**

**COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

*REPORT*

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

*2023 second quarterly report*



*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 of the second quarter of 2023.*

*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***

***18*** *cases of various forms of pressure,* ***24*** *violations of the right to receive and disseminate information and* ***no*** *case of physical violence.*

 The second quarter of 2023 stands out due to an increase in the number of new court cases filed against media outlets and journalists. Compared to the first quarter, this number went up from 9 to 16. Besides, 2 cases of hindering a journalist’s activity or unfriendly attitude towards a journalist were recorded.

 The vast majority of court cases, namely 11, were filed by either the ruling political party or officials. As a rule, the opportunities to resolve information-related disputes through extrajudicial mechanisms were ignored, which is a proof that politicians and officials often aim to put pressure on the media to retaliate. One of the prominent examples of this is the unprecedented court case, initiated by Yerevan Deputy Mayor Tigran Avinyan against 168 Hours LLC and journalist Davit Sargsyan, when the court satisfied the plaintiff’s demand for securing the claim in the amount of the maximum compensation for insult and defamation, namely, the amount of 9 million AMD, and the defendants' bank accounts were frozen. In this regard, 11 journalistic organizations issued a statement on May 12, as a result of which the decision of the court was revised and the seizure of assets in the bank accounts was lifted.

 Both during the first and second quarters, due to the relatively calm socio-political life in the country and the absence of mass protests or extreme situations related to them, not a single case of physical violence against journalists was registered.

 Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information remain a concern. Especially, when the state bodies adhere to double standards when providing this or that kind of information, they unnecessarily refuse or delay the answers, or the answers are “blurred” and do not correspond to the essence of inquiries. The Ministries of Defense and Internal Affairs often stand out with such work practices, whereas currently the public is most concerned about security issues. On the one hand, this creates additional complications for the media, and it leads to the spread of inaccurate information, on the other. It is especially ridiculous when some ministries consider that the information provided by other ministries is a state secret. Or, when instead of a 5-day period, they request a period of 30 days to provide an answer and then they refuse to provide this information, citing the state secret. In total, 24 violations of the right to receive and disseminate information were recorded in the second quarter.

 **In the period under review, international organizations published their annual reports, including those on freedom of speech and media activities.** Thus, the Reporters Without Borders advocacy group, in its World Press Freedom Index 2023, ranked Armenia as the 49th among 180 countries with a “satisfactory” situation, compared to the 51st position it had last year. Nevertheless, the report also noted that the Armenian press continues to be polarized, and the legislation regulating the media sphere does not sufficiently protect the freedom of the press.

According to the public opinion survey on the topics of freedom of speech and media independence[[1]](#footnote-1) conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in January-March 2023 and published on May 1, the freedom of speech in Armenia has declined. 43% of the respondents believed that the media were not free to express diverse political views.

In this year's report, undertaken by Freedom House, another international organization, Armenia scored 3.00 points this year compared to 2.75 points in 2022. The report emphasized the role of the NGO sector in effectively fighting against problematic legislative amendments. And in this regard, the round table organized by CPFE on April 28, with the participation of the representatives of legislative and executive authorities, media, non-governmental organizations, and experts was important, since a number of key directions in the conceptual framework of media legislation reform were discussed.

At the end of the quarter, Yerkir Media television company, not considered as a winner in the licensing competition for the republican broadcasting slot in the public multiplex announced by the Commission on Television and Radio, returned to air. This return was made possible due to an amendment to the Law on Audiovisual Media, made in March 2023. Yerkir Media TV will continue broadcasting until a new competition is held and its results are summarized. For details see “Media Activities Environment” chapter.

***MEDIA ACTIVITIES ENVIRONMENT***

 Since the very beginning of the second quarter of 2023, there was a large flow of lawsuits against journalists and media outlets. If 9 such new cases were recorded in the first quarter, the number of lawsuits reached 16 in the second quarter. The majority of filed lawsuits, namely 11, were initiated by officials or representatives of the ruling political force, and 5 were initiated by business entities.

During the period under review, the most unusual one was the lawsuit, initiated by Yerevan Deputy Mayor Tigran Avinyan against 168 Hours LLC and journalist Davit Sargsyan, in which the plaintiff claimed a maximum monetary compensation of 9 million AMD for insult and defamation and motioned for a measure to secure the claim and freeze the defendants' bank accounts, with the court granting that motion. In this regard, 11 journalistic organizations issued a statement on May 12,[[2]](#footnote-2) condemning such kind of pressure applied against the media and a journalist, especially when there is no reason why the plaintiff would assume, that unless the defendants' property and funds are frozen, the judicial act cannot be executed, and it is not clear why the court would support that position. Not to mention that the courts are obliged to maintain the proportionality of the security of claim in cases of insult and defamation, also taking into account the fact that they should not create obstacles for the regular activity of the media, a circumstance that was ignored in this case.

The authors of the statement also expressed a conviction that some of the unacceptable developments within this judicial process were directly linked to the amendments to Article 1087.1 of the RA Civil Code of March 24, 2021, according to which the caps of monetary compensation for insult and defamation were tripled, amounting to 3 million and 6 million AMD, respectively. Journalist organizations demanded from the court to immediately cancel the decision on applying a measure to secure the claim in the aforementioned case, lift the lien from the property and bank accounts of the defendants and proceed to the investigation of the dispute itself. They also stated that the Deputy Mayor Tigran Avinyan, as a high-ranking official, should be more tolerant and display a behaviour that is more appropriate to his position, calling to him to focus on the corrections of information about him, or in the event of appropriate grounds, refutation thereof within the court proceedings or, more preferably, withdraw the claim and resolve the issue out of court by applying to the Information Disputes Council or the Self-Regulation Initiative: Media Ethics Observatory for the purpose of obtaining an expert opinion.

A few days later, on May 16, Tigran Avinyan's representative made a statement: “In response to the May 12 statement issued by Armenian journalistic organizations and with an aim to emphasize Tigran Avinyan's position on his lack of intention to cause the bankruptcy of any media outlet or any financial inconveniences in particular” and filed a motion to the court to lift the lien. By the way, the lawyer also expressed his belief that very often the request for refutation in an extrajudicial manner is ineffective, and in the fight against defamation, the judicial remedy is the most effective way. Of course, this is a controversial approach to the very least, because out-of-court solutions are much faster and free from putting unnecessary pressure on the media.

During this quarter, there were 2 cases when other types of pressure were applied against the representatives of the media, with a display of unfriendly attitude and obstruction of journalistic activity.

Cases of physical violence were registered in neither the previous, nor the currently reviewed quarter, which once again proves that such cases are directly linked to the socio-political climate, prevalent in the country, with no need to cover mass revolts, police counteractions and various clashes.

 Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information continue to be a concern. It is true that, compared to the previous quarter, the number of such occurrences decreased by half and amounted to a total of **24**, but the issues related to refusals to provide information with unreasonable references to state secrets, unnecessary delays in response, as well as the “blurred” or incomplete content of provided information, remain unresolved. CPFE has observed that journalists' are mainly unhappy with the practices of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Yerevan Municipality. Meanwhile, it is natural for the media to be especially interested in the activities of the law enforcement agencies, because in the post-war period the topics the public is most concerned about have to do with both external and internal security issues.

It is encouraging that the editorial offices defend their rights to receive and disseminate information in court as well. To this end, 4 lawsuits were filed with the Administrative Court in the second quarter.

 ***In the course of the second quarter, international organizations covered freedom of speech issues in Armenia, too.***

On May 1, the International Republican Institute (IRI) published the results of a public opinion poll for Armenia, conducted in in January-March 2023, that covered the topics of freedom of speech and media independence.[[3]](#footnote-3) Accordingly, if 80% of the respondents in October 2019 said that the situation with freedom of speech in Armenia had improved, this number fell to 56% in 2023. In addition, in 2019, 75% of respondents saw an improvement in the independence of the media, while in 2023 only 41% thought so. 43% of the respondents believe that the media are not free to express diverse political views and are biased, 28% believe that the government oppresses the media, and 5% believe that the media is corrupt.[[4]](#footnote-4)

On May 3, World Press Freedom Day, Reporters Without Borders advocacy group published its “Press Freedom Index 2023” report, which assesses the working conditions of journalists in 180 countries and territories of the world.[[5]](#footnote-5) According to this report, Armenia improved its position by two notches and came in 49th instead of being the 51st last year, and appearing among countries with a “satisfactory” situation. As last year, Armenia is the leader in the South Caucasus in terms of the freedom of speech situation, since neighboring Georgia ranks the 77th, Turkey ranks the 165th, Azerbaijan ranks the 151st, and Iran ranks the 177th. The report also states that the polarisation of the media mirrors that of the political scene in Armenia, that only a few media outlets have remained independent, while others are remaining loyal either to the ruling force or the opposition.

Reporters Without Borders also referred to the legislation regulating the media sector and stressed that it did not sufficiently protect the freedom of the press and that recent reforms had not addressed this problem. Special attention was paid to access to information, and it was considered that state entities were granting limited access to it. According to this report, journalists were regularly subjected to pressure and violence both by the representatives of the government and the opposition, and the perpetrators of these incidents often remianed unidentified or unpunished. In this regard, CPFE’s studies also show that the investigations of such cases in recent years would mostly conclude with the law enforcement officers dismissing the cases on the grounds of no criminal charges.

On May 24, Freedom House international human rights organization published its annual report “Nations in Transit”, where Armenia showed an improvement in its degree of democracy, the rating of the country was estimated at 3.11 on a seven-point scale.[[6]](#footnote-6) Last year, that indicator was 3.04. Armenia is the only transition country in the 2023 report to have improved in more than one indicator. In particular, in terms of the freedom of the press, this year the Republic of Armenia scored 3.00 compared to its 2.75 score in 2022. The report emphasized the role of the NGO sector in effectively fighting against problematic legislative amendments.

A round table discussion, held on April 28 and organized by CPFE, was also aimed at improving the legal regulations of media activities on the following topic: “Need for reforming the Armenian media legislation and potential solutions to problems”. Representatives of media, the parliament, the government, other state entities, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations participated in the round table discussion. This discussion allowed not only to summarize the results of the work done for reforming the media legislation, countering regressive legislative initiatives, and developing new conceptual proposals, but also to expand the scope of participation in this process, identify the shortcomings due to their contributions and look for alternative solutions.

Let's remind that on April 19, 2022, the Ministry of Justice, the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Diaspora, Youth and Sports of the National Assembly and 10 journalistic non-governmental organizations signed a memorandum of cooperation with the aim of jointly developing a policy for the development of the media sector and a concept paper to reform the legislation on mass media. This work is still in progress.

On May 22, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan gave a regular press conference in the face to face and real time question-and-answer format. In contrast to the 2 press conferences held in the previous quarter, with a large number of media outlets going uninvited and feeling dissatisfied in this regard, there were no manifestations of discriminatory attitude towards the media this time.

On May 24, Amnesty International human rights organization announced that at least 13 Armenian public figures, including journalists and human rights defenders, were targeted by Pegasus spyware. The statement was preceded by a joint assessment exercise by human rights defenders and IT specialists. The spyware was used since November 2020 to December 2022. Amnesty International's security laboratory found out that the phones of two journalists from Radio Liberty, namely Karlen Aslanyan and Astghik Bedevyan, were infected with Pegasus spyware. According to the source, the phones of two journalists were infected in the period of April-May 2021, when they were covering the consequences of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the emerging domestic crisis.

 During the quarter under review, the competition announced for the vacancy on the Public Broadcaster’s Council was held with Arpi Voskanyan, director of the Grogh Literary and Cultural Foundation, winning with 5 votes. This fact was important due to the first and so far the only woman becoming a member of the council.

The proper representation of women is a problem in the Commission on Television and Radio, too. That is the reason why at a regular June 13 session of the National Assembly, the first reading and discussions of the draft law “On Making Amendment and Supplements to the Law on Audiovisual Media,” authored by Lilit Galstyan and Elinar Vardanyan – MPs of the National Assembly from Armenia faction, was held. The draft law aimed at reducing the existing barriers for female candidates to become memebrs of the Public Broadcaster’s Governing body, as well as the Commission on Television and Radio. The authors of the draft law believed that the legal provisions related to the involvement of women in those two state bodies were vulnerable and contained uncertainties, thus failing to provide sufficient guarantees and effective opportunities for women to realize their potential to more effectively. It is assumed that the adoption of the draft law will contribute to overcoming the underrepresentation of women in the Council of the Public Broadcaster and the Commission on Television and Radio, and at the legislative level, too, Armenia will confirm its steps towards non-discrimination and gender equality. As Vladimir Vardanyan, chairman of the NA Standing Committee on State and Legal Affairs noted, the draft law is aligned with the Constitution. According to him, equal participation of women and men should be encouraged by all possible means. On June 14, the draft law was adopted by the National Assembly in the first reading.

On June 2, the Commission on Television and Radio announced a licensing tender for the use of a free slot of the national broadcast coverage in the public multiplex. Applications will be accepted from July 3-24. By the way, Yerkir Media TV company that had been deprived of broadcasting since January 2023, returned to air on June 30th thanks to the amendment to the RA Law “On Audiovisual Media” in March. We should remind that the amendment to the law stipulated that if the broadcaster had a license for terrestrial broadcasting and if the results of the new licensing competition were declared invalid by the court, the broadcaster should continue to use the slot until a new competition for that slot was held and the results were summarized. A similar situation emerged in the case of Armenian Channel 2 LLC (H2) vs. The Commission on Television and Radio (AC/2112/05/21, with a claim to recognize H2 as the winner and grant a license in the licensing competition for the use of the national slot in a public multiplex) the court decided to turn down the claim on March 17, cancel the injunction on securing the claim (that is, to prohibit the Commission on Television and Radio from conducting a competition for the national coverage slot in the public multiplex, until the judicial act that essentially resolves this case comes into force. For details see the relevant parts of this report).

***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 2023 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 2023, as well as the developments related to the previous incidents.

***In total, there were 42 reported violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the second quarter of 2023. 18 were cases of pressure against the media and their personnel, and 24 were cases of violations of the right to receive and disseminate information. No cases of physical violence were recorded.***

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

**Quantitative Data on Violations in the 1st and 2nd Quarters of 2023**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 1st quarter of 2023 | 2nd quarter of 2023 | Total |
| Physical violence against journalists | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | 17 | 18 | **35** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | 48 | 24 | **72** |

**Quantitative Data on Violations in the 2nd Quarters of 2022-2023**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 2nd quarter of 2022 | 2nd quarter of 2023 |
| Physical violence against journalists | 11(12 victims) | **0** |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | 11 | **18** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | 24 | **24** |

**Lawsuits, Involving Media and Journalists in the 1st and 2nd Quarters of 2023**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 1st quarter of 2023 | 2nd quarter of 2023 | Total |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 9 | 15 | **24** |
| Economic and other disputes | 0 | 1 | **1** |

**Lawsuits, Involving Media and Journalists in the 2nd Quarters of 2022-2023**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 2nd quarter of 2022 | 2nd quarter of 2023 |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 9 | 15 |
| Economic and other disputes | 0 | 1 |

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 about impediments to 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***

 *During the second quarter of 2023, there was no case of physical violence against media personnel. Below we present the developments related to the past instances of use of violence in chronological order.*

**On April 21,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *168.am website correspondent Ani Keshishyan and Public Radio correspondent Liana Yeghiazaryan and other citizens v. former commander of RA Police armed forces Levon Yeranosyan*.
 We should remind that Levon Yeranosyan was charged for intentionally committing acts that were manifestly outside his powers, using special measures, and caused substantial damage to citizens' rights, and negligently brought about severe consequences. Ani Keshishyan was injured in Baghramyan Avenue, Yerevan, on April 16, 2018, and Liana Yeghiazaryan was injured at the intersection of Artsakh-Erebuni Streets, on April 22, covering the protests and police activities. (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2018-2023, in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

Court hearings on the case were held also on May 12 and 26, June 9 and 23, and the next one was scheduled on July 7.

 **On April 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 case of 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 reports for 2018-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

Court hearings on the case were held on May 4, June 5 and 12, and the next one was scheduled for July 19.

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

 *In the second quarter of 2023,* ***18*** *cases of various other instances of applying pressure against the media and their personnel were registered. All these 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 3**, Deputy Head of the Shirak Marz Investigative Department Hovhannes Poghosyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against 168 Hours LLC and journalist Gohar Savzyan, demanding to refute the defamatory information and pay a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the article about the plaintiff published on the 168.am website, owned by the LLC, on March 7 under the heading “Prosecutor Unfit for His Position is Now Deputy Head of the Regional Investigative Department”. The website, referring to its sources, noted that Hovhannes Poghosyan benefited from being the colleague of the chairman of the Investigative Committee, Argishti Kyaramyan. The application was returned on April 11 due to incomplete documentation, on April 28 it was resubmitted, and on May 12 it was returned on the same grounds. No new claims were filed by the end of the quarter.

 **On April 3**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Styopa Safaryan, the former Chairman of the Public Council, vs. LiveNews correspondent Taguhi Aslanyan*, demanding public apology for statements of insult and 1 million 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 on…”.[[7]](#footnote-7) The journalist, 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 held on June 30, with the next one scheduled for September 13, 2013.

**On April 3**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, after the reassignment of a new judge, launched new proceedings on the case of *Lyova Abrahamyan, Head of Sarukhan Community in Gegharkunik Marz, v. Narine Hasratyan, a reporter at the Haykakan Zham news website*, with a claim of refutation of the information discrediting honor, dignity and business reputation.

The lawsuit filed on February 13, 2019, was caused by an article entitled: “Who Sponsors Sarukhan Mayor and has Prevented Pre-Trial Investigation since August”, published on the website on January 10 and containing villagers’ complaints about their mayor.[[8]](#footnote-8)
 A court hearing was scheduled for September 13, 2023.

 **On April 4,** the case of Ruben Khachatryan, the former Director of the Yerevan Zoo, against citizen Manuk Manukyan (third party – Iravunk Media Ltd.) was redistributed in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan. The lawsuit, claiming refutation of defamatory information and monetary compensation for non-pecuniary damage, was filed on April 29, 2022 and was caused by the statements made by Manuk Manukyan on the air of *Iravunk TV* on April 1, according to which the Zoo was standing on the edge of the abyss, because for years, in particular, when led by Ruben Khachatryan, a corruption scheme was operating: public funds were embezzled, and animals were neglected.[[9]](#footnote-9)

On April 21, 2023, the case was accepted for proceedings, presided by a new judge, and the next court hearing is scheduled for August 18.

**On April 5,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Karen Melik-Tangyan, the already former Director of the Mother Armenia Museum of Military History at the RA Ministry of Defense v. Social Media LLC*, claiming compensation of the damage caused to his honor and dignity.
 We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on December 10, 2021, and was caused by the article, under the heading: “Military or Gangster? The Head of the Museum is Out of Order” and published on the page “Spokesperson” on *Mamul.am* website owned by *Social Media LLC* on November 11. The article was later removed from the website.

 The judgment of April 27, 2023, partially upheld the claim, namely the website was obligated to apologize for the offensive remarks, publish a refutation, and pay 40 thousand AMD as state duty, along with 100 thousand AMD as an attorney’s fee.

No appeal was filed against the judgment by the end of the quarter.

**On April 5,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the former Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure and current Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan v. Anna Gevorgyan Private Entrepreneur* (founder of *Hzham.am* news website).The court distributed the burden of proof between the parties.

The lawsuit was filed on June 22, 2020, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and payment of a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article published on *Hzham.am* website on May 15, entitled: “My Step Party Members are Interested in the Real Estate Market”, which states in particular that the province governors, led by Minister Suren Papikyan, are buying houses in the capital city “without paying” as they provide services, demanding an apartment as a donation.[[10]](#footnote-10) 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 force. On April 29, the plaintiff appealed the judgment in the Court of Appeal. On September 6, the appeal was granted. The judgment was overturned in relation to the claims of obliging the defendant to refute the information considered as defamatory, and the case was sent to the same court for a new trial in relation to this part.

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 17, 2023.

**On April 5,** the case of *Mher Terteryan, the leader of the United Homeland Party and an advisor to former Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan, Naira Terteryan (third party, Live News Media LLC)*, demanding refutation of the information considered as defamatory was dismissed. The lawsuit was caused by the following allegations made in the authorial program *Ditaket* on *Livenews.am* website on June 30: “Leader of United Homeland Party Mher Terteryan tried to kill his wife”, as well as other details of his personal life, about which Terteryan's ex-wife Naira Terteryan and her lawyer Hakob Charoyan spoke during the show.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**On May 10**, the regular session on the case of attorney Lusine Avagyan v. Naira Terteryan (Live News Media LLC as third party), with claims of refuting information considered as defamatory and compensation of damage caused to the diginity, honour and business reputation continued at the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan.

The cause of the lawsuit filed on August 10, 2021 was caused by the same show, containing allegations by Naira Terteryan that Lusine Avagyan who was her ex-husband Mher Terteryan’s lawyer, apart from fulfilling her professional duties, would also interfere in their private and family life.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The next court session has not been scheduled yet.

**On May 22,**  the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the hearing on the case of attorney Lusine Avagyan v. Naira Terteryan (Live News Media LLC as third party), with claims of refuting information considered as defamatory and compensation of damage caused to the diginity, honour and business reputation continued at the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan.

 We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on October 22, 2021, and was caused by the following allegations made in the same program: “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 and her lawyer Hakob Charoyan spoke during the program.[[13]](#footnote-13)

In 2022, court hearings on the case were also held on May 30, September 7, November 16, with the next one scheduled for February 22, 2023.

 The next court hearing is scheduled for September 11, 2023.

 **On April 6**, Alisa Mkhitaryan, the director of Maralik Community School No. 1 in Shirak Marz, filed a lawsuit against the *Haykakan Zham* news website, with claims to refute the information defaming her honor, dignity and business reputation and obligate the media outlet to pay compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the news published on the Facebook page of the website on February 19, according to which the plaintiff instructed the teachers and parents of the school to vote for the government's candidate in the council elections, otherwise she threatened they would face reprisals.[[14]](#footnote-14) On April 17, the claim was returned, as the plaintiff addressed the claim to different defendants, namely in one case it was a claim against the website, in another case – the founder. On April 28, the case was handed over to the court archive.

**On April 6**, the former mayor of Yerevan Hrachya Sargsyan and the former chairman of the board of directors of the Metropolitan Hayk Hovhannisyan filed a lawsuit against Zhoghovurd newspaper editorial office LLC, claiming a refutation of the information defaming honor, dignity and business reputation and monetary compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article published in the *Zhoghovurd* newspaper on March 30, under the heading “New details on the procurement of buses. What happened?”[[15]](#footnote-15) According to the newspaper, the acquisition of Chinese buses for Yerevan was accompanied with corruption practices with the involvement of the co-plaintiffs. The claim was accepted for proceedings on April 18, whereas the motion for injunction on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. The date of the court hearing was set for July 3.

  **On April 6,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the court hearing on the case of *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.[[16]](#footnote-16) 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.[[17]](#footnote-17)

In 2022, a court hearing was held on May 2, and on the 30th, the court upheld the lawsuit, obliging the defendant to publish a refutation and confiscate 120,000 AMD in favor of the plaintiff as an attorney’s reasonable fee and 4,000 AMD as a state duty.

The plaintiff was the son of the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia in Kazakhstan Hayk Terteryan.

A court hearing on the case was also held on June 15, with the next one scheduled for July 11.

**On April 6,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted for new proceedings (on the grounds of a different judge appointed) on the case of *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Armenuhi Hovsepyan, the founder of Newspress.am website*, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to the honor, dignity and good reputation through slander and insult.

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

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 11, 2023.

**On April 6,** a regular court hearing on the case ofNA Deputy Speaker Hakob Arshakyan vs. *Lurer.com* and *ArmDay.am* news websites, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information contained in the mentioned websites and a compensation in the amount of 500,000 AMD from each.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on March 16, 2022, 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[[18]](#footnote-18), then on the latter[[19]](#footnote-19) websites with a difference of a few minutes. The article particularly states: “Hakob Arshakyan has made the 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.” By the way, the lawsuit was returned twice. when Hakob Arshakyan refiled the lawsuit for the third time on June 9, the demanded payment was increased to 5 million AMD.

The next court hearing was scheduled for August 25.

**On April 7,** the defendant in 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* went to the Court of Appeals which refused to accept the lawsuit and upheld the judgment of the first instance court, keeping it unchanged

The lawsuit, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity, was filed on September 24, 2021, and caused by the article published on September 11 in the newspaper and on *Armlur.am* website owned by the same company, entitled: “Sasun Khachatryan Has an Apartment in Moscow. He Signed His Indictment”[[20]](#footnote-20), in which the high-ranking official is attributed with real estate and money of great value, which the official did not declare. By the way, before applying to court, the plaintiff demanded the media outlet to publish refutation, which was refused.[[21]](#footnote-21) The amount of compensation mentioned in Sasun Khachatryan's claim is 2 million AMD.

On July 20, 2022, the claim was partially upheld. The court ruled to confiscate 200,000 AMD in favor of the plaintiff as material compensation for defamation, and also to oblige the media outlet to publish a refutation.

On May 17, the Court of Cassation decided to return the appeal due to deficiencies in the documents. Other developments had not taken place by the end of the quarter.

**On April 7,** the Court of Cassation upheld the appeal, filed by the defendant in the case of *Mega Trade LLC, owned by Khachatur Sukiasyan v. News.am* website, overturning the judgment of the first instance court, which had granted the claim in part.

We should remind that the lawsuit filed on April 19, 2021, was an article published on the website on March 25, entitled: “Poor Quality Petrolium Imported by Khachatur Sukiasyan Spoils Cars. Déjà vu” [[22]](#footnote-22), with a reference to an unidentifiable Telegram channel.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Besides, Meha Trade LLC was obligated to pay 150.000 AMD as attorney’s reasonable fee and 13.000AMD as state duty. The plaintiff went to the Court of Cassation on May 5, and the case was handed to the judge on June 1.

 **On April 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan redistributed the case of *Van-Charter LLC vs. Armenia TV CJSC*, demanding refutation of the defamation and a compensation and filed on May 12, 2020.

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.[[24]](#footnote-24) 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 its publication, therefore, the disputed expressions were qualified as a value judgment. On March 5, the plaintiff appealed to the Civil Court of Appeal, where the appeal was upheld, and the case was sent for a retrial.

The case was accepted for new proceedings on April 21, 2023, and a court hearing was scheduled for November 16.

  **On April 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevanheld a regular court hearing on the case of Davit Galstyan, Advisor to the former Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, vs. the *First Armenian News Website Ltd.* and journalist Nver Mnatsakanyan.

The lawsuit was filed on March 23, 2021, claiming compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, and a public refutation of defamatory information. The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on April 1.

A court hearing on the case was held on May 4, 2023, and the next one was scheduled for August 15.

 **On April 10,** journalist Ani Gevorgyan announced a fundraising campaign in order to use the collected money to fulfill the court's judgment in the case of *NA Vice-Speaker (now NA President) Alen Simonyan vs. “Tert.am” news website journalist Ani Gevorgyan*. According to that judgment, the reporter was obliged to publicly refute the data considered as defamatory, pay 150,000 AMD as compensation for the damage caused by defamation, 100,000 AMD as an attorney’s reasonable fee, and 7,000 AMD as a state duty.

We should remind that the lawsuit, claiming refutation of the defamatory information and the payment of a compensation in the amount of 2 million AMD was filed on May 13, 2021, and was caused by the interview given by Ani Gevorgyan at the *Hayeli* club on April 16, where the latter accused Alen Simonyan of organizing a campaign against her with threats and insults.[[25]](#footnote-25) By the way, by the decision of the court, dated October 5, *News.am LLC* was involved as a third party.

Failing to win in all three court instances, Ani Gevorgyan complied with the requirements of the judgment.

 **On April 11**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing on the case of Hovhannes Hovhannisyan, Acting Rector (now incumbent Rector) of YSU, vs. *Media Plus LLC* and *Platform of Free News* NGO, the founders of *Yerevan.today* and *Politik.am,* demanding refutation of defamatory data, an apology for the inflicted insult and compensation for slander and humiliation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on August 27, 2021, caused by articles, published on *Yerevan.today* on August 10, entitled: “The Acting Rector of YSU Plagiarized and Falsified His Biography” [[26]](#footnote-26) and “A Scandal is Brewing Around the Acting Rector of YSU.” [[27]](#footnote-27) Within the same lawsuit, Hoavhannisyan is also challenging the nickname “Sorosian” ascribed to him in the feature, published on *Politik.am* on August 4, entitled: “Sorosian Hovhannes Hovhannisyan will be appointed as the Rector of YSU”.[[28]](#footnote-28)

On May 11, the court decided to uphold the claim in part and oblige Media Plus LLC to refute the information considered as defamatory, confiscate in favor of the plaintiff 500 thousand AMD as compensation for the damage caused by defamation, 14 thousand AMD as state duty and 50 thousand AMD as a reasonable attorney's fee.

The proceedings of the case were dismissed in relation to the remaining part of the case on the grounds that the defendant was not a proper party and the dispute was not amenable to examination in the court under civil proceedings.

The judgment was not appealed.

 **On April 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan rejected the lawsuit of the Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC vs. Pastinfo LLC, claiming a refutation of the information defaming the business reputation and a payment of monetary compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was caused by an article, published on PastInfo.am website owned by the LLC on June 25. The article stated, that in violation of the RA Law on Freedom of Information, the Fund failed to disclose the contact information of foreign members of the Board of Directors, and the inquiries made by the editors sent to the Fund office did not reach the right addressees.[[29]](#footnote-29)

According to the judgment of the court, the plaintiff was obliged to pay 200,000 AMD in favor of the media outlet as an attorney’s reasonable fee. The judgment was not appealed.

**On April 12,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Armavir made a judgment to dismiss the case of *the Head of Arshaluys Community of Armavir Marz Zarzand Grigoryan v. citizen Virab Shahbazyan and Bats TV Plus Ltd.*, because the plaintiff abandoned his claims.

We should remind that the lawsuit, claiming a refutation of slander, a public apology and confiscation of a compensation and filed on July 24, 2020, was caused by the broadcast on Bats TV, dated October 29, 2019, during which Virab Shahbazyan, a resident of Arshaluys village, spoke about Zarzand Grigoryan's activities, in particular, noting that the latter was still continuing his illegal activities even after the revolution. “He has been persecuting, robbing and tormenting the people for 12 years, he manages the village alone, sells the lands at a high price, while the authorities and law-enforcement bodies do not interfere in all this”.[[30]](#footnote-30)

 **On April 13,** the Administrative Court of Appeal rejected the appeal of the plaintiff of the case Armenian Channel 2 vs. the Commission on Television and Radio (Boon TV scientific and cultural foundation as third party), leaving the judgment of the Administrative Court, dated October 10, 2022, unchanged.

The lawsuit, filed on August 9, 2022, claimed the abolishment of Decision N 103-A of July 15, 2022. This decision recognized BOON scientific and cultural foundation (Boon TV) as the winner of the licensing tender over the slot for broadcasting in the capital in public multiplex. On October 10, the court rejected the claim, and the plaintiff went to the Court of Appeal.

On June 20, the plaintiff filed an appeal with the Court of Cassation.

On May 17, a hearing was held in the Court of Appeals over the case of the same plaintiff against the Commission on Television and Radio, this time with a claim to repeal the December 2 decision No. 143-A on the recognition of winners in the licensing competition for the use of national broadcast coverage slot, this time in public multiplex, and on the issuance of a license (with Armenia TV CJSC, A-TV LLC, SHANT LLC and Multi Media Center TV CJSC, acting as third party). This lawsuit was filed on December 21, 2022.

On March 23, 2023, the defendant appealed to the Court of Appeal, challenging the judgment of the first instance court, according to which the claim was granted, namely, the contested decision was declared invalid.

On June 7, the Court of Appeal ruled to resume the investigation of the case. A court hearing was scheduled for September 13.

On May 25, in another case of Armenian TV Channel 2 LLC vs. the Commission on Television and Radio, the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Appeal, challenging the decision of the first instance court which had rejected the claim and abolished measure of securing the claim.

We should remind that this lawsuit was filed on March 15, 2021, against the Commission on Television and Radio, demanding to obligate it to make a decision on recognizing Armenian TV Channel 2 LLC as a winner and granting a license to the given channel in the competition for licensing the use of slots in the Public Multiplex. *ArmNews CJSC, Shark LLC, Multi Media Center TV CJSC, Armenia TV CJSC, A-TV LLC, Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., Free News LLC, Meltex LLC, Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC, Husaber CJSC, Shant LLC*, and the Ministry of High-Tech Industry were involved as a third party. A court hearing was also held on March 14, and on August 30, the Administrative Court partially upheld the motion of Armenian TV Channel 2 LLC on applying a measure to secure the claim, prohibiting the Commission on Television and Radio to hold a tender for assigning a slot of national broadcast in public multiplex until the judicial act resolving the merits of this case took effect.

The judgment, passed on March 17, 2023, rejected the claim and abolished the measure to secure the claim.

On June 12, a new judge was appointed to the case. A court hearing is scheduled for May 8, 2024.

 **On April 13**, the Deputy Mayor of Yerevan Tigran Avinyan filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Oragir Media LLC, demanding to obligate the media outlet to refute the information defaming his honor, dignity and business reputation and pay monetary compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article published on Oragir.news website on March 9 under the heading: “Appetite comes when eating. Avinyan has got down onto Vivasel-MTS.”[[31]](#footnote-31) Referring to its sources, the website noted that after buying Grand Hotel Yerevan, Avinyan had decided to also the telecommunications operator “Vivacell-MTS,” too, and that he was using administrative levers to prevent the implementation of the transaction with another buyer, demanding to sell the telecommunications company to him only.

On April 25, the claim was accepted for proceedings, the motion for injuction to secure the claim, and place lien on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. No other developments were recorded by the end of the quarter.

**On April 13**, the Deputy Mayor of Yerevan Gevorg Simonyan filed a lawsuit against Pastinfo LLC in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, claiming refutation of the information defaming his honor, dignity and business reputation and monetary compensation (a total of 6 million AMD). The lawsuit is the article published on Pastinfo.am website on March 11 under the heading: “Interesting documents were found during the search of Gevorg Simonyan's office. Tigran Avinyan's situation is aggravating”.[[32]](#footnote-32) The website wrote that, according to the information it availed of, the search of Gevorg Simonyan's office revealed to the law enforcement officers lists on his computer, which related to the involvement of the staff of polyclinics and ambulance service in the upcoming elections of Yerevan’s Council of Elders. One of the documents revealed that some loyal medical workers were fired recently.

The claim was accepted for proceedings on April 28, the claimant's motion to enforce the claim was rejected. A hearing was scheduled for July 21.

 **On April 14, another court hearing on the case of Serob Sargsyan, deputy head of Ajapnyak administrative district of Yerevan, against Liana Sargsyan, journalist of Yerkir Media TV company, continued in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Armavir Marz (Echmiadzin seat) with claims to oblige the defendant to pay a compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, refute defamatory information and make an apology. The defendant's motion for the recusal of the judge on the grounds of bias was rejected.**

**We should remind that the claim was submitted on May 16, 2022, on the occasion of Liana Sargsyan's post on Facebook of April 30, about an incident that took place during the march organized by the parents of the fallen servicemen. The journalist specifically wrote that “...the person who called the parents of the victims “unclean” is Serob Sargsyan, the deputy head of Ajapnyak administrative district. And here you go. And thousands of men have died for this scoundrel, and this scoundrel lives beside you...”**

**During this quarter, court sessions were also held on May 12, June 9 and 30, with the next one scheduled for July 14.**

 **On April 17**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing on the case of MP Hayk Sargsyan against *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office LLC,* claiming compensaton for the damage caused to his dignity and good reputation through slander.

The lawsuit was filed on December 10, 2021, and was caused by an article, published in the eponymous *Zhoghovurd* newspaper owned by the LLC as well as on Armlur.am news website on November 17. The article was titled “On the Day of the Murder MP Hayk Sargsyan Was Near the Former MP’s House, Waiting for Tuy.”[[33]](#footnote-33) On the next day, the MP submitted a refuation text to the editorial house, however, the editorial house found controversies in the invoked facts and included this information in the comments published along with the text of refutation.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Court hearings were held also on June 1 and 30, 2023, with the next one scheduled for Septmember 29.

**On April 17,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan conducted the redistribution of the case on Yerevan State University Foundation against Hraparak Daily Limited Liability Company, the owner of the Hraparak.am website.

The lawsuit was filed on January 30, 2023, demanding public refutation of the information considered as defamatory, and confiscation of a compensation for defamation. The lawsuit was caused by an article, published on the website on December 30, 2022, entitled “A Financial Deficit has Arisen in YSU”.[[35]](#footnote-35) YSU demanded a refutation, which was published with certain comments, but it did not satisfy the plaintiff, and the latter applied to the court.

On May 2, the case was accepted for new proceedings, and on June 14, there was another redistribution.

 **On April 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the judicial investigation of the case on Larisa Harutyunyan against *Shark LLC* (the legal person representing *Channel 5 TV*). The court distributed the burden of proof for every person, participating in the case.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on October 26, 2021, demanding refutation. The lawsuit was caused by the news report for *Haylur* of *5 TV* on October 16, entitled: “She makes me grieve; the neighbor doesn’t allow to insert a khachkar in tribute to heroes”.[[36]](#footnote-36) The plaintiff suggests the media outlet that they publish refutation since the disagreement among fellow villagers has nothing to do with khachkar, but a routine argument, and the assertion in the title does not comply with the reality. According to the lawsuit, the media admitted that there had been an imprecision, but refused to publish appropriate refutation.

The next court session was scheduled for September 11.

 **On April 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan granted the claim in the case of *citizen Ashot Parazyan v. Tert AM LLC , the founder of Tert.am news website*, which was claiming to publicly refute the data, considered as defamatory and compensate for the damage, caused to honor and dignity.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed 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.[[37]](#footnote-37) On January 21,2021, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan rejected the lawsuit, basing its decision on the assertion that the impugned expressions were value judgments. The plaintiff went to the Court of Appeal, which upheld the it, and the case was reaccepted by the Court of General Jurisdiction for a retrial.

 According to the judgment made, the media outlet was obligated to refute the impunged statements, pay 14,000 AMD as a state duty and 100,000 AMD as an attorney’s fee. The judgment was not appealed.

**On April 19**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the court hearing on the case of *Yura Adyan v. Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., the founder of the Zhamanak newspaper*, claiming refutation and compensation in the amount of 2 million AMD.

The lawsuit, filed on June 10, 2019, was caused by the aforementioned article, published by the *Zhamanak daily* on May 9 of the same year under the heading “The Old Fox of Old and New Armenia.” The plaintiff seeks refutation of the point that he is the uncle of the Adyans, who occupy posts in the State Control Service, and in the times of the former authorities was considered the “old fox” in the field of procurements, participating in tenders beyond his field of specialization and sold the contract to other companies, after winning these tenders.

The next court session was scheduled for July 25, 2023.

**On April 19**, Narek Kirakosyan, a reporter of Factor TV accredited in the parliament, tried to videotape RA Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in the NA hall with a mobile phone from the lodge intended for journalists. However, the shooting was obstructed by Pashinyan's security officer.[[38]](#footnote-38) In particular, the latter forbade filming the prime minister in close-up, zooming in.

**On April 19**, NA Speaker Alen Simonyan filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Mediahub LLC (Mediahub.am website), claiming refutation of defamatory information and payment of a compensation in the amount of 1 million AMD.

The lawsuit was caused by an article published on the website on April 13 with the heading “The government signs a 79 million AMD contract with Alen Simonyan's brother’s company with no tender”, stating that the agreement signed with the official's brother's company did not reflect why the government gave him so much money from the state budget for road construction without even opening a call for tender. [[39]](#footnote-39)

The claim was accepted for proceedings on May 5, the motion to place a lien on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim was rejected. A preliminary hearing was scheduled for August 8.

 **On April 19,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the casue of *Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine CJSC v. journalist Tehmine Yenokyan*, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory and a compensation (in the amount of 6 million AMD).

The lawsuit, filed on Januray 5, was caused by the journalist's post on her Facebook page on December 1, 2022, where, using open sources, she stated: “The pipeline going to the ZCMC tailings dump broke down again, the Voghji River was polluted again, a criminal case was initiated again and it will be forgotten again, they will cover this up...” .[[40]](#footnote-40) The CJSC representative first demanded a refutation from the journalist, which was not fulfilled, after which a lawsuit was filed in court.

The next court hearing was scheduled for September 28, 2023.

**On April 19**, 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 Head of Charentsavan Community Hakob Shahgaldyan*, demanding refutation of the information considered as defamatory.

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.[[41]](#footnote-41) The plaintiff considered Hakob Shahgaldyan’s comment on the quality of his performance as defamatory. *Yeghitsi Luys-BK Ltd*. demanded from *Public TV* to publicly refute the defamatory information on air, and claimed from the head of Charentsavan Community Hakob Shahgaldyan the payment of monetary compensation of 2 million AMD.

A court hearing on the case was scheduled for November 22, 2023.

**On April 19,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Armenian National Interests Fund* CJSC vs. *Hraparak Daily* LLC and Hrant Bagratyan, former Prime Minister of the RA, demanding refutation of information discrediting business reputation as well as monetary compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on October 20, 2021, was caused by the opinion of Hrant Bagratyan, published on *Hraparak.am* on September 28, which once more reestablishes the media’s standpoint that the deal concluded by the above-noted Fund on July 14, in line with which the Arabic company *Air Arabia* was granted the status of national airline, is not transparent for the public and contains many corruption risks.[[42]](#footnote-42)

On May 4, the lawsuit was rejected by the court's decision, the State Interests Fund of Armenia was obliged to pay 100,000 AMD in favor of the media outlet as an attorney’s reasonable fee.

The judgment was not appealed as of the end of the quarter.

 **On April 20,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan dismissed the case of *citizen Samvel Hayrapetyan v. Russian-based political scientist Mariam Hovsepyan and Armdaily News Agency LLC*, on the grounds of the withdrawal of the claim. Besides, a decision was made to confiscate 200,000 AMD in favour of Mariam Hovsepyan as an attonery’s reasonable fee.

The lawsuit, filed on Januray 7, 2022, was caused by an 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”[[43]](#footnote-43), where the defendant mentioned that the programmer Samvel Hayrapetyan was fulfilling certain orders through “mushroom sites”, spreading misinformation, fake news, and as a result, provoking ethnic clashes. The plaintiff was claiming to obligate defendant Mariam Hovespyan to refute the defamatory expressions through a publication in the same outlet and confiscate 1,5 million AMD, and demanding from the media outlet to publish the defnedant’s refutation, as approved by the judgment of the court.

 **On April 20,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a trial on the criminal case on the attack on journalist Tehime Yenokyan’s apartment.

We should remind thatjournalist Tehime Yenokyan reported a crime on her Faceboook page on July 12, 2022: again her window was shot at from an unknown weapon which broke the glass and the round landed in the living-room of her apartment.[[44]](#footnote-44) The reporter informed that earlier, on June 29, there was a similar incident, too, and on March 9, unidentified individuals committed an act of arson at the enterance door to her apartment.

 In response to the inquiry by CPFE, the RA Prosecutor’s Office informed that criminal proceedings had been initiated in relation to all the three above-mentioned cases which were later consolidated. On March 13, 2023 the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan received the fiminal case from the prosecutor’s office of Avan and Nor Nork administrative districts, that contained accusations of citizen Hayk Grigoryan.

 Court sessions on the case were held also on May 11 and June 8, with the next one scheduled for July 11.

  **On April 20,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the trial on the case of *businessman Vahe Keushgueryan v. Dareskizb Ltd*., claiming refutation of the information, considered as defamatory.

The lawsuit was filed on October 12, 2020, caused by an article, published on Armtimes.com website (owned by the company) on September 7, which particularly stated that a semi-secret auction was an attempt to alienate the Chrran waterfall near the border village of Khachik, which is the most picturesque place in the village, selling it to the Armenian American Vahe Keushgueryan.[[45]](#footnote-45) The website also wrote that the businessman was still enjoying the privilege, granted to him by the former government, and was almost the only buyer of all the grapes grown in Khachik village, this being an exceptional raw material for producing his expensive wine.

The next court session on the case was scheduled for July 7, 2023.

 **On April 21, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan dismissed the case of *Spayka LLC v. Zhamanak daily LLC and First Armenian News Platform (1in.am website)*, since the plaintiff withdrew the claim.**

**The lawsuit,** demanding refutation of defamation, discrediting business reputation and publication of its reply, public apology and confiscation of compensation for the damage caused, was filed on April 15, 2021, caused by an article published in the *Zhamanak* daily and *1in.am* website on March 11, under the heading: “Slavery at Spayka: Employees work also on Sundays without pay”.

 **On April 25**, Project Inter-Invest LLC filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Hraparak Daily LLC and journalist Suzan Simonyan, demanding to refute the information defaming business reputation and pay monetary compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the March 6 publication on Hraparak.am website with the title “Black Clouds over the Head of the Oligarch, Dear to the Heart of the Government.” [[46]](#footnote-46) According to the publication, the founder of the plaintiff company Narek Nalbandyan evaded taxes as a result of machinations, devised cunning schemes to avoid paying taxes to the state, and was caught. On May 17, the application was returned due to inaccuracies. It was resubmitted on June 27.

**On April 25**, the ruling Civil Contract party filed 4 lawsuits with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, claiming refutation of defamatory information and compensation. The lawsuits were filed against 168 hours, 24 News, News.AM LLCs and Hayeli Club NGO, on the occasion of the news piece, published in 168.am, 24news.am, news.am and hayeli.am websites that on the day of elections in Sisian and Ani communities, namely March 26 (which the law defines as a day of no campaign), the media engaged in counter-propaganda against the Civil Contract party by copying the statement made by the Citizen's Decision party pre-election headquarters, bearing the headline “Civil Contract Gives out Bribes”. By the way, the publication was later removed from the websites.

The lawsuit against 168.am was accepted for proceedings on May 4, and a court hearing was scheduled for July 7. The one against 24news was accepted for proceedings on May 2, a hearing was scheduled for July 14. The lawsuit against News.am was accepted into proceedings on May 11, the date of the court session was not scheduled yet, and the lawsuit against Hayeli.am was accepted into proceedings on April 28. A preliminary hearing was scheduled for July 18.

 **On April 25,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *Ruben Arakelyan, the former Director of the Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise SNCO, v. Power of Speech NGO* (*4rd.am* website), demanding public refutation of the information considered as defamatory.

The lawsuit, filed on May 31, 2022, was caused by an article, entitled “Reform According to Nikol Pashinyan” and 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 in relation to the violations was archived. The publication also mentioned that the Director of the organization Ruben Arakelyan, together with his relative extorted the money allocated for the SNCO.[[47]](#footnote-47)

A court hearing was held also on June 19, 2023, and on 23, the court ruled to leave the lawsuit without examination, since the notified plaintiff did not show up to 2 successive sessions. The Court also obligated the plaintiff to pay 50,000 AMD as an attorney’s reasonable fee.

**On April 25,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Hayk Khanumyan, the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Artsakh v. Hraparak Daily*, demanding refutation of the defamation and payment of a compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on May, 2022, was caused by the articles published in the newspaper stating that Hayk Khanumyan was a party to several criminal cases related to corruption and abuse of power, and the RA authorities supported Khanumyan and did everything to exonerate him from liability.[[48]](#footnote-48)
 The next court hearing was scheduled for September 28.

**On April 25,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan launched a new trial to continue the examination of the case of *Hraparak Daily* LLC *v.* *Media Initiatives Center* *NGO*, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory as well as a compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on July 19, 2021, caused by the joint program initiated by factcheck.ge website and the NGO, which revealed fake news and disinformation materials, and Facebook and Instagram blocked them.

On July 6, the court granted the claim in part, obliging Media Initiatives Center to post refutation in the website above, confiscate 500,000 AMD in favor of *Hraparak daily* LLC as compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity and reputation, as well as 44,000 AMD as a pre-paid state duty for the application. The defendant filed an appeal against this decision, which was partially granted: the judgment of the court of general jurisdiction was overturned, and the case was sent to the same court for a new trial in the entirety of the case.

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 3.

**On April 25,** Garnik Isagulyan went to the Court of Appeal on the case of *Nver Mnatsakanyan, a journalist and anchor, v. Hayeli Club and Garnik Isagulyan*, to appeal the judgment passed by the first instance court, according to which the claim was granted in part, namely the court obliged Garnik Isagulyan to apologize, pay 28,000 AMD as a state duty and 300,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee. As for the part of the claim against Hayeli Club was rejected.

We should remind that the lawsuit claiming an apology and a publication of the court judgment in a news outlet was filed on May 15, 2019, 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 an assessment of Nver Mnatsakanyan's activities.[[49]](#footnote-49)

By the judgement of August 16, 2021, the Court rejected Nver Mnatsakanyan’s lawsuit, however, after the Court of Appeal overturned the judgment and after the new examination the claim was granted in part.

On June 12, the appeal was accepted for proceedings.

**On April 26,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the examination of the case of *Vardan Badasyan (the former RA Minister of Justice Rustam Badasyan's father. Comment by CPFE) v. Alternativ.am news website* within new proceedings, with claims of confiscating money and publishing refutation.

The lawsuit, filed on July 13, 2020 was caused by an article, published on the above-mentioned website on June 9, entitled: “The Apple does not Fall Far from the Tree. Rustam Badasyan should Start the Vetting Process from His Own Father.” It was particularly mentioned that Vardan Badasyan used to be the Deputy Head of the Legal Department of the Police, the First Deputy Head of the 6th Department and “the appointments in positions below his level of hierarchy were made on one condition– appointment for money”.[[50]](#footnote-50)

A court hearing on the case was also held on May 18, with the next one scheduled for August 28.

 **On April 28,** in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the examination of the case on the *businessman (now MP) Khachatur Sukiasyan v. Armday.am LLC, the founder of Armday.am* (Tatevik Ayvazyan, a reporter for the website was also involved as defendant), demanding a public apology, refutation of information considered defamatory, as well as payment of compensation.

 We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on April 19, 2021, as well as a number of other lawsuits, filed by the same plaintiff, were caused by an article with the same heading and contents, but published on different websites on March 25: “The Petrolium Imported by Khachatur Sukiasyan Spoils Customers’ Cars,” with a link to an unidentified Telegram channel.[[51]](#footnote-51) By the way, the court granted the motion to apply a measure to secure the claim, an injunction to place a lien on the property owned by the defendant in the amount of 3 million AMD, until the final judicial act in this case is passed.

 A court session was also held on June 6, and on June 27 the court passed a decision to separate the cases of the two defendants. A court hearing of the case against Armday AM LLC was scheduled for October 10, and a separate lawsuit against Tatevik Ayvazyan was filed on June 27.

**On May 2,** on the grounds of changing the judge, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted 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 Excess 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 generated a profit of at least 111 million AMD (212,237 USD) as a result of the procurement process.

The next court hearings on the case was scheduled for October 23, 2023.

 **On May 2,** the Court of Common Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted the case of *Yerevan Deputy Mayor Tigran Avinyan v. 168 Hours LLC and journalist Davit Sargsyan*, demanding an apology, obligation of the defendant to refute the information defaming his honor, dignity and business reputation, as well as confiscation of monetary compensation.

The lawsuit filed on March 31 was caused by a February 25 video, published on the YouTube channel of 168.am website: "Tigran Avinyan. the newly emerged rich" is the video in which Davit Sargsyan, characterizing Avinyan as having unlimited administrative powers and steadily getting rich, accused him of economic and political corruption.[[52]](#footnote-52)

On May 2, the court also granted the motion to secure the claim and seized the property and bank accounts of the media outlet and the journalist in the amount of 9 million AMD. After the condemning statement, published by the media organizations, the decision to grant the motion was canceled on May 18, as per the plaintiff’s request. The next court hearing was scheduled for July 17.

**On May 3,** journalists tried to ask questions to Vladimir Gasparyan before the court hearing on the case of illegal property attributed to former RA police chief Vladimir Gasparyan and other former high-ranking officials, but he started insulting and cursing them.[[53]](#footnote-53)

**On May 3,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *Vardan Badasyan (the father of the RA Minister of Justice Rustam Badasyan -* ***CPFE****) v. Narek Mantashyan, News.am LLC (news.am website), Datablog LLC (the founder of Blognews.am website), Analitic LLC (Analitik.am news website), Ipress.am LLC (Ipress.am news website),* claiming a seizure of a compensation and publication of refutation.

We should remind that thelawsuitwasfiledon July 10, 2020, caused by publications on the above-mentioned websites, according to which Vardan Badasyan in his old capacity was giving out positions for money.[[54]](#footnote-54) (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2020-2023, in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The next hearing was scheduled for July 14, 2023.

**On May 3,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *NA Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan (currently NA Speaker) v. Iravunk Media Ltd.*, claiming a compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

 We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 4, 2020, was triggered by a publication in the *Iravunk* newspaper on July 20 of the same year, entitled “What Innovation will Nikol Pashinyan Implement in August?”, 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. By the judgment, dated September 29, 2021, the court partially upheld the claim. The court obliged the media outlet to publicly refute the information considered defamatory and pay 200,000 AMD as an attorney’s fee. The defendant filed an appeal against this judgment. On April 29, 2022, the appeal was upheld, and the case was sent for a retrial.

 On June 19, 2023, the case was taken to another court and was accepted for proceedings on June 29. A court hearing was scheduled for September 13, 2023.

 **On May 5,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *Arayik Harutyunyan, the Chief of Staff of the RA Prime Minister v. Hraparak Daily LLC* with claims of refuting the information considered as defamatory and payment of compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on August 19, 2022, was caused by an article, published on Hraparak.am website, owned by the LLC, on July 31, under the heading “Hrach is Inside, Avinyan is Outside: There will be no Clashes” which stated that Arayik Harutyunyan and his brother, too, who had a private business and were taking over all well-funded projects, would play an active role in city management.[[55]](#footnote-55) The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on August 30.

On June 19, 2023, the case was redistributed, on the grounds of transfer of the case to another court, and the trial was scheduled for September 8.

 **On May 10,** 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 as defamatory, as well as payment of a compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on June 2, 2017, was caused by an article, entitled: “Meghri Medical Center vs. SRC” published on *Lurer.com* website, in which a reference was made to Narine Abrahamyan appearing in the center of a number of scandals during her professional activity.[[56]](#footnote-56)

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 24, 2023.

**On May 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori Marz (Vanadzor seat) continued the 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”[[57]](#footnote-57) and “A Teacher in Vanadzor Received 12 Million AMD for Forced Idle Time”[[58]](#footnote-58) which were published on the aforementioned website on October 4 and December 5, 2013, respectively. (For details see the reports of CPFE for 2016-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

A court hearing on the case was also held on June 19, 2023, with the next one scheduled for August 24.

 **On May 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on one of the two cases of *Senik Julhakyan, Director of Armhydroenergy Project CJSC, v. 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.

We should remind thaton March 17,2022, Senik Julhakyan, Director of Armhydroenergy Project CJSC, filed **two lawsuits** of the same content. The lawsuits were caused by the political scientsit’s thoughts expressed on the air of the TV Company on December 21, 2021[[59]](#footnote-59) and January 15, 2022,[[60]](#footnote-60) according to which the plaintiff obtained construction permit through corruption transactions and that through him the former RA President Serzh Sargsyan wanted to take over the building of the Armhydroenergy Project Institute which houses the office of the Political Scientists Union of Armenia.

 On June 19, the case on the first lawsuit was redistributed. A hearing on the second lawsuit was scheduled for July 4.

 **On May 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *lawyer Tigran Yegoryan v. Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Board LLC and Union of Journalists of Armenia NGO*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

The lawsuit, filed on November 2, 2022, was caused by the statement, made by the Union of Journalists of Armenia on October 3 in defense of the *Zhoghovurd* daily newspaper after an incident, when the former official Samvel Kharazyan, as Tigran Yegoryan's client, filed a second lawsuit against the media outlet.[[61]](#footnote-61)

In particular, the statement said that the editorial office had reasonable suspicion that the plaintiff and especially lawyer Yegoryan were pursuing the goal of harming the newspaper.

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 9, 2023.

 **On May 12,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular 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 relevant feedback. A decision on the distribution of the burden of evidence was made during the hearing.

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 stated that in order to avoid a costly and time-consuming process, medical vitamins were often registered in violation as a supplement or food.[[62]](#footnote-62) The next court hearing was scheduled for September 15, 2023.

 **On May 12,** the Court ofGeneral Jurisdication continued the re-examination of the case on  *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Hraparak Daily LLC,* demanding compensation for the damage caused to honour, dignity and reputation through defamation and insult.

We should remind that the lawuit, filed on June 21, 2019, was caused by a June 19, 2019 article, entitled: “Pashinyan Showed a Yellow Card to Hayk Sargsyan.”[[63]](#footnote-63) (For details see the reports of CPFE for 2019-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The judgment passed on **June 2** granted the claim in part. The media outlet was obligated to publicly apologize to Hayk Sargsyan, pay 200,000 AMD for insult and defamation, and 100,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee.

On June 30, the defendant filed an appeal.

 **On May 15,** the Courtof General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *citizen Mariam Hovsepyan v. International Media Holding LLC (the founder of Lurer.com news website),* with claims of public apology, refutation of defamation and payment of compensation. During the session a decision was made on the distribution of the burden of proof.

The lawsuit, filed on August 23, 2022, was caused by an article under the heading: “The Court Fined Citizen Mariam Hovsepyan for an Insulting Conduct on Social Media and Forced to Apologize in Writing”, published in Lurer.com on July 7, which stated that Hovsepyan was notorious for her insulting statements on Facebook about public institutions, politicians, journalists, and businessmen and was fined in the amount of 200,000 AMD.[[64]](#footnote-64)

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 3, 2023.

**On May 16,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on 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* to oblige them to refute defamatory information, publish the refutation text, as well as pay compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity and/or business reputation.

 The lawsuit, filed on February 28, 2022, was caused by an 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 elect the head of that organization serving their camp ... .”

The next court session was scheduled for October 26, 2023.

 **On May 16,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing on the case of *NA MP Khachatur Sukiasyan v. Alternative Media LLC (Alternativ.am website) and Media Plus LLC (Yerevan.today)*, demanding public apology, publication of the court judgement, refutation of the defamatory information, as well as a compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on Januray 5, was caused by the article published on Alternativ.am website on December 5, 2022, under the heading, ""Black Clouds" of the Velvet "Racket" above the Kirov Factory. The Buyer of the Factory Put up for Auction in His Own Bank is the Sukiasyans' Driver"[[65]](#footnote-65), which was also published by the Yerevan.today website, referring to the original source. "Sukiasyan's Driver Buys the Factory Put as a Collateral in Sukiasyan's Bank: Alternativ.am".[[66]](#footnote-66) The publication specifically states: "According to reliable information of Alternativ.am, when the Kirov factory was removed from the auction at a price several times lower than the amount taken from the auction, the buyer was found at once, and he was no one else, but the same Sukiasyans' driver."

The next court hearing was scheduled for September 11, 2023.

**On May 17,** the Court of Cassation rejected the plaintiff’s appeal on the decision of the Court of Appeal on the case of *lawyer Aram Orbelyan v. the Republic of Armenia*, *represented by the National Security Service and the Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC,* which also rejected the appeal of the plaintiff. By the way, the lawsuit was being re-examined.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on March 3, 2020, demanding a refutation of the defamatory information and a compensation for the damage caused, was caused by the report within the main newscast on the Public TV on January 30, which, 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.[[67]](#footnote-67) On July 26, 2021, the Court ruled to reject the lawsuit. The plaintiff's appeal against the judgement was upheld. The judgment of the first instance court was overturned in its entirety, the case was sent for a new trial. On September 22, 2022, the court rejected the lawsuit again. This judgement was appealed again.

 **On May 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Europe in Law NGO*, *lawyers Lousine Hakobyan, Tigran Yegoryan, human rights activist Zhanna Aleksanyan, Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., NA MP Arman Babajanyan v. Veto* *social -political movement, Narek Malyan, ArmNews TV CJSC and Yerevan.today website*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

The lawsuit, filed on January 29, 2021, was caused by an article published on Yerevan.today website on October 24, 2020, entitled: “Working Hand in Hand in the Interests of the Turks”, which targeted the human rights organizations, labeling them as “Sorosians” who “lay the cornerstone of Armenia's downfall”,[[68]](#footnote-68) as well as Narek Malyan's film with the same content shown on December 5 on ArmNews TV.[[69]](#footnote-69)

The next hearing on the court case was scheduled for July 12, 2023.

 **On May 18,** Veolia Jur CJSC filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against the citizen of France and French military and investigative journalist of Armenian descent Leo Nikolyan, Hayeli Club NGO (Hayeli.am website) and Live News Media LLC (Livenews.am website) with demands to oblige the defendant to remove defamatory publications, refute them, and confiscate monetary compensation. The lawsuit was caused by Leo Nikolyan's statements on May 2[[70]](#footnote-70) and 14[[71]](#footnote-71) on the YouTube channel of Hayeli.am that the French ambassador to Armenia received a bribe from Aliyev to carry out espionage, and in Armenia, the management of French Veolia Jur CJSC is a corrupt entity and cooperates with Ambassador Anne Luo in order to gain a stronger footing with the RA authorities. The cause of the lawsuit is also an interview with the French-Armenian journalist on the YouTube channel of Livenews.am on May 4, where he reiterated that "the French ambassador to Armenia is spying for Azerbaijan in Yerevan, and Veolia Jur bribed Anne Luo, so that the Ambassador would put in a good word for Director General Marianna Shahinyan before the RA authorities to enjoy their support."[[72]](#footnote-72)

On June 1, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings.

**On May 23**, Marianna Shahinyan, Director General of Veolia Jur CJSC, filed a separate lawsuit against the same defendants on the same occasion with the same claims. On June 2, this claim was accepted for proceedings.

In both cases, no other developments were registered as of the end of the quarter.

**On May 18,** the Civil Court of Appreal accepted the appeal of the defendant against the judgment of Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan on the case of *citizen Arusyak Mkrtchyan v. Zhoghovurd Daily Editorial Office LLC* which upheld the appeal in part.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on August 12, 2019, demanding refutation of defamatory information and compensation of damage, 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”.[[73]](#footnote-73) The author has noted that the RA Ministry of Health has allocated over 9.5 million AMD from the state budget to “In Progress Production Company”, founded by Arusyak Mkrtchyan, i.e. DJ Vaccina, to film social ads.

By the judgment of December 21, 2022, the media outlet was obliged to refute the defamatory information published about Arusyak Mkrtchyan and pay 150,000 AMD as an attorney’s fee.

No date for the court session was scheduled as of the end of the quarter.

 **On May 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing on the case of *News.AM LLC v. Hraparak Daily LLC,* with claims to refute the defamatory information, obligate the defendant to publicly apologize for the insult and compensate for the damage caused to business reputation.The lawsuit, filed on September 13, 2022, was caused by an August 10 article of Hraparak.am website,[[74]](#footnote-74) according to which News.am refuted their publication about an unpleasant incident involving the minister at the request of the Ministry of Defense.[[75]](#footnote-75)

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 18.

**On May 19,** the Court of Appeal rejected the appeal of the plaintiff against the judgment of the first instance court on the case of *citizen Zaven Hakobyan v. Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., the founder of Zhamanak Daily*, which had rejected the motion on changing the manner and procedure of the execution of the judgment. The court established that it was revealed that in the course of the litigation Skizb Media Center LLC sold 100 percent of the *Zhamanak Daily*’s shares to Zhamanak Daily LLC. In the given conditions, the plaintiff submitted a request to change the manner and procedure of the execution of the court judgment, however, its contents and the request showed that the demand, enclosed in the latter’s motion, aimed at the change of the manner and procedure of the execution of the judgment, but the change of the conclusive part of the judgment.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on July 13, 2020, demanding a compensation for the non-pecuniary damage caused to business reputation, a public apology and a refutation, was caused by an article, published in the daily on June 13, under the heading, "What Vanetsyan Left Behind? Who are Zaven and Sos Hakobyans?", where it was particularly mentioned that when the former Head of the NSS Artur Vanetsyan was in office, “his godson Zaven Hakobyan who was notorious for being extremely corrupt was promoted from an operative inspector to the Head of the super profitable Araratyan Customs, however, after Vanetsyan’s dismissal, he also managed to escape the system by a near miss.” [[76]](#footnote-76) On July 19, 2021, the court partially upheld the lawsuit (the media outlet was obligated to publish an apology text, pay 200,000 AMD to the plaintiff in compensation for the non-pecuniary damage, 100,000 AMD as the attorney's fee and 8000 AMD as a state duty).

On June 1, the plaintiff went to the Court of Cassation, continuing to challenge the judicial act on the motion to change the manner and procedure for the execution of the judgment.

 **On May 19,** the Civil Court of Appeal rejected the appeal filed by the plaintiff within the case of *Vanadzor office of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly NGO* *v.* *Antifake.am* *website* against the judgment, passed by the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, which had rejected the lawsuit.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on January 26, 2021, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused. It was triggered by the article, entitled: “How Much Money did the NGOs Operating in Armenia Receive for Supporting the Handover of Artsakh,” published on the website on December 29, 2020, where, among other organizations, the name of the plaintiff was mentioned, too.[[77]](#footnote-77)

On December 21, 2022, the court rejected the lawsuit, mentioning that the impugned statements used in the article were abstract judgments, they were not facts and were not addressed to the plaintiff. The Court of Appeal left this judgment unchanged. This ruling was not appealed.

**On May 22,** Solid Partners LLC filed a lawsuit against Best Media LLC in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, claiming compensation for the damage caused and copyright infringements. The Commission on Television and Radio and Multi Media-Kentron TV CJSC are involved in the case as third parties.

The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on June 5, no other developments were registered.

**On May 22,** the Court ofGeneral Jurisidction of Yerevan held a regular hearing on the case of *Arman Martirosyan v.* *Exclusive Media Holding* LLC (founder of *Exclusive.am* news website), demanding refutation of slander, an apology for insult, compensation, and publication of the conclusive part of the court’s judgment.

The lawsuit, filed on October 22, 2021, was caused by an article, published on September 29, entitled: “Arayik Harutyunyan Rewarded the Owner of Entertainment Clubs with a Weapon: for What Act of Heroism? For running the clubs during the war?”[[78]](#footnote-78)

On June 12, 2023, the claim was granted in part. The media outlet was obliged to publicly refute the impunged information, pay 170,000AMD, of which 20,000 AMD would be charged as a state duty, and 150,000AMD as an attorney’s fee. The judgment was not appealed.

**On May 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NA Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan (currently NA Speaker) v. Ani Hovhannisyan, the founder of Media Idea LLC and Analitik.am website owned by the company*, demanding compensation for the damage caused.

The lawsuit, filed on July 13, 2020, was caused by an article, entitled: “The Government Needs a Referendum to Ratify the Istanbul Convention. Was This Confirmed by Alen Simonyan?” and published on the website on February 11, stating that the present composition of the Constitutional Court would not give a positive opinion on the Istanbul Convention, hence it was crucial for the ruling power to change the composition of the RA Constitutional Court as soon as possible.[[79]](#footnote-79) (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2020-2022 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The next court hearing on the case was scheduled for September 11, 2023.

 **On May 25,** the Court of General Jurisdication of Yerevan continued the trial on the case of *Lara Aharonyan, Head of the Women's Resource Center NGO, v. 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 Childern: Hayk Ayvazyan” published on April 24, 2019, in which one of the guests of Hayeli Club, Hayk Ayvazyan, made assessments of Aharonyan's activities during a press conference. The video was posted on Hayeli.am and Livenews.am news websites.

The next court hearing on the case was scheduled for October 2, 2023.

**On May 26,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the former NSS colonel Eduard Harutyunyan v. former MP Taron Sahakyan (with Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., founder of Zhamanak Daily involved as the third party)*, demanding a public apology, as well as refutation of the information considered slander and payment of compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was caused by the article dated May 29, 2019, published in the daily newspaper and 1in.am website, entitled: “The Harutyunyans’ Dynasty is Still Rooted in the State Administration System: Which of Them Occupies a Post, What Post and Where?”[[80]](#footnote-80)
 The next court hearing was scheduled for August 21, 2023.

 **On May 29,** the Civil Court of Appeal accepted for proceedings the appeal of the plaintiff in the case *Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC and its Executive Director Davit Papazyan v. Hraparak Daily LLC and journalist Suzan Simonyan* against the judgment of the first instance court, which had rejected the lawsuit, and under solidary obligation each plaintiff was obligated to pay 200,000AMD as the attorney’s fee.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 2, 2021, was caused by the article on Hraparak.am website, published on July 24, entitled: “State Interest or Business of a Group of People?”, which particularly states that Davit Papazyan published a Q&A talk, addressing the deal signed with Air Arabia company on July 14.[[81]](#footnote-81) Then the journalist expressed a final thought, “The state invests, the businessman puts the money in his pocket...” (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2021-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

No further developments were registered by the end of the quarter.

 **Մայիսի 29-ին**

**On May 29,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Armenian National Interests Fund* CJSC *v.* *Hraparak Daily* *LLC and journalist Suzan Simonyan*, demanding refutation of information discrediting business reputation, and a monetary compensation. The lawsuit was filed on the same day and for the same reason as the previous case.

The next court hearing was scheduled for September 8.

**On May 31,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevanheld a preliminary court hearing on the case of*Samvel Kharazyan v.* *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office LLC and its editor-in-chief Knar Manukyan*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

The lawsuit, filed on September 26, 2022, was caused by an article, published in Armlur.am website on August 25 and entitled “The Corrupt System Persists even Today: New Disclosures by the Head of State Supervision Service”,[[82]](#footnote-82) which reminded that Samvel Kharazyan, together with a number of other officials, was involved in a criminal case, and the editorial office would pursue the disclosure of the corrupt activity, related to the case.

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 12, 2023.

**On June 2,** 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 NA v. Gurgen (Gagik) Melkonyan, a member of the Civil Contract faction of the National Assembly (third party:* *Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC*), demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

The lawsuit, filed on August 19, 2021, was caused by Melkonyan’s thoughts on Arthur Vanetsyan’s activities during the 44-day Artsakh war on July 20 expressed during an interview with Petros Ghazaryan on Public TV. The defendant particularly said: “Vanetsyan went there 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”.[[83]](#footnote-83)

According to the judgment made on June 16, the claim was partially granted, the defendant was obliged to refute the disputed statements on H1 TV channel, pay 500,000 AMD as compensation for defamation, and 18,000 AMD as state duty.

 **On June 5,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan made a decision to leave the case of *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Iravunk Media LLC* *and journalist Ilona Azaryan* without examination and levy 200,000 AMD from the plaintiff in favour of each defendant. The decision is based on the fact that the notified plaintiff did not show up for 2 successive sessions.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on June 13, 2019, and claiming 1 million AMD in compensation for insult and defamation, was caused by an article published in the *Iravunk* newspaper on May 14, stating that “the entire information package against David Sanasaryan (Former Head of the State Control Service. *Comment by CPFE*) reached the NSS with Hayk Sargsyan’s help.” On March 2, 2021, the court partially upheld the lawsuit. Both the defendant and the plaintiff appealed to the Civil Court of Appeal. The appeals were upheld, and the case was accepted for new proceedings. (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2019-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The judgment of the Court of General Jurisdiction was not appealed.

 **On June 5,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing on the case of citizen *Erik Yeghinyan vs. CMG LLC (*the founder of Pastinfonews website).

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on February 14, 2019, was caused by the September 10, 2018 publication on the above-mentioned website, entitled: “The Prisoner Attempted a Suicide Because He was not Taken to the Dentist”.[[84]](#footnote-84) (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2019-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website). The plaintiff claimed a confiscation of 1 million AMD from the defendant as compensation for insult and defamation, obliging the defendant to apologize in writing and publish a refutation. On October 31, 2022, the appeal was partially upheld. The judgment of the first instance court was overturned, and the case was sent to the court for a new trial.

The next court hearing was scheduled for September 19, 2023.

**On June 7,** 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 on the case was scheduled for September 26.

**On June 7,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *News AM LLC* *v. Dareskizb Ltd.*, *founder of Haykakan Zhamanak Daily.*

The lawsuit was caused by an article published in Haykakan Zhamanak on August 21, 2018, entitled: “Ararat, Armnews, H2, News.am, Yerkir Media - All Fakes: Which Media Outlets were “Bought” by Kocharyan?”[[85]](#footnote-85) According to the plaintiff, with several expressions in the publications about News.am, as well as with the title of the article, damage was caused to its business reputation. News AM LLC brought a claim of compensation of 200,000 AMD to the founder of Haykakan Zhamanak.

The next court hearing on the case was scheduled for October 5, 2023.

**On June 8,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held another session on the case of *Alvina Gyulumyan, a former member of the Constitutional Court, v. Dareskizb Ltd., the founder of the Haykakan Zhamanak daily*, demanding refutation of slander and a compensation.

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

 In 2021, court hearings on the case wereheld on February 24, April 30, June 14, November 4, the next one was scheduled for January 26, 2022. (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2018 – 2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The next court session on the case was scheduled for September 26, 2023.

**On June 9,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary session on the case of the *Speaker of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan v. V.I.V. Today and Tomorrow LLC, the founder of Ankakh.com news website*, claiming compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

The lawsuit, filed on December 22, 2022, was caused by an article published on December 9 under the heading, “Are Alen Simonyan and Vahagn Khachaturyan Making Purchases with State Funds?”.[[86]](#footnote-86) The website specifically noted that the RA President and the Speaker of the National Assembly documented the purchase of their clothes as public procurement, namely under representative expenses, but the purchased goods were added to their personal wardrobe. In addition, according to the website, these purchases were made from the Gritti LLC chain of stores owned by Sedrak Kocharyan, the eldest son of the 2nd President of the Republic of Armenia Robert Kocharyan, and hereby the political differences were ignored.

The next court hearing was scheduled for April 19, 2023.

**On June 13**, the Chair of the Corruption Prevention Commission Haykuhi Harutyunyan filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Information Committee information NGO, as well as Sevak Mamyan, the editor-in-chief of the NGO's Infocom.am website, and its journalists Mkrtich Karapetyan and Katya Mamyan, with claims to oblige them to publicly refute the factual information considered as defamatory.

The lawsuit was caused by an article, published on the website on May 6: "Members of the family of the President of the Central Intelligence Agency have not submitted a declaration for two years. No proceedings have been initiated."[[87]](#footnote-87)

Before submitting the lawsuit, the Commission sent a refutation text to the editorial office, but the website refused to publish it. The Commission informed on its Facebook page[[88]](#footnote-88) that the website had distorted the facts, and then applied to the court.

On June 27, the lawsuit was returned due to defects in the documents.

**On June 13**, businessman Davit Yeremyan filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Datablog LLC (the founder of Blognews.am website), claiming public refutation of the information considered as defamatory and offensive, obligation of an apology and confiscation of compensation. The lawsuit was caused by a news piece, published on the website on May 12 with reference to Armeniannews.Info Telegram channel, under the heading of "‘Businessman’ Yeremyan Davo has gone off-limits”[[89]](#footnote-89) where, in addition to the use of disrespectful vocabulary, the plaintiff was attributed a number of illegalities and unethical behavior.

By the way, on the same day, on his Facebook page the businessman called for making a public apology for tarnishing his business reputation, in response to which the website printed the words of the businessman, with no apology.[[90]](#footnote-90)

On June 27, the claim was accepted for proceedings.

**On June 13,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular session on the case of *Demi Pharm LLC v. Hetq LLC (founder of Hetq.am website)*, after the redistribution of the case, claiming public refutation of the information considered as defamatory and confiscation of a compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on June 10, 2021, was caused by an article published on *Hetq.am* online periodical on May 6, entitled: “National Institute of Health Registers Children's Vitamins with Violations”.[[91]](#footnote-91) The article mentions that Demi Pharm assured the media outlet that children's vitamins had to have a state registration, and it was trying to buy some time to make up for the inexistent registration document, which was granted by the National Institute of Health in a suspiciously short period and with various violations.

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 7, 2023.

**On July 14,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Ara Mkrtchyan, the Head of Kasakh Community in Kotayk Marz, v. Yelena Zohrabyan, the Head of the Public Affairs Department of the Urban Development, Technical Standards and Fire Safety Inspectorate, as well as against the* *Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC*, demanding a public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

The lawsuit filed on December 7, 2021, and the one filed on January 10, 2022 were caused by a report aired on the TV company’s news program “Lurer” (“News”) on November 2, 2021, entitled: “MP Anna Mkrtchyan’s Father, the Head of Kasakh Community, Donated a Part of the Community to His Son”. The report presented the plaintiff’s possible corrupt transactions, revealed by the inspectorate through investigations.[[92]](#footnote-92)

The next court hearing was scheduled for November 10, 2023.

**On June 14, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori Marz (Alaverdi residence) rejected the lawsuit of *the Director of Alaverdi Medical Center CJSC Stepan Mosinyan v. 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, filed on April 4, 2022, was caused by an article entitled: “Alaverdi: Medical Center Surgeon's Negligence and Director's Business Interests”, published on the Civilnet.am news website on Januray 19, which specifically describes the unhealthy atmosphere in Alaverdi Medical Center, as well as the article “The Director of Alaverdi MC – the Monopolist of the “Death” Business”, published on the same website on March 14, which stated: “...Mosinyan uses the Patho-Anatomical Department of the Medical Center as a source of enrichment.”[[93]](#footnote-93)** (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2022 – 2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

 **The court found that the plaintiff did not substantiate the circumstance of causing damage to honour and dignity through defamation.**

**On June 16,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a session on the case of *Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC and the Chairman of the Company's Board of Directors Tigran Avinyan v. Pastinfo LLC*, demanding to oblige them to refute the information discrediting their honor, dignity and business reputation and pay monetary compensation.

The lawsuit was caused by an article, published on the Pastinfo.am news website on February 20, stating, "The information of Pastinfo was confirmed. Avinyan's tenure as Deputy Mayor is illegal. He leads a commercial organization, which is something he cannot do", in which the two positions of Tigran Avinyan, Chairman of the Fund's Board of Directors and Deputy Mayor, were considered incompatible.[[94]](#footnote-94) By the way, the plaintiffs did not provide the information requested by the website on that subject.

On March 30, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. The motion to place a lien on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected.

The next court session was scheduled for October 20, 2023.

 **On June 16,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the court hearing on the case of *the Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC v. 168 Zham LLC*, demanding refutation of the information discrediting business reputation and monetary compensation.

 We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on May 13, 2021, was caused by an article, published on 168․am website on April 12, entitled: “Waiting for Investments”, which particularly stated that the promised investments were not made by the fund.[[95]](#footnote-95) On December 2, 2021, upon the decision of the court the lawsuit was rejected on the grounds that the statute of limitations had expired. The court obligated the plaintiff to confiscate 50 000 AMD in favor of 168 Zham as an attorney’s fee. Both the plaintiff and the defendant appealed the judgement at a higher instance. Here, the plaintiff’s appeal was upheld, the judgment was overturned, and the case was sent to the same court for a retrial. Against this judgement, on September 8, the defendant filed an appeal to the Court of Cassation, but the judgement of the Court of Appeal entered into legal force.

 The next court hearing was scheduled for October 20, 2023.

 **On June 20,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *the former member of the Yerevan Council of Elders, RPA member Naira Nahapetyan v. First Armenian News LLC*, with the demand to oblige them to refute the information considered as defamatory.

 The lawsuit was caused by a video published on the website's YouTube page under the heading: "The Accused is RPA Member Naira Nahapetyan. Chronicle of January 24" , where there is official information, stating that Nahapetyan is accused of hiding a large amount of taxes.[[96]](#footnote-96) According to Astghik Sapeyan, the editor of the website, it was the legal chronicle of the day, which also included news from the press about Naira Nahapetyan.

 The next court hearing was scheduled for October 24, 2023.

**On June 21,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Europe in Law Association NGO, its President Lousine Hakobyan, and superior legal councilor Tigran Yegoryan, v. Hraparak Daily LLC and journalist Davit Sargsyan*, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

The lawsuit, filed on October 7, 2021, was caused by an article, published on Hraparak.amwebsite, entitled: “An Open Network of Agencies under the Disguise of the Community of Human Rights Defenders.”[[97]](#footnote-97) The author of the article mentioned particularly that in addition to other advocating NGOs and human right defenders, the plaintiffs were also involved in the network of foreign agencies, whose hidden and sometimes evident motive was to change the Government in Armenia, and not to fight for human rights.

The judicial act was scheduled to be published on July 21, 2023.

 **On June 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Gegham Vardanyan, Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission, v. Pastinfo Ltd.,* demanding that the latter be obligated to publicly refute the defamatory information and pay a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article, published on Pastinfo.am website on August 31, 2020, under the heading: “The Armenian Representative in the Eurasian Economic Commission is Suspected of Abuse”.[[98]](#footnote-98)

The judicial act was scheduled to be published on July 14, 2023.

 **On June 23,** 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 partially upheld the lawsuit, filed by Robert Kocharyan against Skizb Media Kentron Ltd.*,* demanding a public refutation of the defamatory information, as well as a 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 reports of CPFE, 2019-2022 on *Reports* section on [www.khosq.am](http://www.khosq.am)website).

The next court hearing on the case was scheduled for August 7.

**On June 28,** the Prosecutor’s Office of Kentron and Nork-Marash Administrative Districts of Yerevan received a motion from an investigator of the Republic of Armenia Investigative Committee’s Yerevan Investigative Department Kentron and Nork-Marash Administrative Districts Division 2 within the proceedings about the editor-in-chief of Oragir.news news website Gevorg Emin-Teryan, on terminating public prosecution against him, which was granted by the decision of the supervising prosecutor on June 29. This information was provided by the RA General Prosecutor’s Office in response to the inquiry of CPFE.

We should remind that on December 14, 2022, Gevorg Emin-Teryan published a Facebook post: “As a sign of protest, the Christmas tree in the main square should be put to fire”,[[99]](#footnote-99) after which he was invited to the police for interrogation. He was charged with an act provided for in Article 329.2(3) of the RA Criminal Code. On the same day, criminal proceedings were initiated and a public prosecution was initiated against the journalist.

The criminal proceedings were dismissed on June 30, 2023.

**On June 29,** the Civil Court of Appeal conducted a distribution of the case of *Ara Harutyunyan, a former employee of the National Security Service, v. Skizb Media Kentron Ltd.,* *founder of 1in.am news website*, on the ground of the change of the judge.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on August 31, 2020, demanding public refutation of defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity. And it was caused by the article published in 1in.am on July 31, which stated that the plaintiff who used to serve in the RA NSS for more than 20 years allegedly engaged in the following: “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 ensured sponsorship”.[[100]](#footnote-100)

By the judgment of September 28, 2022, the claim was partially upheld, namely, the media outlet was obliged to publish a refutation, pay 350,000 AMD as compensation for defamation, 200,000 AMD as an attorney’s reasonable fee. On November 16, the defendant applied to the Court of Appeal.

**On June 3,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the lawsuit filed by Pretty Way LLC (the owner of Vesta electrical appliances store chain) v. the founder of Mitk.am website and journalist Simon Sargsyan, claiming to oblige them to apologize and refute the defamatory information detrimental to their business reputation and pay monetary compensation.

The lawsuit was filed on December 20, 2022, caused by the article “Stay away from the Vesta Furniture Store, they are Inhumane” published on the website on December 8, where the author, describing his own experience, told about the impolite, deceitful and inhumane attitude he faced in the menioned store.[[101]](#footnote-101) On March 10, Murk LLC, which is the founder of the website, was substituted for by Jazzmitk LLC.

The final judicial act was scheduled for July 12.

 **On June 30,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *citizen Siranush Abelyan v. the Chief Executive of Politcom.am news website Lilit Silanyan*, demanding apology for the slander and publication of a refutation.
 The lawsuit was filed on September 3, 2021, and was caused by the issue related to the provision of loans in one of the banks, which was posted on the website. After the publication of the article, the bank employee, the plaintiff, expressed her disagreement with news, as a result of which it was removed from the website within hours. The person in charge of the media outlet offered to also publish the viewpoint of the bank, but the plaintiff did not agree and applied to the court.
 The next court hearing was scheduled for September 14, 2023.

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

*In the second quarter of 2023, the CPFE recorded* ***24*** *facts on the violation of the right to receive and disseminate information. In only* ***4*** *cases, a lawsuit was filed with the court, demanding provision of information. These violations, as well as the new developments related to the events from past periods are presented below in chronological order.*

**On April 4,** Infocom.am news website, not receiving a response to the written inquiry sent to Yerevan Municipality on March 28 within the 5-day period established by law, called the information department of the municipality, who said that they had not received the inquiry. In this inquiry, the website was asking to clarify the legal grounds supporting the decision for qualifying Deputy Mayor Tigran Avinyan as the one to chair regular briefings, if the relevant decision of the mayor stipulates that they shall be conducted by the mayor, and in the latter's absence, by the mayor’s first deputy. On the same day, April 4, the inquiry was filed in for the second time. On April 10, the department sent a letter stating that the information will be provided within a 30-day period, as defined by law. The municipality finally responded to the inquiry on May 5, after the maximum period provided for by law had expired, which the website considered an unreasonable delay.

**On April 4**, the correspondent of Radio Liberty Naira Bulghadaryan posted a Facebook status, mentioning that it was impossible to get information from the Ministry of Economy on the ban on the export of dairy products to Russia. According to the journalist, the press secretary promised to talk to the deputy minister and organize an interview a week ago, but did not take any relevant steps.

**On May 2**, the reporter of Aravot.am news website Hripsime Jebejyan sent a request to the staff of the Prime Minister of Armenia, asking to provide information on the weapons, awarded after the 2018 revolution. The answer was delayed and was received on May 30.

On the same day, the journalist sent the same inquiry to the Minister of Defense. The reply which contained a rejection was received late, on June 6. In this case, the Ministry considered the same information to be a state secret.

**On May 5**, the Union of Informed Citizens NGO (the founder of the Fip.am website) applied to the General Prosecutor's Office, requesting information on how many cases of murder committed in 2021 and 2022 were disclosed and were sent to court with an indictment.

On the same day, the NGO wrote to the Minister of Internal Affairs, asking how the Ministry planned to ensure the uniformity of the appearance (color) of patrol police cars in Yerevan and the regions.

Both inquiries remained unanswered.

**On May 10**, Narine Kirakosyan, an Eco Media Network journalist, warned on Facebook that the Ministry of Environment blocked her on social networks in an attempt to silence her. Earlier, the journalist asked the Ministry questions about the status of the Shikahogh reserve, the programs implemented in the protected areas of the Republic of Armenia, all of which received incomplete answers.[[102]](#footnote-102)

**On May 11,** the Administrative Court decided to grant the claim in the case of the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO (the founder of the Fip.am website) v. the RA Police,* demanding to oblige the defendant to provide exhaustive information.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on June 6, 2022, since the agency had not responded to the inquiry on May 27. The website had asked to provide the names, surnames of the chiefs and deputy chiefs as well as working phone numbers of all regional police departments, divisions and units.

The judgment was not appealed as of the end of the quarter.

**On May 11,** the Administrative Court of Appeal examined the appeal of the defendant on against the judgment of the first instance court on the case of *Transparency International Anticorruption Center NGO*, *LDPF foundation and Civilitas Foundation (the founder of Civilnet.am news website) v. Environmental Protection and Mining Inspection Body of the Republic of Armenia.* That judgment had granted the claim in part.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on August 23, 2021, claiming to obligate to provide the information and documents requested on July 12 of the same year. The inquiry and the requested data had to do with the results of an inspection in the mining sector in a specific time period. The court ruled to obligate the defendant to provide the requested information.

On June 1, the appeal was rejected, and the judgment of the first instance court was left unchanged.

**On May 11**, the news website Infocom.am asked the General Prosecutor's Office, to say whether the decision of the Criminal Court of Appeal on the case of Restart initiative members was appealed or not. Since the oral question received an unclear answer, a written inquiry was sent on May 15. The Prosecutor's Office responded to this clearly, however, only on May 24, which is a violation of the 5-day period established by the RA Law On Freedom of Information.

**Since May 11**, the Corruption Prevention Commission, failing to send replies to the inquiries Infocom.am website reporter, without mutual consent started to publish them in the News section of the official website of the Commission. The latter justified this practice with their subjective evaluations of the operation of the website.[[103]](#footnote-103) Taking into account the above stated, the editorial office applied to the Information Disputes Council to get an expert evaluation of the above-described practice and the issues it caused for journalists. In response to the application, on June 5, the Information Disputes Council announced that the actions of the Commission contradicted the national and international norms of freedom of information and protection of personal data. The editorial office sent the independent expert opinion to the Corruption Prevention Commission, and the latter terminated this practice thereafter.

**On May 15**, Lilit Hovhannisyan, the editor of *Media Kentron* of the Public Journalism Club, wrote to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vahe Ghazaryan, asking him to organize a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Arpi Sargsyan, in order to include the agency’s commentary on the incidents of torture at police stations and remarks on the police recruitment policy, in general, in a film under production. Both the letter and the subsequent calls remained unanswered.

**On May 16,** the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of Fip.am fact-checking platform, filed a lawsuit with the RA Administrative Court against the RA Investigative Committee, demanding to oblige the Committee to provide a comprehensive answer to the February 17 inquiry. The question read as follows: “Have criminal proceedings been instituted after the 44-day war regarding the theft of electric circuits, microprocessors and other parts from the missiles in the arsenal of the RA Armed Forces (if so, please provide some details of the relevant cases)?” The Investigative Committee promised to call back to respond to the inquiry, but no information was provided as of the end of the quarter.

On May 23, the claim was returned on the grounds that no evidence was presented as to the date of sending the inquiry to the respondent. On May 31, the claim was resubmitted, but on June 7, it was rejected with the same reasoning.

**On May 22**, the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of Fip.am fact-checking platform, submitted a lawsuit to the RA Administrative Court against the staff of the RA Supreme Judicial Council, the Judicial Department and its head Nairi Galstyan, to oblige them to provide exhaustive information to the inquiry made on March 14 and bring Nairi Galstyan to administrative liability.

The website made an inquiry, requesting details on the cases of desertion in a specific period of time. The inquiry remained unanswered.

On May 25, the lawsuit was returned on the grounds that the claims were related to different disputes, are not intertwined and were targeted at different defendants. On June 14, the amended lawsuit was submitted again, this time only against the staff of the RA Supreme Judicial Council and the Judicial Department. It was accepted for proceedings on June 21. The preliminary court hearing was scheduled for December 6. **On June 14**, the NGO filed a separate lawsuit against Nairi Galstyan on the same occasion and with the request to bring him to administrative liability on the grounds of Article 189.7 (Failure to provide information) of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Armenia. On June 21, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, and a court hearing was scheduled for December 6.

**On May 29**, the editor of Asparez.am website Ani Mkrtchyan sent an inquiry to the mayor of Gyumri community about control over illegal construction and initiation of administrative proceedings. The response to the inquiry was received with delay, namely on June 19, and was incomplete.

 **On May 30**, PastInfo.am news website sent an inquiry to the Prosecutor General's Office of the RA on the cases of infection with Pegasus online spyware. On June 2, a response letter was received from the Prosecutor's Office stating that the inquiry was forwarded to the National Security Service, and it was impossible to receive any response from the NSS till the end of the quarter.

 **On June 5**, Investigative Journalists NGO, the founder of *Hetq.am* online periodical, filed a lawsuit with the RA Administrative Court against the RA Ministry of High-Tech Industry (the RA Ministry of Finance is the 3rd party in the case). The NGO demanded to oblige the Ministry to provide the information, requested on May 22, namely on the contractors who had signed contracts with the agency and specify the amount of state support provided to them. On June 13, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, and a court hearing was scheduled for January 24, 2024.

 **On June 6,** Sputnik Armenia news website sent an inquiry to the staff of the Prime Minister of Armenia, asking them to inform about what gift the President of Turkey Recep Erdogan received from Nikol Pashinyan during his inauguration ceremony. The response that contained a rejection was received late on June 23, following many calls. The RA Prime Minister's staff informed that the data related to such measures were included in the list of procurements containing state secrets, therefore that information was not subject to publication.

**On June 9**, the editor of Asparez.am news website, Ani Mkrtchyan, sent an inquiry to Karen Harutyunyan, Director General of Electric Networks of Armenia CJSC, expecting to receive information about why the residents' request to straighten the bent electric pole was not met, whether it was dangerous, and if it was deemed safe, a professional opinion was requested.

The Electric Networks of Armenia CJSC sent its reply by post on June 28, with a delay, yet the issue was not resolved between the inquiry and the response.

**On June 12**, the journalist of Forrights.am website Hasmik Hambardzumyan asked the Ministry of Defense for clarifications regarding the health problems of a former serviceman and the procedure of organizing his treatment. No answer was received as of the end of the quarter, and the spokesman of the Ministry of Defense did not respond to the calls either.

 **On June 17**, Asparez.am news website sent an inquiry to the mayor of Artashat community regarding the number of children studying in preschool institutions, the rent amounts set, provided proviliges, as well as the children left out of preschool education and other issues. The inquiry was replied in violation of the 5-day period, established by law, and was received on July 3.

**On June 19**, Sputnik Armenia news website sent an inquiry to Yerevan Municipality, expecting answers to a number of questions regarding the modernization of the metro and the financing of construction works. No answer was received as of the end of the quarter.

**On June 21**, Arpi Hakobyan, a journalist of Factor.am news website, sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Internal Affairs about smoking ban violations, as well as the methods of control used. There was no response from the Ministry as of the end of the quarter.

**On June 22**, the editor of Asparez.am news website, Ani Mkrtchyan, sent an inquiry to the Mayor of Gyumri community to find out the reasons for the postponement of the elections of directors in the CNCOs of the city and the planned competitions. The response to the inquiry was received with a delay on June 30 and was incomplete, since some questions were skipped.

**On June 22**, the reporter of Aravot.am news website Hripsime Jebejyan sent an inquiry to National Assembly MP Tsovinar Vardanyan about the effectiveness of business trips to Russia, Greece, Spain and other countries. The inquiry remained unanswered.

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

**On April 11,** theCourt of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *Shark LLC (the founder of the Channel 5 TV company) v. the National Assembly MP Khachatur Sukiasyan*, with claims to oblige him to publicly refute the information considered as defamatory and pay monetary compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on November 25, 2022, was caused by an incident that happened in the National Assembly on November 7. During a briefing with journalists, Sukiasyan shouted at Channel 5 TV reporter Arpi Sukiasyan, did not let her finish the question, then referred to the media's political patronage, linking it to the second president of the Republic of Armenia, Robert Kocharyan, and called the latter a thief, a bandit, who was engaged in embezzlement: “You should join your owner and bring the billions back, you have no right to be called a media outlet...”[[104]](#footnote-104)

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 6, 2023.

**On April 12,** the Administrative Court of Appealaccepted for proceedings the appeal of the plaintiff on the case of *Armenian TV Channel 2 LLC v. the Commission on TV and Radio*, against the judgment of the first instance court which rejected the acceptance of the appeal for proceedings.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on Januray 5, with a claim to oblige the Commission to recognize the LLC as a winner in the licensing tender for the use of the slot for broadcasting in the capital via public multiplex and issuing a license to it. On Januray 12, the lawsuit was returned for corrections, it was resubmitted on February 6. On February 14, the acceptance of the lawsuit was rejected, since the mistake contained therein had not been corrected. The plaintiff appealed this decision in the Court of Appeal on March 21.

On May 4, the appeal was upheld, and the decision of February 14 was repealed. No further developments were registered as of the end of the quarter.

**On April 20**, the plaintiff filed an appeal against the decision of the court of first instance in another case of *Armenian TV Channel 2 LLC v. Commission on TV and Radio*. The first instance court had rejected the claim.

The lawsuit, submitted on February 18, 2022, included claims, demanding the recognition of the absence of legal relations for imposing a fine in the amount of one hundred times the minimum wage specified in Article 57(28) the RA Law On Audiovisual Media, which was cited in Decision No. 86-A of May 27 of the Commission on TV and Radio. That fine was imposed because, according to the Commission on TV and Radio, the TV company had not provided information on the gap in the amout of the previous year's revenue and net profit.

The appeal was accepted for proceedings on May 11, 2023. The trial was scheduled for April 25, 2024.

 **On April 25**, the defendant in the case of *Shark LLC (founder of Channel 5 TV company) v. MP Artur Hovhannisyan* again filed a cassation appeal against the decision of the Court of Appeal, by which the appeal was partially upheld, and Artur Hovhannisyan was obliged to apologize and pay 230,000 AMD of which 200,000 as the attorney’s fee and 30,000 as a state duty.

We should remind that the claim was submitted on October 23, 2020, with demands to publicly apologize and pay monetary compensation for the expressions considered as insults. The lawsuit was caused by the statements, made by the MP on his Facebook page about the TV company on October 6. "What are you uo to on Channel 5/5 TV? Even Ilyush and haqqin.az are softer in their use of language", then: "Perhaps our compatriots at Channel 5 were offended by my comparison with haqqin.az, but I am sure that they understood very well what I meant. And today there is absolutely no need to try to speak from the position of the victim and resort to provocations." On May 24, 2021, the court decided to reject the claim. The plaintiff appealed the decision in the Court of Appeal, where it was overturned and the case was sent for a new examination.

According to the judgment of August 4, 2022, the claim was partially granted. Artur Hovhannisyan was obliged to apologize publicly, pay 200,000 AMD as compensation, 24,000 AMD as a state duty and 500,000 AMD as an attorney’s reasonable fee. The defendant appealed this decision in the Court of Appeal. The latter upheld the appeal in part, reducing the amount subject to confiscation.

On May 3, the cassation appeal brought by Artur Hovhannisyan against the decision of the Civil Court of Appeal was rejected.

 **On June 5,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan received the case of *News AM LLC v. political scientist Styopa Safaryan*, which was returned for reexamination after the court decision was overturned.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 28, 2019, was caused by the defendant’s post on Facebook that the website had received an order from Robert Kocharyan’s office to publish some articles about judges.[[105]](#footnote-105)

On July 15, 2022, the claim was granted in part. The court obliged the defendant to make a public refutation of the defamatory information, discreting the business reputation of NewsAM LLC on his personal Facebook page and publish the court judgment. Besides, it was ruled to confiscate 500.000 AMD from Styopa Safaryan in favour of the plaintiff as compensation for slander, 18.000 AMD as state duty and 250.000 AMD as an attorney’s fee. On August 22, the defendant filed a complaint with the Court of Appeal which was upheld in part on March 31, 2023. The judgment was overturned and the case was sent to the same court for a new examination.

**On June 22**, the Administrative Court of Appeal returned the complaint submitted by the defendant of the case of *Husaber CJSC (founder of Yerkir Media TV company) v. the Commission on Television and Radio.*

 We should remind that the plaintiff demanded to repeal Decision No. 98-A of the Commission on TV and Radio, dated July 7, 2022, which was caused by swearing uttered during the livestream, titled "Protests continue in Yerevan and the regions", as well as the vulgarity and curse words used the film "Corruption 2: Retribution", which belittled and discredited universal human values. On December 14, the claim was granted, and the decision to impose an administrative penalty was repealed.

As of June 30, 2023, this case did not have any other developments.

**On April 6**, the appeal, filed by the plaintiff, was partially upheald in another case with Husaber CJSC (the founder of Yerkir Media TV station) against the Commission on TV and Radio, namely, the decision of the Administrative Court to reject the claim was annulled.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on February 13, before the judicial act, resolving administrative case VD/21112/05/21 (*H2 v. the Commission on Television and Radio* - **CPFE**) on the merits had taken effect. The plaintiff claimed to oblige the Commission to ensure that the plaintiff could broadcast, using the republican coverage slot in public multiplex.

**On February 21,** the claim was rejected to be accepted for proceedings, and the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Appeal. No other developments were reported until the end of the quarter, according to the Datalex information system, but Yerkir Media returned to the air on June 30, and the Commission on TV and Radio opened the call for a licensing competition for the use of the republican broadcasting slot in the public multiplex. The basis for this decision was the March 17 decision of the court in the case VD/2112/05/21 (*H2 v. the Commission of TV and Radio*), which rejected the claim, eliminated the applied measure to secure the claim (that is, prohibiting the Comimission on TV and Radio to organize a competition for the republican slot in public multiplex before the judicial act that resolved this case on the merit had entered into force).

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