**

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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

**2022 second quarterly report by the
Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression**

*The Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression regularly submits to the public its reports on the working environment and issues of Armenian media and its personnel, on the status of the freedom of expression and the violations of the rights of media outlets and those of journalists. This report reflects the data from the second quarter of 2022.*

*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***

 The second quarter of 2022 was notable for the increase in the number of physical violence cases against media employees: **11** cases with **12** victims were registered, 10 out of which (11 victims) occurred during the coverage of the disobedience actions organized by the opposition forces. It is noteworthy that the number of such cases is 3 more than those recorded in the same period of the previous year, when a hot post-war and pre-election political struggle was going on in the country, which in turn was accompanied by the activation of attacks on journalists and cameramen.

During the quarter, both local journalistic organizations and international organizations issued statements condemning the obstacles to the professional activities of the media and their employees, calling on the law enforcement agencies not to use disproportionate force and not to violate the rights of media representatives performing their duties.

 During the period under review, reputable international organizations also published their annual reports, in which there were evaluations on Armenian media. In particular, in the “Nations in Transit – 2022” report of *Freedom House*, Armenia was ranked among partially free countries, and the press, in general, was once again described as polarized. In the report of the *Reporters Without Borders* organization, compared to the previous year, Armenia has improved its positions in terms of press freedom, from 63rd to 51st place. However, both reports express concern about new changes in media legislation, which do not promote press freedom and often contradict European norms.

In this regard, the criminalization of the so-called “serious insult”, the tripling of caps for pecuniary compensation for insult and slander stipulated in the Civil Code, the introduction of the possibility of depriving journalists of accreditation in public administration bodies, as well as the package of recommendations for amendments and addenda to the Law on Audiovisual Media and related laws were particularly problematic, the adoption of which would further complicate the situation in the field of broadcasting, would create a wide field of subjectivity and arbitrariness in the process of its regulation.

In order to prevent these regressive tendencies, 11 local journalistic organizations came up with an initiative that involves the cooperation of the legislative and executive authorities and civil society institutions, aimed at developing a concept of the development of the information sector in Armenia and the reforms of legislation related to the media. The result was that the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, having been authorized by 10 partner organizations, signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Chairman of the NA Profile Committee and the RA Deputy Minister of Justice on April 19. Accordingly, the development of the above-mentioned concept launched, which will serve as the basis for future legislative changes.

One of the positive developments in the period under review is that as a result of interdepartmental discussions, the authorities did not find it expedient to include in the new Criminal Code the article providing punishment for “serious insult”, which came into force in August last year. On June 10, 2022, RA Minister of Justice Karen Andreasyan issued a statement, stating that the existing civil liability regulations are preferable for this impermissible phenomenon.

Another notable change was establishing stricter liability for employees of public administration bodies in case of violations of the right of citizens, including journalists, to receive official information and increasing the amount of possible fines. The **draft** was adopted by the National Assembly on May 25 in its first reading.

In general, during the second quarter, CPFE recorded 24 violations of the right to receive and disseminate information, 11 cases of various pressures (without physical violence) on media and their employees. The flow of lawsuits filed against the media outlets and journalists also continued: 8 new such cases were registered, one more than in the previous quarter.

***MEDIA ACTIVITIES ENVIRONMENT***

*“Violence against journalists in Armenia, as a rule, goes unpunished” - this is the observation of the international organization Reporters Without Borders from the annual report published on May 3.*

During the second quarter of 2022, the number of cases of physical violence against media representatives increased sharply, and the majority of them occurred during protest demonstrations organized by the opposition, as a result of disproportionate actions of law enforcement officers. During those events, 11 journalists and cameramen were injured. Another case of physical violence against a media employee was registered in the National Assembly, and the perpetrator is also a representative of the authorities.

 All this did not go unnoticed by both local and international journalistic and human rights organizations. Thus, on May 2, when the work of a number of media representatives was hindered while covering the actions of disobedience organized by the opposition forces, 11 Armenian journalistic organizations issued a joint statement, demanding the Government to initiate an official investigation and hold accountable, in particular, the Head of the State Guard Service Sargis Hovhannisyan and his subordinates surpassing their authorities. In addition, the authors of the document demanded from the highest body of the executive power to give appropriate instructions to both the State Guard Service and the police, so that their actions do not violate the rights of media workers and show respect towards them.[[1]](#footnote-1)
 The same journalistic organizations also issued a condemning statement[[2]](#footnote-2) regarding the events that took place on May 30, when during a protest demonstration organized by the opposition forces near the 3rd building of the RA Government, the police used brutal force against the journalist at *Iravunk* newspaper Hrant Sarafyan and the editor at *YerkirMedia.am* news website Vahe Sargsyan, who were performing their professional duties. The Investigative Committee and the police reacted to the statement made in this regard, but instead of informing about their practical steps, they only welcomed “the participation of the civil society in the strengthening of lawfulness and legal order”.

 It was also an extraordinary case on June 10, when without prior notice, four National Security Service employees broke into the *Yerkir Media TV station* and detained and arrested Bagrat Yesayan, the director of that media outlet, a member of the ARF Supreme Body, from his office. He was charged in November 2020 in connection with the attack on *Radio Liberty*. Journalistic organizations have again issued a condemning statement.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Back on May 11, the spokesperson for the United States Department of State Ned Price referred to the protest demonstrations in Armenia and the pressures applied to the journalists covering them. “We believe that peaceful demonstrations are part of an open political system. We fully support the fundamental freedoms of speech and assembly. We encourage people to express their opinions in a peaceful way. We call on the authorities to exercise restraint and encourage the protesters to refrain from violence and respect democracy and the rule of law in Armenia,” said Price at the briefing.**[[4]](#footnote-4)

**And on May 12, the Chairperson of the NA Standing Committee on Protection of Human Rights and Public Affairs, Taguhi Tovmasyan informed that the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Marija Pejčinović Burić responded to his writings about police violence:**

**“In connection with the alleged disproportionate violence against journalists, a warning has already been posted on our platform to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists.”**[[5]](#footnote-5) **The CE Secretary General expressed hope that the police will adopt a human rights-based approach in their actions, and that the use of force by law enforcement agencies will be lawful, necessary, proportionate and limited to cases where it is absolutely unavoidable.**

 On May 14, the international human rights organization *Freedom House* expressed concern about the violence against journalists, public figures and ordinary citizens during protests in Armenia. A post was made on the organization's Twitter page condemning the disproportionate actions of law enforcement agencies.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Before that, on April 21, *Freedom House* published the annual report “Nations in Transit-2022”, where Armenia was ranked among partially free countries, and again, as in previous years, it was emphasized that the Armenian press remains polarized: “most print or broadcast media are tied to political or broader commercial interests”.[[7]](#footnote-7) The restrictions on freedom of movement of journalists in the Parliament and in some parts of Syunik Marz are mentioned as examples of the restriction of freedom of journalists. The report, based on data from the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, noted that incidents of violence against media workers have increased. According to *Freedom House*, the legislative changes adopted in 2021, according to which the so-called “serious insult” addressed to officials and public figures was criminalized and the caps for pecuniary compensation for insult and slander were tripled in the Civil Code, left a negative mark on the measurement of media freedom. These changes, according to the organization, limit the freedom of speech, which *Freedom House* had warned about earlier, noting that the media could thus be subject to political pressure from officials.

Another report published on May 3 by the international organization *Reporters Without Borders* also emphasizes the affiliation of the Armenian media with the current authorities on the one hand, and with the former oligarchic forces on the other. [[8]](#footnote-8) Although in the index of freedom of the press, compared to the previous year, RA has improved its positions and reached the 51st position from 63rd position, it is noted that the legal framework does not sufficiently protect the media outlets and does not meet European standards: the legislative changes made by the authorities did not solve the problems related to misinformation and growing hate speech. In addition, the criminalization of “serious insult” and the tripling of the caps for pecuniary compensation for slander and insult are a serious threat to the freedom of the press. According to the report, legal provisions guaranteeing the transparency of media ownership and financial sources are still not applied, and the shortcomings of the Law on Advertising affect the financial independence of the media.

The above-mentioned problems prove that the legislative changes concerning the media sphere, initiated by the authorities, are often not subjected to scrutiny, including in international institutions, and as a result, they have a negative impact on the media field and receive strong criticism. It is with this concern that the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression and 10 partner journalistic organizations came up with an initiative to develop a policy for the development of the information sector and reform the media legislation in cooperation with the legislative and executive powers. As a result of intensive contacts and discussions, an agreement was reached on it, and on April 19, it was ratified by a Memorandum, which was signed by the Chairman of the NA Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Diaspora, Youth and Sport Sisak Gabrielyan, RA Deputy Minister of Justice Yeranuhi Tumanyants and Chairman of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression Ashot Melikyan, authorized by 10 journalistic NGOs. A joint working group has been established and is working to develop a concept for the development of the media sector and legislative reforms. The fundamental principles of this extensive document will serve for the preparation and adoption of new laws that comply with international norms. It is intended to create an interconnected system of self-regulation based on legislative regulation of media activities and professional ethics, which will contribute to the development of quality journalism, as well as free and responsible press.

 Nevertheless, contrary to this positive process, as if with old inertia, the authorities continued to come up with regressive legislative initiatives. Thus, on May 25, the Parliament adopted a draft to make amendment and addendum to the RA Law on Media, according to which the public administration body can deprive a journalist of accreditation if he/she has violated the procedure of working in that agency twice within a year. Moreover, each body can set its own conditions: they are not prescribed by law.

Before that, experts in the media sector have repeatedly stated that this change contradicts European norms and international best practice, that state agencies should not have the authority to deprive a journalist of accreditation, and that it is only for the media to decide. By the way, the international organization Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) called on RA President Vahagn Khachaturyan not to sign this law,**[[9]](#footnote-9) but he did not comply with that request.**

**The legislative surprises of the authorities continued in the form of a package of new drafts of addenda and amendments to the Law on Audiovisual Media and related laws, which was posted on the official e-draft.am website on June 6.**[[10]](#footnote-10) **This initiative of the Ministry of High-Tech Industry, in which the Commission on Television and Radio of Armenia, the Council of the Public Broadcaster of Armenia and *Union of Operators of Armenia NGO* also participated, caused deep concern among more than a dozen journalistic organizations, both in terms of the content of the bill and the process of its development and presentation. Thus, according to the amendments, TV companies using a private multiplex (digital terrestrial television broadcasting network) slot are expelled from the regulations, it is obligatory to clearly separate facts from opinions in television programs, which is mostly a self-regulation problem, and it is impossible for the Commission on Television and Radio to be able to identify all violations of that requirement from the huge information flow and apply measures of liability. The same can be said about the requirement to publish only reliable facts, the control of which provides wide opportunities for arbitrariness and subjective approaches. There are many such unacceptable provisions in the document that contradict international norms, and in case of relinquishing from them, the whole draft becomes meaningless.**

**CPFE and partner journalistic organizations issued a statement and called on the Ministry of High-Tech Industry to withdraw the presented package of bills and to organize professional open discussions with the interested state and public institutions in order to improve the legislative regulations of the broadcasting sector. While the NA Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Diaspora, Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia have been offered to work with the Ministry of High-Tech Industry, remaining close to the provisions of the Memorandum of Cooperation with journalistic organizations, so that the implementation of the supposed amendments to the Law on Audiovisual Media are aligned with the processes stipulated in the Memorandum, in line with the principles of the concept currently being elaborated.**[[11]](#footnote-11)

It is important that the criticism of local journalistic organizations and international institutions is taken into account by the authorities in some cases and has a positive impact on the decision-making process and correcting mistakes. During the period under review, one of its examples was that the criminal liability for the so-called “serious insult” introduced last year was revised and it was decided to be removed from the new version of the Criminal Code. In other words, the decriminalization of that offense was carried out, the necessity of which was pointed out by both the Armenian journalistic and human rights community and the international organizations.

Thus, on June 10, 2022, RA Minister of Justice Karen Andreasyan announced that although the Constitutional Court did not find elements in the criminalization of serious insults that contradict the Constitution, as a result of a series of professional discussions led by the Prime Minister, the Government concluded that even the lawful restriction of freedom of speech, included in the further democratization agenda, should be implemented without criminal prosecution tools as much as possible. The authorities did not find it expedient to include serious insult in the new Criminal Code, preferring the existing civil liability regulations for this unacceptable phenomenon.

By the way, on the basis of Article 1087 Part 1 of the RA Civil Code, which refers to insult and slander, during the second quarter, 8 new lawsuits were filed against the media and journalists. 4 of them are from current and former officials.

In general, relations between the authorities and the media are characterized by wavy developments with their ups and downs. In particular, recalling the 4-5-hour press conferences with direct contact given by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in the first two post-revolutionary years, the journalistic community considers it highly unacceptable to organize them in an online or remote format. First, it qualifies as an attempt to avoid unwanted questions. In addition, when media outlets and NGOs are given the opportunity to ask one question in advance, which is presented to the Prime Minister by a journalist of *Public TV Company*, there were cases when the question was either edited or not asked. That is why dozens of media outlets boycotted Pashinyan's regular remote press-conference organized on June 27, calling on him to return to the accepted format of the press conference - direct contact with the media.**[[12]](#footnote-12)**

 **The number of violations of the right to receive official information from public administration bodies continues to be concerning. Rejections are accompanied by various unfounded reasons, or inquiries are simply ignored. And even if answers are provided, they are often either vague or do not correspond to the essence of the questions. All this becomes a serious reason for spreading unreliable information and misinformation.**

**Having studied the results of the research on the given problem, conducted by the Freedom of Information Center of Armenia, and taking them into account, the Government has proposed to increase the amount of the existing fine for not providing the information stipulated in the law. On May 25 the draft** was adopted by the National Assembly in its first reading. **Accordingly, the fine for not providing official information subject to publication has been increased from the amount of 10 to 50 times the minimum wage, reaching the amount of 30 to 70 times, and in case of the same violation being repeated within one year after the administrative penalty has been applied, the fine increased from the amount of 50 to 100 times the minimum wage, reaching the amount of 100 to 150 times.**

**During the period under review, CPFE recorded 24 violations of the right to receive and disseminate information, and these cases once again prove the justification of the aforementioned tightening of penalties against those responsible.**

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

We report the violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the second quarter of 2022 according to 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 the second quarter of 2022, as well as developments related to the previous incidents.

*In total, there were* ***46*** *reported violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the second quarter of 2022.* ***11*** *were cases of physical violence,* ***11*** *were cases of pressure against the media and their personnel, and* ***24*** *were cases of violations of the right to receive and disseminate information.*

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

**Quantiative Data on Violations in the 1st and 2nd Quarters of 2022**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 1st quarter of 2022 | 2nd quarter of 2022 | Total |
| Physical violence against journalists | 1 | 11(12 victims) | 12(13 victims) |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | 12 | 11 | 23 |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | 45 | 24 | 69 |

**Quantiative Data on Violations in the 2nd Quarters of 2021-2022**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 2nd quarter of 2021 | 2nd quarter of 2022 |
| Physical violence against journalists | 8(9 victims) | 11(12 victims) |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | 44 | 11 |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | 15 | 24 |

**Lawsuits, Involving Media and Journalists in the 1st and 2nd Quarters of 2022**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 1st quarter of 2022 | 2nd quarter of 2022 | Total |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| Economic and other disputes | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Lawsuits, Involving Media and Journalists in the 2nd Quarters of 2021-2022**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 2nd quarter of 2021 | 2nd quarter of 2022 |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 23 | 8 |
| Economic and other disputes | 0 | 0 |

As in the previous reports, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression would like to note that the data in the table may not be comprehensive and do not claim absolute accuracy. Media representatives sometimes find it unnecessary to publicize facts 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 the second quarter of 2022 there were 11 cases of physical violence against media workers, with 12 victims. Below we present facts and developments related to both that case and past instances of use of violence in chronological order.*

 **On April 26,** during the anti-government demonstrations organized by the ARF youth wing, their participants also burned tires at the intersection of Gyulbenkyan-Komitas streets in Yerevan, for which the law enforcement officers used force. This fact was recorded on camera by the Armenian correspondent of *Kavkaz-uzel.eu* website **Tigran Petrosyan**, who was pushed away from the place by the police, hindering his professional activities. By the way, the journalist wore an editor's certificate - a badge, and it was visible. Tigran Petrosyan alerted the Office of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression about the incident.

 **On May 2,** during the disobedience actions organized by the opposition forces in Yerevan, the professional activities of a number of media representatives were hindered. In particular, the Head of the State Guard Service, Sargis Hovhannisyan, at the intersection of Proshyan-Baghramyan streets in Yerevan, first obstructed the work of *Mediahub.am* news website correspondent **Nare Gnuni** by hitting her hand-held loudspeaker, and State Guard Service employee Edgar Papinyan kicked the cameraman of the same website **Arman Gharajyan**, and damaged the camera. The representatives of the media outlet were trying to get a comment from the Head of the State Guard Service when he was talking on the phone.

On June 7, the Investigative Committee reported that the mentioned actions were exclusively aimed at ensuring the confidentiality of Sargis Hovhannisyan's telephone conversation, which is protected by RA legislation, therefore, the characteristics of the crime of obstructing journalistic activity envisaged by Article 164 of the RA Criminal Code are absent. The initiation of a criminal case was rejected.

As a result of a clash between the police and citizens at the intersection of Sayat-Nova-Abovyan streets in Yerevan on **May 2, Lia Sargsyan**, correspondent at the *Yerkir.am* news website, felt bad and was given first aid.

**On May 2,** on Heratsi Street in Yerevan, law enforcement officers hit the shoulder of *AntiFake.am* website correspondent **Davit Fidanyan**, obstructing filming, while another journalist of the same website, **Ishkhan Khosrovyan**, was dragged at the intersection of Khanjyan-Sayat-Nova streets.

**On May 2**, law enforcement officers dragged **Edik Andreasyan**, an employee of the *Hraparak daily* and a publicist, bringing him into custody at the Vardanants-Yervand Kochar intersection in Yerevan, and later released him.

 **On May 4**, in the building of the National Assembly, **Suzy Badoyan**, a correspondent of the *Yerevan.today* news website, tried to get a comment from the Civil Contract faction MP Hayk Sargsyan regarding the actions of the opposition, but Sargsyan grabbed the journalist's phone, injuring her hand. After Suzy Badoyan's demand, the MP returned the phone.

**On May 6**, during the opposition rally in Yerevan, near the Victory Bridge, the work of the journalist of the *Aravot.am* news website **Ashot Hakobyan** was hindered while detaining the protesters. The website writes that the journalist's badge was visible, and the police major, seeing that he was recording the actions of the law enforcement officers, hit the camera, instructing the journalist not to take his picture.[[13]](#footnote-13)

**On May 12**, the RA General Prosecutor's Office received a letter from the RA Human Rights Defender's Office regarding the case, which was sent to the NSS Investigation Department with the task of preparing materials. The factual data obtained here also testified that the fact of Ashot Hakobyan being a journalist was not known to the RA police officer, therefore, the presence of the subjective side of the crime stipulated in Article 164 of the Criminal Code was not substantiated in the latter's act. The Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Armenia informed the CPFE that on May 26, a decision was made to reject the initiation of a criminal case.

 **On May 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor marzes (Artashat residence) held the trial on the case of violence against journalist Ani Gevorgyan.
 We should remind that on June 4,2021,during the coverage of the meetings of the acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Artashat City, Ararat Marz, one of the citizens snatched Ani Gevorgyan’s phone, insulted and slapped her.[[14]](#footnote-14) On September 3, the criminal case initiated on the fact of violence was filed to the Court with an indictment of 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.

The court hearing on the case is scheduled for July 6.

**On May 20**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the 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 on 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 and quarterly reports for 2018-2022, in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).
The next court hearing is scheduled for July 14.

 **On May 27,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the trial on the fact of violence against Artak Khulyan, correspondent at *Shantnews.am* news website, and Hovhannes Sargsyan, cameraman at *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. It was sent to the Court with the indictment of 8 people.(For details see CPFE’s annual and quarterly reports for 2018-2022 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 7.

 **On May 30,** during a protest organized by the opposition near the 3rd building of the RA Government, the police used brutal force against the journalist at *Iravunk* newspaper Hrant Sarafyan, hitting and knocking him down. On the same day, during the clashes, the law enforcement officers also used force against Vahe Sargsyan, the editor of the *YerkirMedia.am* news website, trying to detain him. Both journalists were there to cover the action. In response to the statement made by 11 journalistic organizations in this regard, CPFE received a letter from the Investigative Committee, in which it was said that the statement had been sent to the police for consideration. And on June 28, the Police Department told the CPFE that “they welcome the participation of the civil society in strengthening the lawfulness and legal system.” Only... As the author of the above-mentioned statement, the CPFE welcomes the willingness of law enforcement officers not to ignore the reports and demands of journalistic organizations, but expects more effective steps to be taken to solve the mentioned problems.

NA MP Taguhi Tovmasyan submitted a report on the aforementioned incidents to the RA Prosecutor General. The Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Armenia informed the CPFE that the given report was sent to the Investigation Department of the National Security Service with the task of preparing materials. The prepared materials revealed that the police officer, having lost his balance, carelessly touched Hrant Sarafyan and knocked him down. On June 16, a decision was made to reject the initiation of a criminal case based on the grounds of lack of corpus delicti under Article 164 of the Criminal Code.

**On June 3,** during the action organized by the opposition near the Government summer houses in Yerevan, during the clash between the protesters and the police, the cameraman of the *Yerevan.today* news website **Artyom Sargsyan** suffered, injuring his leg. According to the website's editor, the police snatched the camera monopod from the cameraman and beat the protesters with it. As a result, the live broadcast device belonging to the editorial office was also lost.[[15]](#footnote-15)

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

*In the second quarter of 2022, 11 cases of various pressures against the media and their personnel were registered. 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 April 1,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of*FDA Laboratory* LLC v. the *Investigative Journalists* NGO, demanding to post the refutation of the published information, and the presented response.

We should remind that 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, which states that in order to avoid a costly and time-consuming process, medical vitamins are often registered in violation as a supplement, food.[[16]](#footnote-16) A court hearing on the case was also held on June 13, the next one is scheduled for October 21.

 **On April 1,** the Court of Appeal left unchanged the verdict of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan on the case of the *SOS Children's Villages Armenian Charitable Foundation v. Iravunk Media LLC*, which partially upheld the claim on October 13, 2021. *Iravunk Media* was obliged to refute 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.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on May 14, 2020, was caused by the article, entitled: “What is Going on in the Ijevan Branch of SOS Children's Villages?” published on *Iravunk.com website* on January 8.[[17]](#footnote-17) The website, citing its own sources, stated that the Foundation's employees were engaged in robbery. The lawsuit was filed, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to the business reputation.

On May 5, the defendant applied to the Court of Cassation, on June 1, the appeal was returned and refiled on the 15th of the same month.

**On April 1**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, on the grounds of the plaintiff’s withdrawal of the lawsuit, terminated the two lawsuits filed by Arayik Arakelyan, the former Head of the Shirak Regional Department of the Cadastre, against *168 Zham* LLC.

We should remind that the lawsuits were filed on June 18, 2021, demanding compensation for damages caused to 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?”[[18]](#footnote-18), 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.[[19]](#footnote-19)

 **On April 4, the Director of Alaverdi Medical Center CJSC Stepan Mosinyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori Marz (Alaverdi residence) against journalist Larisa Paremuzyan and *CivilNet* online television (later *Civilitas* Foundation was recognized as the proper defendant), demanding public refutation of defamatory information and compensation for damages caused to honor and dignity.**

**The lawsuit was caused by the article entitled: “The Director of Alaverdi MC - the Monopolist of the “Death” Business” published on the *Civilnet.am* news website on March 14, in which it is specifically stated: “...Mosinyan uses the Patho-Anatomical Department of the Medical Center as a source of enrichment. Meanwhile, the Prosecutor's Office of Lori Marz turns a blind eye to Mosinyan's crimes”.[[20]](#footnote-20)**

**On April 7, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the plaintiff's motion to apply injunction to put a freezing order in the amount of 3 million AMD on the property belonging to the defendants was rejected. Court hearings were also held on May 27 and 30, as well as June 16. On the basis of biased attitude, the defendant's motion for the judge's self-recusal was rejected. The next court hearing is scheduled for July 11.**

**On April 4,** the defendant on the case of*famous businessman, current NA MP Khachatur Sukiasyan v. 168 Zham LLC, founder of Blog.168.am website* applied to the Court of Appeal, appealing the verdict by the Court of General Jurisdiction, according to which Khachatur Sukiasyan’s claim was partially upheld: the website was obliged to print refutation and pay 100.000 AMD as an attorney’s reasonable fee.

We should remind that the lawsuit was caused by the article entitled: “Beware. Khachatur Sukiasyan's Petrolium Spoils Cars. Déjà vu”,[[21]](#footnote-21) published on March 25, 2021, with a reference to the Telegram channel.

The Court of General Jurisdiction found that the Telegram social network is an unidentifiable source, and making references to the publications made by unknown persons on that platform does not exempt the defendant from the liability for insult or defamation defined by the Civil Code of the Republic of Armenia.

On May 6, the defendant's appeal was accepted for proceedings; as of June 30, no other developments have been registered.

**On April 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on Khacahtur Sukiasyan’s another lawsuit against *Pastinfo LLC,* demanding public refutation of factual information considered defamatory and a compensation. We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on April 19, 2021, and 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.[[22]](#footnote-22) On April 26, the proceedings of the case were terminated, the plaintiff withdrew the lawsuit, because on March 30, the media published refutation.[[23]](#footnote-23)

**On April 14,** the case of the same plaintiff against Spartak Seyranyan (editor of *Yerkir.am* news website), demanding a public apology, publication of the court judgement, refutation of information considered defamatory, as well as payment of compensation, was terminated. We should remind that the lawsuit filed on April 19, 2021, was caused by an article, entitled: “Beware. Khachatur Sukiasyan's Petrolium Spoils Cars. Déjà vu” published on March 25[[24]](#footnote-24) with reference to an unidentifiable Telegram channel.

The court noted that an agreement was reached between the parties, as a result of which the defendant published a refutation text pre-agreed upon with the plaintiff, and the plaintiff withdrew the submitted claims, except for court costs, and requested for the case proceedings to be terminated.

**On April 15,** the regular court hearing was held on the case of *Khachatur Sukiasyan v. News AM LLC, the founder of News.am website*, demanding a public apology, publication of the court judgement, refutation of information considered defamatory, as well as payment of compensation.[[25]](#footnote-25) The dispute was caused by the printing of the aforementioned publication on the given website. On April 29, according to the Court decision, the lawsuit was upheld in regard to publishing a refutation and compensation for court costs. No appeal was filed against the decision.

**On May 30,** the same plaintiff’s case with the same cause against *Media Plus LLC*, the founder of *Yerevan.Today* website was terminated:[[26]](#footnote-26) an agreement was reached between the parties, as a result of which the defendant published a refutation text pre-agreed upon with the plaintiff, and the plaintiff withdrew the submitted claims, except for court costs, and requested for the case proceedings to be terminated.

**On April 18,** the regular court hearing with the same cause and demand was held on the case of *Mega Trade LLC, owned by Khachatur Sukiasyan, v. News.am;* the next one is scheduled for July 6. And court hearings on the case of the same plaintiff against *Yerevan.today* were held on May 11 and 25.

 **On April 4,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the new trial on the case of *Mher Derdzyan v. Zhoghovurd Newspaper Ltd.*

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on April 15, 2019, was caused by the newspaper’s concerns that Mher Derdzyan’s construction program could be a deliberate hoax.[[27]](#footnote-27) The plaintiff demands a public apology and 1,5 million AMD compensation for insult and slander. (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2019-2021 in the *Reports* section on *khosq.am website*). The Court of General Jurisdiction rejected the lawsuit, after which the appeal was upheld at the Court of Appeal, the judgment was overturned and the case was sent for a retrial. The Court of Appeal found that the evidence in the case was not sufficient to justify that measures were taken by the defendant to verify the accuracy of the information.

On April 19, the Court of First Instance partially upheld the claim, obliging the defendant to apologize, publish a refutation, pay 300.000 AMD for insult, 500.000 AMD as compensation for defamation, as well as 500.000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee and 68.000 AMD as pre-paid state duty. The verdict was not appealed.

**On April 5,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori Marz (Vanadzor residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of *teacher* *Susanna Sargsyan v. Shushanna Grigoryan*, *the correspondent of Hraparak.am website*.

We should remind that the case is being re-examined in the Court of First Instance. The lawsuit, filed on June 6, 2014, was caused by articles, entitled: “The Headmaster of Vanadzor School N8 was Fired”[[28]](#footnote-28) and “A Teacher in Vanadzor Received 12 Million AMD for Forced Idle Time”[[29]](#footnote-29) which were published on the aforementioned website on October 4 and December 5, 2013. (For details see the annual reports of CPFE for 2016-2021 in the *Reports* *section on khosq.am website*).

 On April 7, the court rejected Susanna Sargsyan's motion for the judge's self-recusal on the grounds of biased attitude. A hearing on the case was also held on May 31, the next one is scheduled for July 1.

 **On April 5**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted for proceedings the case of *Europe in Law Association NGO, its President Lousine Hakobyan, and superior legal councilor Tigran Yegoryan v. Hraparak Daily LLC*, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity. The court rejected the plaintiff's motion to apply an injunction, i.e. to put a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim.

 The lawsuit, after being rejected once, was filed again on March 17 and was caused by the article, published on August 27 on *Hraparak Daily* website, entitled: “An Open Network of Agencies under the Disguise of the Community of Human Right Defenders”.[[30]](#footnote-30) 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 the Government in Armenia, and not to fight for human rights.

Court hearings on the case were also held on June 22 and 27, the next one is scheduled for November 9.

**On April 6,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor marzes (Artashat residence) continued the court hearing by double trial on the case of *Nver Mnatsakanyan, a journalist and anchor, v. Hayeli Club and Garnik Isagulyan*, demanding public apology and publication of the judgment in the media.

The lawsuit, filed on May 15, 2019, 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.[[31]](#footnote-31)

By the decision of August 16, 2021, the Court rejected Nver Mnatsakanyan’s lawsuit finding that the plaintiff failed to substantiate the fact that the defendant was seeking to insult the plaintiff and to discredit his honor and dignity and that the disputed expressions were not addressed to the plaintiff. However, on December 24, the Civil Court of Appeal, decided to overturn the verdict of the First Instance and send the case to the same court for a retrial. The Court of Appeal came to the conclusion that the publicity of the statements made by the defendant and their reference to the person of the plaintiff are indisputable.

On June 6, the court made a decision to distribute the burden of proof, the next hearing is scheduled for September 9.

 **On April 6**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister (currently NA MP) Eduard Aghajanyan v. the founder of 168.am website 168 Zham Ltd*., demanding refutation of defamatory information and a confiscation of compensation.

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 aforementioned website on June 7.[[32]](#footnote-32) 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, which was an act prohibited during the state of emergency caused by COVID-19. 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 on the case were also held on April 22, May 23 and June 16, the next hearing has not been scheduled as of June 30.

**On April 7**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the court hearing on the case of *Olymp Construction Ltd. v. Hetq Ltd.*, demanding refutation of defamatory information and a compensation.

We should remind that 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* website*.*[[33]](#footnote-33) Although the author of the article incorporated a comment from the representative of the construction company, too, the plaintiff does not agree to the residents’ complaint. A court hearing on the case was also held on June 20. The next one is scheduled for September 30.

**On April 7,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing on the case of *Gegham Vardanyan, Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission, v. Pastinfo LLC*, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory and payment of a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the article entitled: “The Representative of RA in the Eurasian Economic Commission is Suspected of Abuses” published on *Pastinfo.am* website on August 31, 2020.[[34]](#footnote-34)

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled for October 20.

**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*, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory and payment of a 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 scandals during her professional activity.[[35]](#footnote-35)

A court hearing was also held on June 7, the next one is scheduled for August 12.

**On April 8,** theCourt of Cassation refused to accept for proceedings the defendant’s appeal on the case of *citizens Marat Grigoryan, Sargis Kelyan, Levon Harutyunyan, Liana Manukyan, Esther Manukyan, Tatevik Boyakhchyan v. Hraparak daily LLC*.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on October 30, 2018, 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.[[36]](#footnote-36) The claim was partially upheld by a judgment passed on February 28, 2020. The defendant appealed the judgment to a higher instance, where it was upheld and the case was sent for a retrial. On May 3, 2021, the Court of First Instance again partially upheld the lawsuit. 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 January 31, *Hraparak daily LLC* applied to the Court of Cassation, appealing the decision made by the Court of Appeal.

**On April 8,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the new trial on the case of *lawyer Aram Orbelyan v. the Republic of Armenia*, in the person of the National Security Service and the Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC.

The lawsuit was filed on March, 2020, demanding a refutation of the defamatory information and a compensation for the damage caused. The lawsuit was caused by the report within the main *Lurer* program on the *Public TV Company* 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.[[37]](#footnote-37)
 On July 26, 2021, the Court decided to reject the lawsuit by regarding the disputed judgements as value judgements, to confiscate 100.000 AMD from Aram Orbelyan in favor of *Armenian Public TV* *Company CJSC* as the attorney’s fee. On August 30, an appeal was filed against the verdict, which was upheld on December 15: the case was sent to the same court for a retrial.

During the retrial in the Court of First Instance, the burden of proof was distributed. The next hearing is scheduled for September 9.

 **On April 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted for proceedings the case of *the Union of Journalists of Armenia NGO*, *its President Satik Seyranyan and* *168 Zham LLC* v. *Civic.am* *news website and Chairman of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression NGO Ashot Melikyan.*

The lawsuit was filed on February 28, demanding refutation of defamatory information, publication of the refutation text, as well as compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity and/or business reputation.

 The lawsuit was caused by the interview with Ashot Melikyan published on *Civic.am* news website on January 31, where the latter, referring to the January 29 congress of *the Union of Journalists of Armenia*, particularly said: “It was not a congress of the Union of Journalists, but more an alliance of Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan's propagandists, who had gathered to decide what to do next and to elect the head of that organization serving their camp ... .”

A court hearing was held on June 30, the next one is scheduled for October 20.

 **On April 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan rejected the motion of the plaintiff’s representative on the case of *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v.* *Hraparak Daily Ltd*. to recuse the judge on the grounds of biased attitude.

We should remind that, on February 2,the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan resumed the trial on the case of *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v.* *Hraparak Daily Ltd.*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity and good reputation through slander and insult.

The lawsuit was filed on June 21, 2019, and was caused by an article published on May 26, 2019, entitled: “MP Hayk Sargsyan “Made a Row” on the Yerevan-Moscow Plane”.[[38]](#footnote-38) At the hearing of February 28, 2020, the Court decided to leave the case without trial, on the grounds that the plaintiff and the defendant had failed to attend two successive hearings. The plaintiff filed an appeal against this judgment in the Court of Appeal. After rejection the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Cassation. The claim was upheld and the proceedings resumed.
 A court hearing on the case was also held on May 24, the next one is scheduled for July 12.

**On April 11**, the plaintiff on the case of citizen *Emma Kirakosyan v. A-TV Television LLC* *and other citizens*, applied to the Court of Cassation, appealing the decision of the Court of Appeal, which left the verdict of the Court of First Instance unchanged.

 We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on March 22, 2019, with the demand to pay compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, was caused by 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.[[39]](#footnote-39) On July 10, 2020 the lawsuit was rejected on the ground that the statements made during the broadcast were value judgments that had been expressed in accordance with Article 10 of the European Convention on the Right to Freedom of Expression. On August 17, 2020, the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Appeal, 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 retrial.

On October 22, 2021, the lawsuit was rejected again. The Court again found that the TV company acted in good faith. On November 25, the plaintiff filed an appeal, which was rejected.

On May 4, the Court of Cassation returned the appeal, but on June 7, the plaintiff refiled it.

**On April 12,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to leave without trial the case of *Artak Mkhitaryan, Deputy Director for Protection of Khosrov Forest State Reserve SNCO, v. journalist Narine Kirakosyan*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity through insult and slander, and publication of refutation, and to consider the issue of court costs solved. The decision was based on the fact that the plaintiff, being duly notified, had failed to attend two successive court hearings.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on May 5, 2021, and 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 April 20, 2022, the defendant appealed the decision to a higher instance court, and on May 19, the appeal was accepted for proceedings. On June 30, the Civil Court of Appeal decided to partially uphold the appeal, to confiscate 100,000 AMD from the plaintiff Artak Mkhitaryan in favor of the defendant Narine Kirakosyan as an attorney's reasonable fee, and consider the issue of the rest of the court costs resolved.

**On April 12**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Medisar LLC v. News AM LLC*, *the founder of News.am news website*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to its business reputation.

The lawsuit, filed on July 2, 2021, 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 profit of at least 111 million AMD ($ 212,237) as a result of the procurement process.

A court hearing on the case was also held on June 15, the next one is scheduled for July 26.

**On April 12,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Shirak Marz (Artik residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of *Artak Gevorgyan, Chief 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 chief robbed the village college and fled. What do the people of Maralik tell us?”.[[40]](#footnote-40) The plaintiff demands 2 million AMD from the defendant in compensation.
 On April 21, the defendant filed a motion to leave the lawsuit without trial, based on the plaintiff's failure to appear at the hearings. However, the Court, having verified the factual circumstances, rejected the motion by its decision of June 21. A court hearing is scheduled for September 8.

**On April 13**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Hraparak Daily* LLC *v.* *Media Initiatives Center* *NGO*, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory and a compensation.
 The lawsuit was filed on July 19, 2021, and 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.

A court hearing was also held on June 21. The publication of the judicial act is scheduled for July 6.

**On April 13**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular 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*, demanding 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 a Position”.[[41]](#footnote-41) According to the article, Sona Budaghyan took a bribe from a citizen for an appointment in the position of a school principal.

A court hearing on the case was also held on May 30. As of June 30, no other developments have been registered.

 **On April 13,** the Court of General Jurisdiction partially upheld health expert Samvel Kharazyan’s lawsuit against *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity. The defendant was obliged to publicly apologize to the plaintiff, to pay 150,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee and 4,000 AMD as a pre-paid state duty.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on September 16, 2021, and was caused by the article published in the newspaper and on the *Armlur.am* 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”.[[42]](#footnote-42) 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...”.

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

 **On April 13,** the plaintiff’sappealand on the 21th, the defendant’s appeal on the case of *Lydian Armenia company v. journalist Tehmine Yenokyan* were accepted for proceedings. The appeals were filed against the verdict of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor marzes (Vayk residence) on February 14 and March 15*.*

The lawsuit, filed to the Court of First Instance 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 defamatory via a Facebook public live-stream from the same venue. (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2018-2021 in the *Reports* section on *khosq.am website*).

On December 15, 2021, the lawsuit was partially upheld by a court decision. Tehmine Yenokyan was obliged to refute the data considered defamatory, particularly the following statement: “Lydian has made provocations many times, spread false information, tried to provoke hostility, as well as inter-community and interstate disputes among Gndevaz, Jermuk, Kechut, Gorayk, Saravan and several other communities...”. In addition, the Court decided to confiscate 12,000 AMD from Tehmine Yenokyan in favor of *Lydian Armenia CJSC* as a pre-paid state duty, and 100,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee.

The publication of the judicial act is scheduled for July 22.

**On April 14,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the new trial on the case of *Van-Charter LLC v. Armenia TV CJSC*, demanding refutation of the defamation and a 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.[[43]](#footnote-43) On January 29, 2021, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan rejected the claim, finding 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 it was upheld, and the case was sent for a retrial. The next court hearing is scheduled for September 15.

**On April 14,** the Court of Appeal rejected the appeal of the defendant 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),* leaving the verdict of the Court of General Jurisdiction unchanged.

This 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”, “exporting cheap resources from Armenia and importing expensive ones.[[44]](#footnote-44)

By the verdict dated November 24, 2021, 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. On December 24, the defendant appealed the verdict to the Civil Court of Appeal.

After the rejection, on May 16, the defendant applied to the Court of Cassation, where the case was received on June 14.

 **On April 15,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NA Deputy Speaker (currently the Speaker) Alen Simonyan v. Gegham Simonyan, the domain owner of Alternativ.am website*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity. The Court made a decision to distribute the burden of proof.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on September 18, 2020, was caused by an article, entitled: “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 of the same year. 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**.**[[45]](#footnote-45)

By the verdict dated 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 case was sent to the same court for a retrial. The Court of Appeal found that the registrar of this domain was responsible for the article and was therefore the proper defendant.

On May 6, with a new trial, the court partially upheld the claim, obliging Gegham Simonyan to publicly refute the defamatory information about Alen Simonyan, to pay 500,000 AMD as compensation for defamation, 300,000 AMD as attorney's reasonable fee and 14,000 AMD as state duty. The Court noted that the presented expressions do not correspond to the truth, because the defendant did not present evidence.

On June 20, the plaintiff appealed the verdict.

**On April 18**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan rejected citizen Emma Kirakosyan’s lawsuit against the *Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC*, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to her honor and dignity and refutation of defamation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on January 10, 2019, was caused by *The Single Window* program broadcast on *Public TV* on December 10, 2018.[[46]](#footnote-46) The plaintiff finds that the program contained “false factual information” about her. (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2019-2021 in the *Reports* section on *khosq.am website*).

 The Court justified the rejection of the claim by the fact that the disputed expressions were value judgments based on certain facts. On May 23, the plaintiff appealed the verdict to a higher instance court, where on June 17, the appeal was accepted for proceedings.

**On April 18,** the defendant on the case of*former**NA MP Vahe Enfiajyan v. Social Media LLC, the founder of Mamul.am website* applied to the Civil Court of Appeal, filing an appeal against the verdict of the Court of First Instance, which had partially upheld the claim.

 The lawsuit filed on April 16, 2021, demanding public refutation of the information discrediting his honor and dignity and compensation for defamation, 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”.[[47]](#footnote-47) (For details see CPFE’s annual and quarterly reports for 2018-2022 in the *Reports* section on *khosq.am website*). On June 22, the Court of Appeal overturned the verdict and sent the case for a retrial on the grounds of insufficient evidentiary facts.

 **On April 19**, the Court of General Jurisdiction held a regular court hearing on the case of *Styopa Safaryan,* *already former Chairman of the Public Council, v. Taguhi Aslanyan, correspondent of Livenews.am news website,* demanding public apology for insulting expressions and confiscation of 1 000 000 AMD in compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on July 13, 2021, was caused by the expressions of the journalist, posted on Facebook on June 20, stating: “You are not just rejected, but pissed…”.[[48]](#footnote-48) Taguhi Aslanyan, making reference to an unidentified source, has written that the neighbors have pissed on Styopa Safaryan for serving the Prime Minister.

A court hearing was also held on June 3 of this year, the next one is scheduled for September 9.

**On April 20,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevanheld a regular court hearing on the case of *Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC* *v. journalist Oleg Safonov and* *168 Hours Ltd.*, demanding refutation of information discrediting business reputation and pecuniary compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on January 25, 2021, 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?”.[[49]](#footnote-49) 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.

**On April 21**, the trial of the defendant’s appeal was held on the case of the same *Armenian National Interests Fund* CJSC v. *168 Zham* LLC.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on May 13, 2021, demanding refutation of the information discrediting business reputation and pecuniary 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.[[50]](#footnote-50) On December 2 the lawsuit was rejected because the statute of limitations had expired. The Court ruled to confiscate 50 000 AMD from the plaintiff in favor of *168 hour* as an attorney’s reasonable fee.

The defendant appealed the judgment in regard to court costs. The publication of the judicial act on both cases was scheduled for May 12, but the act has not been published until the end of the quarter.

**On April 20**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing on the case of *News.am LLC v. Dareskizb LLC, founder of Haykakan Zhamanak 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 *Haykakan Zhamanak* on August 21, 2018.[[51]](#footnote-51) 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 Zhamanak.

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled for August 2.

 **On April 25,** the Court of General Jurisdiction held a regular court hearing on the case of *Sasun Khachatryan, former Head of the RA Special Investigation Service and Chairman of the RA Corruption Prevention Commission, v.* *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 filed on September 24, 2021, and was caused by the article published on September 11 in the newspaper and on the *Armlur.am* website belonging to the same company, entitled: “Sasun Khachatryan Has an Apartment in Moscow. He Signed His Indictment”[[52]](#footnote-52), in which Sasun Khachatryan is attributed with real estate and money of great value, which the official did not declare. By the way, before filing a lawsuit, the plaintiff demanded the media outlet to publish refutation, which was refused.[[53]](#footnote-53) 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.

A court hearing was also held on 22, the next one is scheduled for July 8.

**On April 26**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *citizen Gevorg Harutyunyan v. citizen Larisa Harutyunyan and Shark LLC (the legal entity representing 5 TV),* demanding refutation of the information, discrediting honor and dignity, public apology and pecuniary compensation.

The lawsuit was filed on November 11, 2021. It was caused by the report spread through the *Haylur* news program, entitled: “She Makes me Grieve; the Neighbor Doesn’t Allow to Insert a Khachkar in Tribute to Heroes”[[54]](#footnote-54), particularly by the defendant’s assertion that Gevorg Harutyunyan had lashed out at her with a knife, besides, had an intention 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 the claim - 9 000 000 AMD, was upheld.

A court hearing was also held on June 22, 2022, the next one is scheduled for October 17.

**On April 26**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NA Deputy Speaker (currently NA Speaker) Alen Simonyan v. Tert.am journalist Ani Gevorgyan,* demanding public refutation of information considered defamatory.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on May 13, 2021, and 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.[[55]](#footnote-55) By the way, on October 5 upon the decision of the Court, *News.am LLC* was involved in the case as a third party. 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.

On May 23, Alen Simonyan's claim was partially upheld. Ani Gevorgyan was obliged to publicly refute the information considered defamatory, to pay 150.000 AMD as compensation for the damage caused through defamation, 100.000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee, and 7000 AMD as a state duty.

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

**On April 28,** the defendant on the case of *citizen Edgar Janibekyan v. Shamshyan Media LLC and its founder Gagik Shamshyan*, applied to the Court of Cassation, appealing the rejection by the Court of Appeal of the complaint against the verdict of the Court of General Jurisdiction.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on July 14, 2020, and was caused by an article on *Shamshyan.com*, entitled: “Discovery of Another Large Batch 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.[[56]](#footnote-56) By the decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction, the *LLC* was obliged to refute the statements considered defamatory through *Shamshyan.com* website, to pay 100,000 AMD to the plaintiff as compensation.

The Court of Cassation returned the appeal on May 25.

**On April 29**, the Civil Court of Appeal upheld the defendant’s appeal on the case of *NA Deputy Speaker (currently NA Speaker) Alen Simonyan v. Iravunk Media Ltd.*, and sent the case for a retrial.

The lawsuit, filed on August 4, 2020, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, 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.

On September 29, 2021, the court partially upheld the claim. *Iravunk Media Ltd*. was obliged to publicly refute the information considered defamatory and to pay 200,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee.

On June 28, the Court of General Jurisdiction received the case to conduct a new trial.

 **On April 29,** the plaintiff on the case of *the Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan v. Anna Gevorgyan Private Entrepreneur* (founder of *Hzham.am* news website) appeal the verdict of the Court of First Instance, which had rejected the lawsuit.

The lawsuit was filed on June 22, 2020, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and payment of a compensation, when the plaintiff was the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure. 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.[[57]](#footnote-57) On December 17, the motion to apply injunction of a freezing order on the property was upheld.

On March 31, 2022, the Court ruled to reject Suren Papikyan's lawsuit and maintain the injunction of a freezing order on the private entrepreneur in the amount of 1,200,000 AMD, until the decision enters into legal force.The court recorded that the name of the author of the article, Armen Sargsyan, was posted at the end of the disputed article, that is, a proper reference was made to the source of the information - the author, and this is a sufficient ground to release the defendant on the case from liability.

On June 3, the Civil Court of Appeal accepted the appeal for proceedings.

 **On April 29,** publicist Vahram Tokmajyan personally insulted journalist Mher Arshakyan and his family on Facebook. The reason is the journalist's professional activity: in particular, the latter's article about the fact that the procession of the RA Prime Minister fatally struck a pregnant woman in Yerevan. The author of the post accuses the journalist of writing an article on blood and thereby discrediting the authorities.[[58]](#footnote-58) Later, Vahram Tokmajyan apologized to the journalist, whose text was available only for a few hours. The CPFE submitted a report about this incident to the RA Prosecutor's Office.

**On April 29,** Ruben Khachatryan, the former Director of the Yerevan Zoo, filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against citizen Manuk Manukyan and Iravunk Media Ltd., demanding refutation of defamatory information and monetary compensation for non-pecuniary damage. The lawsuit was caused by the thoughts voiced by Manuk Manukyan on the air of *Iravunk TV* on April 1, according to which the Zoo is standing on the edge of the abyss, because for years, in particular, during the ownership of Ruben Khachatryan, a corruption scheme was operating: public funds were embezzled and animals were neglected.[[59]](#footnote-59) The lawsuit was returned on May 10 for corrections, it was refiled on the 19th and was accepted for proceedings on June 3.

**On May 2,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia in Kazakhstan Hayk Terteryan v.* *Hraparak Daily LLC,* demanding refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the expression discrediting his business reputation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on February 2, 2021, and 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. 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 plaintiff party.[[61]](#footnote-61)

On May 30, the Court upheld the claim, obliging to publish a refutation, to confiscate 120.000 AMD in favor of the plaintiff as an attorney's reasonable fee and 4.000 AMD as a state duty.

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

**On May 4,** 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 of 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 lawsuit, 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 next court hearing is scheduled for July 13.

 **On May 4,** the proceedings on the case of *former MP Nikolay Baghdasaryan v.* *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office*, were terminated on the ground’s of the plaintiff’s withdrawal of the lawsuit.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on September 16, 2021, demanding a public apology and a compensation in the amount of 500.000 AMD for the damage caused to 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, 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 particularly stated “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.”[[62]](#footnote-62)

**On May 4,** the Director of the National Center of Aesthetics Vahan Badalyan, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Anzhela Tovmasyan, editor-in-chief of the Hayeli.am news website, demanding the confiscation of 1 million AMD for the damage caused to her honor, dignity and business reputation. The lawsuit was caused by the thoughts expressed by the defendant during the press conference on November 21, 2021, that there is an unhealthy atmosphere in the National Center of Aesthetics. According to Artur Atoyan, the defender of interests of the center, they tried to solve the issues out of court, but the editor did not get in touch, so they had to go to court. By the way, the press conference was not saved in the archive of the website.

On May 16, the lawsuit was returned due to gaps in the documents. As of June 30, no new lawsuit has been filed.

**On May 10,** *Global Gold Mining LLC* filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Yerkir Editorial Office LLC* (the founder of the *Yerkir.am* news website), demanding refutation of the defamatory information in the published article. On April 6, *Yerkir.am* wrote that 140 employees of the bankrupt *Global Gold Mining* have not received salaries for 10 years,[[63]](#footnote-63) and then on April 11, published the LLC’s refutation in regard to the previously made statement.[[64]](#footnote-64) On April 12, the publication entitled “Global Gold Mining's Claims Are Clearly False: Unpaid Employees Deny GGM's Refutation” followed [[65]](#footnote-65), which became the cause of the lawsuit. On May 23, the lawsuit was returned for corrections, on June 10, it was refiled, and on the 23rd, was accepted for proceedings.

 **On May 12**, 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 lawsuit, filed on July 10, 2020, was caused by an article, entitled: “Nikol Pashinyan Talked to Artur Vardanyan during His Campaign” and published on March 6.[[66]](#footnote-66) The website quoted Pirumyan: “The Prime-Minister warmly greeted the terrorist Artur Vardanyan on the street, who was incomprehensibly released by the Court during the former’s rule.” On June 15, the Court ruled 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 appeal was upheld: the verdict of the Court of General Jurisdiction was overturned, the case was sent to the same court for a retrial.

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 4.

 **On May 15,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted for proceedings one of the two lawsuits filed by Senik Julhakyan, director of *Armhydroenergy Project CJSC*, against Hmayak Hovhannisyan, Chairman of *the Political Scientists Union of Armenia* and *BATS TV online* TV Company, demanding a public apology for insult, as well as refutation of information and confiscation of a compensation for defamation.A hearing on the other lawsuit was held on May 25, the next one is scheduled for July 6.

We should remind that the 2 lawsuits, filed on March 17, were caused by the political scientsit’s thoughts expressed on the air of the TV Company on December 21, 2021[[67]](#footnote-67) and January 15, 2022,[[68]](#footnote-68) according to which the plaintiff obtained construction permit through corruption transactions and that through him the former RA President Serzh Sargsyan wants to take over the building of the Armhydroenergy Project Institute, where the office of *Political Scientists Union of Armenia* is located.

**On May 16,** 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.”

On June 6, by the Court verdict, the lawsuit was completely rejected: the plaintiff did not prove that the statements he considered insulting were made by the defendant.

 **On May 16,** Ruben Melikyan, former Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh, representative of the opposition forces, urged on Facebook to “unlike” the page of *Radio Liberty* and joined the campaign to publicly condemn the media. According to him, “that propaganda tool was, first of all, the number one “informational sponsor” of the conspiratorial power grab in 2018, and today it has openly engaged in the propaganda of Turkification of Armenia.”[[69]](#footnote-69)

**On May 18**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevanheld the court hearing on the case of *Armenian National Interests Fund* CJSC *v.* *Hraparak Daily* *LLC* *and journalist Suzan Simonyan*, demanding refutation of information discrediting honor, dignity, and business reputation, and a monetary compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on August 2, 2021, and 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 the CJSC CEO Davit Papazyan published a Q&A talk, addressing the deal signed with Air Arabia company on July 14.[[70]](#footnote-70) Then the journalist expressed a final thought, “The state invests, the businessman puts the money in his pocket...”

The next court hearing is scheduled for September 26.

 **On May 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”.[[71]](#footnote-71) The author 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.

The next court hearing is scheduled for September 19.

 **On May 23,** the plaintiffon the case of citizen Samvel Hayrapetyan v. political scientist Mariam Hovsepyan and *Armdaily News Agency LLC* filed a motion to the Court to change the subject matter and the basis of the lawsuit, which was upheld on May 26.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on January 7, demanding refutation of insulting expressions, apology and compensation of the damage caused to honor, dignity and business reputation, as a result of the insult. The plaintiff demands to confiscate 1.5 million AMD from the defendant in compensation for the damage caused to the plaintiff’s honor, dignity and business reputation. This refers to the article published on *Armdaily.am* news website on November 4, 2021, entitled: “Who and Why has Spread the News on Diana Martirosyan Beating Three Azerbaijanis? Mariam Hovsepyan Provides Details”,[[72]](#footnote-72) where the defendant mentioned that the programmer Samvel Hayrapetyan was fulfilling certain orders through “mushroom sites”, spreading misinformation, false news, and as a result, provoking ethnic clashes.

 According to the amendment, the plaintiff demands from the defendant Mariam Hovsepyan public refutation of the factual information considered defamatory in the same media and confiscation of 1.5 million AMD, and from the media - publication of the defendant's refutation approved by the court verdict.

**On May 25**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a redistribution on the case of *citizen Larisa Harutyunyan v. Shark LLC (the legal entity representing 5 TV) on the grounds of the reappointment of the judge*.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on October 26, 2021, demanding publication of refutation. It was caused by the report spread through the *Haylur* news program of *5 TV*, entitled: “She Makes Me Grieve; the Neighbor doesn’t Allow to Insert a Khachkar in Tribute to Heroes”.[[73]](#footnote-73) The plaintiff suggested 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 correspond to the reality. According to the lawsuit, the media admitted that there had been an imprecision, but refused to publish appropriate refutation.

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 8.

**On May 25**, the Court of Cassation rejected to accept for proceedings the plaintiff’s appeal against the verdict of the Court of Appeal on the case of *former Vayots Dzor Governor Trdat Sargsyan v. Hraparak Daily LLC*, which left the verdict of the Court of General Jurisdiction unchanged, which stipulated to leave the lawsuit without trial.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on October 30, 2019, demanding refutation of information considered defamaotry and confiscation of a compensation in the amount of 2 million AMD. It 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.[[74]](#footnote-74)

On November 5, 2021, 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.

On December 21, the plaintiff applied to the Court of Appeal, but did not prove the fact that he was not notified of the court hearings, and on that ground the appeal was rejected.

**On May 27**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to terminate the proceedings on the case of Arthur Vardanyan, the leader of All-Armenian National Statehood Party, v. *Zhoghovurd Newspaper’s Editorial Office LLC* and journalist Sevak Vardumyan, on the grounds of concluding a reconciliation agreement between the parties.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on December 27, 2021, demanding refutation of the defamatory information and confiscation of a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the article, entitled: “How did the Accused in Terrorism Enter the National Assembly?” and published on the website *Armlur.am,* owned by the LLC, on November 26. 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.[[75]](#footnote-75)
 On April 13, at the hearing held in the same court, the lawsuit filed on December 30, 2021, by the same plaintiff with the same claims against Hraparak daily LLC was examined. The lawsuit was caused by the article, entitled: “The Gang Leader in the National Assembly” and published in the newspaper and on the eponymous website on December 3. [[76]](#footnote-76) The next court hearing on this case is scheduled for September 22.

**On May 27,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued trial on the case of *Lara Aharonyan, head of Women's Resource Center NGO v. the Hayeli club and Live News Media LLC*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity in the amount of 2 million AMD.

 The lawsuit was caused by a video, entitled: “Member of the CC Board of Trustees Lara Aharonyan is Involved in Sexual Profanity of Children: Hayk Ayvazyan” published on April 24, 2019. 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.

The next court hearing is scheduled for September 29.

 **On May 30,** Hayk Khanumyan, the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Artsakh, filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Hraparak daily, demanding refutation of the defamation and payment of a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the articles published in the newspaper that Hayk Khanumyan is facing several criminal cases related to corruption and abuse of powers, and the RA authorities support Khanumyan and do everything to exonerate him from liability.[[77]](#footnote-77)
 According to the publication, the criminal case concerns the displaced people of Artsakh: the accusation states that a hotel in Artsakh plundered 19.5 million AMD from the state by presenting false data, but the problem is not the hotel, but the Ministry of Territorial Administration of the Republic of Artsakh, which deals with displaced people, because it exercises control and determines the scope of beneficiaries.[[78]](#footnote-78) On June 13, the application was returned for corrections and was refiled on the 28th of the same month.

**On May 31**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly (currently NA Speaker) Alen Simonyan v. Anna Gevorgyan, the Director of the* *Haykakan Zham* *news website*, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage.

 The lawsuit, filed on May 19, 2020, 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.[[79]](#footnote-79)

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 4.

 **On May 31,** Ruben Arakelyan, the former Director of *the Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise SNCO*, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against the *Power of Speech NGO* (*4rd.am* website), demanding public refutation of the factual information considered defamatory. The lawsuit was caused by the article entitled: “Reform According to Nikol Pashinyan” published on the website on April 20, about the numerous violations recorded during the internal audit in the SNCO, as a result of which the culprits were fired, and the initiated criminal case related to the violations was archived. It was also mentioned in the publication that the Director of the organization Ruben Arakelyan, together with his relative - the Head of the Training Center of the SNCO Grigor Basentsyan, extorted the money given to the SNCO.[[80]](#footnote-80)

On May 9, the website published the plaintiff's letter demanding refutation of defamatory information about the above-mentioned 2 officials. [[81]](#footnote-81) Nevertheless, Ruben Arakelyan filed a lawsuit to the Court. On June 14, the lawsuit was returned for corrections.

**On May 31,** 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 and lexicon. In particular, “Tell little Hayk, who used to hold the water bottle for Nikol, that I have collected good bottles for him to hold”, etc.

The next court hearing is scheduled for September 26.

 **On May 31,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan terminated the proceedings on the case of *GN Tobacco Sweden AB* company *v. Golos LLC, founder of Golosarmenii.am* website, on the grounds of concluding a reconciliation agreement between the parties. The media outlet was obliged to publish the text of the refutation presented by the plaintiff, and the plaintiff withdrew the pecuniary demand.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filedon June 22, 2020, demanding refutation and compensation for the damage (3 million AMD) caused to its business reputation. It 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.

**On June 2,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan decided to leave without trial the case of *NA* *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.[[82]](#footnote-82)

The Court decision was made based on the fact that the notified plaintiff had failed to attend two successive hearings.

**On June 2**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Mher Terteryan, the leader of the United Homeland Party and an advisor to former Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan, v. Naira Terteryan (third party, Live News Media LLC)*, demanding refutation of the information considered defamatory.

The lawsuit was filed on September 3, 2021, and was caused by the following allegations made in the 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 her lawyer Hakob Charoyan.[[83]](#footnote-83)

The next court hearing is scheduled for October 19.

**On June 7,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to distribute the burden of proof on the case of *citizen Ashot Parazyan v. Tert AM LLC , the founder of Tert.am news website*.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed by Ashot Parazyan on August 16, 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.[[84]](#footnote-84) On January 21,2021, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan rejected the lawsuit, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity. The court based its decision on the assertion that the disputed expressions were value judgments. The plaintiff appealed to the Court of Appeal, which upheld the appeal, 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 retrial.

 The next court hearing is scheduled for December 1.

 **On June 7,** the RA Court of Cassation decided to refuse to accept the appeal for proceedings brought by the defendant on the case of *Armenian Second TV Channel LLC v. the Commission on Television and Radio (the third party: Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC)* on the grounds of insufficient justifications.

This refers to the lawsuit filed on June 24, 2021, with the demand to abolish the Decision No. 93-A dated June 4, 2021 regarding the rating assessment of the participants of the competition for licensing the use of slots in the Public Multiplex of the Capital Broadcast. By the judgement of August 25, the lawsuit was upheld by the Administrative Court. 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, which left the verdict of the Administrative Court unchanged. On February 4, the defendant applied to the Court of Cassation.

**On June 8,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Yeghitsi Luys-BK Ltd. v. Public TV Company of Armenia and Chief of Charentsavan Community Hakob Shahgaldyan*, demanding refutation of the information considered defamatory.

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.[[85]](#footnote-85) The plaintiff considered Hakob Shahgaldyan’s comment on the quality of his work as defamatory. *Yeghitsi Luys-BK Ltd*. demanded from *Public TV* to publicly refute the defamatory information on air, and claimed from Hakob Shahgaldyan payment of monetary compensation of 2 million AMD.

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

**On June 9,** NA Deputy Speaker Hakob Arshakyan filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *International Media Holding LLC* (founder of *Lurer.com* news website) and *ArmDay.am* *LLC*, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information contained in the mentioned websites and a compensation in the amount of 500,000 AMD.The lawsuit was caused by the article, entitled: “Post-Revolutionary “Accomplishments” of Former Employers of Civil Contract Officials. Part I”, published on February 14 first on the former[[86]](#footnote-86), then on the latter [[87]](#footnote-87) websites with a difference of a few minutes. The article particularly states: “Hakob Arshakyan has made Government adopt a decision, by which the state shall take a loan in the amount of $10 million from the World Bank to build an Engineering City in Jrvezh in cooperation with Hakob's former employer (National Instruments), Hakob's own firm (Araxis Engineering) and several other companies.”

We should remind that on March 16, the same plaintiff filed a lawsuit to the Court with the same cause against the same media outlets, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory and payment of a compensation in the amount of 500.000 AMD from each. This lawsuit was returned on April 25. On June 22, the second lawsuit was also returned.

**On June 9,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Ara Harutyunyan, a former employee of the National Security Service, v.* *Skizb Media Kentron* Ltd., *founder of* *1in.am* *news website*, demanding public refutation of defamatory information and compensation of the damage caused to honor and dignity.
 The lawsuit was filed on August 31, 2020, and was caused by the article published on *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”.[[88]](#footnote-88)

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 19.

 **On June 10,** Bagrat Yesayan, Director of *Yerkir Media TV Company*, was detained and arrested by National Security Service officers. He was charged with participating in mass riots, as well as with the articles of obstructing the lawful professional activity of a journalist. That charge is related to the attack on the Yerevan office of *Radio Liberty* station on the night of November 10, 2020: it can be seen in the videos that Bagrat Yesayan was among the people who broke into the office. Later, the motion for detention was rejected, Yesayan was released.

The General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Armenia informed the CPFE that the part separated from the criminal case in 2020 was sent to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan with the indictment approved on June 30 of this year.

 **On June 14,** citizen Arsen Ghukasyan filed a lawsuit to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Media News LLC* (the founder of the *Medianews.am* website), demanding refutation of defamatory information and compensation for damage. The lawsuit was caused by the news published on the website on May 26, according to which the relatives of the victims of the 44-day war, including the plaintiff, are politicizing the ongoing court hearings on charges of treason and using them against the current authorities.

On June 23, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings.

 **On June 14,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to leave without trial the case of *Bari Samaratsi Ltd. v. journalist Teresa Asatryan (third party: Bats TV Ltd.)*, demanding a refutation and a compensation for the damage caused to its business reputation.

The lawsuit was filed on February 24, 2020, and was caused by Teresa Asatryan's statement about Bari Samaratsi’s production, voiced during *Bats Or* program, according to which this meat product was inedible, even though it was told to be a leader on the market, because its owner was in close relations with Serzh Sargsyan. The plaintiff also demanded 2 million AMD in compensation. On March 2, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. The court hearings initially scheduled for June 11, September 15, and November 24 were postponed, and the next one is scheduled for February 9, 2021.The Court decision was based on the fact that the notified plaintiff failed to appear at two successive court hearings, nor did he file a motion to postpone the trial or settle the case in absentia, and the defendant did not file a motion to continue the trial.

 **On June 14,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Demi Pharm* LLC v. *Hetq* LLC, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory and confiscation of compensation.

The lawsuit was filed on June 10, 2021, and was caused by the article published on *Hetq.am* website on May 6, entitled: “National Institute of Health Registers Children's Vitamins with Violations.”[[89]](#footnote-89) The article mentions that *Demi Pharm* assured the website that children's vitamins had 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.

The next court hearing is scheduled for September 16.

**On June 14**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Karen Melik-Tangyan, already the former Director of the Mother Armenia Museum of Military History at the RA Ministry of Defense, v. Social Media LLC*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on Decemebr 10, 2021, and 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* (owned by *Social Media LLC*) on November 11. The article was later removed from the page.

###  The next court hearing on the case is scheduled for September 27.

**On June 15,** the Courtof Cassationrefused to accept for proceedings the cassation appeal brought against the decision on rejection of accepting the appeal on the case of *Chambarak Mayor Vazgen Adamyan v.* *Skizb Media Kentron Ltd.*.

 We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on January 14, 2021, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity. The lawsuit was caused by the article published in the *Zhamanak* newspaper owned by the LLC and *1in.am* website on December 11, 2020, entitled: “Chambarak Mayor Suspected of Selling Military Aid”.[[90]](#footnote-90) The Court of First Instance obliged the media outlet to refute all the expressions, where the plaintiff was accused of corruption, against which the defendant filed an appeal. On February 11, that appeal was rejected due to existing inaccuracies, and Skizb Media Kentron Ltd. filed an appeal against this decision to the Court of Cassation.

**On June 17,** the Court of Cassation upheld the appeal against the decision of the Corut of Appeal on the case of citizen *Erik Yeghinyan v. C-M-G LLC (founder of Factinfo news website).* By the decision of the Court of Appeal, the appeal against the verdict of the Court of First Instance on rejecting the lawsuit was returned.

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”.[[91]](#footnote-91) (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2019-2021 in the *Reports* section on *khosq.am website*). The plaintiff claims 1 million AMD confiscated in his favor, a written apology and a published refutation.

As of June 30, no court hearing has been scheduled.

**On June 21,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Arthur Vanetsyan, former Head of the NSS and leader of the I Have Honor Alliance of the National Assembly, v. Gurgen (Gagik) Melkonyan, a member of the Civil Contract faction of the National Assembly (third party:* *Public TV Company 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, filed on August 19, 2021, was caused by Melkonyan's thoughts on Arthur Vanetsyan' s activities during the Artsakh 44-day war on July 20 expressed during an interview with Petros Ghazaryan on *Public TV*. The defendant 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”.[[92]](#footnote-92)

The next court hearing is scheduled for August 4.

**On June 22**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the regular court hearing on the case of *NA MP Sophia Hovsepyan v. Anna Gevorgyan, editor of Haykakan Zham news-analytical agency*, demanding refutation of slander and compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity and business reputation

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on July 29 of 2020, and 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 during the Elections” 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”.[[93]](#footnote-93) On June 1, it was mentioned in the article, entitled: “Velvet Corruption” that “Sophia Hovsepyan, NA current MP of My Step faction, who used to hold the office of Shirak’s Deputy Governor, would extort presents from the heads of provincial infrastructures”.[[94]](#footnote-94) 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.[[95]](#footnote-95)

The next court hearing is scheduled for November 8.

**On June 26,** the Court of Cassation accepted for proceedings the defendant’s appeal on the case of *the former Governor of Ararat Marz* *Garik Sargsyan v. 168 Zham Ltd..*

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed to the Court of First instance on Decmeber 20, 2019, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, and public refutation of defamatory information. It was caused by the article, entitled: “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.[[96]](#footnote-96) On August 2, 2021, the lawsuit was partially upheld:*168 Zham LLC* was obliged 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 state duty.

The defendant filed an appeal to the Court of Appeal, which was rejected, after which he filed a cassation appeal.

**On June 28,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of the *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v. the Irates social-political newspaper and eponymous electronic website*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to the honor and dignity through slander and insult.

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

The next court hearing is scheduled for September 29.

**On June 29,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a redistribution on the case of *Spayka LLC v. Zhamanak Daily Ltd. and First Armenian (1in.am website)*, on the basis of a reappointment of the judge.

The lawsuit was filed on April 15, demanding refutation of the defamation 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 June 29,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Suren Papikyan (currently the Minister of Defense) v.* *Media Plus* LLC.

 The lawsuit was caused by the article, published on June 11 on *Yerevan.today* website owned by the LLC, entitled: “Armenia's New Millionaires. Papikyan Became a Dollar Millionaire on the Incomes from Asphalt in 3 Years”.[[97]](#footnote-97) The plaintiff demands from the media outlet refutation of the data considered defamatory. The lawsuit was filed on June 17, 2021.

Publication of the judicial act is scheduled for July 21.

**On June 30,** the Court of Appeal upheld the plaintiff’s appeal against the verdict of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan on the case of *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v.* *Andradardz Press Club NGO*, which rejected the lawsuit.

 We should remind that the lawsuit was caused by an article, entitled: “Another Precious Gift: A Cell-Phone Number that Costs 20 Million AMD for Hayk Sargsyan”[[98]](#footnote-98) and published on *Newspress.am* website owned by *Andradardz Press Club NGO*. The lawsuit was filed on June 21, 2019, demanding compensation of the damage caused to honor, dignity and good reputation through slander and insult.

The Court of First Instance concluded from the examination of the case that the plaintiff did not provide sufficient evidence that the defendant's statements were offensive and/or defamatory, but the Court of Appeal sent the case for a retrial.

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

*In the second quarter of 2022, the CPFE recorded 24 facts on the violation of the right to receive and disseminate information. In only one of these cases a lawsuit was filed with the court, demanding provision of official information. 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 April 7,** *Union of Informed Citizens NGO*, the founder of *Fip.am* website, applied to the National Security Service, requesting information about the vehicles with “Nissan x-trail” brand (variator) gearboxes in the State Guard Service of the RA National Security Service: particularly, what is the year of their production; what is their mileage; have there been any problems with the transmission; if so, how much did it cost to fix the problems? On April 13, the NSS refused to provide information, which is why the NGO filed a lawsuit against the NSS in the Administrative Court on May 12, with the demand to obligate it to provide information. On May 18, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. A court hearing is scheduled for October 13.

**On April 20,** the RA Administrative Court held a court hearing on the lawsuit filed by *the Union of Informed Citizens NGO*, the founder of the *Fip.am* website, against the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, demanding provision of the full list of questions and the media outlets and organizations that authored them, sent to the e-mail address press@gov.am for the Facebook press conference dated November 23, 2021. The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on January 3, 2022. The next court hearing is scheduled for August 8.

**On April 21,** *PastInfo.am* sent a written inquiry to the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia to find out why Government Board No.1 was not being used, whether it had malfunctions; when was it last inspected and how much money was spent; did Nikol Pashinyan leave for Moscow on a chartered plane, and if so, how much did the flight cost? However, the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia did not respond in any way.[[99]](#footnote-99)

After a publication on this topic on May 12, the Prime Minister's Office provided answers to some of the questions. For example, the issues of how much money was provided for the technical inspection and what problems were identified during it were ignored. The Prime Minister's Office considered all this a state secret.

 **On May 2,** Narek Kirakosyan, the correspondent of the *Factor.am* news website, wrote to the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, requesting to provide information about the composition of the joint commission on the demarcation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. The Office informed within the prescribed period that the inquiry was forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from which, however, the journalist never received an answer. Later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published information about the inquiry on the agency's official website.

**On May 23**, the RA Administrative Court held the court hearing on the case of *Civilitas Foundation, the founder of CivilNet.am and Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center v. the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, demanding provision of a copy of the share donation agreement of of Zangezur Copper and Molybdenum Combine.

 We should remind that on October 4 and November 23, 2021, Mkrtich Karapetyan, a correspondent of *CivilNet.am*, sent inquiries to the RA Government, requesting to provide that document. The Government, considering that the agreement contained a trade secret, refused the request.

On December 16, *Civilitas* and *Transparency International* filed a lawsuit in the Administrative Court.

The next court hearing is scheduled for July 11.

 **On May 5,** the *Fip.am* fact-checking platform contacted the RA Police anticipating to find out the real reason for the death of a citizen during an opposition rally at France Square in Yerevan. Taking into account the fact that the requested information could contain a pre-investigation or medical secret, the website requested to provide the information without disclosing the identity of the person.

The day after the death, the *Armlur.am* news website published a document stating that the citizen died not of an overdose, as was rumored, but of acute heart failure. However, according to *Fip.am*, the published document was not based on the response from the forensic examination, and the website contacted the police by phone on May 10 to get clarification on the topic. The police reported that the results of the forensic examination were not available, but about two hours later, the police issued a statement, essentially confirming that the cause of the citizen's death was a drug overdose. And the next day, on May 11, the police, in response to the written inquiry dated May 5, refused to provide the requested information, reasoning that it violates the privacy of personal and family life.

 **On May 13,** the camera of *Yerevan.today* news website captured how the policemen were transporting large amounts of food, cigarettes and other items from the building of the *HayPost* company located in the Republic Square, Yerevan. In the video, it can be seen that the sweets in particular come in boxes from the *Grand Candy* company. In this regard, the website sent questions to the police: particularly, why are the police officers on duty dealing with such issues; for whom is this product intended and by what means was it purchased, what does the *Grand Candy* company have to do with this process?[[100]](#footnote-100)

According to the website, after two unclear answers, the RA Police refused to provide information for the third time, reasoning that they are “encrypted and not subject to publication”. It is unclear to the website what secret the connection between the police and the *Grand Candy* company contains.

**On May 19**, the Administrative Court held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *the Freedom of Information Center v. Yerevan Municipality,* demanding provision of requested information on 60/1 Silikyan Highway residential area.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on Novemebr 5, 2021, and previously, from August 12, the FOICA 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 abstract comments.

On June 9, according to the Court verdict, the lawsuit was upheld: the defendant was obliged to provide the requested information: does the economic entity operating the stone factory have a legal use or lease contract for the communal land with the municipality or Ajapnyak district administration, or did he simply occupy the land belonging to the community?

As of June 30, the verdict has not been appealed.

**On June 1,** the RA Administrative Court held a trial on the case of *Investigative Journalists NGO (founder of the Hetq.am news website) v. the Speaker of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan (the third party: the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Armenia)*, with a claim of providing information.

The lawsuit was filed on December 14, 2021. It refers to receiving answers to the following questions requested in writing on November 15: who is served by each of the 43 vehicles of the National Assembly, and how much is the expense of each of them?

A hearing on the case was also held on June 16, and on the 30th of the same month, according to the Court verdict, Alen Simonyan was obliged to provide the requested information. In addition, it was decided to charge him 80,000 AMD as an attorney's fee and 8,000 AMD as a state duty.

**On June 15,** the *Infocom.am* news website wrote that since January, it has addressed all RA ministries with a written inquiry, requesting them to provide information on the monthly salaries, bonuses and additional fees received by the persons holding the position of minister during 2021. 10 out of 12 ministries (except for the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Environment) refused to provide information.[[101]](#footnote-101) In addition, 2 of those 10 ministries, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Finance, refused to provide information on the basis of considering it personal data, for which the website applied to the Personal Data Protection Agency. On May 18, the Agency informed that it had initiated proceedings on the occasion of the letter, according to which “in the case of the need to limit the access of third parties to the personal data under the management of the state body or the public accessibility of such data, personal data or documents containing personal data should be classified as a secret”, and in this case there is no question of secrecy. On June 9, the Ministry of Finance filed a judicial appeal against the Agency's decision regarding it. A court hearing on the case has not been scheduled yet.

**On June 16,** the RA Administrative Court held a regular court hearing on the case of *the Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center, Law Development and Protection Foundation and the Civilitas Foundation (the founder of the Civilnet.am news website) v. the RA Environmental Protection and Mining Inspection Body*, demanding to provision of the information and documents requested on July 12. The requested information refers to the results of inspections carried out in the mining sector during a specific period in order to understand possible corruption risks.

The lawsuit was filed on August 23, 2021, and accepted for proceedings on the 30th.

Publication of the judicial act is scheduled for July 7.

 **On June 23,** the *Oragir.news* website wrote that it had sent an inquiry to the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia, requesting an answer to the following questions: what criteria are used to determine which of the Facebook users can comment on the Minister's Facebook posts and who cannot, considering the fact that the comments section of the posts is closed to a number of citizens? In addition, is it not a restriction of the citizen's freedom of speech? For what purpose does the Minister deprive the citizens of the opportunity to express their opinion, complaint, criticism, especially if we consider that he is financed by the taxes paid by the citizens?[[102]](#footnote-102) The Minister did not answer these questions, reasoning that “the inquiry is not information in the sense of the Law on Freedom of Information”.

 **On June 24,** the *Panorama.am* news website sent an inquiry to the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia regarding the activities of the biological laboratories operating in Armenia and their safety. In a reply letter from the Office, they informed that the addressee of the question is the RA Ministry of Health, but the inquiry was not forwarded to that Ministry in a manner prescribed by the law.[[103]](#footnote-103)

*Panorama.am* sent the same inquiry to the RA Ministry of Health, from which, however, it did not receive complete information about the problem.

 **On June 24,** the *168.am* news website wrote that, according to the news, Tigran Avinyan, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the *Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC*, currently not holding any public office, is going abroad with a diplomatic passport.[[104]](#footnote-104) In this regard, the website has sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whether RA citizen, former Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan has a diplomatic passport, and if so, on what grounds. According to the reply received from the MFA, the requested information is a state secret.

 **On June 24,** *Hetq.am* online periodical wrote that on March 31, it applied to Yerevan Municipality for questions regarding the activities of the Nork-Marash Medical Center, in particular, purchases, but did not receive a response, and after verbal inquiries, the false information presented by the medical center was provided (falseness was confirmed by media investigation).[[105]](#footnote-105) On May 17, the media sent the second inquiry about the activities and development plans of the medical center to the municipality. On June 3, inaccurate and incomplete information was received from the municipality.

 **On June 25,** the *Pastinfo.am* news website wrote that the *Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC*, in violation of the RA Law on Freedom of Information, keeps the contact information of foreign members of the Board of Directors confidential,[[106]](#footnote-106) and their inquiries, addressed to the Fund's office, do not reach the addressees. The website's inquiries mainly related to the management of the Zangezur Copper and Molybdenum Combine and decision-making related to shares.

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

**On April 7**, the plaintiff filed a cassation appeal against the decision of the Court of Appeal on the case of *the Investigative Journalists NGO v. the National Security Service*, which had left the verdict of the Court of General Jurisdiction in effect.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on August 26, 2020, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information, and was caused by the video released by the NSS on July 15, in which the publication of *Hetq.am* (owned by 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.[[107]](#footnote-107) *The Investigative Journalists NGO* considers this an unfounded accusation, as the information provided by *Hetq.am* from the site of the incident was confirmed by the representative of the RA Ministry of Defense and the Human Rights Defender.

The lawsuit was rejected by the decision of August 6, 2021. Accordingly, the Service did not slander the plaintiff, did not discredit its honor, dignity, or business reputation. The plaintiff’s appeal to the Court of Appeal was also rejected.

On May 4, the cassation appeal was returned for corrections and refiled on June 14.

**On May 6**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Armavir (Echmiadzin residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of *Mariam Tashchyan, a journalist of Econews.am, v. Armen Tadevosyan, the President of the* *Armavir Zoo and Wildlife Rescue Center NGO*, demanding an apology for the insult and compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on August 23, 2021, 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 a compensation. On October 25, the court made a decision to accept the counterclaim for proceedings and examine it together with the initial claim, and by the decision of March 21, 2022, the proceedings regarding the counterclaim were separated.

A court hearing on the case was also held on June 3 of this year, the next one is scheduled for July 8.

 **On May 9,** in the area of Sanahin railway station in Alaverdi city, Lori Marz, Armine Tshagharyan, a host at *Shant TV* company, fell into the Debed river while filming on a ferry with her colleagues. It was not possible to save her.

**On May 12**, the Administrative Court of Appeal held a regular court hearing on the case of *MELTEX LLC, the founder of A1+ TV, v. RA Government and Commission on Television and Radio*.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on December 18, 2019, *MELTEX LLC* 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* are involved 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.
 On June 1, 2022, the Court of Appeal rejected the appeal. No justification was expressed in the courtroom. The decision was also not published due to technical problems.

 **On May 17,** the RA Administrative Court held a preliminary court hearing on the case of the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO,* the founder of *Fip.am* website, v. the National Assembly, demanding to annul the sub-clause 4.1 of clause 22 of the appendix to the decision No.NACD-44-L[[108]](#footnote-108), which restricted the movement and work of journalists in the NA territory, and to suspend that sub-clause before the final judicial act entered into force.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on November 25, 2021, and after being returned multiple times, was accepted for proceedings on February 9, 2022․

The next court hearing is scheduled for October 26.

**On June 23**, the Court of Appeal accepted for proceedings the plaintiff’s appeal against the verdict of the Court of First Instance on the case of *168 Zham Ltd. and founder Satik Seyranyan v. Styopa Safaryan, the Chairman of the Public Council*.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on November 2, 2020, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information, apology for the insult, removal of the article, and a compensation of the damage caused to honor, dignity, and business reputation. It was caused by Styopa Safaryan’s post on Facebook, dated October 13, according to which the *168.am* website, owned by the company, attributed remarks insulting Styopa Safaryan to the Russian journalist Vladimir Solovyov, which, however, the latter had not made. The plaintiff claims 2 million AMD in compensation for defamation and 1 million AMD in compensation for insult. On January 17, the Court partially upheld the lawsuit. The court verdict was as follows: in terms of defamation, 100,000 AMD each to be confiscated from Styopa Safaryan in favor of Satik Seyranyan and *168 Zham Ltd.*, in terms of insult - 30,000 AMD each and 150,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee. Besides, it was decided to oblige Styopa Safaryan to apologize on his Facebook page to Satik Seyranyan and *168 Zham Ltd.*, particularly for the following expressions: “Ask your question to the infamous lady” and “in the *168.am* website known to the Armenian public for its immorality”. On February 21, the plaintiff filed an appeal to the Court of Appeal.

**On June 28,** he RA Administrative Court held a court hearing on the case of *Armenian Second TV Channel LLC* *v. the Commission on Television and Radio*, demanding to recognize the absence of the legal relationship to impose an administrative penalty on the TV company in connection with the advertisement of “Shiraz Brandy” of Proshyan Brandy Company in accordance with Article 57 Part 8 of the RA Law “On Audiovisual Media” (broadcasting advertisements for strong alcoholic beverages is prohibited from 06:00 to 22:30) and to oblige the plaintiff to return the sum of the penalty in the amount of 200,000 AMD paid in advance.

The lawsuit was filed on February 18, accepted for proceedings on February 25. The next court hearing is scheduled for November 29.

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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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