**

**COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**



*REPORT*

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

*2023 third 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 third 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***

The third quarter of 2023 was a hyper-tense period for the Armenian media due to the fatal events taking place in Armenia and Artsakh. The Azerbaijani military aggression following the blockade of Artsakh and the acute humanitarian crisis there, the emigration of almost all Artsakh Armenians to Armenia, the coverage of the processes related to accepting tens of thousands of families here and creating at least minimum living conditions required the greatest efforts from the editorial offices. During the period under review, the elections of Yerevan Council of the Elders also took place, with uncompromising pre-election struggle and post-election developments. As usual, these processes, including the events in Nagorno-Karabakh, were combined with the aggravation of the socio-political situation in the country. In those conditions, when it was necessary to cover mass protests and police operations, the work of journalists and cameramen became even more difficult.

In the course of demonstrations, assemblies, and other events held in the atmosphere of intolerance and hostility, cases of physical violence and various other pressures, expressions of hatred, and impolite treatment of media representatives were also recorded. Thus, if there was no violence against journalists since the beginning of the year, 3 such cases were recorded in the third quarter: 1 in Stepanakert and 2 in Yerevan, during the coverage of the election campaign and post-election protests.

The other recorded types of pressure, including insults and threats, amount to 13. It is noteworthy that in some cases, journalists filed lawsuits against the authors of Internet posts in connection with the spread of hate speech, as well as expressions discrediting their honor and dignity. According to the data of the “DataLex” information system, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted 3 such cases for proceedings.

As for the number of new lawsuits filed against journalists and media, in the third quarter they amount to **6**, 2 out of which are from the Government, 3 from representatives of business circles, and 1 from another citizen. It is alarming that judicial practice continues to witness processes where plaintiffs, in addition to lawsuit demands, also file motions to apply a freezing order on the assets and bank accounts of the media outlet and/or journalist as an injunction, and the courts uphold them, which, in fact, puts additional pressure on the media and contradicts international norms.

The situation also remains problematic in terms of violations of the right to receive and disseminate information. **33** cases were registered in July-September, which is 9 more than the previous quarter.

In general, during the period under review, CPFE recorded **49** violations of the rights of journalists and media. They are described in the relevant sections of the report, and 11 Armenian journalistic organizations issued joint statements regarding the most controversial ones.

One of the important processes of the third quarter is that, on the initiative of some of the above-mentioned journalistic organizations, a Rapid Response Fund is being created for media workers forcibly displaced from Artsakh, which is already developing mechanisms to support Artsakh colleagues, and is finding appropriate resources in order to provide social and professional assistance.[[1]](#footnote-1)

***MEDIA ACTIVITIES ENVIRONMENT***

 On September 19 and 20, 2023, prior to Azerbaijan's military aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh, since the blockade of the Lachin Corridor, Armenian media have faced serious obstacles to carry out their professional activities in that and adjacent areas. That situation has not changed during the period under review either. In addition, as a rule, the Russian peacekeepers were the obstructors. They violated the right of journalists to receive and disseminate information even in the Armenian territory, outside their area of responsibility.

Thus, on August 26, a soldier of the Russian peacekeeping forces in Goris, without any explanation, forbade Syunik correspondent of Radio Liberty Tigran Hovsepyan to film dozens of Artsakh citizens who passed through the Lachin Corridor accompanied by peacekeepers and arrived in Armenia. Journalist organizations issued a statement in this regard on August 28, reminding that this is happening in a situation where Azerbaijani media at the Lachin checkpoint are filming unhindered, showing close-ups of people leaving Artsakh for Armenia, including medical patients, without their consent and, therefore, in violation of the right to respect for private life, while the Russian peacekeepers do not interfere in any way. This is a clearly discriminatory approach that is unacceptable and condemnable.[[2]](#footnote-2) The authors of the statement demanded the RA Government to immediately initiate negotiations with the command staff of the peacekeeping mission and, if necessary, with the heads of the responsible state institutionss of the Russian Federation, in order to clearly regulate and facilitate the work of representatives of the Armenian media in the Lachin Corridor and other adjacent zones.

The tense political situation in both Armenia and Artsakh led to the fact that many media coverages received a highly sensitive response and made emotions run high. In these conditions, as we mentioned, attacks on journalists increased. For example, the case of physical violence against Hayk Ghazaryan, a reporter of the Civilnet news website and a journalist of the Analyticon periodical, received a wide public response in Stepanakert on July 11. A group of people ambushed him, tried to kidnap him, and when they failed, they beat him up. The journalist recognized some of those people and said that they are from the circle of the NKR Minister of Internal Affairs. This incident was preceded by the obstruction of Hayk Ghazaryan's lawful professional activity two days ago. While covering the protest demonstration in Stepanakert, a policeman snatched the phone from his hand, which was later returned, but the recorded footage was deleted. On July 12, Armenian journalistic organizations issued a statement on this occasion, demanding the Prosecutor's Office of Artsakh to take all necessary measures to identify and prosecute the persons who beat the journalist, the Parliament and Government of Artsakh to express a stance on the violence, and the President to dismiss the Minister of Internal Affairs Karen Sargsyan, should his involvement in the aforementioned incident be proven.[[3]](#footnote-3) The human rights defender of Artsakh Gegham Stepanyan addressed the incident, informing that a discussion procedure has begun in his staff and demanding that law enforcement agencies take all actions to reveal the details of the incident, find out the identity of the persons who committed the alleged crime and bring them to justice.[[4]](#footnote-4) Later, according to the journalist, the President of Artsakh and the Acting Prosecutor General promised that the case would be processed and the culprits will be punished.

In the conditions of internal political tension, a journalist was also injured during the clashes in Yerevan. Thus, on September 19, Hetk Media Factory journalist Anush Mkrtchyan was injured as a result of the use of stun grenades by the police against the citizens who were protesting in front of the Government building.

The arrests in Syunik Marz were also alarming. On September 7, pro-Russian blogger Mika Badalyan and Sputnik Armenia news website columnist Ashot Gevorgyan, among other citizens, were arrested on the suspicion of illegal circulation of firearms, their main components, munitions and other materials, devices, and objects under the features of Article 335, Part 2 of the RA Criminal Code.[[5]](#footnote-5) They were released the next day. According to the Prosecutor's Office, the pre-investigation is ongoing. Gor Abrahamyan, the press secretary of the Investigative Committee, said in response to the CPFE inquiry that the incident had nothing to do with the professional activities of the above-mentioned persons.

In the same way, according to official information, the arrest of Davit Sargsyan, commenter of 168.am news website on September 25, had nothing to do with journalistic activities. He was detained from the YSU building on the suspicion of violating public order and apparently committing hooliganism.[[6]](#footnote-6) He was later released.

The third quarter was the period of the election campaign of Yerevan Council of Elders and the elections themselves, and as during any such political events, this time the media representatives were not spared from targeting, hate speech, insults, violations of the right to receive information, and even physical violence. Thus, on September 15, the last day of the election campaign of Yerevan Council of the Elders, one of the participants in the rally of the Government candidate Tigran Avinyan cursed and hit the editor of NewDay.am website Ani Gevorgyan with a flag. And earlier, on September 11, again during the election campaign and again one of the supporters of the ruling power attacked the same Ani Gevorgyan, insulting and threatening her.

By the way, as it turned out later, this is the same citizen who sent threats on the Internet to Aravot.am reporter Hripsime Jebejyan after she disrespected the head of the country during the press conference of the RA Prime Minister on July 25, asking Nikol Pashinyan: "Have you ever thought what will happen on the day when you cease your physical existence? Who will mourn you, except your family members...?" During the same press conference, Ani Gevorgyan, the editor of the NewDay.am news website, also asked hateful questions, after which those two journalists were targeted by various people on Facebook, including fake users.

The Prime Minister's press conference and the uproar surrounding it on July 28 triggered another announcement by CPFE and partner journalistic organizations. [[7]](#footnote-7) This time, attention was drawn not only to the rights of journalists, but also to the responsibilities, the need to observe the norms of professional ethics. In particular, it was noted that the organizational problems of the press conference, on the one hand, and the behavior of Ani Gevorgyan and Hripsime Jebejyan, on the other hand, were far from professional perceptions of how the dialogue between the top state figure and the public through journalists should proceed in a country facing complex challenges. Subjective interpretations of facts, manifestations of intolerance, lack of concrete and constructive discussions of problems, disrespect towards each other, disregard for the principles of professional ethics - that was the picture that our compatriots witnessed. After an event of such quality, it was difficult to avoid reactions that were polarized, full of mutual hatred, deepening the dissonance between different political and journalistic camps, and not containing any healthy analysis.

As for the campaign against Ani Gevorgyan and Hripsime Jebejyan on social networks and separate media outlets, with obscenity, curses and threats addressed to them after the press conference, then, according to journalistic organizations, even obvious violations of professional norms do not give anyone the right to respond with insolence and extreme hostility.

Taking into account the aforementioned, the authors of the statement called on the Government to fulfill its positive duty and protect the rights of journalists, to take appropriate measures to identify and prosecute the offenders, and on the representatives of the journalistic community and the public communication sector to hold civilized professional discussions about the incident, excluding mutual insults and hate speech. Otherwise, multifaceted provocations and their unkind reactions will become mutually feeding phenomena. All this will push the discussions on the solutions of current problems into the background; tolerance, restraint and respect for professional standards will be eventually ignored, and instead the generation of hostility in the information sector will continue.

This statement was not accepted unequivocally by a part of the journalistic community, and on July 30, they issued a response statement,[[8]](#footnote-8) noting that "The journalists' questions were sharp in some episodes, which is typical of all journalists who respect the profession, and against the background of the current situation in Armenia and Artsakh, those who live in Armenia and especially the journalists who feel the weight of the situation on themselves, as besides being journalists, they are also citizens."

Meanwhile, by expressing such a stance, the authors of the statement, in fact, neglected the difference between the rights and responsibilities of professional journalists and ordinary citizens in the information field. In particular, the fact that there is a whole system of domestic and international legal regulations for journalistic activities, which are not mandatory for other persons. In addition, all journalists who respect the profession are obliged to observe the norms of journalistic ethics, to follow them, rather than, for example, turning into a participant or activist while covering a protest demonstration, forgetting about their mission and giving in to emotions. The same applies to the press conference: it is unacceptable when, disguised by the right to ask "sharp questions" and the determination to express a "civic stance", a journalist violates the norms of basic ethics. In the end, it is the choice of every journalist to fulfill their mission or to stop being a representative of that profession, to get rid of the obligations related to journalism and to carry out other activities.

As for the cases of insulting and threatening journalists Ani Gevorgyan and Hripsime Jebejyan on the Internet, the first of them filed 1 and the second one filed 2 lawsuits against specific Facebook users. These facts are presented in the "Pressures" section of the report.

At the same time, some media outlets also stood out for their discrimination and hate speech when covering the protest demonstrations that took place in Yerevan in September. In particular, the publications targeted the "Karabakh people", who were generally attributed the debacles recorded during the demonstrations. In this regard, the Information Disputes Council and the Media Self-Regulation Observatory made a joint statement emphasizing the inappropriateness of such coverage.

During the quarter, 3 cases of physical violence and 13 cases of various other pressures were recorded, including 6 new lawsuits against journalists and media outlets, compared to 15 in the previous quarter. One of those lawsuits received the special attention of journalistic organizations and the general public, because within the framework of the case, a motion was filed to put a freezing order on the property of the defendant, the founder of the media outlet, in the amount of the claim -1 million AMD, and the court upheld it. Thus, on August 17, the Civil Contract Party filed a lawsuit against the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the Fip.am news website, demanding to refute the defamatory factual data and pay a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the investigative article published on the Fip.am website on July 21 entitled: "Civil Contract Collects Votes for Avinyan Using the Administrative Resources of Other Communities".[[9]](#footnote-9) On August 25, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. But in that process, using an injunction and placing a freezing order on the defendant's property, according to experts, is a prime example of putting additional pressure on the media in this case.

During the previous quarter, we have already touched upon this issue on the case of Yerevan Deputy Mayor Tigran Avinyan v. 168 Hours and journalist Davit Sargsyan, when the court judgement to apply an injunction against the journalist was canceled after the statement of journalistic organizations.[[10]](#footnote-10) However, it is alarming that the judgements to put freezing orders on the property and bank accounts of media outlets are repeated in judicial practice and the authorities continue to use this pressure tool. Courts uphold such motions instead of opposing them. It is known that such judgements limit the free activity of media and can lead to bankruptcy. And as long as the non-application of an injunction does not prevent the execution of the judicial act, it should not be applied, as required by international norms.

In this regard, journalistic organizations issued a statement on September 6, noting that filing a motion to put a freezing order on the property of the media is in itself an attempt to "settle the score" with the editorial office, which is impermissible.[[11]](#footnote-11) And the unsubstantiated judgments of the courts on upholding such motions contradict the international norms and practice, disrupting the normal activities of the editorial offices. Meanwhile, the courts should resist the attempts of the plaintiffs to use the judicial mechanisms as a "punitive tool" against the media. Taking into account the aforementioned, the authors of the statement requested the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan to immediately abolish the judgement to put a freezing order on the property of the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the Fip.am fact-checking platform, and to take back the enforcement notice sent to the Compulsory Enforcement Service of Judicial Acts. They also requested Civil Contract Party to withdraw the motion to apply an injunction, showing political broad-mindedness and tolerance, and to focus on the actual informational dispute in the court case.

During the period under review, other cases were also recorded when the activities of the media outlets were hindered by the judicial authorities. Thus, on July 3, the Supreme Judicial Council forbade media access to the previously announced open court hearing. No explanation or reasoning was presented from the Supreme Judicial Council regarding the incident. Thus, the decision of that body was violated, according to which the access of journalists to open hearings is free. Another incident was recorded on August 31 at the Center residence of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, when media representatives were forbidden to broadcast live and then videotape during the open hearing.

The incident with the reporter of the Vanadzor Lori TV company is also one of the examples of the unprofessional work of the authorities with the media. The journalist informed the CPFE that they demanded accreditation from him to film in the Municipality. Meanwhile, it is known that the law does not envisage the accreditation of media in local self-government bodies. The latter themselves should be interested in being open to journalists and the public.

In the months of July-September, the complaints filed by journalists about violations of the right to receive and disseminate information concerned the RA Government Staff, the Ministries of Defense, Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Yerevan Municipality and other state bodies, which either avoided answering written inquiries for various unfounded reasons, or sent responses with "ambiguous" content that did not correspond to the essence of the questions.

The number of such violations increased by 9 compared to the previous quarter, reaching 33. In 4 of them, the media outlets filed lawsuits against state bodies.

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

 We report the violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the third 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 third quarter of 2023, as well as the developments related to the previous incidents.

***In total, there were 49 reported violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the third quarter of 2023. 3 of them were cases of physical violence against media and their personnel, 13 were cases of pressure against the media and their personnel, and 33 were cases of violations of the right to receive and disseminate information.***

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

**Quantitative Data on Violations in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Quarters of 2023**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 1st quarter of 2023 | 2nd quarter of 2023 | 3rd quarter of 2023 | Total |
| Physical violence against journalists | 0 | 0 | **3** | **3** |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | 17 | 18 | **13** | **48** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | 48 | 24 | **33** | **105** |

**Quantitative Data on Violations in the 3rd Quarters of 2022-2023**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 3rd quarter of 2022 | 3rd quarter of 2023 |
| Physical violence against journalists | 2(3 victims) | **3** |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | 18 | **13** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | 20 | **33** |

**Lawsuits, Involving Media and Journalists in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Quarters of 2023**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  Types of court cases | 1st quarter of 2023 | 2nd quarter of 2023 | 3rd quarter of 2023 | Total |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 9 | 15 | **6** | **30** |
| Economic and other disputes | 0 | 1 | **0** | **1** |

**Lawsuits, Involving Media and Journalists in the 3rd Quarters of 2022-2023**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 3rd quarter of 2022 | 3rd quarter of 2023 |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 9 | 6 |
| Economic and other disputes | 0 | 0 |

As in the previous reports, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression would like to note that the data in the table may not be comprehensive and do not claim absolute accuracy. Media representatives sometimes find it unnecessary to publicize facts 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 third quarter of 2023, 3 cases of physical violence against media personnel were recorded. Below we present them and the developments related to the past instances of use of violence in chronological order.*

**On July 7,** 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 July 14, September 15 and 29, and the next one was scheduled for November 30.

**On July 11**, Hayk Ghazaryan, a reporter of the Civilnet news website and a journalist of the Analyticon periodical, underwent physical violence in Stepanakert. A group of people ambushed him, tried to kidnap him, and when they failed, they beat him up. The journalist recognized some of those people and said that they were from the circle of the NKR Minister of Internal Affairs Karen Sargsyan. This incident was preceded by the obstruction of Hayk Ghazaryan's lawful professional activity two days ago. While covering the protest demonstration in Stepanakert, a policeman snatched the phone from his hand, which was later returned, but the recorded footage was deleted. The journalistic organizations issued a statement in this regard.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**On July 19,** 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 also held on July 26, August 1, and the next one is scheduled for October 17.

 **On September 15**, the last day of the election campaign of Yerevan Council of Elders, one of the participants in the rally of the Government candidate Tigran Avinyan cursed and hit the editor of NewDay.am website Ani Gevorgyan with a flag.

The CPFE sent an inquiry regarding the case to the RA Prosecutor's Office, from where it was addressed to the Prosecutor's Office of Erebuni and Nubarashen administrative districts. In a reply letter, they informed that a criminal proceeding was initiated in connection with the incident under Article 237, Part 3 of the RA Criminal Code, journalist Ani Gevorgyan was recognized as a victim and was interrogated. The pre-investigation is ongoing.

**On September 19**, Hetk Media Factory journalist Anush Mkrtchyan, who was covering the demonstration, was injured as a result of the use of stun grenades by the police against the citizens who were protesting in front of the Government building.[[13]](#footnote-13) She received a shrapnel injury, which, according to the doctors, also caused a superficial burn.

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

*In the third quarter of 2023,* ***13*** *cases of various 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 July 3,** the Supreme Judicial Council prohibited the media from entering the previously announced open court hearing. They did not provide any explanation or reasoning from the Supreme Judicial Council. Thus, the decision of that body was violated, according to which the access of journalists to open hearings is free.[[14]](#footnote-14)

 **On July 3**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *the former Mayor of Yerevan Hrachya Sargsyan and the former Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Hayk Hovhannisyan v. Zhoghovurd newspaper editorial office LLC*, claiming a refutation of the information defaming honor, dignity and business reputation and a monetary compensation.

The lawsuit was filed on April 6 and 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 aforementioned officials. The claim was accepted for proceedings on April 18, whereas the motion for injunction to put a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected. A court hearing was held also on August 21, the next one is scheduled for December 5.

**On July 3,** after redistribution,the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted for new proceedings 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**.**[[16]](#footnote-16)

A court hearing is scheduled for November 27, 2023.

 **On July 3,** 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.

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 website on July 7, which stated that Hovsepyan was notorious for her insulting statements on Facebook about public institutions, politicians, journalists, and businessmen, due to which she was fined in the amount of 200,000 AMD by the court judgement.[[17]](#footnote-17)

A court hearing was also held on September 4, the next one was scheduled for November 22.

**On July 4,** 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 considered defamatory and confiscation of a compensation.The next court hearing was scheduled for February 1, 2024.

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[[18]](#footnote-18) and January 15, 2022[[19]](#footnote-19) 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.

 A hearing on the second lawsuit was held on September 28, the next one was scheduled for January 11, 2024.

 **On July 6,** the Court of General Jursdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *already former* *NA MP Vahe Enfiajyan v.* *Social Media LLC*, *the founder of Mamul.am website*, demanding public refutation of the information discrediting his honor and dignity and a compensation for defamation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on April 16, 2021, and was caused by the article published on *Mamul.am* website on December 9, 2020, entitled: “Vahe Enfiajyan's Assistant Offers to Write Praises about Tsarukyan in Exchange for Money, and to Discredit Pashinyan”.[[20]](#footnote-20)

On March 9, 2022, the lawsuit was partially upheld: the court obligated *Social Media LLC* to refute the defamatory information about Vahe Enfiajyan on the *Mamul.am* website, noting also that Liana Manukyan mentioned in the article was not Vahe Enfiajyan's assistant. On April 18, the defendant filed an appeal with the Civil Court of Appeal where on June 22, the judgment was overturned due to insufficiency of evidencial facts, and the case was sent for a new trial.

On July 27, according to the court judgement, the lawsuit was rejected. The judicial act entered into legal force.

 **On July 6, the plaintiff on the case of *the Director of Alaverdi Medical Center CJSC Stepan Mosinyan v. journalist Larisa Paremuzyan and CivilNet online television* filed an appeal against the judgement of the First Instance Court, according to which the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori Marz (Alaverdi residence) rejected the lawsuit on June 14, 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: “The Director of Alaverdi MC – the Monopolist of the “Death” Business”, published on Civilnet.am website on March 14, which stated: “...Mosinyan uses the Patho-Anatomical Department of the Medical Center as a source of enrichment”.[[21]](#footnote-21)** (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 August 8, the appeal was returned, on the 17th it was filed again and accepted for proceedings on September 8.**

 **On July 6**, Deputy Head of the Shirak Marz Investigative Department Hovhannes Poghosyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan for the third time against 168 Hours LLC and journalist Gohar Savzyan, demanding to refute the defamatory information and pay a compensation. The previous 2 times, the lawsuit was returned due to document deficiencies.

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”.[[22]](#footnote-22) The website, referring to its sources, noted that Hovhannes Poghosyan benefited from being the former colleague of the Chairman of the Investigative Committee, Argishti Kyaramyan.

The claim was accepted for proceedings on July 21, a court hearing was scheduled for October 2.

 **On July 7,** 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 businessman Vahe Keushgueryan.[[23]](#footnote-23) 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 hearing on the case was scheduled for October 6, 2023.

**On July 7,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of the ruling Civil Contract party v. 168 hours ltd., claiming refutation of defamatory information and compensation: The next court hearing is scheduled for October 31.

 We should remind that on April 25, the ruling Civil Contract party filed **4** lawsuits with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan with the same claim. The lawsuits were also filed against 24 News, News.AM LLCs and Hayeli Club NGO, and were caused by 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.

A court hearing on the case of 24news was held on July 14, the next one was scheduled for December 14. A court hearing on the case of News.am was held on August 23, there has been a distribution of the burden of proof, a court hearing has been scheduled for December 6. As for the case of Hayeli.am, a court hearing was held on July 18, the next one was scheduled for October 9. We should remind that in the latter’s case the motion to apply an injunction of putting a freezing order in the amount of the claim was upheld.

**On July 7,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the trial on the case of *Demi Pharm LLC v. Hetq LLC (founder of Hetq.am website)*, claiming public refutation of the information considered 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”.[[24]](#footnote-24) 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.

 A court hearing on the case was also held on August 9, the date of publication of the judicial act was set on the 22nd, but it was not published.

 **On July 10**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted for proceedings the lawsuit filed by Project Inter-Invest LLC against Hraparak Daily LLC and journalist Suzan Simonyan on April 25, demanding to refute the information defaming business reputation and pay a 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.”[[25]](#footnote-25) 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 refiled on June 27. On July 10, according to the court judgement, the plaintiff's motion to apply an injunction was rejected. No other developments have been recorded by the end of the quarter.

 **On July 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the court hearing on the case of *Mher Terteryan v. Hraparak Daily LLC,* demanding refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the expression discrediting his business reputation. The plaintiff is the son of Hayk Terteryan, Honorary Consul of the RA in Aktyubinsk Region of Kazakhstan.
 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.[[26]](#footnote-26) The article particularly mentions that the bodies of sick pigs were buried in the land around the pig farm belonging to the Terteryans, 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.[[27]](#footnote-27) Court hearings on the case were also held on August 21 and September 28, the next one was scheduled for November 7.

**On July 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing 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 is scheduled for October 19.

 **On July 11,** Luyser CJSC filed a lawsuit against Zhoghovurd newspaper editorial office LLC, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory and payment of a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the article published on June 8 on the Armlur.am website owned by the LLC, entitled: "The Yard of Luyser Residential Buildings Crawls with Snakes and Scorpions. Residents are Raising the Alarm".[[28]](#footnote-28)

On July 26, the claim was returned due to inaccuracies, it was refiled on September 8, and was accepted for proceedings on September 20. The motion to apply an injunction was rejected.

**On July 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the investigation of the criminal case related to the attack on the house of journalist Tehmine Yenokyan.

We should remind that on July 12, 2022, journalist Tehmine Yenokyan reported a crime on her Faceboook page: 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.[[29]](#footnote-29) 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 31,2023, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan received a criminal case from the Prosecutor’s Office of Avan and Nor Nork administrative districts, by which citizen Hayk Grigoryan was indicted.

 A hearing on the case was also held on September 7, the next one was scheduled for October 19.

**On July 12,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Europe of Law Union 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”**,**[[30]](#footnote-30) as well as Narek Malyan's film with the same content shown on December 5 on ArmNews TV.[[31]](#footnote-31)

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled for October 12.

**On July 12**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to terminate the proceedings of the case of *Pretty Way LLC (the owner of Vesta electrical appliances store chain) v. Murk LLC, the founder of Mitk.am website, and journalist Simon Sargsyan*, on the grounds of approving the reconciliation agreement.

The lawsuit, claiming apology and refutation of the defamatory information detrimental to business reputation and payment of a monetary compensation, was filed on December 20, 2022, and was caused by the article, entitled: “Stay away from the Վեստա-Vesta Furniture Store, they are Inhumane” published on the website on December 8, where the author, describing his own experience, told how impolite, deceitful and inhumane the menioned store was.[[32]](#footnote-32)

 **On July 12,** the Court of Cassation returned the appeal of the plaintiff against the judgement of the Court of Appeal on the case of *Armenian Channel 2 vs. the Commission on Television and Radio* (Boon TV scientific and cultural foundation as third party), which left the judgment of the Court of General Jurisdiction on rejecting the lawsuit unchanged.

The lawsuit, filed on August 9, 2022, claimed the abolishment of Decision N 103-A dated 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 August 18, the plaintiff again filed an appeal with the Court of Cassation

**On September 13**, the Court of Appeal continued the court hearing on 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 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. The investigation of the case was resumed.

The day of publication of the judicial act was set for October 5.

**On July 13,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to reject Davit Sargsyan’s motion on applying statute of limitation 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*.

The lawsuit, filed on October 7, 2021, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, 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.”[[33]](#footnote-33) 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.

A court hearing is scheduled for November 23, 2023.

 **On July 14,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to uphold the lawsuit of Gegham Vardanyan, Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission againstPastinfo 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.”[[34]](#footnote-34)

The court obliged the defendant to publish a refutation and pay 500,000 AMD in compensation for the damage to honor and dignity, 200,000 AMD as an attorney's fee and 48,000 AMD as a state duty.

As of September 30, there has been no information about appealing the judgement.

**On July 14, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Armavir Marz (Echmiadzin residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of *Serob Sargsyan, Deputy Head of Ajapnyak administrative district of Yerevan, v. Liana Sargsyan, journalist of Yerkir Media TV company*, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, refutation of defamatory information and an apology. The defendant's motion for the recusal of the judge on the grounds of bias was rejected.**

**The lawsuit was filed on May 16, 2022, and was caused by Liana Sargsyan's post on Facebook on 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 hearings were also held on August 18, September 29, with the next one scheduled for December 1.**

 **On July 14,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *Vardan Badasyan (the father of the former RA Minister of Justice Rustam Badasyan -* ***CPFE****) v. Narek Mantashyan, News.am LLC (the founder of news.am website), Datablog LLC (the founder of Blognews.am website), Analitic LLC (the founder of Analitik.am news website), Ipress.am LLC (the founder of Ipress.am news website),* and ruled to distribute the burden of proof.

Thelawsuit, claiming a confiscation of a compensation and publication of refutation, wasfiledon 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.[[35]](#footnote-35) (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2020-2023, in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The next court hearing is scheduled for November 1.

**On July 17,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on 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, 2023, was caused by a February 25 video, published on the YouTube channel of 168.am website: "Tigran Avinyan. the Newly Emerged Richman" 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**.**[[36]](#footnote-36)

On May 2, accepting the case for proceedings, the court also granted the motion to apply an injunction and put a freezing order on the property and bank accounts of the media outlet and the journalist in the amount of 9 million AMD each. 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.

A court hearing was also held on September 4 and the plaintiff's motion to change the subject of the claim was upheld. The next hearing was scheduled for November 8.

 **On July 17**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to partially uphold citizen Artur Vardanyan’s lawsuit against168 Zham Ltd. and citizen David Pirumyan with claims of obligating the defendant to apologize, refute the defamatory information and confiscating a compensation. The court obliged Davit Pirumyan to apologize on the website and in another print media, to confiscate the state duties, and to pay 100 thousand AMD to both parties at the same time as attorneys' reasonable fee.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on July 10, 2020, was caused by an article, entitled: “Nikol Pashinyan Talked to Artur Vardanyan during His Campaign” and published in 168.am website on March 6.[[37]](#footnote-37) The website quoted Pirumyan: “The Prime-Minister warmly greeted the terrorist Artur Vardanyan on the street who was incomprehensibly released by the court during the former’s rule.” On June 15, 2021, the court ruled to reject the claim on the grounds of statute of limitations, for which the defendant had filed a motion. The plaintiff filed an appeal to the Civil Court of Appeal, where the appeal was upheld, the judgement of the Court of General Jurisdiction was overturned, and the case was sent to the same court for a new trial.

On September 5, the defendant filed an appeal.

**On July 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *citizen Arsen Ghukasyan v. Media News LLC* *(the founder of the Medianews.am website)*, demanding refutation of defamatory information and a compensation for damage.

The lawsuit was filed on June 14, 2022, and was caused by the article published on the website on May 26, entitled: "Arsen Ghukasyan Made a Row in the Court Yesterday and Insulted the Judge. Why did the Court of Appeal Decide to Investigate the Appeal against Pashinyan behind Closed Doors?”[[38]](#footnote-38) According to the article, the relatives of the victims of the 44-day war, including the plaintiff, are politicizing the ongoing court hearings on charges of treason and using them against the current authorities.

The next court hearing is scheduled for October 24.

 **On July 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the 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,[[39]](#footnote-39) according to which News.am refuted their publication about an unpleasant incident involving the minister at the request of the Ministry of Defense.[[40]](#footnote-40)

 The next court hearing is scheduled for October 12.

  **On July 19,** the Court of Cassation returned the appeal of the plaintiff against the judgment of the court on the case of *citizen Zaven Hakobyan v. Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., the founder of Zhamanak Daily*, which was challenging the motion on changing the manner and procedure of the execution of the judgment.

The lawsuit, filed on July 13, 2020, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to honor and 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.”[[41]](#footnote-41) On July 19, 2021, the lawsuit was partially upheld (the media outlet was obligated to publish an apology text, pay 200,000 AMD to the plaintiff in compensation, 100,000 AMD as the attorney's fee and 8000 AMD as a state duty).

 On August 18, a cassation appeal was filed again, on September 6 it was accepted for proceedings.

**On July 20,** during a public hearing at the Vanadzor Municipality, the acting secretary of the staff Hayk Virabyan, obstructed the professional activities of the journalist of Lori TV station Lusine Sargsyan, specifically forbidding filming. The official demanded accreditation, which is not provided by any legislative act in the case of local self-government bodies.

 **On July 20,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NA MP Khachatur Sukiasyan v. Vazgen Sagahatelyan, the Press Secretary of the Reviving Armenia Party (third party: NewsAM LLC)*, with claims of public apology, refutation of information considered defamatory as well as payment of a compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on August 12, 2022, was caused by the ideas expressed by Saghatelyan during the July 29 demonstration of the opposition in Yerevan according to which the MP was involved in the business of licensing the gas cylinders in cars and was benefitting from the relevant decree of the Government. The speech under question was published by News.am website, belonging to NewsAM LLC, involved in the case as the third party. On August 23, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, and the plaintiff’s motion of placing a freezing order on the property, as well as the monetary assets of the defendant in an amount equal to the claim, was rejected.
 The next court hearing is scheduled for November 30.

**On July 25**, 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 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.

A court hearing was also held on September 6, the next one was scheduled for November 29.

**On July 26,** the defendant on the case of *Arthur Vanetsyan, former Head of the NSS and (already former) leader of the I Have Honor Alliance of the NA v. Gurgen (Gagik) Melkonyan, a member of the Civil Contract faction of the NA (third party:* *Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC*) applied to the Court of Appeal, challenging the judgement of the First Instance Court, which had paritally upheld the lawsuit, obligating the defendant to refute the disputed statements on H1 TV channel, pay 500,000 AMD as compensation for defamation, and 18,000 AMD as state duty.

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.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

On August 18, the appeal was accepted for proceedings of the Court of Appeal. No other developments have been registered by the end of the quarter.

**On July 26,** editor of NewDay.am news website Ani Gevorgyan and Aravot.am journalist Hripsime Jebejyan were targeted on Facebook by various people, including fake users, for the questions they addressed to the RA Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan during the press conference the day before. Threats, insults and curses were addressed to the journalists.[[43]](#footnote-43) On this occasion, they filed claims to the court.

**On July 27,** the "French University in Armenia" Foundation filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against French citizen Leo Nikolian (3rd party: Bats TV LLC) with demands to oblige him to refute defamatory information and to confiscate a compensation for defamatory statements. The lawsuit was caused by Leo Nikolian's interview on Bats TV, in which he accuses of corruption the former Ambassador of France to Armenia Anne Louyot and the French University in Armenia.[[44]](#footnote-44)

On August 10, the claim was returned, on the 21st it was filed again, on the 31st it was accepted for proceedings. The motion to place a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim was granted. As of September 30, a court hearing has not been scheduled.

**On July 31,** the Rector of the French University in Armenia Sandra Bourdichon (aka Salwa Nacouzi), filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against the French citizen Leo Nikolian, demanding to publicly apologize for the insult, to refute the defamatory information, and to confiscate compensation from the defendant for defamatory statements. Third party in the case included: Free Speech Platform Media NGO (founder of the "Politik.am" website) in connection with the article: "The French Ambassador to Armenia Sold Information to Azerbaijan for 5 Million AMD" published on July 12, in which accusations were also addressed to the Rector of the University;[[45]](#footnote-45) Hayeli Club NGO (founder of the Hayeli.am website) for the insulting remarks made by Nikolian in that club on July 14, according to which the Rector is the ambassador's friend, and they are known for corruption scandals;[[46]](#footnote-46) Iravunk.com news website of the Constitutional Law Union Party for the article: "Criminal Case should Be Initiated against Anne Louyot under the Article of Treason. Leo Nikolian", in which the Rector of the French University is again accused of corrupt dealings with the Ambassador of France;[[47]](#footnote-47) as well as Bats TV LLC for similar accusations made on the air again. [[48]](#footnote-48)

The claim was returned on August 11, and the plaintiff appealed this judgement to the Court of Appeal on August 28. That appeal was also returned; on September 22, it was filed again; on the 28th, its acceptance was rejected by the judgement of the Court of Appeal.

**On August 1,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the former Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Suren Papikyan (currently the Minister of Defense) 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 “without paying” as they provide services, demanding an apartment as a donation.[[49]](#footnote-49) On December 17, the motion to apply injunction of a freezing order on the property was upheld.

On March 31, 2022, the Court ruled to reject Suren Papikyan's lawsuit and maintain the injunction of a freezing order on the private entrepreneur in the amount of 1,200,000 AMD, until the decision enters into legal force.On April 29,the plaintiff appealed the judgement in the Court of Appeal. On September 6, the appeal was upheld. The judgment on the rejection of the demand to oblige to refute the information considered defamatory was overturned and the case was sent to the same court for a new trial.

The next court hearing was scheduled for April 23, 2024.

**On August 2,** the cassation appeal, filed by the plaintiff against the judgement of the Court of Appeal, which upheld the defendant’s appeal and overturned the judgment of the First Instance Court, having granted the claim in part, on the case of *Mega Trade LLC, owned by Khachatur Sukiasyan, v. News.am* website, was returned and was filed again on the 28th.

We should remind that the lawsuit filed on April 19, 2021, was caused by an article published on the News.am website on March 25, entitled: “Poor Quality Petrolium Imported by Khachatur Sukiasyan Spoils Car Engines. Déjà vu”, with a reference to an unidentifiable Telegram channel.[[50]](#footnote-50)
 By the end of the quarter, no other developments have been registered in the case.

 **On August 8,** the Court of Appreal accepted the appeal of the defendant against the judgment of the 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”.[[51]](#footnote-51) 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.

By the end of the quarter, no other developments have been registered.

 **On August 3,** the plaintiff on the case of the Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC vs. Pastinfo LLC filed an appeal in the Court of Appeal against the judgement of the First Instance Court, which rejected the lawsuit.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 2, 2022,claiming a refutation of the information defaming the business reputation and a payment of monetary compensation, 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.[[52]](#footnote-52)

On April 11, 2022, the Court rejected the lawsuit, and the plaintiff was obliged to pay 200,000 AMD in favor of the media outlet as an attorney’s reasonable fee. On August 29, the judge was replaced at the Court of Appeal, on September 1, the appeal was returned, and on September 20, it was filed again. On the same day, the judge was replaced again.

**On August 7,** the Court ruled to indicte the defendant 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.* and to dismiss the prosecution against him without imposing a sentence on the grounds that the statute of limitations for prosecution had expired.

We should remind that on July 6, 2020, the Court received a criminal case from the Prosecutor’s Office of Kentron and Nork-Marash administrative districts against Hasmik Martirosyan, director of Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., who was charged for the deliberate failure of the execution of a legally effective judicial act in the prescribed period. Thus, on January 18, 2019, the court partially 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 judgement has not been appealed.

 **On August 8**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *NA Speaker Alen Simonyan v. Mediahub LLC (Mediahub.am website)*, claiming refutation of defamatory information and payment of a compensation in the amount of 1 million AMD.

The lawsuit, filed on April 19, 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.[[53]](#footnote-53)

 The claim was accepted for proceedings on May 5, the motion to place a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim was rejected.

The next court hearing was scheduled for December 12.

 **On August 9,** the Civil Court of Appeal accepted for proceedings the plaintiff’s appeal against the May 4 judgement of the First Instance Court on the case of *Armenian National Interests Fund* CJSC v. *Hraparak Daily LLC and Hrant Bagratyan, former Prime Minister of the RA*, according to which the lawsuit was rejected, and the Armenian National Interests Fund was obliged to pay 100,000 AMD in favor of the media outlet as an attorney’s reasonable fee.

The lawsuit, filed on October 20, 2021, demanding refutation of information discrediting business reputation as well as monetary compensation, 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.[[54]](#footnote-54)

No other developments have been registered by the end of the quarter.

 **On August 11,** the Civil Court of Appeal accepted for proceedings the defendant’s appeal against the judgement of the First Instance Court on the case of *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Hraparak Daily LLC,* which upheld the lawsuit partially. 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.

We should remind that the lawuit, filed on June 21, 2019, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honour, dignity and reputation through defamation and insult, was caused by a June 19, 2019 article, entitled: “Pashinyan Showed a Yellow Card to Hayk Sargsyan.”[[55]](#footnote-55) (For details see the reports of CPFE for 2019-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

No other developments have been registered by the end of the quarter.

**On August 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Syunik Marz (Meghri residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of *investigator Narek Abgaryan v. former Mayor of Meghri Arshavir Hovhannisyan (with the founder of the Syunyats Yerkir newspaper "Syunyats Ashkhar" LLC as a third party)*, with claims of refutation of defamatory information and compensation of the damage caused to honor and dignity. On that day, the Court ruled to clarify the lawsuit matter.

The lawsuit was filed on July 16, 2019, and was caused by the statements made by Arshavir Hovhannisyan about Narek Abgaryan, which were published on June 16 in the *Syunyats Yerkir* provincial newspaper. In particular, those statements included: "nonsense", "smarty pants", "the investigator didn't understand", "look how my investigator grew into a big boy", "the parents don't influence either".

A court hearing was also held on September 22, the next one was scheduled for October 20.

 **On August 15,** 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, v. 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 next court hearing on the case is scheduled for December 5.

 **On August 17**, the Civil Contract Party filed a lawsuit against the Union of Informed Citizens NGO (the founder of the Fip.am news website), demanding to refute the defamatory factual data and pay a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the investigative article published on the Fip.am website on July 21 entitled: "Civil Contract Collects Votes for Avinyan Using the Administrative Resources of Other Communities".[[56]](#footnote-56)

On August 25, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. The court upheld the motion of applying an injunction and placing a freezing order on the defendant's property in the claim amount of 1 million AMD. Journalist organizations made a statement in this regard, considering the application of the freezing order as additional pressure on the media outlet.[[57]](#footnote-57)
 The next court hearing is scheduled for October 2.

**On August 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Ruben Khachatryan, the former Director of the Yerevan Zoo, against citizen Manuk Manukyan (third party – Iravunk Media Ltd.)*, claiming refutation of defamatory information and monetary compensation.

The lawsuit 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.[[58]](#footnote-58)
 The next court hearing is scheduled for January 30, 2024.

 **On August 21,** 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 defamatory 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?”.[[59]](#footnote-59)

On September 11, the court ruled to reject the lawsuit.

 **On August 22,** citizen Yurik Grigoryan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Kentron TV Company - Multi Media Kentron CJSC, demanding to publicly refute defamatory information and pay compensation.

The lawsuit was caused by the July 23 edition of the "In the Footsteps of Crime" program of the Kentron TV Company, during which the presumption of innocence was violated; the plaintiff was accused of organizing a murder. "The ex-boyfriend was killed by blowing up the car. What does "Tokhmakh Yuro" have to do with it?".[[60]](#footnote-60)

On September 5, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, a court hearing was scheduled for November 2.

 **On August 23**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *businessman Ashot Khlghatyan v. lawyer Lernik Hovhannisyan,* with claims to publicly refute the defamatory information and pay a compensation. Investigative Journalists NGO was recognized as the third party in the case. The lawsuit, filed on October 17, 2022, was caused by the open letter addressed to the RA Prime Minister and published on September 8 on Hetq.am website that belongs to the NGO.[[61]](#footnote-61) According to this piece, the gas station belonging to the lawyer's client was illegally operated by the plaintiff Ashot Khlghatyan.

The next court hearing is scheduled for December 6.

**On August 24,** 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”[[62]](#footnote-62) and “A Teacher in Vanadzor Received 12 Million AMD for Forced Idle Time”[[63]](#footnote-63) 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).

The next court hearing is scheduled for October 19.

**On August 25,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevanhelda regular court hearing on the case ofNA Deputy Speaker Hakob Arshakyan v. *ArmDay.am LLC (the founder of ArmDay.am* news website*)* and International Media Holding LLC (*the founder of Lurer.com* news website), demanding public refutation of the defamatory information contained in the aforementioned 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[[64]](#footnote-64), then on the latter [[65]](#footnote-65) 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, and when Hakob Arshakyan refiled the lawsuit for the third time on June 9, the demanded payment was **increased to 5 million AMD.**

 According to the judgment of September 8, the lawsuit was partially upheld. The websites were obliged to publicly refute the expressions in question and pay the plaintiff 500 thousand AMD as compensation for defamation and 35,000 AMD as state duty.

 **On August 26,** a soldier of the Russian peacekeeping forces in Goris, without any explanation, forbade Tigran Hovsepyan, the Syunik correspondent of Radio Liberty, to film several dozen Artsakh citizens who passed through the Lachin Corridor accompanied by peacekeepers and reached the territory of Armenia. Journalistic organizations issued a statement in this regard.[[66]](#footnote-66)

 **On August 28,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the court hearing on the case of *Vardan Badasyan (the former RA Minister of Justice Rustam Badasyan's father. Comment by CPFE) v. Alternativ.am news website*, 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”.[[67]](#footnote-67)

The next court hearing is scheduled for October 9.

**On August 29,** the defendanton the case of *Karen Melik-Tangyan, the former Director of the Mother Armenia Museum of Military History at the RA Ministry of Defense v. Social Media LLC* again filed an appeal against the judgement of the Court of General Jurisdiction, which partially upheld the lawsuit.
 We should remind that the lawsuit, which was filed on December 10, 2021, claiming compensation of the damage caused to his honor and dignity, 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.

By the judgment of April 27, 2023 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.

An appeal against the judgment was filed on June 29, which was returned on August 9. On September 19, the appeal was accepted for proceedings.

**On August 30,** the Civil Court of Appeal rejected the defendant’s appeal against the judgment of the first instance court on the case of *Nver Mnatsakanyan, a journalist and anchor, v. Hayeli Club and Garnik Isagulyan*, according to which the claim was granted in part.

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.[[68]](#footnote-68) By the judgement of August 16, 2021, the Court rejected the lawsuit, however, after the Court of Appeal overturned the judgment and after the new examination the claim was granted in part.

On April 25, 2023, Garnik Isagulyan went to the Court of Appeal appealing the judgement of the first instance court, according to which he was obliged 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, the lawsuit was rejected.

 **On August 31,** at the court hearing on the case of the catastrophic explosion of the Yerevan Surmalu fair, in the Center residence of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, the correspondents of the Public TV Company, Factor.TV, and News.am were forbidden to broadcast live and then to film. 10 minutes after the beginning of the hearing, the judge, given the complexity of the case, ordered to stop the video recordings, whereas the accused did not object to it. Judge Gagik Poghosyan even reprimanded Tatev Khachatryan, who presented herself as a H1 journalist, saying that she was disrupting the hearing, and threatened to apply a stricter sanction.

 **On August 31**, the Civil Court of Appeal upheld the defendant’s appeal against the judgement of the first instance court on the case of *the Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister Eduard Aghajanyan v. the founder of 168.am website 168 Zham Ltd*., according to which the lawsuit was rejected, but the defendant appealed it only in terms of the confiscation of attorney’s fee (150 thousand AMD).

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on July 10, 2020, claiming refutation of defamatory information and a compensation for defamation, was caused by an article, entitled: “A Party in the Government-owned Fermata Club” and published on the website on June 7.[[69]](#footnote-69) The article narrated that the club, owned by Eduard Aghajanyan, violated the Commandant’s decisions by organizing a night-club style party with the participation of several dozen people in a closed space, such as his club, which is an act prohibited during the state of emergency caused by COVID-19. Eduard Aghajanyan sent a refutation text to the editorial office, but the latter did not publish it due to disagreement with the presented arguments. (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2020-2023, in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The judgement was not appealed, and entered into force.

**On September 6,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of the NA *Speaker 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?”**.**[[70]](#footnote-70) The website specifically noted that the RA President and the Speaker of the National Assembly documented the purchase of their clothes as state 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 is scheduled for November1.

 **On September 11, during the rally of supporters of the government candidate Tigran Avinyan, organized within the framework of Yerevan Council of the Elders election campaign, Diana Martirosyan, one of his supporters, attacked Ani Gevorgyan, the editor of the NewDay.am website, insulting and threatening her. "...Rejoice that I did not throw you under my feet".**[[71]](#footnote-71) In reply to the question: Who are you?, she stated: "I'm the one who'll pull out your eyeballs. Have you got a problem? I promised that I would come closer and I say, "Pray, you did not end up under my feet."

By the way, this is the same citizen who threatened Aravot.am reporter Hripsime Jebejyan on the Internet, for which the latter filed a lawsuit against her.

**On September 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a trial on the case of *NA MP Khachatur Sukiasyan v. Alternative Media LLC (the founder of Alternativ.am website) and Media Plus LLC (the founder of Yerevan.today website)*, 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”,[[72]](#footnote-72) 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".[[73]](#footnote-73) 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 is scheduled for February 5, 2024.

 **On September 11,** 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.[[74]](#footnote-74) (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2020-2022 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The publication of the judicial act was scheduled for October 3.

**On September 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the trial on the case of *Larisa Harutyunyan v.* *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 publication of a 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”.[[75]](#footnote-75) The plaintiff suggested the media outlet that they publish refutation since the disagreement among fellow villagers has nothing to do with khachkar, but a routine argument, and the assertion in the title does not 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 hearing is scheduled for October16.

 **On September 13,** 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.

The next court hearing is scheduled for November 27.

 **On September 13**, 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, v. 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…”.[[76]](#footnote-76) The journalist, making reference to an unidentified source, has written that the neighbors have pissed on Styopa Safaryan for serving the Prime Minister.

The next court hearing is scheduled for December 11.

 **On September 13**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued trial 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.[[77]](#footnote-77)

The next court hearing is scheduled for Februry 28, 2024. **On September 14**, 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 is scheduled for November 17.

 **On September 15,** 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.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 12, 2021, was caused by the article, entitled: “Two of the Vitamin D Drugs Registered as Biologically Active Supplements” published in Hetq.am owned by 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.[[78]](#footnote-78)

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled for February 20, 2024.

 **On September 18,** the Hetq.am website of Investigative Journalists was subjected to a DDoS attack, which caused access problems. Later, specialists rectified the situation.

 **On September 19,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing on the case of *citizen* *Erik Yeghinyan v. 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”.[[79]](#footnote-79) (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 date of the next court hearing has not been set by the end of the quarter.

**On September 25,** for the second time this year there has been aredistribution on the case of *Livenews.am journalist Arthur Hovhannisyan v. Public TV journalist Levon Sardaryan*; the case was sent to another court.

The lawsuit, filed on June 22, 2020, demanding an apology for the insult and a public refutation of the information considered defamatory, was caused by Levon Sardaryan's Facebook comment, dated May 21, on the article, entitled: “The Situation in Armenia is Terrible: Some will Survive, the Rest will Die” published on *Livenews.am* website on the same day. Sardaryan quoted the title of the article and wrote: “If anyone proves that after all this the owner of this website is a human being, I will agree to live in a barn. But in my subjective opinion, I will let G.I. enjoy the life in the barn.” (G.I. is Garnik Isagulyan, who is identified as the site owner. *Comment by CPFE*).

No court hearing date on the case has been set.

**On September 26**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan made a redistribution on the case of *the Deputy Mayor of Yerevan Tigran Avinyan v. Oragir Media LLC*. The claims include obligating the media outlet to refute the information discrediting honor, dignity and business reputation and confiscating a monetary compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on April 13, 2023, 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 Vivacell-MTS.”[[80]](#footnote-80) Referring to its sources, the website noted that after buying Grand Hotel Yerevan, Avinyan had decided to buy 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 to apply an injuction and place a freezing order on the property belonging to the defendant in the amount of the claim, was rejected.

 **On September 26,** 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 publication of the judicial act was scheduled for October 6.

 **On September 26,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Alvina Gyulumyan, a former member of the Constitutional Court, v. Dareskizb Ltd., the founder of the 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. (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2018 – 2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

The next court hearing on the case is scheduled for December 5.

**On September 27,** the Head of the Kentron administrative district Samvel Ghukasyan filed a lawsuit against Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Board LLC in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, demanding a public apology, publication of the court judgement, an obligation to refute the defamatory information, as well as payment of a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by articles in Zhoghovurd newspaper and Armlur.am website owned by LLC entitled: "PHOTO. The Head of the Kentron District, Casting the Problems Aside, Joined the Civil Contract Campaign with His Staff"[[81]](#footnote-81) and "The Head of the Kentron District and Its Residents. Who invaded Abovyan 22? Zhoghovurd"[[82]](#footnote-82) published on August 26 and September 9, respectively. The claim has not been accepted for proceedings by the end of the quarter.

 **On September 29**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted new proceedings on the case of *MP Hayk Sargsyan v.* *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office LLC,* claiming compensaton for the damage caused to honor, 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 entitled: “On the Day of the Murder MP Hayk Sargsyan Was Near the Former MP’s House, Waiting for Tuy.”[[83]](#footnote-83) On the next day, the MP submitted a refuation text to the editorial office, however, the editorial office found controversies in the invoked facts and included this information in the comments published along with the text of refutation.[[84]](#footnote-84)
 A court hearing is scheduled for October 26.

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

*In the third quarter of 2023, the CPFE recorded* ***33*** *facts on the violation of the right to receive and disseminate information. In only* ***4*** *cases, lawsuits against state bodies were 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 July 10,** the Freedom of Information Center (FIC) applied to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia, requesting to provide the copies of the documents related to the SDO-1175 decision on the compliance of the obligations with the RA Constitution stipulated in the contract signed between Eurasian Economic Union and Armenia on May 29. The application remained unanswered.

 **On July 11,** the Union of Informed Citizens NGO , the founder of the Fip.am fact-checking website, sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, requesting information related to the content of school programs, particularly certain concepts. A general answer was given to the survey, which the site considers incomplete.

 **On July 13,** the Pastinfo.am news website sent a written inquiry to the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia to find out what happened after the end of the 44-day war and after the announcement of November 9, 2020, on what grounds a number of border settlements of Syunik and Gegharkunik marzes, houses owned by people with property rights, as well as separate sections of the interstate road were handed over to Azerbaijan. Was the process of handing over the territories to Azerbaijan carried out with any map?[[85]](#footnote-85) The RA Ministry of Defense requested an additional period to answer the inquiry, then they refused to provide the information, with the reasoning that it is a state secret. "It seems the Ministry of Defense investigated for about a month and "found out" that the requested information is secret...", the website stated.

 **On July 13,** the Freedom of Information Center sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Defense, requesting to provide data on the money spent for the purpose of organizing/implementing information campaigns in 2022 and 2023. The reply was provided with a delay, on July 26.

 **On July 14,** the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the Fip.am fact-checking platform, applied to the Administrative Court against the RA Investigative Committee with the demand to oblige them to provide a comprehensive answer to the inquiry. The content of the inquiry was as follows: have criminal proceedings been initiated 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 or not? The Investigative Committee promised to answer the inquiry with a call, but they never did.

On July 24, the lawsuit was returned in order to eliminate the inaccuracies, but it was not filed to the court for the second time.

 **On July 18,** the news website Oragir.News wrote that the editorial office sent an inquiry to the office of the RA Prime Minister, asking them to provide information on when the Prime Minister and ministers will go on vacation. The Prime Minister's office did not provide a clear answer.[[86]](#footnote-86)

**On July 1,** the defendant applied to the Court of Cassation appealing the judgment of the Court of Appeal on the case of *Transparency International Anticorruption Center NGO*, *Law Development and Protection Foundation and Civilitas Foundation (the founder of Civilnet.am news website) v. Environmental Protection and Mining Inspection Body of the Republic of Armenia,* according to which the judgment of the First Instance Court on upholding the claim was left unchanged.

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 requested data had to do with the results of an inspection in the mining sector in a specific period. The court ruled to obligate the defendant to provide the requested information.

On August 30, the Court of Cassation received the appeal.

**On July 20,** the news website Infocom.am sent an inquiry to the Staff of the RA Government, asking them to answer what steps have been taken to return the registered RA citizens temporarily living in Artsakh to Armenia.[[87]](#footnote-87) Not receiving an answer, the website repeated the inquiry **on July 31**, but after waiting for 30 days, it did not receive a reply. **On September 1**, Infocom.am wrote that it also sent a written inquiry to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Human Rights Defender's Office regarding the same issues.[[88]](#footnote-88) Although they sent a response from the RA MFA, it was incomplete and did not contain information on the issue. And the HRD staff presented the works they performed within the framework of the powers defined by the law.

 **On July 26,** the Administrative Court held a regular court hearing on the case of the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the Fip.am website, v. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, demanding to oblige the government agency to provide the information, requested on October 20, 2022. The inquiry referred to the expected support from the CSTO for the purpose of protecting the RA borders on September 13, 2022. The lawsuit was filed on November 14, 2022.

The next court hearing was scheduled for March 14, 2024.

 **On July 28,** the news website Irakanum.am wrote that it sent an inquiry to Levon Hovhannisyan, the acting mayor of Yerevan, asking him to provide information on who owns the "Coffelav" mobile vendor, as well as the permission to trade in the area.[[89]](#footnote-89) The municipality did not give any clear answer to these two questions.

 **On August 1,** Radio Liberty correspondent Karine Simonyan reported that the Vanadzor municipality did not respond to her written inquiry about how many employees it has, how many people got bonuses and whether the bonus also applied to the employees of the institutions under the municipality.[[90]](#footnote-90)

The head of the legal department gave the following answer to the journalist under the signature of the acting mayor: "Go open the staff list, see how many employees we have. In the decision on awarding bonuses, it is written who we awarded."

 **On August 7,** the Freedom of Information Center applied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, requesting to provide information on whether there is any mechanism or procedure by which the Republic of Armenia can recognize the legal act of another state or union in its territory (for example, to recognize sanctions (acts on sanctions) imposed by the US or the EU on Russia enforceable in the RA). The response was provided with a delay, on September 13.

 **On August 8,** the RA Administrative Court held a regular court hearing on the case of Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of Fip.am website, v. the Ministry of Internal Affairs, demanding to oblige the plaintiff to answer the inquiry dated February 20. The inquiry was addressed to the RA Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Kamo Tsutsulyan, which consisted in the following: for what purpose were red and blue flashing beacons installed on some rescue service vehicles? No answer was given.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on March 22, 2023. The next court hearing is scheduled for December 5.

 **On August 8,** a court hearing was held on another case of the same NGO, the founder of the Fip.am website, Union of Informed Citizens against the Ministry of Internal Affairs, demanding to oblige the plaintiff to respond to the inquiry dated February 13. The inquiry referred to the description of the location of fixed cameras monitored by the police in public places, including cameras that do not record traffic. The lawsuit was filed on March 1, 2023. The next court hearing was scheduled for February 22, 2024.

 **On August 9,** the journalist of the Infocom.am website, Lusine Manvelyan, sent an inquiry to the office of the Civil Contract Party, asking to provide the list of donations collected during the fundraising evening organized ahead of the Council of the Elders elections, according to the names of the donors. On August 15, they promised to answer the question in a reply letter, without specifying specific dates. On August 18, the editors asked to send a proper answer, indicating a clear deadline for providing the requested information. No answer was received.

The journalist presented the problem to the Freedom of Information Center, and **2 more times, on August 23 and September 11,** FIC sent the same inquiry. In both cases, no response was received.

 **On August 11,** the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the Fip.am website, filed a lawsuit with the Administrative Court against the Public TV Company CJSC, demanding an answer to the inquiry.

The plaintiff did not receive the answers to the following questions: why an interview was taken from exactly one of the deputy mayors, Tigran Avinyan, before the Yerevan Council of the Elders elections, and whether Public TV Company will provide the opportunity for a similar interview to the mayoral candidates of other political forces.

According to the decision dated August 18, the lawsuit was forwarded to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, because "JSC is not an entity endowed with public authority, the plaintiff's claim is not open to the court." On August 25, the case was received in that court, and on September 8 it was returned due to existing document inaccuracies.

**On August 14,** the website Fip.am applied to the Civil Contract party, asking to provide the list of individuals and legal entities who donated money during the fundraising campaign they carried out on July 31. The information was not provided.

 **On August 14,** the online periodical Hetq.am wrote that it sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Defense to find out whether the SU-25s have been modernized or not. The Ministry of Defense refused to provide information, making reference to law regulations on state and military secrets.[[91]](#footnote-91) Meanwhile, the website writes that some information about the relevant contract has already been officially reported. "Actually, it turns out that announcing the signing of a contract for the modernization of SU-25s is not a military secret for the Ministry of Defense, instead it is a secret to announce whether the attack aircrafts have finally been upgraded or not... This way of working has already become common for the Ministry of Defense, when, in order to avoid answers to questions that cannot be considered a military or state secret, reference is made to those legal regulations."

 **On August 15,** the Factor.am news website applied to the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Vahe Ghazaryan, asking whether the Deputy Mayor of Yerevan Tigran Avinyan did not violate traffic rules by driving a GAZelle car serving as public transportation, and what steps the police has taken in that direction.[[92]](#footnote-92) There was no response from the agency. The editors have repeatedly inquired about the fate of the request and always received the same answer: "the response is in progress". And later it was found out that Avinyan was fined. Thus, the media was deprived of the opportunity to receive exclusive information.

 **On August 23,** the news website Infocom.am sent inquiries to RA universities to find out what percentage of lecturers are engaged in research along with teaching.[[93]](#footnote-93) First, it has become known that the universities either do not have the necessary data, or they have it, but they do not want to provide it, or they do not have it and they do not want to get it. Therefore, the website decided to talk to individual universities. The representatives of National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia and Russian-Armenian University refused to be interviewed.

 **On August 24,** the journalist of the Infocom.am website Lusine Manvelyan sent an inquiry to the Corruption Prevention Commission, asking to provide the 2022 list of officials who are obliged to submit an annual declaration, according to individual structures. The inquiry was left unanswered. **On September 1**, the journalist repeated the question, and on September 7 she received an answer, a link to the CPC website, where they published both the inquiry and the answer, noting that given the "repeated behavior" of another journalist on the website, that is, the facts presented are reproduced by distorting them, misleading the reader, creating an illusion about the impartiality and accuracy of the reported information, the inquiries received from the same news site and its journalists are answered exclusively in public."

According to CPFE, this behavior is an ongoing violation of freedom of information. We should remind that the Information Disputes Council has already issued an expert opinion in this regard[[94]](#footnote-94) noting that the Commission committed a violation on two grounds. 1) responded to the journalist's inquiry for information in a manner not established by law, and 2) published the inquiry without the applicant's consent. The actions of the public body contradict the national and international norms of freedom of information and protection of personal data. In particular, Articles 34 and 51 of the RA Constitution guaranteeing these rights, Articles 8 and 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as Conventions of the Council of Europe "On Access to Official Documents" and "For the Protection of Individuals with Regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data" were violated.

 **On August 25,** the website Fip.am sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding the violations of the vehicle belonging to the police by the surveillance center of the electronic video recording systems of the police. The agency informed that it would provide an answer within 30 days, but it did not do so.

**On August 28,** the Freedom of Information Center applied to the SRC, requesting to provide data on how many washing machines were imported to the RA in 2022 and 2023, and how many were exported during the same period. The answer was incomplete.

 **On August 30,** the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the Fip.am website, filed a lawsuit with the Administrative Court against the staff of the RA Supreme Judicial Council, the Judicial Department and the General Secretary of the RA Ministry of Defense, Hamlet Batikyan, with the demand to bring Hamlet Batikyan to administrative responsibility under Article 189.7 of the RA Code on Administrative Offenses. The lawsuit was triggered by the fact that the RA Ministry of Defense did not provide the information about how many cases were investigated in court from September 27 to December 31, 2020 and from January 1 to April 3, 2023, under the article of desertion, how many were upheld and how many were rejected.

On September 6, the lawsuit was returned, as no claim was filed to the judicial department of the Supreme Judicial Council staff, which was named as the defendant. On September 15, the lawsuit was filed again, but against one defendant, Hamlet Batikyan, Secretary General of the Ministry of Defense. The case was accepted for proceedings on September 22.

A court hearing was scheduled for March 6, 2024.

**On August 30,** the same website filed another lawsuit against the Ministry of Defense, with the demand to oblige it to give an exhaustive response to the inquiry. This time, the agency did not provide information on how much money the Republic of Armenia spent on acquiring weapons in 2008-2022.

The claim was accepted for proceedings on September 7, a court hearing was scheduled for January 16, 2024. **On August 31,** the news website Oragir.News wrote that it sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to find out whether they fined the Deputy Mayor Tigran Avinyan for driving the last GAZelle of public transport without the appropriate driver's license class.[[95]](#footnote-95) "In this case, by your requested information... the privacy of an individual's personal life will be violated, therefore the requested information is not subject to provision," the response of the Ministry of Internal Affairs stated.

"On the one hand, the police is fighting against unlawfulness, on the other hand, by not publicizing the information about imposing a fine on the violation of a politician, it encourages this phenomenon," the website commented.

 **On September 5,** the Freedom of Information Center applied to the Ministry of Economy, requesting to provide additional data on the export of dual purpose goods. The answer was incomplete.

 **On September 5,** the Lurer.com news website sent an inquiry to the Urban Development, Technical and Fire Safety Inspectorate regarding the activities of the Charlotte Cabaret night club located on Baghramyan Avenue in Yerevan.[[96]](#footnote-96) They responded to the inquiry with a delay, on September 14, and only after the reminder letter. However, the answer was incomplete. The website sent another inquiry **on September 15**, to which the inspectorate did not respond at all.

 **On September 5,** the online periodical Hetq.am wrote that it sent a written inquiry to Armen Melikbekyan, the president of the Football Federation of Armenia, and asked for information about the bids of the participants in the Abovyan stadium construction tender, and the procedure for selecting the winner.[[97]](#footnote-97) He also asked to give an opportunity to get acquainted with the tender documents. However, the editorial office did not receive an answer. Attempts to get information from Hayk Karapetyan, Head of the FFA Public Relations and Press Unit, were also unsuccessful; Armen Melikbekyan did not answer the calls either.

 **On September 7,** Sputnik Armenia news website wrote that a month ago, it sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, asking them to answer whether after September 2022 Azerbaijan made any advances in the direction of Jermuk, if it deployed new positions in that area, and how many square kilometers of territory are under Baku's control.[[98]](#footnote-98) The Ministry of Defense answered only the first question.

 **On September 20,** the Administrative Court of Appeal held a trial on the appeal filed by the plaintiff against the judgement of the First Instance Court on the case of the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the Fip.am website, v. the RA Prime Minister's Office, by which the claim was rejected.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on December 27, 2021, demanding to oblige to provide the full list of questions and the media and organizations that authored them for the Prime Minister's Facebook press conference held on November 23, 2021, sent to the email address press@gov.am.

Publication of the judicial act was scheduled for October 12.

 **On September 26,** the Administrative Court held a regular court hearing on the case of the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the Fip.am website, against the National Security Service, demanding to oblige to provide exhaustive information to the plaintiff's inquiry dated October 28. The NGO made an inquiry, requesting information about considering Russian citizens, in particular, Margarita Simonyan, Konstantin Zatulin, Andranik Mihranyan, as personas non grata in Armenia since January 2021. Not receiving an answer, the NGO applied to the court on November 17, 2022.

Publication of the judicial act was scheduled for October 5.

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

**On July 6,** theCourt of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Shark LLC (the founder of the Channel 5 TV company) v. the NA MP Khachatur Sukiasyan*, with claims to oblige him to publicly refute the information considered as defamatory and pay a 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, 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.[[99]](#footnote-99)
 According to the judgement made on July 21, the lawsuit was rejected. The court found that no statement was made by the defendant regarding the plaintiff. Furthermore, the plaintiff has not provided any evidence that the Channel 5 television company belongs to him and that the statements made against the said television company are aimed at a specific company and defame the plaintiff's honor, dignity and business reputation.

On September 18, the plaintiff applied to the Court of Appeal, where the case was received on September 29.

**On July 14,** 168 Hours LLC and journalist Gohar Svazyan filed a lawsuit against citizen Ashot Davinyan, demanding to apologize for the insult, refute the defamatory information, oblige him to publish the refutation text, as well as confiscate a compensation for the damage caused to his honor, dignity and business reputation.

The lawsuit was caused the post made on Ashot Davinyan's Facebook page on June 10, addressed to the journalist and the media, in response to the article, entitled : "The Person at the Epicenter of the Sex Scandal has been Appointed General Coordinator-Manager of the College and Training School under Shirak State University" published on the 168.am website owned by the LLC on June 9.[[100]](#footnote-100)

On July 26, the court ruled to return the lawsuit due to insufficient payments made. The plaintiff challenged this decision in the Court of Appeal on August 7. According to the decision made on August 30, the appeal was rejected.

 **On July 28,** Armenian Second TV Channel LLC filed a lawsuit with the Administrative Court against the RA Compulsory Enforcement Service to recognize the lack of lawfulness to terminate the enforcement proceedings No. 09483309, as a result demanding to oblige the RA Commission on Television and Radio to prohibit the implementation of the tender for filling one slot of the republican broadcast in the public multiplex. On August 7, the lawsuit was returned to eliminate the inaccuracies, on the 14th, the plaintiff appealed this judgement to the Court of Appeal, and on September 25, the latter rejected the appeal.

 **On August 4,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted new proceedings on the case of *News AM LLC v. political scientist Styopa Safaryan*, which was returned for retrial after the court judgement 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.[[101]](#footnote-101)

On July 15, 2022, the claim was granted in part. The court obliged the defendant to make a public refutation of the defamatory information, discrediting the business reputation of NewsAM LLC on his personal Facebook page, to pay 500.000 AMD 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 trial.

A hearing on the case was held on September 14, the next one was scheduled for January 30, 2024.

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

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2. **[https://khosq.am/2023/08/28/%d5%b0%d5%a1%d5%b5%d5%bf%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%a9%d5%b5%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%b6-110/](https://khosq.am/2023/08/28/%D5%B0%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%BF%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9%D5%B5%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6-110/)** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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4. **<https://infocom.am/hy/article/106213>** [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. **<https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32584106.html>** [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. **<https://news.am/arm/news/783077.html>** [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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8. **<https://www.aravot.am/2023/07/30/1358607/>** [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. **<https://fip.am/23243>** [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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14. **<https://irakanum.am/post/462422?fbclid=IwAR2muXxlU-3WQLf1rFq5PSfd5T8XWwEUQpiadD-NgrWtMWn3nMqdk1USGiI&mibextid=Zxz2cZ>** [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. **<https://armlur.am/1254318/>** [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. **<https://hraparak.am/post/c1cf0ec5169a39e8e7e5db4d031b7b1d?fbclid=IwAR1ODzrsCZX5jSXQfctEl0VKB3tFTZHCt06PmXvZ0fITgupOXw9TEGAQlWg>** [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. **<https://lurer.com/?p=471857&l=am>** [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
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53. **<https://www.mediahub.am/post/a2d1943f03c54cf4>** [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. **<https://hraparak.am/post/fce1d14accd0c9cceabc338fdc0e6a51>** [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. **<https://hraparak.am/post/1129192114>** [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. **<https://fip.am/23243>** [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. **[https://khosq.am/2023/09/06/%d5%b0%d5%a1%d5%b5%d5%bf%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%a9%d5%b5%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%b6-111/](https://khosq.am/2023/09/06/%D5%B0%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%BF%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9%D5%B5%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6-111/)** [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
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59. **<https://www.1in.am/2567780.html>**  [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. **<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKP-wttP3jw>** [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. **<https://hetq.am/hy/article/148025>** [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. **<https://hraparak.am/post/591fb734e3d84d0d37fd972c>** [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. **<https://hraparak.am/post/591fb531e3d84d0d37fd8835>** [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. **<https://lurer.com/?p=451795&l=am>** [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
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