Armenia is an organization of public significance, so it must be accountable and transparent to the public, especially due to the fact that one of the parties to the deal is a company owned by a high-ranking state official, the Secretary General of the RA Investigative Committee.

**On February 2**, *168.am* sent an inquiry to the Penitentiary Service of the RA Ministry of Justice about the whereabouts of Azerbaijani convicts in Armenia, as well as the people transferred from Shushi prison. The Penitentiary Service considered the provision of information inexpedient. The website commented: “The penitentiary service needed more than 20 days to provide information which, of course, is available in the penitentiary registers, but they could not think of a more creative excuse, so apparently, they resorted to the old and good formulation “we find the provision of information inexpedient”.”

**On February 10**, *168.am* sent an inquiry to the RA Prosecutor General about the aid received from abroad for the needs of the Armed Forces during the 44-day war, which, however, never arrived at the destination, as well as about the criminal cases initiated in that regard.

In this regard, the website wrote that the Prosecutor General’s Office, in fact, did not give a clear answer to any question.

**On February 17**, the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO* filed a lawsuit in the Administrative Court against the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, demanding to obligate it to provide information. The NGO expected the agency to receive the departmental list of information subject to encryption.

On February 25, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. The court hearings were held on April 6 and 26, June 21 and 25. On July 9, the lawsuit was rejected with no explanation.

**On February 24**, the website *Iravunk.com* wrote that two weeks before it had sent a written inquiry to Tatevik Revazyan, the Chair of the Civil Aviation Committee, requesting clarifications on both personal and work issues. The answers to the questions were provided in violation of the term provided by law.

**On February 28**, the *Hraparak* newspaper wrote that the RA Ministry of Defense, responding to their inquiry, asked for a month to announce the name of the commander in charge of Shushi during the 44-day war. This news was also published by several other websites, considering the possibility of extending the 5-day period set for the response to 30 days as an abuse of the law and an unnecessary delay of information provision.

**On March 10**, the Court of Cassation rejected the appeal, brought by David Ananyan, the former Chairman of the RA State Revenue Committee against the decision made by the Court of Appeal, which in its turn rejected the appeal against the decision of the First Instance Court on the case of Investigative Journalists NGO v. David Ananyan, the Chairman of the State Revenue Committee.

We should remind that the NGO filed the lawsuit on April 17, 2019, demanding to provide information. The website *Hetq.am* of Investigative Journalists NGO expected to receive copies of all contracts with Taiwanese *Mitak Information Technology* and Chinese *Pax Technology* companies, and if the contracts contained any trade secrets, the relevant lines could be closed. On August 6, 2019, the court ruled to uphold the Investigative Journalists’ claim partially, obligate the State Revenue Committee to provide copies of all contracts signed with the Taiwanese and Chinese companies, closing all the excerpts containing trade secrets. On September 12, David Ananyan appealed to the Court of Appeal. On October 28, 2020, the appeal of the defendant was rejected, and the latter appealed to the Court of Cassation on December 11.

The judicial act entered into force.

**On April 6**, the website *Hetq.am* wrote that a number of inquiries had been sent to Suren Papikyan, the Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, and Suren Machyan, the 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 still 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 an inquiry to the Civil Aviation Committee, requesting to provide 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 Civil Aviation Committee response was that they kept no statistics on such data. The FOICA considered the response inappropriate.

**On April 12**, the website *168.am* wrote that on March 26 it sent a written inquiry to David Papazyan, the Executive Director of the *Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC*, 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 an email 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 an inquiry to the RA National Assembly Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan, requesting 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. In addition, the FOICA sent an inquiry of almost the same content on March 11, which remained unanswered. Accordingly, it sent a double inquiry to the Committee, which also remained unanswered.

**On April 19**, Hayarpi Baghdasaryan, a journalist of the website *Infocom.am*, sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense, requesting to provide 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 matters of the army. The Ministry of Defense first asked for a 30-day period, then refused to provide the information, substantiating that the request is of military-political nature; therefore, it is beyond the competence of the Ministry of Defense.

**On April 20**, Hayarpi Baghdasaryan, a journalist of the website *Infocom.am*, sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense, requesting to provide information on the veracity of some statements made by Samvel Babayan, the Artsakh Security Council Secretary. 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, which 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 RA Ministry of Economy on March 9. Violating the norms defined by the RA Law on Freedom of Information, without asking for an additional term, the inquiry was finally answered after a month of numerous calls.

**On April 20**, the Freedom of Information Center sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense, requesting to provide a list of documents under the supervision of the agency’s staff that were declassified in 2020, as well as to provide 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**, Hayarpi Baghdasaryan, a journalist of *Infocom.am*, sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense, requesting to provide information on the increase of fortifications in the army and other similar activities in the periods of 2016-2018 and 2018-2020. On May 14, she received an answer which stated that the requested information had already been published. The journalist reminded that according to 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, place and period of the publication within 5 days after receiving the request,” under Article 12 Clause 3, “the information holder is obliged to provide the information seeker with reliable, complete information under their 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 she tried to contact the executor by phone, but failed. The attempts to get clarification from the media department of the Ministry of Defense were also in vain.

**On May 25**, the website *Yerevanlur.am* sent a letter to Arthur Davtyan, the RA Prosecutor General, 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**, Tirayr Muradyan, the correspondent of the website *Hetq.am*, 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 upshot 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—the founder of the fact-checking platform *Fip.am*—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 was held on August 23, but on August 24 the case was terminated on the grounds that the dispute between the parties had ended.

 **On July 20**, Lusine Sargsyan, a correspondent of the *Public Radio Vanadzor*, sent a letter to Mamikon Aslanyan, the Mayor of Vanadzor, asking for information on the owner of one of the buildings being built near the green zone in the city, as well as its purpose, and the terms of the works to be carried out. Violating the 5-day period prescribed by law for response and after numerous reminder calls, the journalist’s inquiry was responded incompletely.

 **On July 21**, Ophelia Simonyan, a journalist of Media Initiatives Center, sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense, asking for information on the number of servicemen who signed a contract with the programs “I Am” and “I Have Honor.” The ministry refused to provide the information, reasoning that it was an official secret. Meanwhile, in response to the inquiry with the same content from the 2020 issue of *Hraparak* newspaper, the Ministry of Defense provided a full answer.[[205]](#footnote-205)

**From July 22** to September 30, Hayarpi Baghdasaryan, the correspondent of the news website *Infocom.am*, sent 20 inquiries with the same content to the RA Ministry of Defense, asking to provide information on how many Azerbaijani servicemen are in the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia as of a specific day, on what territories the Azerbaijani army is located, and what the maximum depth of penetration of the Azerbaijani army is.

In three cases, letters came from the Ministry, according to which there is a need for additional examination to provide the information mentioned in the inquiry. Accordingly, the answer to the request will be provided within the timeframe prescribed by the RA legislation, i.e., within 30 days. However, no answer has been received. And after examining the inquiries on July 22, 23 and 30, the ministry decided to refuse to provide the information, again violating the timeframe prescribed by law. Thus, no substantive answer has been given to the inquiries sent to the Ministry of Defense. In some cases, the Ministry of Defense considered the requested information a secret, while it had already been published by the RA Prime Minister.

**On August 2**, Hripsime Jebejyan, a journalist of *Aravot.am*, sent an inquiry to Gnel Sanosyan, the RA Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, about the restoration of the monument-building at 23 Arami Street in Yerevan. The agency, in violation of the timeframe prescribed by law, stated that an additional 30-day period was required for a response. The journalist, with the intervention of the Freedom of Information Center, expressed her disagreement with this response, as the public administration body abused its authority to apply an additional 30-day period for providing information, whereafter the requested information was provided.

**On August 3**, the Freedom of Information Center sent an inquiry to the RA National Assembly, requesting to provide information on the legal basis for restricting the movement of journalists in the National Assembly building. The FOICA assessed the answer provided by the National Assembly as incomplete, as the format of presenting open data was violated.

**On the same day**, the FOICA sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Environment, requesting to provide information on what awareness-raising activities/measures are being carried out among economic entities and residents, starting from January 1, 2022, due to the ban on sale and utilization of polyethylene sacks and bags (except for those made of secondary and weighing-packing raw materials). The Ministry provided an incomplete answer. In particular, it is not specified what means are used to carry out the awareness-raising activities.

 **On August 6**, Gevorg Tosunyan, a correspondent of *Civilnet.am*, sent an inquiry to the RA Minister of Health to get information about the funds allocated to the agency for the fight against Coronavirus, as well as the parties to the transactions. The Ministry provided only the amount spent, responding that the remaining information requested was a trade secret for supplier organizations. The journalist states that the information, which was considered a secret, was provided to them in 2020.

**On August 9**, Tirayr Muradyan, a journalist of *Hetq.am*, addressed an inquiry to Tigran Ulikhanyan, the Head of the RA State Supervision Service, asking for information on the findings of the study conducted at the Center for Agricultural Services SNCO. The agency refused to respond to the inquiry, reasoning that the information contained personal data.

**On August 11**, Nelli Babayan, a journalist of *Aravot.am*, sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Defense, regarding the placement of the tombstones of the victims of the 44-day war, buried in the Yerablur Pantheon. On August 17, the RA Ministry of Defense informed that additional time was needed to answer the questions (according to the law, it can take up to 30 days), but even after a month and a half, the response to the question was not acquired.

**On August 11**, during the clash between the MPs of different factions in the session hall of the National Assembly, the NA Speaker instructed to turn off the live broadcast, which was carried out from the session hall of the Parliament.[[206]](#footnote-206) The NA Speaker also gave such an instruction on August 25, after the heated argument between the NA MPs Hayk Sargsyan and Seyran Ohanyan, which turned into a fistfight.[[207]](#footnote-207) By doing so, the Head of the Parliament violated the right of the public to be informed.

**On August 12**, the Freedom of Information Center sent an inquiry to the Yerevan Municipality, requesting information on a stone factory, located on a community-owned land adjacent to the Silikyan Highway residential area and operating illegally for more than 10 years. The FOICA also requested to clarify why the municipality displayed inaction and did not destroy or dismantle that factory. The municipality, in fact, did not respond to the questions and skipped them, providing an abstract comment. On August 19, the FOICA resent an inquiry, demanding a proper response to the questions. The municipality again did not provide a proper response; moreover, the letter had the same content and was signed by the same official, which is a violation of the RA Law on Freedom of Information. On September 2, the FOICA submitted a complaint to the Mayor. **On November 1**, the FOICA filed a lawsuit in the Administrative Court against the Yerevan Municipality, demanding to oblige the Municipality to provide the requested information on 60/1 Silikyan Old Highway in Yerevan. On December 2, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. A preliminary court hearing was scheduled for February 15, 2022.

**On August 25**, the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO*—the founder of the website *Fip.am*—filed a lawsuit in the Administrative Court against the staff of the National Assembly, demanding to recognize the violation of the right to information and to oblige to provide the minutes of the session, dated August 11, 2021. The lawsuit was caused by the restrictions applied in the NA session hall on August 11, when the media representatives were forbidden to work and to film from the press room, after the heated argument between the political forces. This case is presented in the section of “Pressures.” **On September 1**, the lawsuit was rejected. The court substantiated its decision as follows: “In case of the first claim, the lawsuit is not subject to trial, as it is beyond the jurisdiction of the Administrative Court. In case of the second claim, the lawsuit can be accepted if the plaintiff has applied to the administrative body with the request to implement the action and has received a rejection (or the timeframe for its implementation has expired). On September 15, the case was handed over to the court archives.

**On September 1**, Aspram Parsadanyan, a correspondent of *Infocom.am*, sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense, asking for information on the sources of funding for the Russian military in Voskepar. The agency directed the journalist to the NSS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but they noted that the provision of that information is within the authority of the RA Ministry of Defense. The journalist did not receive an answer.

**On September 9**, Anna Avetisyan, a journalist of the website *Vesti.am*, addressed an inquiry to Derenik Dumanyan, the RA Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, asking for information on the creation of a new video for the Armenian national anthem and the content of its possible variants.

 The agency said it had no information about the process, about which the journalist was skeptical and sent a double inquiry **on September 13**. In the second response, the ministry only added in which areas under its jurisdiction the filming took place and did not answer the questions regarding the content and the funding.

**On September 21**, the same journalist sent an inquiry to Yerevan State University, asking for information about the purpose of businessman Samvel Aleksanyan’s visit to YSU on September 12. In response, Hovhannes Hovhannisyan, the Acting Rector of YSU, gave a general answer, without referring to the visit of the businessman, which is an evasive approach to not provide information.

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#  **On October 2**, the news website *168.am* wrote that on September 24, they sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense to find out if domestically produced UAVs were ordered from the Ministry of Defense.[[208]](#footnote-208) After a week, the Ministry of Defense replied, stating that the requested information is a state secret. The website reminded that similar information about UAVs was previously published by high-ranking officials.

**On October 4** and **November 23**, Mkrtich Karapetyan, a correspondent of the news website *CivilNet.am*, sent an inquiry to the RA Government, requesting to provide the agreement on donating 15% of shares of Zangezur Copper and Molybdenum Combine to the Government. The Government, considering that the document contained a trade secret, refused the request.

On December 16, *CivilNet.am* (Civilitas Foundation) and *Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center* filed a lawsuit in the Administrative Court, demanding to obligate the RA Government staff to provide a copy of the share donation agreement. The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on December 23. A preliminary court hearing was scheduled for May 3.

 **On October 8**, the news website *Pastinfo.am* sent a written inquiry to the RA Police, requesting to provide information on when Mher Poloskov, the former Director of the Zangezur Copper and Molybdenum Combine, was declared wanted, and under which article of the RA Criminal Code. They also requested if he had been declared wanted also internationally.[[209]](#footnote-209) The police first asked for a 30-day period to carry out additional investigations to answer the questions, but on November 1, they refused to provide the information, noting that the relevant power of attorney issued by Mher Poloskov to the media outlet was missing, and that the data contained personal secrets. “It turns out that the police consider the information on persons declared wanted to be personal data, while the law enforcement officers themselves publish the photos of persons declared wanted and the data necessary for their identification,” wrote the website.

 **On October 14**, *News.am* wrote that they regularly sent inquiries to the RA Ministry of Defense and law enforcement agencies, requesting to provide information on war crimes during the martial law in 2020. In response to the latest inquiry, on September 3, the General Military Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee responded that they kept no statistics on the information requested in the Investigative Committee, and urged to contact the police.[[210]](#footnote-210) In response to the inquiry with the same content, the police directed them to the RA Ministry of Defense. To respond to the website’s inquiry, the Ministry of Defense first asked for an additional 30-day period, then after a month, on October 8, suggested requesting to the Investigative Committee.

Hitting a dead end, the media outlet was not able to get the answers to the requested questions.

**On October 21**, Arshaluys Barseghyan, a journalist of *Media.am*, sent an inquiry to the RA Police to find out if the problem of issuing passports to the RA citizens living abroad had been resolved.[[211]](#footnote-211) Not receiving the answer in due time, on October 29, the journalist sent a reminding letter, after which the answer was received. **On November 10**, the same inquiry was sent to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Not receiving a reply in due time, on November 17, a reminding letter was again sent; the reply was received a day later.
The journalist also sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations, using the e-mail address of the Information and Public Relations Department, available on the website. A few days later, she called to find out what phase the answer to the question was in. It turned out that the structure did not even start working on the answer to the letter, and they suggested sending the letter to the secretariat’s e-mail address.

##  **On October 28**, Anna Sahakyan, a journalist of *Infocom.am*, sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Health, requesting to provide information on the number of Coronavirus vaccinations. She did not receive a response in due period. After the journalist’s reminders, the Ministry said that the answer is ready, but there is a problem, so they will send it later. The journalist reported that in a few days the data would be overdue.

 **On November 2**, *168.am* sent an inquiry to the NSS to find out what the officials of the RA Armed Forces Aviation Department are accused of in the case of low-quality missiles received by the Ministry of Defense and whether there are other officials of the ministry in charge of this case.[[212]](#footnote-212) The NSS responded that the data contained pre-investigation secrets. The website writes: “It has become a tradition for law enforcement and other state agencies, departments, to avoid answering media questions when they find it convenient, by either saying it is a pre-investigation secret or a state secret.” The website then notes that the NSS could at least name the high-ranking officials involved in the case or at least confirm the arrest of the person in question.

 **On November 3**, *Hetq.am* online periodical wrote that they sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense, requesting information on the choice of the service place and the profession of Beniamin Ghalumyan, the son of Tavush Province Governor Hayk Ghalumyan, but more than 1.5 months later, the Ministry of Defense refused to disclose the conscript’s place of service.[[213]](#footnote-213) The answer only mentioned that Ghalumyan’s conscription place was chosen by lot, and that the rest of the questions were considered state secret information at the headquarters, so they refused to provide answers to them. Meanwhile, by the photos posted on social media, the website found out where the official’s son is serving.

**On November 4**, Narek Martirosyan, a journalist of *Infocom.am*, wrote that he had sent an inquiry to the Public Relations Department of the Office of the RA President, requesting to provide the list of guests at one of the events and the negative results of PCR tests, where personal data are hidden.[[214]](#footnote-214) In response to the request, the President’s Office stated that the list could not be provided due to the confidentiality of personal data, and then noted that everyone had a negative test result. The journalist later found out from official sources that not everyone had a negative PCR test result.

**On November 9**, *Vesti.am* news website wrote that they had sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Environment, regarding the rumors about the content of the chemical element barium in the air. The ministry suggested requesting to the Environmental Protection and Mining Inspection Body.[[215]](#footnote-215) The latter demanded a written inquiry, and after 9 days, informed that the inquiry was redirected to Romanos Petrosyan, the Minister of Environment. Later it turned out that the address was accidentally mistaken and there were a number of other mistakes. “As a result of such a botch job, the media cannot get answers to the simplest questions, and the public is deprived of its right to get the official version,” wrote the website.

**On November 10**, Roza Vardanyan, a correspondent of the news website *Factor.am*, sent an inquiry to the NSS, requesting information on the criminal case against Movses Hakobyan, the former head of the Military Control Service of the RA Ministry of Defense, for publishing a state secret. The agency refused to provide any information, saying it all contained state secrets.

**On November 18**, Roza Vardanyan sent another inquiry to the NSS, requesting information on the seizure of the courts’ automatic signature computers on July 22. In response to this inquiry, the NSS did not provide any information, considering it a state secret. Meanwhile, according to the journalist, in the past, certain information was provided in case of such inquiries.

**On December 14**, the same journalist applied to the NSS, trying to find out the following: a year after the accusation, at what stage the criminal case against Arthur Vanetsyan, the former head of the service, is. The NSS refused to respond verbally, urging to send a written inquiry. The journalist sent a written inquiry to the NSS, but she did not receive any answer.[[216]](#footnote-216)

**On November 15**, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression sent a letter to the RA Government, requesting to clarify whether the drafts developed by the RA Ministry of High-Tech Industry and the RA National Security Service, which do not include the information on the travel expenses of state officials, were accepted. In violation of the RA Law on Freedom of Information, two weeks later, on November 29, the Government responded that to provide the information, they needed additional time—a 30-day period, as prescribed by law.

**On November 15**, the news website *Infocom.am* sent a written inquiry to the RA Ministry of Economy, requesting information on the Government decision, regarding the village of Yeghipatrush, in particular, how many residents of that village own land in the territory recognized as “primary public interest,” and what percentage of this territory is arable. The ministry responded to the inquiry on December 6, in violation of the term prescribed by law.

**On November 23**, Hayarpi Baghdasaryan, a journalist of *Infocom.am*, wrote that she had sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Health to find out how many doses of each vaccine are about to expire.[[217]](#footnote-217) The ministry did not provide a clear answer, so the journalist sent another inquiry, but it remained unanswered.

**On November 25**, the RA Administrative Court of Appeal continued the lawsuit of Levon Barseghyan, the President of the Asparez Journalists’ Club, against the National Security Service, demanding to obligate the NSS to provide the requested information.
 It should be reminded that the lawsuit was filed on February 26, 2020. The plaintiff had asked the NSS to provide all the information they had about him. The answer to the inquiry did not satisfy Levon Barseghyan, so he applied to the court with the aim to create a precedent so that the citizens are provided with information about themselves by those who hold it. The court rejected the lawsuit on October 1, 2020, and on November 9, the plaintiff filed an appeal in the Administrative Court of Appeal.

On December 15 of this year, the Court of Appeal also rejected the appeal on the same grounds as the Court of First Instance, i.e., the information obtained as a result of operative actions is not subject to publication.

**On November 27**, Nane Avetisyan, a journalist of *Infocom.am*, wrote that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had not clearly answered their inquiry on whether after the November 16 border tensions, Armenia had formally applied to Russia for assistance under the 1997 agreement.[[218]](#footnote-218) The ministry provided general documentary data on this. The journalist tried to get the answer to the question by phone, but the ministry did not clarify anything.

**On December 10**, the news website *Infocom.am* wrote that the RA Ministry of Defense and the RA Prime Minister’s Office do not want to comment on which department informed the RA Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan about the number of Azeris in the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia.[[219]](#footnote-219) Clarification is required as the number differs from those provided by other officials. To write just one sentence, the department first asked for one-month period, then 36 working days after the inquiry, sent an indefinite answer. The website sent another clarifying inquiry to the Ministry of Defense, which, in fact, was not answered.

**On December 14**, *Infocom.am* wrote that the RA Ministry of Defense, the National Security Service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister’s Office did not answer their inquiries on the legal basis, regulating the deployment of Russian border guards in Voskepar village of Noyemberyan Community in Tavush Marz.[[220]](#footnote-220) The RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested applying to the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Defense and the Prime Minister’s Office recommended addressing the inquiry to the NSS. The latter replied that the requested information was confidential, yet it was clarified according to which law and which article the information is considered confidential.

**On December 18**, *Fast daily* wrote that they had sent an inquiry to the *Road Department* Foundation for the authenticity of the construction of the Kirants-Voskepar alternative road. According to the media, the answer was evasive and inadequate, and the news about the construction of the road was neither denied nor confirmed.[[221]](#footnote-221)

**On December 23**, Hayarpi Baghdasaryan, a journalist of *Infocom.am*, wrote that her inquiry to the RA Investigative Committee on the identification of the bodies of the 44-day Artsakh war victims by forensic DNA profiling in October remained unanswered, even after numerous calls.[[222]](#footnote-222) The committee also did not provide information on the number of bodies and whether the number of 3807 victims included only the identified bodies.

***OTHER EVENTS ON THE ACTIVITY OF MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS***

**On January 25**, Styopa Safaryan, the chairman of the Public Council, applied to the Court of Appeal, appealing the decision of the Court of First Instance of December 4, 2020, which partially upheld *LiveNews* journalist Taguhi Aslanyan’s lawsuit against Styopa Safaryan and the latter was obligated to apologize to the journalist for the insulting expressions and to pay 600.000 AMD (the plaintiff demanded 1 million AMD) in compensation.

We should remind that on October 29, 2019, the Armenian Institute of International and Security Issues 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 they could not invite him “either to the sauna, or to their place.” [[223]](#footnote-223) For this reason, the journalist filed a lawsuit on November 14, 2019.

The Court of Appeal accepted the defendant’s appeal for proceedings on February 11, and the court hearing was held on April 6. On April 23, the defendant’s appeal was partially upheld, 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, and on June 9, the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Cassation, where the appeals were returned on June 23 for corrections. On August 18, the Court of Cassation rejected the defendant’s second appeal of July 14 for proceedings.

**On February 12**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the founder of the Iravunk newspaper, former MP* *Hayk Babukhanyan v. Larissa Minasyan*, *the executive director of Open Society Foundations-Armenia*.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on April 4, 2019, demanding the refutation of the defamatory information. The lawsuit was caused by Larissa Minasyan’s statement that Hayk Babukhanyan also received a grant from their foundation.[[224]](#footnote-224)

On March 5, 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. 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 2, Hayk Babukhanyan filed an appeal, which was accepted for proceedings on April 30 and rejected on June 30. On July 29, the plaintiff filed an appeal, which was returned for corrections on August 25, and was re-filed on September 22. On October 27, the Court of Cassation rejected the appeal for proceedings.

**On March 15**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary hearing on the case of *168 Zham Ltd. and founder* *Satik Seyranyan v. Styopa Safaryan*, the Chairman of the Public Council, demanding the public refutation of the defamatory information, the removal of the article, and the compensation for the damage caused to 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 the *168.am* website, belonging to the company, attributed insulting remarks to the Russian journalist Vladimir Solovyov, which, however, the latter had not made. The plaintiff considers the following expressions made in the defendant’s post as an insult and slander, particularly: “…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 in compensation for defamation and 1 million AMD in compensation for insult.

The court hearing on the case was held on March 25, April 15, June 21, and December 22. The next one is not scheduled yet.

**On March 16**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *News AM LLC v. political scientist Styopa Safaryan*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to their business reputation. We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 28, 2019, was caused by the defendant’s post on Facebook that the website had received an order from Robert Kocharyan’s office to publish some articles about judges.[[225]](#footnote-225)

The court hearing was held on March 19, June 18; the next one was scheduled for February 14, 2022.

**On March 16**, a regular court hearing was held on the case of *MELTEX LLC v. RA Government and Commission on Television and Radio* (*MELTEX LLC* is the founder of *A1+ TV*).

We should remind that on December 18, 2019, *MELTEX LLC* filed a lawsuit in the RA Administrative Court against the RA Government and the Commission on Television and Radio in relation to the annulment of acts from 7 broadcast licensing competitions held in 2003. *Armenia TV CJSC, Mo TV Media Holding CJSC, ArmenAkob LLC, AR TV LLC* and *Husaber CJSC* act as the third party in the case.

On April 6, 2021, the court rejected the lawsuit, and on May 10, the plaintiff applied to the Court of Appeal, where the appeal was accepted for proceedings on June 17. The case was redistributed in the Administrative Court of Appeal on July 21, and the appeal was accepted for proceedings on October 27. A court hearing was scheduled for May 12, 2022.

**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 the 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 *Hetq.am* (which belongs to the NGO) on the shelling of Tavush border village of Aygepar was presented as misinformation among the posts of Azerbaijani media materials and social media users.[[226]](#footnote-226) The website considers this an unfounded accusation, as the information provided by *Hetq.am* from the site was confirmed by the representative of the RA Ministry of Defense and the Human Rights Defender.

The court hearing was held on July 20, 2021. On August 6, the court rejected the lawsuit, and the reasoning is as follows: the activities of the media outlet are conditioned by the overriding public interest, but depending on national security, territorial integrity and the right to life, it cannot be considered absolute. In addition, according to the judgment, the service did not slander the plaintiff, did not discredit their honor, dignity and business reputation, therefore the claim is obviously unfounded and is subject to rejection.

On September 10, the judgement was appealed to a higher court instance, and on October 23 it was accepted for proceedings. On November 25, the judge recused himself from the case because the plaintiff’s representative suspected that the judge might be biased because his wife worked for the NSS. The case was redistributed on November 29, and on December 15 it was accepted for proceedings by another judge.

**On June 4**, *Armenian Second TV Channel LLC* filed a lawsuit in 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, and the court hearing was held on August 11, but was rejected on August 23. On October 1, the plaintiff filed an appeal, which was returned on October 21. It was presented again on December 2. No other developments were registered as of the end of the year.

**On August 6**, *Armenian Second TV Channel LLC* filed a lawsuit in the Administrative Court against the Commission on Television and Radio, demanding to recognize *Armenian Second TV Channel LLC* as the winner of the Competition of Capital Broadcast of Slots in the Public Multiplex and to make a decision on issuing a license. On August 13, the lawsuit was returned for corrections, and on August 20, the plaintiff appealed that decision in the Court of Appeal. On September 3, the appeal was accepted for proceedings and on October 1, it was upheld. On November 8, the case proceedings commenced. The court hearing was scheduled for March 22, 2022.

**On August 23**, Mariam Tashchyan, a journalist of *Econews.am*, filed a lawsuit in the General Jurisdiction Court of Armavir (Echmiadzin residence) against Armen Tadevosyan, the president of the *Armavir Zoo and Wildlife Rescue Center NGO*, demanding an apology for the insult and compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the insulting remarks, made by the defendant on Facebook Live on July 24, after the journalist visited the aforementioned park during the journalistic investigation on July 9. The journalist saw how the brown bear (included in the red list) was kept in a cage and wrote a Facebook post about it on July 15. The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on September 1. On October 20, Armen Tadevosyan filed a counterclaim in the same court, demanding refutation of the defamatory information and compensation. On October 25, the court made a decision to accept the counterclaim for proceedings and examine it together with the initial claim. The court hearing was scheduled for January 14, 2022.

**On September 6**, the Union of Informed Citizens NGO—the founder of the website *Fip.am*—filed 2 lawsuits in the RA Administrative Court against the National Assembly Council, demanding to annul the Sub-clause 4.1 of the Appendix Clause 22 to the decision No. DCNA-44-L regarding the work of journalists in the NA territory[[227]](#footnote-227), which restricts the movement and activities of the journalists in the NA territory, as well as to suspend that sub-clause before the final judicial act enters into force.

No development has been recorded regarding the first lawsuit. As for the other, on September 13, the lawsuit was rejected on the grounds that the plaintiff in this case is not entitled to apply to court, as there is no legal claim, and “the applicant is not a holder of the right that is the object of the violation.”

**On November 25**, the same plaintiff filed a new lawsuit with the same claim. On December 6, the court rejected the lawsuit.

**On September 8**, the Union of Informed Citizens NGO—the founder of the website *Fip.am*—filed a lawsuit in the RA Administrative Court against the National Assembly, demanding to annul Clause 2.8 of the RA NA Speaker’s decision NO-01-L. The matter refers to the provision of the decision made on July 30, “On approving the security rules operating in the area and the building of the NA residence of the Republic Armenia,” which states: “It is prohibited to record, film or photograph security guards during their professional activities in the area of the protected object, including at the checkpoints.”

On September 16, the lawsuit was returned. The court noted that the cases on the lawfulness of normative legal acts adopted by the RA NA Speaker are not within the jurisdiction of the RA Administrative Court, and the judge issued a special opinion on this lawsuit, not considering it necessary to refer to the grounds for returning the application.

The case was handed over to the archive on September 22.

**On November 25**, the Union of Informed Citizens NGO—the founder of the website *Fip.am*—again filed a lawsuit in the RA Administrative Court against the National Assembly, demanding to annul Clause 2.8 of the RA NA Speaker’s decision NO-01-L and to suspend the disputed clause of the RA NA Speaker’s decision (mentioned above), until the final judicial act enters into force.

On the same day, the case was signed by Judge Gevorg Sosyan for individual investigation.

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

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