***REPORT***

***ON STATUS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN ARMENIA AND VIOLATION OF RIGHTS OF JOURNALISTS AND THE MEDIA IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF***

***2024***

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*The Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression regularly submits to the public its reports on the working environment and issues of Armenian media and its personnel, on the status of the freedom of expression and the violations of the rights of media outlets and those of journalists. This report reflects the data of the second quarter of 2024.*

*The sources of facts included in the report are the following:*

*- phone calls to CPFE “hot line”,*

*- meetings and conversations of the CPFE experts with media personnel,*

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

*- materials from court cases with media involvement,*

*- materials disseminated by the partner journalist organization,*

*- publications by the media.*

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

***BRIEF SUMMARY***

 ***The second quarter of 2024 was unprecedented in post-revolutionary Armenia in terms of physical violence against media workers.***

***Although the protest actions organized by the opposition in recent years, as a rule, were accompanied not only by clashes between the police and demonstrators, but also by many violations of the rights of media representatives, they reached their peak during the reporting period. In particular, 14 cases of physical violence against journalists and cameramen were registered, most of which, 11, were the result of disproportionate actions of the law enforcement bodies. 9 other cases of various other pressures, insults, threats, obstruction of professional activities were recorded, too. The number of court cases against journalists and media increased with 17 such new lawsuits being filed in April-June, vis à vis 12 in the previous quarter. There were 19 violations of the right to receive official information from state bodies and disseminate it.***

 The second quarter of 2024 coincided with the border demarcation process between Armenia and Azerbaijan and related protests, which began in the Tavush region of the Republic of Armenia. Later this movement reached Yerevan. In relation to violence, obstruction of professional activities, and other pressures on journalists and cameramen covering the events both in the regions and in the capital, the CPFE and partner journalistic organizations issued joint statements, demanding the authorities to ensure the unobstructed work of the media in crisis situations and hold the police officers who had abused their powers accountable. In some cases, law enforcement agencies responded to those statements. In particular, on May 14, the Investigative Committee announced in a letter addressed to the CPFE that in connection with the cases of violence against media representatives, other evidence collection and procedural actions were being taken in order to ensure the objectivity, comprehensiveness and normal course of the investigation. And on May 23, it was reported that the demand of CPFE and partner organizations to inform the public about the cases of violence against media representatives and their investigations was taken note of. Later, on June 22, the CPFE and partner organizations received a letter from the same Investigative Committee stating that the June 13 statement was attached to the criminal proceedings initiated in the General Department of Investigation of Particularly Important Cases.

The international organization *Reporters Without Borders* and the US Embassy in Armenia also condemned the violence against media workers during the protests.

In general, during the quarter, a number of international organizations referred to the freedom of speech situation in Armenia in their reports. Those documents also mention cases of violations of the rights of media representatives. Thus, in the Nations in Transit 2024 report published on April 10, the *Freedom House* international organization stated that in 2023, a declining trend in democracy decline was recorded in Armenia, including in democratic institutions.

 The US State Department's annual report "2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Armenia" published on April 23 also emphasized that the media in Armenia continues to be polarized, yet individual citizens and the media enjoy the right to freedom of speech and freely criticize the government.

In its annual report published on April 24, the Amnesty International human rights organization expressed concern, especially regarding the journalists injured during the protests that took place in Yerevan on September 19, 2023.

The polarization of the media is also cited as a serious problem in the annual report of the international organization *Reporters Without Borders,* published on May 3, whereas the shaped environment of pluralism in place was mentioned as an important achievement. Due to this, Armenia improved its position by 6 points in the ranking of press freedom. Last year, the RA was the 49th on the list of 180 countries, this year it ended up, ranking the 43rd. However, the organization noted that the legal framework regulating this sector in the country did not sufficiently protect the freedom of the press and did not comply with European standards.

In this regard, the joint work of CPFE and partner journalistic organizations, the NA Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Diaspora, Youth and Sports Affairs and the Ministry of Justice for drafting the media institution reforms concept is most urgent. The draft law on making amendments and supplements to the Law on Media, submitted to the RA government on April 11, also stems from the logic of that process. Later, on April 29, parliamentary hearings were also held to discuss the draft law.

***MEDIA ACTIVITIES ENVIRONMENT***

 ***The second quarter of 2024 was a period full of challenges for media activity due to the tense socio-political situation in the country, ongoing protests, extremely unfavorable conditions for covering these events, namely numerous clashes between protesters and the police, violence and other pressures against journalists and cameramen.***

***During this period, 14 cases of physical violence were registered, as a result of which 23 journalists and cameramen were injured. This is the highest index recorded after the revolution of 2018, and the number of victims is equal to that recorded during the days of the revolution. Since the beginning of the anti-government demonstrations, there have been 6 other cases of pressure on media representatives. Out of the total 20 incidents, 13 were registered as a result of the actions of law enforcement officers, 7 as a result of the actions of Bagrat Galstanyan, the leader of the protests, his supporters or other opposition forces.***

 The demarcation process that started in Tavush region of RA in April raised a wave of discontent and rebellion, an opposition movement was created, led by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, the leader of Tavush Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Along with organized protest actions, various clashes, manifestations of extreme intolerance, the violence against the representatives of the media increased significantly, the right to express an opinion was threatened. As a rule, these cases did not receive a legal evaluation, according to the established vicious practice.

The protests gradually moved from Tavush marz to the capital, and during that time, the journalists and cameramen covering the events faced various obstacles and pressures in their professional activities, the Committee for the Protection of Freedom of Expression and partner journalistic organizations issued condemning statements regarding the most scandalous ones.

Thus, on April 23, during the clashes between the Police and citizens who considered the process of border demarcation in the Tavush Marz of RA as unacceptable and were protesting on the Bagratashen-Ayrum road, the lawful professional activities of Garik Melkonyan, an employee of the *Aravot* daily newspaper, were hindered. In particular, the law enforcement officers, noticing that their actions were being filmed, approached the media representative, one of them hit and knocked the phone out of Garik Melkonyan's hand and broke it.[[1]](#footnote-1)

On April 27, on the Ijevan-Kirants highway of Tavush Marz, RA, masked policemen stopped a car transporting media workers, took them out, knocked Janibek Khachatryan, cameraman of the news website *NewDay.am* to the ground, handcuffed him and tried to detain him. Numerous warnings that the person in question was a representative of the media and was covering the protests taking place on those days with his colleagues, remained unanswered. The cameraman was released a little later. On the same day, while dispersing the citizens' protest action in the section of Dsegh village of Lori region on the Yerevan-Tbilisi road, the policemen obstructed the professional activities of the employees of the Oragir.News website covering these actions. Journalist Ani Nerkaryan was pushed onto the ground and got injured, and the cameraman Zaven Ohanyan had to stop filming.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Physical violence was also used by the supporters of Bagrat Galstanyan, the leader of the protest movement. In particular, on April 30, Davit Levonyan, the reporter of the Civic.am news website, was attacked near the central building of the National Assembly. Artur Sukoyan, accompanying MP Levon Kocharyan and his assistant, approached the journalist, got into an argument and hit him in the face, accusing him of "blasphemy". According to Davit Levonyan, Sukoyan meant the view expressed by the journalist on his personal YouTube channel a few days before, stating that Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, leader of the Diocese of Tavush, served Russian interests.[[3]](#footnote-3) And on the evening of May 5, Zhirayr Voskanyan, the commentator of the 1in.am news website was assaulted in the "1896" restaurant in Tumanyan Street in Yerevan. This case, too, had to do with Jirayr Voskanyan’s views against the movement.[[4]](#footnote-4)
 The peak of violence against media workers was recorded on June 12, when as a result of the special measures used by the Police against the protest organized by the *Tavush for the Motherland* movement near the RA National Assembly, more than 10 journalists and cameramen, who were in the heat of the events and were performing their professional duties, were also injured along with many protesters. A number of video recordings clearly show that the flashbangs were also directed towards journalists and cameramen, the spot with a large number of cameras of media outlets. This is reminiscent of the targeting of journalists covering the events in Yerevan's Sari Tagh in July 2016 and the use of unjustified force and persecution against them, which proves that almost nothing has changed in Police practices, and casts serious doubt on the claims of announced reforms.[[5]](#footnote-5)

 The facts presented above are just a few examples of the many cases of attacks on and the obstruction of activities of journalists and cameramen.

 By the way, the harsh, and in some cases also reckless and irresponsible rhetoric on the media by high-ranking representatives of the government, on the one hand, and the opposition figures and leaders of the movement, on the other, created fertile ground for actions against journalists. Let us provide two examples. On May 6, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Alen Simonyan, said from the podium of the Parliament: "Why do you assume I am not eager to beat a journalist? I just don't have the right to do that, I don't have the right to think about it..." It can be assumed that if the Speaker of the National Assembly had the right to beat a journalist, he would do it because he has such a desire. And on May 10, in Yerevan's Republic Square, Bagrat Galstanyan called those in charge of *Araratnews.am* website "scum" and "murderers" for distorting his words. This vocabulary is not only clearly offensive, but also is provocative by nature and can provoke new violence against journalists.

 In the months of April-June, during the aforementioned movement, the CPFE and partner journalistic organizations issued 8 joint statements regarding the violations of the rights of media employees. Acknowledging that in some cases an official investigation has been initiated against police officers, and criminal cases have been initiated in relation to some facts, these organizations have expressed deep concern regarding the emerged situation and specifically called on:

• To the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to intensify the work with the police personnel, instructing the officers to act more professionally, strictly observe the principle of proportionality in case of the need for the use of force, and refrain from hindering the lawful professional activity and ensure their safety when dealing with journalists.

• To state officials and politicians to show restraint and responsibility in their public discourse, show tolerance towards media representatives, regardless of the "camp" they are associated with,

• To the ruling political power to take measures to ensure the safe activities of journalists in crisis situations,

• To journalists and cameramen to carry out their mission responsibly and behave professionally, especially in tense situations, and strictly follow the norms of journalistic ethics.

It is noteworthy that three times the Investigative Committee responded to the statements, issued by the journalistic organizations. In the first letter, which was received by the Committee on May 14, they assured that the relevant actions provided by the RA Criminal Procedure Code were being taken in connection with the cases of violence against media representatives in order to ensure the objectivity and comprehensiveness of the investigation. Secondly, on May 23, they informed that they had taken note of the request made by the CPFE and partner organizations to inform the public about the cases of violence against media representatives and the investigation thereof. And in the third response of June 22, it was noted that the statement, made on June 13, was attached to the criminal proceedings initiated in the General Department of Investigation of Particularly Important Cases.

 External reactions in the course of the aforementioned events were noteworthy, too. Thus, on May 22, the international organization *Reporters Without Borders* issued a press release regarding the pressure and violence used by the police against journalists during the protests in Armenia, stressing that sometimes media representatives were targeted by the police, and were attacked by politicians who should actually have been the guarantors of the freedom of the press. “We call on the Armenian authorities to immediately end this violence and fight impunity by conducting an independent and transparent investigation into the attacks.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

 And on June 12, the US Embassy in Armenia issued a statement regarding the clashes between the protesters and the police near the Parliament, urging them to responsibly exercise their right to freedom of assembly by eschewing violence. “The democratic process is the way to resolve political disputes. We also encourage law enforcement authorities to maintain order in a manner that upholds citizens' rights to freedom of expression and assembly, and to investigate any incidents in which procedures may have been violated, including with regards to journalists covering demonstrations,” the statement read.[[7]](#footnote-7)

*During the quarter, international human rights and journalistic organizations, as well as the US State Department, issued reports evaluating the situation with freedom of speech in Armenia.*

 Thus, according to the annual report “Human Rights 2023: Armenia” published by the US State Department on April 23, “the media in Armenia remain polarized.”[[8]](#footnote-8) However, it is also noted that both individual citizens and the media exercised their right to free speech, freely criticized the government, and the latter, with some exceptions, generally respected freedom of speech. The report, referring to the Committee for the Protection of Freedom of Expression, stated that in the first half of 2023 the political environment had been relatively calm, as a result of which no cases of physical violence against journalists had been recorded. However, in autumn, the situation changed during the elections of the Yerevan Council of Elders and the military operations by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh on September 19 and the subsequent protests. According to the assessment of the State Department, the polarization of the media in Armenia and the problems of financial viability posed an obstacle to the freedom of the press. The report read that private individuals or groups reportedly tied to former authorities or parliamentary opposition parties continued to hold ownership stakes in many broadcast media organizations and newspapers, which tended to reflect the political leanings and financial interests of their proprietors. Throughout the year, government authorities expanded their financial investments in media outlets, exacerbating polarization. As for freedom on the Internet, the report stated that Armenian government did not restrict or obstruct Internet access or censor online content during the year.

On April 10, the Freedom House human rights organization published its “Nations in Transit 2024” annual report,**[[9]](#footnote-9)** according to which, in 2023, a declining trend in democracy was recorded in Armenia, including in the democratic institutions of Armenia. Mike Smeltzer, co-author of the report, assessed the situation as “three steps forward and one step backward,” implying that the progress had been made after the “Velvet Revolution.”

Amnesty International published a report on April 24th, expressing concern especially with regard to the journalists injured during the protests in Yerevan on September 19, 2023, along with those who criticized the government.[[10]](#footnote-10) Referring to the latter, the organization referred to the Prime Minister's press conference held on July 25, during which “at least two journalists reported being subjected to an intense campaign of online harassment and threats, including by some public officials, after their critical questioning of the prime minister about events in Nagorno-Karabakh.”

The media environment, according to Amnesty International, remained largely free and pluralistic, but was deeply polarized over the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh and conflict with Azerbaijan, with an unprecedented level of disinformation and hate speech.

 The international organization Reporters Without Borders also addressed these issues. Despite the pluralistic environment, the media remains polarized, according to an annual report released on May 3. The country is facing unprecedented levels of misinformation and hate speech, especially in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh territorial dispute and the ongoing threat of war with Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, Armenia has improved its rating in press freedom by 6 points. Last year, the RA was the 49th on the list of 180 countries, this year it has ranked the 43rd. [[11]](#footnote-11)

“Journalists are often subjected to pressure, insults and violence by both ruling party officials and opposition politicians, as well as their supporters – whether in Parliament, in the street, or on social media. In general, violence against journalists goes unpunished,” the report says. Accordingly, most media outlets are controlled by people close to political associations or influential public figures, the advertising market remains underdeveloped, which limits the financial independence of private media. Reporters Without Borders believes that as a profession, journalism is disparaged and subject to especially troubling hate speech. “Despite the decriminalisation of defamation and the implementation of legislation that guarantees the transparency of media ownership, the legal framework that regulates the sector does not sufficiently protect freedom of the press, nor does it follow European standards. Recent reforms have not resolved problems posed by disinformation and gag orders. Access to state-held information is limited by the government (refusal to respond, delays, etc.).”

During the quarter, the works aimed at reforming the RA media legislation continued. To remind, this process is implemented in cooperation with CPFE and partner journalistic organizations, the relevant National Assembly Committee and the Ministry of Justice on the basis of the tripartite Memorandum signed on April 19, 2022. A Concept paper is being developed, which will become the basis for legislative amendments. At the moment, in particular, draft chapters on the development of media self-regulation system, new definitions of the terms “journalist” and “media” in modern times, the Public Television and Radio Company reforms, and the development of freedom of information were prepared and discussed.

 The drafting of the bill on making amendments and supplements to the RA Law On Media was part of this process, too. After a series of expert discussions, the Ministry of Justice submitted the document to the RA government for discussion on April 11. In case of approval, the draft will be sent to the National Assembly. In this sense, the parliamentary hearings organized on April 29 were important, where the draft law was also comprehensively discussed. The proposed amendments are aimed at the establishment and development of the media self-regulation system based on the norms of journalistic ethics, the recognition of that system by the state, the encouragement and wide dissemination of quality media.

 During the second quarter, as in the previous reporting periods, complications in receiving information from state bodies persisted. Unreasonable refusals to provide information requested by journalists and media, unjustified delays in responding to submitted written inquiries, or vague answers unrelated to the essence of the questions were the persistent problems here. In the months of April-June, 19 such cases were recorded, which were assessed as violations of the right to receive and distribute information according to the classification of the CPFE. A case was also registered when the RA government refused to accredit a media reporter, which, according to the conclusion of the Information Disputes Council[[12]](#footnote-12) violated the requirements of the Armenian legislation and international norms.

In order to discuss these problems and propose solutions, on April 25, CPFE organized a round table on the topic *Freedom of Information and Media Coverage of Public Authorities’ Activities*, which was attended by the representatives of the legislature and executive branches of power, media, and non-governmental organizations.

One of the characteristic features of the second quarter is also the large number of court cases against media and journalists. During the reporting period, 17 new lawsuits were filed, 5 of them by businessmen, 4 by government representatives, 4 by citizens, 2 by lawyers, 1 by an NGO, and 1 by an opposition figure.

Although the number of court cases against journalists and the media causes concern, there has been a recent trend among political figures, and primarily representatives of the ruling power, to settle information disputes extrajudicially through the media ethics body. By the way, with the aforementioned legislative amendments, it is planned to create a favorable legal framework for such solutions. First, this will significantly reduce the workload of the courts, and in addition, it will save both potential plaintiffs and the media and journalists from legal hassles, and most importantly, judicial mechanisms will not be used so often to put additional, including financial pressure on the media.

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

We report the violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the second quarter of 2024 according to the following classification by the CPFE:

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

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

The relevant sections of the report list the facts on the violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the second quarter of 2024, as well as the developments related to the previous incidents.

***In total, there were 59 reported violations of the rights of journalists and the media in the second quarter of 2024. 14 were cases of physical violence, 26 were various kinds of pressure, and 41 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 by Quarters of 2024**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 1st quarter | 2nd quarter | Total |
| Physical violence against journalists | 0 | 14(23 victims) | **14** |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | 17 | 26 | **43** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | 41 | 19 | **60** |

**Quantitative Data on Violations in the 2nd Quarters of 2023 – 2024**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 2nd quarter of 2023 | 2nd quarter of 2024 |
| Physical violence against journalists | 0 | **14** |
| Pressure on media outlets and their personnel | 18 | **26** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | 24 | **19** |

**Lawsuits against the Media and Journalists in 2024**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 1st quarter of  | 2nd quarter of  | Total |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 12 | 17 | 29 |
| Economic and other disputes | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Lawsuits, Filed in the 2nd Quarters of 2023 – 2024**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 2nd quarter of 2023 | 2nd quarter of 2024 |
| On the grounds of insult and slander | 15 | 17 |
| Economic and other disputes | 1 | 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 second quarter of 2024, there were* ***14*** *cases of physical violence against media personnel with 23 journalists and cameramen as victims. Below we present those cases and the developments related to the past instances of use of violence in chronological order.*

 **On April 1,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the trial on the fact of violence against Artak Khulyan, correspondent at Shantnews.am news website, and Hovhannes Sargsyan, cameraman at Factor.am news website.

We should remind that the criminal case was initiated in connection with the violence that took place during the days of the April Revolution in 2018, including against representatives of media outlets. It was sent to the Court with the indictment of 8 people. Criminal prosecution for some episodes of those events was terminated on the grounds that the statute of limitations for prosecution had expired.(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 May 14 and June 11. The next court hearing was not yet scheduled as of June 30.

 **On April 12,** 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 beyond his powers, using special means, and caused substantial damage to citizens' rights, including the aforementioned journalists, and negligently brought about severe consequences. (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 April 26, May 2 and 24, and by the verdict issued on June 3, Levon Yeranosyan was found guilty, but was released from the sentence, based on amnesty and the statute of limitations.

 **On April 27**, on the Ijevan-Kirants highway of Tavush marz, RA, masked police officers stopped a car transporting media workers, took them out of the car, knocked the cameraman of NewDay.am news website **Janibek Khachatryan** to the ground, put handcuffs on him and tried to apprehend him.[[13]](#footnote-13) The multiple warnings that the person was a media representative and carrying out his professional duties there with his colleagues remained unanswered. The cameraman was later released. In response to the request of the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Prosecutor's Office informed that on June 4, criminal proceedings were initiated in connection with the incident under Article 237(3) (*Obstruction of the Professional Lawful Activity of a Journalist by Use of Violence*) and Article 441(2.1) (*Abusing State or Official Authorities or the Influence Caused Thereby or Exceeding Authority through the Use of Violence or Threats of Use of Violence*) of the RA Criminal Code.

The cameraman was recognized as a victim, the investigation is pending.

On the next day, **April 28**, during the protest action in the Dsegh village of Lori region on the Yerevan-Tbilisi road, Police officers obstructed the professional activities of Oragir.News website employees and pushed journalist **Ani Nerkararyan**.[[14]](#footnote-14) The Prosecutor's Office informed the CPFE that no criminal proceedings were initiated in connection with the incident.

 **On April 23**, the lawful professional activities of Garik Melkonyan, an employee of the *Aravot* daily, were hindered in Bagratashen-Ayrum, Tavush Marz, during the clashes between Police and protesters who were protesting against the border demarcation with Azerbaijan.[[15]](#footnote-15) In particular, the law enforcement officers, noticing that their actions were being filmed, approached the media representative, one of them hit and knocked the phone out of Garik Melkonyan’s hand and broke it. Journalist organizations issued a statement regarding the incident.[[16]](#footnote-16) In response to the inquiry sent to the Prosecutor's Office, they informed that no criminal proceedings had been initiated in connection with the incident.

 **On April 30**, the person accompanying MP Levon Kocharyan, Artur Sukoyan, posing as the former’s assistant, hit in the face David Levonyan, a reporter of Civic.am news website, in the vicinity of the National Assembly building, accusing him of “blasphemy.”[[17]](#footnote-17) The MP’s assistant had referred to the journalist's point of view expressed on the latter’s *YouTube* channel a few days before, according to which the leader of the Diocese of Tavush Bagrat Srbazan served Russian interests.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Based on the revealed facts, a criminal prosecution case was initiated against Artur Sukoyan under Article 237(3) of the RA Criminal Code (*Obstruction of the Professional Lawful Activity of a Journalist by Use of Violence*). On May 1, the MP’s assistant was arrested on that charge. The General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Armenia informed the CPFE that on June 13, the criminal proceedings were sent to the court with an indictment. The criminal case is at the stage of trial.

 Artur Sukoyan was charged with the use of violence against journalist David Levonyan to obstruct his lawful professional activity by forcing him to refuse to share information.

On June 17, the case was accepted for proceedings at the Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction, a session was also held on June 27.

 On the evening of **May 5**, Zhirayr Voskanyan, a commentator of the 1in.am news website, was assaulted in the "1896" restaurant on Tumanyan Street in Yerevan. According to the journalist, blogger Mika Badalyan approached him with a group of his table mates, displaying an obscene behavior and provoking a fight. After Zhirayr Voskanyan had alerted the Police, the people of that group hit him in front of the former and took the phone from his hand. The fight continued in the street. A criminal case was initiated in connection with the incident. In the following days, Mika Badalyan, being on the wanted list, used threats and insults in the address of Zhirayr Voskanyan on the social media, and he was taken into custody on May 9.

Criminal proceedings were initiated in the Investigation Department of the Kentron and Nor-Nork administrative districts of the Yerevan Investigation Department of the RA Investigative Committee under Article 297(2.1) (*group hooliganism*) and Article 460(1) (*Lynching*) of the RA Criminal Code. Zhirayr Voskanyan was recognized as a victim. As part of the proceedings, measures are being taken to find out the circumstances of the incident and to give a legal evaluation to the actions of its participants. The investigation is ongoing.

**On May 9**, during the march on Amiryan Street in Yerevan, the supporters of Bagrat Galstanyan, the leader of the *Tavush for the Motherland* initiative, snatched the camera from the hand of the xosnak.am news website cameraman Vahe Aghryan, removed the chip, threw it on the ground and left cursing. Journalistic organizations issued a statement regarding the incident.[[19]](#footnote-19)

As reported by the RA Investigative Committee, criminal proceedings were initiated on the occasion of the incident under Article 237(1) of the RA Criminal Code (*Compelling a journalist to disseminate or refuse to disseminate information or obstructing their lawful professional activity in any other manner*). The preliminary investigation is ongoing.

 **On May 13**, officers of the Special Battalion of the Police used force against journalists covering the protests in Yerevan. 24news.am journalist **Mary Manukyan** and ABCmedia.am cameraman **Mher Davtyan** suffered from the actions of the "Red Berets". First, one of the police officers pushed the cameraman, then, seeing that the latter fell on the stairs, he left.[[20]](#footnote-20) Later, the police used force against 24news journalist Mary Manukyan, as a result of which she lost consciousness[[21]](#footnote-21) and was hospitalized after receiving first aid. In response to the CPFE’s inquiry, the Prosecutor’s Office reported that on May 17, a criminal investigation was initiated in the Department of Investigation of Crimes on Torture and Abusing or Exceeding Authorities by Officials through Using Violence, General Department of Investigation of Particularly Important Cases of the Investigative Committee, under Article 441(2.1) of the RA Criminal Code (*Abusing State or Official Authority or the Influence Caused Thereby or Exceeding Authority through the Use of Violence or Threats of Use of Violence*). Only Mary Manukyan was recognized as a victim, preliminary investigation is ongoing.

**On May 14**, during the actions of disobedience in the capital, the Police car hit the journalist of Mediahub.am news website Nare Gevorgyan on the pedestrian crossing on Abovyan Street-Hanrapetutyan Square.[[22]](#footnote-22) A police officer escorted the journalist out of the site. Nare Gevorgyan suffered a leg injury, underwent examination at one of the medical centers and was discharged. The Prosecutor's Office informed that on the occasion of the incident, on May 14, the Division of Investigation of Traffic Crimes, Investigative Department of Yerevan, Investigation Committee of the RA initiated a criminal proceeding under Article 342(1) of the RA Criminal Code (*Violation of the Requirement for Ensuring Road Traffic Safety by a Person Driving a Car or Another Mechanical Vehicle or Violation of a Rule Ensuring the Safety of Road Traffic or Vehicle Operation, which Negligently Caused Serious or Moderate Damage to Human Health*).

According to the RA General Prosecutor's Office, Nare Gevorgyan was recognized as a victim and gave an explanation. A forensic examination was appointed. According to the conclusion, no physical injuries were found. Based on the above, the criminal proceedings were terminated on the basis of the absence of a crime.

 **On May 15**, during the Police operations to disperse the protest action organized in Yerevan, the bus hit the reporter of the Oragir.News news website, Ani Nerkararyan.

The General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Armenia stated in response to the inquiry submitted by the CPFE that no criminal proceedings had been initiated in connection with the incident.

**On May 25**, security officers dragged Ani Gevorgyan, the editor of Newday.am news site, out of the vicinity of Baghanis community school, Tavush Marz, RA, where the meeting of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was supposed to take place.[[23]](#footnote-23) The journalist noted that by using force, the security officers prevented her from asking the Prime Minister a question. The General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Armenia stated in response to the inquiry made by the CSPC that no criminal proceedings had been initiated in connection with the incident.

**On May 27**, during the protest actions organized in Yerevan by the opposition, the officers of the Special Battalion of the Police hit and knocked Paruyr Nersisyan, the cameraman of the Yerkir.am news website, who was filming the actions of the Police to disperse the demonstration by force, onto the ground. The video shows that Paruyr was wearing his journalist’s badge.[[24]](#footnote-24)

The General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Armenia stated in response to the request of the CPFE that no criminal proceedings had been initiated in connection with the incident.
On **June 12**, journalists and cameramen, performing their professional duties in the heat of the events, were also injured among many demonstrators as a result of the special means used by the Police near the RA National Assembly against the protest organized by the "Tavush for the Motherland" movement.

 Thus, **News.am news website cameraman Vazgen Yetumyan, Armlur.am cameraman Hovsep Hovsepyan, CivilNet cameraman Narek Hayryan, ABC media journalists Nane Hayrapetyan and Aghvan Asoyan, cameramen Edik Malakyan and Arman Gharibyan, Mediahub.am reporter Nare Gevorgyan, AlphaNews reporter Arpine Baghdasaryan and cameraman Hovhannes Hakobyan** were injured from the explosions of flashbangs and the resulting stampedes.

 During the clashes, the equipment – live broadcast devices, cameras and microphones – of Pastinfo, PARA TV, Sputnik Armenia and other media outlets was either damaged or lost.

 The General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Armenia reported that on June 14, criminal proceedings were initiated in the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia under Article 441(2.1, 2.3 and 2.4) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia (*Abusing and Exceeding State or Official Authority or the Influence Caused Thereby or Exceeding Authority through the Use of Violence or Threats to Use Violence, the Use of a Weapon or a Special Means, by a Group of Officials upon a Prior Agreement*). Media representatives were interviewed and recognized as victims. A forensic examination was appointed. The investigation is ongoing.

 **On June 12**, at the session of the National Assembly, when an argument broke out between the government and opposition representatives in the Q&A with the Prime Minister, the security service officers forcibly removed several journalists from the press lodge and tried to do the same to others, prohibiting them from fulfilling their professional duties, namely taking the footage of what was happening in the meeting hall of the National Assembly. Only thanks to persistent demands and standing up for their rights, did the journalists manage to stay in the lodge and continue their work.

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

*During the second quarter of 2024,* ***26*** *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 April 2**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Yura Adyan v. Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., the founder of the Zhamanak newspaper*, claiming refutation of defamation 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* Dailyon May 9 of the same year under the heading: “The Old Fox of Old and New Armenia.” The plaintiff demanded 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 another company, after winning these tenders.

On April 19, 2024, the court's decision partially upheld the claim: the media outlet was obligated to publish a refutation and pay 4,000 AMD as state duty. There is no information about the verdict being appealed.

 **On April 2,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *citizen Yurik Grigoryan v. Kentron TV Company - Multimedia Kentron CJSC*, demanding to publicly refute defamatory information and pay a compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on August 22, 2023, was caused by the July 23 edition of the "In the Footsteps of Crime" program of the Kentron TV Company, during which, according to the plaintiff, the presumption of innocence was violated; he 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?"[[25]](#footnote-25)

On April 29, 2024, the court's decision rejected the claim. On May 31, the plaintiff submitted a appeal to a higher court, and on June 17, the appeal was returned for corrections.

**On April 3,** the Court of Cassation refused to accept the appeal of the plaintiff against the judgment of the Court of Appeal on the case of *Arthur Vanetsyan, former Head of the NSS and leader of the I Have Honor Faction of the National Assembly, v. Gurgen (Gagik) Melkonyan, a member of the Civil Contract Faction of the National Assembly (third party:* *Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC*), which ruled that the case must be sent to the first instance court for a new trial.

We should remind that the lawsuit, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, filed on August 19, 2021, was caused by Melkonyan's thoughts on Arthur Vanetsyan' s activities during the Artsakh 44-day war on July 20 expressed during an interview with Petros Ghazaryan on Public TV. The defendant particularly said: “Vanetsyan went and ran away. He went and came back in the blink of an eye. They went and got there, collected the weapons, knew that there were a lot of weapons dumped there, collected them and brought them to Armenia. Their goal was to bring weapons”.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The judgment of the Court of General Jurisdiction partially upheld the claim, the defendant was obligated to refute the disputed statements, made H1 TV channel, to pay 500 thousand AMD as compensation for defamation, and 18 thousand AMD as state duty. After the defendant appealed the verdict, the Appellate Civil Court partially satisfied the appeal on January 12, 2024, the case was sent to the first instance court for a retrial. On February 14, the plaintiff appealed this decision ատ the Court of Cassation.

A court hearing with a new ցօւռտ investigation was not held as of the end of the quarter.

**On April 4,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the court hearing on the case of *Ruben Khachatryan, the former Director of the Yerevan Zoo, v. reporter Narine Kirakosyan,* claiming refutation of defamatory information and monetary compensation.

The lawsuit was first filed on September 24, 2019, then it was returned upon the request of the plaintiff and refiled on November 13. The lawsuit was caused by the journalist’s Facebook post on August 25, where she stated that Ruben Khachatryan had inflicted great damage on the animals by declaring himself a sole leader. (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2019-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

In this quarter, a hearing on the case was also held on April 29, the next one was scheduled for July 9.

 **On April 19**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *NA Speaker Alen Simonyan v. Mediahub LLC* (founder of Mediahub.am website), claiming refutation of defamatory information and payment of a compensation in the amount of 1 million AMD.

The lawsuit was caused by an article published on the website on April 13 with the heading “The Government Signs a 79 Million AMD Agreement 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. [[27]](#footnote-27)

A court session was held on June 13, and the publication of the judicial act was scheduled for July 4.

**On April 5,** the appeal against the judgement dated December 12, 2023 on the case of *citizen Mariam Hovsepyan v. International Media Holding LLC (the founder of Lurer.com news website),* which partially upheld the lawsuit, was accepted for proceedings. The media outlet was obligated to publish refutation and pay the plaintiff 50 thousand AMD in compensation for the insult and defamation each, and the same amount as an attorney’s fee, as well as 43 thousand AMD as state duty.

We should remind that the lawsuit, with claims of public apology, refutation of defamation and payment of compensation, 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 on Lurer.com website on July 7.[[28]](#footnote-28)

No other developments happened as of the end of the quarter.

 **On April 6,** Judge Rubik Mkhitaryan of the Appellate Criminal Court filed a lawsuit in the General Jurisdiction Court of Yerevan against Pastinfo LLC (the founder of the Pastinfo.am news website), demanding public apology for the defamatory and offensive expressions and compensation of a total of 6 million AMD. The lawsuit was caused by articles published on the website on March 6 and 12: “The dismissed judges were spied on. Karen Andreasyan is trying to appoint his favorite candidate as a member of the Supreme Judicial Council”[[29]](#footnote-29) and “The authorities are changing tactics. Rubik Mkhitaryan has given up his candidacy as a member of the Supreme Judicial Council.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

On June 4, after redistribution, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the date of the court session has not been set yet.

 **On April 6**, Judge Rubik Mkhitaryan of the Appellate Criminal Court filed a lawsuit in the General Jurisdiction Court of Yerevan against the *Zhoghovurd* Newspaper Editorial Office LLC with demands to publicly refute the information considered defamatory and to pay 3 million AMD in compensation.

The lawsuit was caused by a March 12 article, titled "The Chaos in the Judicial System continues. After the "correspondence" scandal, the candidate to the Supreme Judicial Council Rubik Mkhitaryan withdrew his application,” published on the Armlur.am news website owned by the LLC.[[31]](#footnote-31) On April 17, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings. No court date has been set yet.

 **On April 8**, the RA government, in response to the application of the *Aravot* daily newspaper, refused to accredit journalist Hripsime Jebejyan instead of another accredited journalist from the media outlet. The Information Disputes Council of the Republic of Armenia assessed this step as illegal, issuing a relevant conclusion.[[32]](#footnote-32) Accordingly, not only does the decision fail to meet the requirement of legality, but is also unnecessary in a democratic society. This violated the right of the *Aravot* daily newspaper to disseminate information and ideas, which is protected by Article 42 of the RA Constitution and Article 10 of the European Convention.

**On April 8,** the plaintiff filed an appeal against the judgment of the General Jurisdiction Court of Yerevan on the case of *citizen Narine Abrahamyan v. journalist Kristine Aghalaryan (*with the later involvement of International Media Holding LLC as the founder of Lurer.com news website as defendant*)*, which was returned on May 23, and was resubmitted on June 13.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on June 2, 2017, demanding public refutation of the information considered as defamatory, as well as payment of a compensation, was caused by an article, entitled: “Meghri Medical Center vs. SRC” published on Lurer.com website on May 17, 2017, in which a reference was made to Narine Abrahamyan appearing in the epicenter of a number of scandals during her professional activity.[[33]](#footnote-33) (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2017-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

On January 25, 2024, the court decided to reject the claim, confiscate 200000 AMD in favor of Kristine Aghalaryan as an attorney’s reasonable fee.

**On April 9,** the defendant in the case of *Hayk Khanumyan, the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Artsakh v. Hraparak Daily* filed an appeal with the Court of Appeals which returned the appeal on May 6, due to the missed deadline.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on May, 2022, and demanding refutation of the defamation and payment of a compensation, was caused by the articles published in the newspaper stating that Hayk Khanumyan is facing several criminal cases related to corruption and abuse of powers, and the RA authorities support Khanumyan and do everything to exonerate him from liability.[[34]](#footnote-34)

According to the judgment published on February 29, 2024, the lawsuit was partially upheld: the court obligated the defendant to publish a refutation, pay 100,000 AMD as material compensation and 23,000 AMD as state duty.

On May 21, the defendant again submitted an appeal, which was accepted for proceedings on June 13.

 **On April 9**, the appeal of the defendant on the case of *citizen Larisa Harutyunyan v.* *Shark LLC* (the legal entity representing 5 TV), challenging the judgment of the first instance court which partially upheld the claim, was accepted for proceedings. The first instance judicial act obligated the media outlet to publish a refutation and pay a state duty in the amount of 4000 AMD in favor of the plaintiff.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on October 26, 2021, demanding publication of 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 Erect a Khachkar in Tribute to Heroes”.[[35]](#footnote-35)
 No developments had emerged as of the end of the quarter.

**On April 9,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held 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, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, and public refutation of defamatory information. (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2021-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

A hearing on the case was also held on May 10, the next one was scheduled for July 16.

 **On April 9,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the court hearing on the case of *citizen Mher Terteryan v. Hraparak Daily LLC,* demanding refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the statement discrediting his business reputation. The plaintiff is the son of Hayk Terteryan, Honorary Consul of the RA in Aktyubinsk Region of Kazakhstan.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on February 2, 2021, and was caused by an article, entitled: “The Pig Farm of the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia in Kazakhstan has Caused an Ecological Disaster”, published on December 9, 2020 on Hraparak.am website.[[36]](#footnote-36) 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.[[37]](#footnote-37)

A court hearing on the case was also held on June 12, with the next one scheduled for September 3.

 **On April 10,** the Court of Appeal received the case of *Mher Derdzyan v. Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office Ltd.* After the interim judicial act was repealed, and accepted the case for proceedings on the 16th.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on April 15, 2019, was caused by the newspaper’s concerns that Mher Derdzyan’s construction program could be a deliberate hoax.[[38]](#footnote-38) The plaintiff demands a public apology and 1,5 million AMD compensation for insult and slander. (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2019-2023 in the *Reports* section on *khosq.am website*). The Court of General Jurisdiction rejected the lawsuit, after which the appeal was upheld at the Court of Appeal, the judgment was overturned and the case was sent for a retrial. This time the lawsuit was partially upheld, obliging the defendant to apologize, publish a refutation, pay 300.000 AMD for insult, 500.000 AMD as compensation for defamation, as well as 500.000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee and 68.000 AMD as pre-paid state duty. The defendant appealed this judgment in the Court of Appeal. The appeal was rejected twice, due to deficiencies in the documents, and the defendant applied to the Court of Cassation. This appeal was upheld on March 19.

The Court of Appeal held a hearing on the case also on June 20, and the publication of the judicial act has been planned for August 14.

**On April 11,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to reject the lawsuit filed by Luyser CJSC against the *Zhoghovurd* newspaper editorial office LLC, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory and payment of a compensation.

The lawsuit filed on July 11, 2023, was caused by an 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 Beating an Alarm".[[39]](#footnote-39)

On April 26, the plaintiff went to the Court of Appeal where the appeal was accepted for proceedings on May 27.

 **On April 12,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori Marz (Vanadzor residence) 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”[[40]](#footnote-40) and “A Teacher in Vanadzor Received 12 Million AMD for Forced Idle Time”[[41]](#footnote-41) which were published on the aforementioned website on October 4 and December 5, 2013, respectively. (For details see the annual reports of CPFE for 2016-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

Court hearings on the case were also held on May 20, June 24, and the publication of the verdict was scheduled for July 9.

 **On April 25**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of the ruling Civil Contract Party v. “Hayeli” Club NGO (the founder of Hayeli.am website), claiming refutation of defamatory information and compensation.

We should remind that on April 25, 2023, the party filed **4** lawsuits with similar claims against 168 hours, 24 News, News.AM LLCs and Hayeli Club NGO, 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.

In the case against the founder of Hayeli.am, the motion for securing the claim was partially upheld.The next court hearing was scheduled for July 9.

This quarter a session on the case against the founder of 24news was held on May 2, with the next session scheduled for September 4. In the case against the founder of 168.am, a hearing was held on May 6, with the next hearing scheduled for July 24. No court session was held this quarter on the case against the founder of News.am, the session was scheduled for July 16.

 **On April 15**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the new trial on the case of *NA Deputy Speaker Alen Simonyan (currently NA Speaker) v. Iravunk Media Ltd* and the burden of proof has been distributed.

 We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 4, 2020, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, 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. (For details see the reports of CPFE for 2020 – 2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

A court session was also held on June 7, 2024, and on June 27, the claim was rejected, the case proceedings were terminated. The plaintiff was obligated to pay 10,000 AMD to the media outlet as state duty for the appeal, as well as 140,000 AMD as the amount of an attorney’s reasonable fee.

 **On April 15**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the court hearing on the case of *the Speaker of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan v. V.I.V. Today and Tomorrow LLC, the founder of Ankakh.com news website*, claiming compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

The lawsuit filed on December 22, 2022, was caused by an article published on December 9 under the heading, “Are Alen Simonyan and Vahagn Khachaturyan Making Purchases with State Funds?”[[42]](#footnote-42) 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.

A court hearing was also held on May 17, with the next one scheduled for July 3.

 **On April 15,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine CJSC v. journalist Tehmine Yenokyan*, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory and a compensation in the amount of 6 million AMD.

The lawsuit, filed on January 5, 2023, was caused by the journalist's post on her Facebook page on December 1, 2022, where, using open sources, she stated: "The pipeline going to the ZCMC tailings dump broke down again, the Voghji River was polluted again, a criminal case was initiated again and it will be forgotten again, a cover-up will be done...".[[43]](#footnote-43) The CJSC representative first demanded a refutation from the journalist, which was not fulfilled, after which a lawsuit was filed in court.

According to the judgment issued on May 7, 2024, the claim was rejected in terms of one of the statements made by the defendant, on the ground of expired statute of limitations, with the severance of the case in relation to another statement. On June 20, the case was put to trial, with demands to publicly deny the defamatory phrase: “Yesterday, the pipeline going to the tailings of ZCMC again broke down, the Voghji river was polluted again” and to pay compensation.

 A preliminary hearing was scheduled for September 20.

 **On April 16**, in the National Assembly, Hripsime Jebejyan, a reporter of the Aravot.am news website, conducted an interview with Khachatur Sukiasyan, an MP from the Civil Contract faction, and specifically noted that according to public opinion, "Khachatur Sukiasyan robbed and did not pay taxes" and that people are not equal before the law.

In response to those statements, the MP rudely countered, stating: "You, your parents and your boss are robbers... Go and ask your boss, say, ‘Boss, the KGB gave you money for years, why did they give it to you? So that you would publish lies, make up false stories about people, so that you would disturb this country...’” Journalist organizations issued a statement regarding the incident.[[44]](#footnote-44)

 **On April 16,** citizen Arev Vratsyan filed a lawsuit with the Yerevan Court of Common Jurisdiction against Oragir Media LLC (the founder of the Oragir.news website) and Half-Open Windows show, alleging defamation and insulting information defaming honor, dignity, and business reputation and demanding refutation, an apology and compensation for the damage caused. The lawsuit was caused by a video published on January 24 by the ATV TV “Half-OpenWindows" show about Arev Vratsyan, the teacher of school No. 4 in Masis, which accused her of allegedly discriminating against children from Artsakh, displaying disrespectful behavior,[[45]](#footnote-45) along with the article, titled "The Fact of Violence Suffices for Warning and Firing a Teacher" published in Oragir.news on December 16, 2023.[[46]](#footnote-46)

On April 26, the lawsuit was returned due to defeciencies in the documents, and it was submitted again on June 3.

 **On April 17**, the Court of Cassation returned the appeal of the *Hraparak Daily,* one of the defendants in the case of *Armenian National Interests Fund* CJSC v. *Hraparak Daily LLC and Hrant Bagratyan, former Prime Minister of the RA*, that challenged the judgment of the Court of Appeal, where the verdict of the first instance court on rejecting the claim in relation to the part against the media outlet was quashed, and the case was sent for a retrial in its entirety.

We should remind that

The lawsuit, filed on October 20, 2021, and demanding refutation of information discrediting business reputation and monetary compensation, was caused by the opinion of Hrant Bagratyan, published on Hraparak.am on September 28, which reinstates the media’s standpoint that the deal concluded by the above-noted Fund on July 14, in line with which the Arabic company Air Arabiawas granted the status of national airline, is not transparent for the public and contains many corruption risks.[[47]](#footnote-47)

The appeal to the Court of Cassation was resubmitted on May 21.

**On April 17**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled on severance of the claim against the media outlet from within the case of *RA Deputy Military Prosecutor Vahagn Muradyan v. citizen Marianna Sahakyan and Factor Information Center NGO* (the founder of the Factor.am news website), and on April 22 it was registered with the court with a new number.

 The reason for the main lawsuit filed on January 24 with demands to refute the defamatory information and pay compensation was an article, under the heading “‘I fear for my life,’ the woman claims that the prosecutor's son took 45,000 USD and disappeared” published on the website on January 19, according to which Marianna Sahakyan, the defendant in the case, was a victim of fraud, which she also accused the plaintiff of.[[48]](#footnote-48) Later, the website added a refutation in relation to the plaintiff in the postscript to the article, but the trial continues.

No court hearing was scheduled as of the end of the quarter.

**On April 18**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Olymp Construction Ltd. v. Hetq Ltd. (the founder of Hetq.am website)*, demanding refutation of defamatory information and a compensation.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on June 29, 2020 and was caused by an article, entitled: “The Construction Company Developing a New Building Refuses to Hand Over the Pumping Station to the Water Committee: Residents are Complaining” and published on Hetq.amwebsite*.*[[49]](#footnote-49) Although the author of the article incorporated a comment from the representative of the development company, too, the plaintiff did not agree to the residents’ complaint.
 The next court hearing on the case was scheduled for July 4, 2024.

**On April 18**, the plaintiff on the case of *Deputy Head of the Shirak Marz Investigative Department Hovhannes Poghosyan v. 168 Hours Ltd. and journalist Gohar Svazyan* filed an appeal with the Court of Appeal, challenging the judgment of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan which ruled to reject the lawsuit on the grounds of the statute of limitations. The court also ruled to confiscate 100,000 AMD as an attorney's fee from Hovhannes Poghosyan in favor of 168 Hours Ltd..

The lawsuit, demanding to refute the defamatory information and pay a compensation, as filed on April 3, 2023, was caused by an article about the plaintiff published on March 7 on the 168.am website, owned by the LLC. The article bore the heading: “Prosecutor Unfit for His Position is Now Deputy Head of the Regional Investigative Department”.[[50]](#footnote-50) The website, referring to its sources, noted that Hovhannes Poghosyan, in terms of the appointment in the position, benefited from being the colleague of the Chairman of the Investigative Committee, Argishti Kyaramyan.

On May 10, the appeal was returned, and on June 13, it was submitted again.

**On April 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Europe in Law Association NGO, its President Lousine Hakobyan, and superior legal councilor Tigran Yegoryan, v. Hraparak Daily LLC and journalist Davit Sargsyan*, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity.

The lawsuit, filed on October 7, 2021, was caused by an article, published on Hraparak.amwebsite, entitled: “An Open Network of Agencies under the Disguise of the Community of Human Rights Defenders.”[[51]](#footnote-51) The author of the article mentioned particularly that in addition to other advocating NGOs and human right defenders, the plaintiffs were also involved in the network of foreign agencies, whose hidden and sometimes evident motive was to change the Government in Armenia, and not to fight for human rights.

The next court hearing was scheduled for September 4.

 **On April 19**, Pallada Tsaghkadzor LLC filed a lawsuit in the Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction against the *Zhoghovurd* Newspaper Editorial Office LLC, demanding refutation of the defamatory factual information and a payment of 12 million AMD as compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity or business reputation. The lawsuit was caused by an article published on March 5 on the Armlur.am news website owned by the LLC, as well as its eponymous pages on social media, under the heading: “The Government Assists A. Simonyan’s Godfather, but Nature Hinders,”[[52]](#footnote-52) which specifically states: “Pallada Tsaghkadzor multifunctional residential complex is facing serious construction problems. The *Zhoghovurd* daily learnt that even last year, while digging the foundation of the building, a river was found on the by-design site of the foundation, at a depth of 20 or more meters from the surface, which disrupted the construction process. Besides, there are landslides, too.”

 On May 2, the lawsuit was returned for the correction of deficiencies, and on June 13, it was submitted again. No other developments were recorded by the end of the quarter.

**On April 19,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Medisar LLC v. News AM LLC*, *the founder of News.am news website*, demanding compensation for the damage caused to its business reputation.

The lawsuit, filed on July 2, 2021, was caused by an article published on May 29 on the above-mentioned website, entitled: “Did They Get Excess Profit by Purchasing a DNA Identification Device for War Victims? New Facts from a Suspicious Deal”. The website particularly stated that as a result of the tender conducted by the Scientific and Practical Center of Forensic Medicine SNCO of the RA Ministry of Justice, a contract worth 295.8 million AMD was signed with *Medisar LLC*, engaged in the supply and import of laboratory equipment and chemicals, which generated a profit of at least 111 million AMD due to the procurement process.

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

 **On April 19,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine CJSC v. Datablog Ltd.* (the founder of Blognews.am website), demanding public refutation of factual information considered defamatory and payment of a compensation.

The lawsuit was caused by the article, published on Blognews.am website owned by the Ltd. on December 28, 2023, entitled: "Trotsenko will Rob Syunik with a an Expatriate's Logic, and Aro Doing PR will have to Explain to the Residents of Syunik why They Have neither a Mine nor Health",[[53]](#footnote-53) where it is mentioned that ZCMC plunders the subsoil, employees receive astronomical salaries at the expense of people's health.

A court session was also held on May 16, during which the court granted the plaintiff's motion for permission to change the grounds of the claim. And in the session of June 20, the burden of proof was distributed between the parties. The next court session was scheduled for August 1.

 **On April 20,** Lusine Sargsyan, the correspondent of Public Radio from Vanadzor, did not manage to show up on time and participate in the meeting with the RA Prime Minister organized at Stepanavan College No. 1.[[54]](#footnote-54) According to the journalist, this was due to the lack of coordination in the operations of government staff and law enforcement officers. As a result, the journalist did not manage to report the information to the editorial office on time.

 **On April 22**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *attorney Lusine Avagyan v. Naira Terteryan (Live News Media LLC as third party),* with claims of refuting information considered as defamatory and compensation of damage caused to the diginity, honor and business reputation. The lawsuit, filed on August 10, 2021, was caused by the June 30 issue of Ditaket program, containing allegations by Naira Terteryan that Lusine Avagyan who was her ex-husband Mher Terteryan’s lawyer, apart from fulfilling her professional duties, would also interfere in their private and family life.[[55]](#footnote-55)

On June 13, according to the court's decision, the proceedings of the case were terminated, the plaintiff dropped the claim.

 **On April 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court session on the case of *Yerevan State University Foundation v. Hraparak Daily LLC, the owner of the Hraparak.am website*, demanding public refutation of the information considered defamatory, and confiscation of a compensation for defamation. The lawsuit was caused by the article published on the website on December 30, 2022, entitled "A Financial Deficit has Arisen in YSU".[[56]](#footnote-56) YSU demanded a refutation, which was published with certain comments, but it did not satisfy the plaintiff, and the latter applied to the court.

A court session was also held on June 5, with the next one scheduled for July 15.

 **On April 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Grisha Tamrazyan, Advisor to the Rector of Brusov State University v. Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC*, claiming public refutation of the information considered defamatory. The lawsuit, filed on January 5, 2023, was caused by a report, broadcast on Public TV News program on December 10, 2022. The report stated that Tamrazyan cursed the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Vahram Dumanyan after the Rector's election.[[57]](#footnote-57)

 According to the judgment made on May 15, the claim was partially granted. The defendant was obligated to publish a refutation, pay 20,000 AMD as a state duty and 150,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee. On June 17, the defendant appealed the decision to a higher court.

 **On April 23,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of Yerevan State University Foundation v. Oragir Media LLC (the founder of Oragir.news news website), claiming public refutation of factual information considered defamatory, and confiscation of a compensation for defamation.

The lawsuit, filed on October 10, 2023, was caused by a September 5 article, published on on the Oragir.news website owned by the LLC, entitled: “STEM. Another Disgrace from YSU.”[[58]](#footnote-58) Accordingly, the project of a STEM-focused school, established under the YSU had failed, because it had only 36 students, and the allocated money was not spent purposefully.

The next court session was scheduled for September 10, 2024.

 **On April 26,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court session on the case of the *Armenian National Agrarian University Foundation v. Hraparak Daily LLC*, demanding to oblige the latter to publicly refute the defamatory information and confiscate compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on December 20, 2023, was caused by an article, entitled "Electoral Chaos in the Agrarian University" published on November 22 in Hraparak newspaper and on the eponymous website[[59]](#footnote-59), where referring to the Rector's elections to be held at the University, the newspaper specifically wrote that a forgery was committed. "...actually, a candidate for the post of Rector was not nominated, yesterday the documents of Vice-Rector Hrachik Zakoyan, a close friend of the Acting Rector Vardan Urutyan, were submitted, bearing an earlier date." The plaintiff considers this information as defamation.

The next court hearing has been scheduled for August 14, 2024.

 **On April 29,** the plaintiff on the case of *the Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC v. 168 Hours LLC* filed an appeal with the Court of Cassation, challenging the judgment of the Court of Appeal, which upheld the appeal of the plaintiff, the judgment of the General Jurisdiction Court was quashed and the case was sent back to the same court for a retrial.

 The lawsuit was filed on May 13, 2021, demanding refutation of the information discrediting business reputation and monetary compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the article published on 168․am website on April 12, entitled: “Waiting for Investments”, which particularly states that the promised investments are not made by the fund.[[60]](#footnote-60) By the way, the lawsuit was in retrial. (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2021-2023, in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

 The judgement of November 10, 2023, rejected the lawsuit on the grounds of the expiration of the statute of limitations, and the plaintiff was obligated to pay 200,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee.

**On April 30,** the Civil Court of Appeal granted the appeal on the case of the *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Irates newspaper and the eponymous electronic website*, namely to annul the judgment of October 6, 2023, on leaving the lawsuit without trial and sending it to the same court to continue from the moment of interruption.

 The lawsuit, demanding compensation for slander and insult, 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”.

On October 6, 2023, the court ruled to leave the lawsuit without trial, because the notified plaintiff failed to appear at two successive court hearings. In addition, the court ruled to confiscate 300,000 AMD from the plaintiff as an attorney's reasonable fee of the media outlet. The plaintiff filed an appeal against this judgment.

No date of a court hearing has been set for the retrial.

**On April 30**, Argo Farm LLC filed a lawsuit in the General Jurisdiction Court of Yerevan against Investigative Journalists NGO, demanding a refutation of the information published in an article, published on the Hetq.am website owned by the NGO on April 6. The article was entitled “The Grey Market of Drugs. Why Some Drugs are not Registered, but are Sold.”[[61]](#footnote-61) In particular, the plaintiff challenges the following statement: “We purchased Voltaren, SirdaluD and Claforan from the 36.6 pharmacy on Khorenatsi 72, which is part of the chain, owned by Argo Pharm LLC. In this case, there was a stamp mark on the drugs, but the drugs are not registered, and the importers had not received an import certificate from the Ministry of Health (...)".

On May 13, the lawsuit was returned due to document deficiencies, it was submitted again on the 15th, and was accepted for proceedings on the 24th.

#

**On May 2,** the Police blocked all the roads leading to Kirants, they also banned the entry of journalists and cameramen.

**On May 2**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing on the case of *Styopa Safaryan, the former Chairman of the Public Council, v. LiveNews correspondent Taguhi Aslanyan*.

The lawsuit, demanding public apology for statements of insult and 1 million AMD in compensation, filed on July 13, 2021, was caused by the expressions of the journalist, posted on Facebook on June 20, particularly stating: “You are not just rejected, but pissed on…”[[62]](#footnote-62). The journalist, making reference to an unidentified source, wrote that the neighbors have pissed on Styopa Safaryan for serving the Prime Minister.

A court hearing was also held on June 14, 2024, with the next one scheduled for July 24.

 **On May 2,** the plaintiff on the case of *Yerevan State University Foundation v. 24News.am LLC* (the founder of the 24News.am website) filed an appeal, challenging the judgment of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan on returning the lawsuit, dated March 15.

We should remind that on March 5, 2024, Yerevan State University Foundation filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, demanding to publicly refute the information considered defamatory and confiscate 1 million AMD as compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article, published on the mentioned website on February 5, entitled: "Pashinyan has a Folder of Compromising Information about YSU Rector. Corruption Scandal is Brewing" with a link to the Russian Telegram channel TOGARMA.[[63]](#footnote-63) In particular, the article states that YSU Rector is the author of corruption schemes, besides, he is trying to prevent Gagik Ghazinyan, Dean of the Law Department, from being re-elected at all costs.

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

 **On May 2,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held another court hearing on the case of shooting at the window of journalist Tehmine Yenokyan's apartment.

We should remind that on March 31, 2023, the court received a criminal case from the Prosecutor’s Office of Avan and Nor Nork administrative districts, which indicted citizen Hayk Grigoryan. [[64]](#footnote-64)

Court hearings on the case were also held on May 17. No new developments were recorded as of the end of the quarter.

 **On May 3,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the retrial on the case of *Van-Charter LLC v. Armenia TV CJSC*, demanding refutation of the defamation and a compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on May 12, 2020, was caused by an opinion about the company in relation to the wrong declarations and insufficient quality of alcohol-based sanitizer production, expressed during the Acute Angle program on the TV channel on April 12, 2020.[[65]](#footnote-65) On January 29, 2021, the court rejected the claim, finding that the defendant did not seek to discredit the plaintiff's business reputation with its publication, therefore, the disputed expressions were qualified as a value judgment. On March 5, the plaintiff appealed to the Civil Court of Appeal, where the appeal was upheld, and the case was sent for retrial.

The next court hearing was scheduled for September 11, 2024.

 **On May 7,** the Court of Cassation ruled to uphold the appeal of the defendant in the case of *the former Governor of Ararat Marz Garik Sargsyan v. 168 Zham Ltd* challenging the judgment of the Court of Appeal which had rejected the defendant's appeal against the judgment of the first instance court. On August 2, 2021, the lawsuit was partially upheld, namely *168 Zham LLC* was obliged to publish a refutation on *168.am website*, 700,000 AMD would be confiscated from the defendant as compensation in favor of the plaintiff, along with 18,000 AMD as a state duty.

The lawsuit was filed on Decmeber 20, 2019, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, and public refutation of defamatory information, and was caused by the article, entitled: “Again an Incident with the Participation of Governor of Ararat” published on *168.am website*, which stated that Garik Sargsyan was again part of another fight and that barber Serob was beaten for not cutting the Governor's hair asking him to wait for his turn. Hence, the barber was not allowed to continue his business in Nor Kyank community.[[66]](#footnote-66)

The Court of Cassation overturned the 2022 judgment of the RA Civil Court of Appeal of February 11 and sent the case for retrial. The judgment was based on the fact that “the lower courts did not carry out a comprehensive examination of the case and an evaluation of the facts.”

In this case, the Court of Cassation expressed a position that the dissemination of defamatory information about other persons was justified when accounted for by an “urgent public demand,” and when the person had acted in good faith in order to provide accurate and reliable information based on the journalistic code of conduct, meaning that, under the guise of “an evaluative judgement,” the media should not exceed the limits set for the protection of the reputation of other persons.

The Court of Cassation established that the issue of considering freedom of speech as a priority in cases of insult and defamation played a decisive role. However, publishing any evaluative judgment, the journalist shall be obliged to take all reasonably possible measures to verify the truthfulness of the information. During the examination of a legal dispute, the court must balance the right to a person's honor, dignity and business reputation on the one hand, and the right to freedom of speech, on the other. As a result, the court must find out whether there has been a violation of the right to freedom of speech and whether the person's honor and dignity have been tarnished.

**On May 7**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the Deputy Mayor of Yerevan (currently Mayor) Tigran Avinyan v. Oragir Media LLC*, demanding to obligate the media outlet to refute the information discrediting his honor, dignity and business reputation, and confiscate 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.”[[67]](#footnote-67) Referring to its sources, the website noted that after buying Grand Hotel Yerevan, Avinyan had decided to also purchase the telecommunications operator “Vivacell-MTS”, 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.
 The next court hearing on the case was scheduled for August 8, 2024.

 **On May 9,** the professional activities of the news website Xosnak.am personnel were obstructed during the march carried out by the "Tavush for the Motherland" initiative on Amiryan Street, Yerevan. Thus, journalist Nane Israelyan tried to hold a briefing with the leader of the march, Bagrat Galstanyan, but the latter urged the journalist to leave. Journalistic organizations made a statement.[[68]](#footnote-68) As reported by the RA Investigative Committee, a criminal proceeding was initiated on the occasion of the incident under Article 237(1) of the RA Criminal Code (*Compelling a journalist to disseminate or refuse to disseminate information or obstructing their lawful professional activity in any other manner*). The preliminary investigation is ongoing.

**On May 10**, in Republic Square, Yerevan, the leader of the opposition movement, Bagrat Galstanyan, used the podium and called those in charge of the Araratnews.am website "scum" and "murderers" for distorting his words.[[69]](#footnote-69)

**On May 13,** the Court of Appeal ruled to reject the complaint of the plaintiff on the case of *Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC v. Pastinfo LLC*, appealing the verdict of the General Jurisdiction Court which had rejected the lawsuit.

We should remind that the lawsuit, claiming a refutation of the information discrediting the business reputation and a payment of monetary compensation, filed on August 2, 2022, 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 CJSC 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.[[70]](#footnote-70)

The Court of Appeal left the verdict of the first instance court unchanged and decided to confiscate 100,000 AMD from the plaintiff as an attorney’s reasonable remuneration for the appellate proceedings.

 No other developments were recorded as of the end of the quarter.

**On May 13,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of the *French University in Armenia Foundation v. French citizen Leo Nikolian* (with Bats TV LLC as third party), claiming to oblige the latter to refute defamatory information and confiscate a compensation for statements discrediting business reputation.

The lawsuit, filed on July 27, 2023, was caused by Leo Nikolian's interview on Bats TV, in which he accuses the former Ambassador of France to Armenia Anne Louyot and the French University in Armenia of corruption.[[71]](#footnote-71)

A court hearing on the case was also held on June 10, 2024, with the next one scheduled for September 24.

 **On May 13,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a prliminary court hearing on the case of *the Speaker of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan v. Angela Tovmasyan, president of the Hayeli club* (founder of Hayeli.am website), demanding an apology for the insult, 1 million AMD in compensation and confiscation of 530,000 AMD as compensation for court expenses.

The lawsuit, filed on January 16, was caused by Angela Tovmasyan's following a statement about Alen Simonyan during the press conference with Ambassador Edgar Ghazaryan at the Hayeli club on December 25, 2023: "...He was running around under Khachatur Sukiasyan's feet, he was running under his feet like this, Alen was running around".[[72]](#footnote-72)

On January 24, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, the plaintiff's motion on applying an injunction, placing a freezing order on the defendant's property and funds in the amount of the claim, was granted. A court hearing was also held on June 14, 2024.

 **On May 14**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *MP Hayk Sargsyan v.* *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office LLC,* claiming compensation for the damage caused to his dignity and good reputation through defamation.

The lawsuit was filed on December 10, 2021, and was caused by an article, published in the eponymous the *Zhoghovurd* newspaper owned by the LLC as well as on Armlur.am news website on November 17. The article was titled “On the Day of the Murder MP Hayk Sargsyan was Near the Former MP’s House, Waiting for Tuy.”[[73]](#footnote-73) On the next day, the MP submitted a refuation text to the media outlet, however, the editorial office found controversies in the invoked facts and included this information in the comments published along with the text of refutation.[[74]](#footnote-74)

On May 29, 2024, the court made a decision rejecting the claim on the grounds that the plaintiff did not specify and failed to substantiate what factual data the information qualified as defamation contained in relation to the violation of the requirements of the current legislation, manifestations of unfair conduct, as well as conduct contrary to ethics requirements in personal, public or political life.

No other developments in the case were recorded as of the end of the quarter.

 **On May 14**, the commander of the Special Battalion of Yerevan Police Department, Haykaz Jomardyan, called Hasmik Arakelyan, the reporter of Antifake.am news website, a "scum, "profane", when the journalist reprimanded the policemen for speaking disrespectfully to the parents of fallen soldiers.[[75]](#footnote-75) The journalist submitted a report about the crime, and an internal investigation was initiated against Haykaz Jomardyan.

The General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Armenia stated in response to the request of the CPFE that no criminal proceedings had been initiated in connection with the incident.

 **On May 15**, lawyer Tigran Yegoryan filed a lawsuit in the Yerevan Court of Common Jurisdiction against Gagik Yeghiazaryan and Hraparak Daily LLC, demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

 The lawsuit was caused by the news posted on Hraparak.am news website, owned by the LLC on April 12, under the heading “Gagik Yeghiazaryan from Sasna Tsrer accuses Yegoryan of embezzling the 2,500EUR he received as compensation.”[[76]](#footnote-76) The article specified that incarcerated Gagik Yeghiazaryan accused the lawyer Tigran Yegoryan, who had been hi defense counsel for years, of embezzling 2500EUR that were allocated to him as compensation, abusing his trust and not fulfilling his duties.

 On May 23, the claim was returned due to deficiencies, it was submitted again on June 12, and was accepted for proceedings on the 17th.

**On May 15,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Armavir Marz (Ejmiatsin residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of *Armavir Regional State College Director Angin Arshakyan v. pedagogues Susanna Margaryan and Karine Harutyunyan* (ALT TV Company of Armavir was involved as third party on March 18).

The lawsuit was filed on September 12, 2022, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity, business reputation and the right to privacy of personal and family life. It was caused by a report prepared by ALT TV Company on September 2, 2022, entitled: "The Staff of Armavir Regional State College Demands the Resignation of the Director", which was shown during the "Zham" news program of Armenia TV Company and posted on the alttv.am website of ALT TV Company.[[77]](#footnote-77)

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 3.

**On May 16,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Yeghitsi Luys-BK Ltd. v. Public TV Company of Armenia and Head of Charentsavan Community Hakob Shahgaldyan*, demanding refutation of the information considered as defamatory.

The lawsuit, filed on January 10, 2020, was caused by the broadcast of a report on issues related to the use of community owned territories during the news program on the First Channel of Public TV “News in 60 Minutes” on November 30, 2019.[[78]](#footnote-78) The plaintiff considered Hakob Shahgaldyan’s comment on the quality of his work as defamatory. Yeghitsi Luys-BK Ltd. demanded from Public TV to publicly refute the defamatory information on live television and claimed from the Head of Charentsavan Community Hakob Shahgaldyan a payment of monetary compensation in the amount of 2 million AMD. (For details see CPFE’s annual reports for 2020-2023, in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website).

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

 **On May 16**, in the village of Kirants, Tavush region, MP Gegham Nazaryan from the Hayastan faction of the National Assembly insulted the editor of NewDay.am website, journalist Ani Gevorgyan, showed aggressive behavior, and demanded to stop the live broadcast.[[79]](#footnote-79) The incident arose when Nazaryan wanted to convince the villagers fighting against the border demarcation to open the closed Kirants-Voskepar road. Noticing the camera, Nazaryan got angry and rudely demanded from Ani Gevorgyan to turn it off, accusing the latter of making orders and devising manipulations.

 **On May 17**, the court decided to approve the amicable settlement of the litigants in the case of *Yerevan Deputy Mayor Gevorg Simonyan v. Pastinfo LLC*. Accordingly, the defendant must publish the text requested by the plaintiff, and the plaintiff must waive all other demands.

The lawsuit, filed on April 13, 2023, claiming refutation of the information discrediting his honor, dignity and business reputation and monetary compensation (a total of 6 million AMD). was caused by the article published on Pastinfo.am website on March 11 under the heading: “Interesting Documents were Found during the Search of Gevorg Simonyan's Office. Tigran Avinyan's Situation is Aggravating.”[[80]](#footnote-80) The website wrote that, according to the information it availed of, the search of Gevorg Simonyan's office revealed to the law enforcement officers lists on his computer, which related to the involvement of the staff of polyclinics and ambulance service in the upcoming elections of Yerevan Council of Elders.

 **On May 21**, Pride Systems LLC and its director, Mher Terteryan, the leader of the United Motherland party, filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Hraparak Daily LLC, demanding to oblige the media outlet to refute the information considered as defamatory, and compensate for the damage caused to the dignity, honor and business reputation.

The lawsuit was caused by an article, under the heading “Why Armenian Drones Never Got Produced” which was published in the daily newspaper and on Hraparak.am website on April 13.[[81]](#footnote-81) Among personal information, the media outlet also wrote: "In 2021, the company "Pride Systems" was given a license for the production of combat weapons and was supposed to produce drones. The license expired this February, but the company has not produced the promised drones." Moreover, the author of the article Suzan Simonyan sent a request to Terteryan for clarification, but the latter refused to answer the journalist's questions. Later, the *Hraparak* received the refutation text from Terteryan and published an article on May 14, entitled: "How to Refute the Irrefutable. Failure to Implement State Order Cannot be a Secret."[[82]](#footnote-82) The claim was returned on June 4 to correct the deficiencies in the documents, and a new one was not filed before the end of the quarter.

**On May 21**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular 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 discrediting honor, dignity and business reputation and payment of a monetary compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on April 6, 2023, 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?”.[[83]](#footnote-83) According to the newspaper, the acquisition of Chinese buses for Yerevan was accompanied with corruption practices with the involvement of the co-plaintiffs.

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

 **On May 21**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *Civil Contract Party v. the Union of Informed Citizens NGO* (the founder of the Fip.am news website), demanding to refute the defamatory information and pay a compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on August 17, 2023, was caused by an 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".[[84]](#footnote-84) 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. Journalistic organizations issued a statement in this regard, considering the application of the freezing order as additional pressure on the media outlet.[[85]](#footnote-85) A court hearing was also held on October 2, and on November 27, the court ruled to repeal the decision on the injunction.

According to the judgment made on June 7, 2024, the claim was partially upheld. The court obligated the defendant to publish a refutation, pay 20,000 AMD as state duty, 150,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee. And the Civil Contract party was obligated to pay the defendant 50,000 AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee.

 The Union of Informed Citizens NGO has expressed its intention to appeal this verdict at the Court of Appeals.

 **On May 22**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Ara Mkrtchyan, the Head of Kasakh Community in Kotayk Marz, v. Yelena Zohrabyan, the Head of the Public Affairs Department of the Urban Development, Technical Standards and Fire Safety Inspectorate, as well as against the* *Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC*, demanding a public refutation of the defamatory information and compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

The lawsuit filed on December 7, 2021, and the one filed on January 10, 2022 were caused by a report aired on the TV company’s news program “Lurer” on November 2, entitled: “MP Anna Mkrtchyan’s Father, the Head of Kasakh Community, “Donated” a Part of the Community to His Son”. The report presented the plaintiff’s alleged corrupt transactions, detected by the inspectorate through its investigations.[[86]](#footnote-86)

The next hearing on the case was scheduled for September 25, 2024.

 **On May 22,** 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, v. 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.[[87]](#footnote-87)

In the recent hearing the court distributed the burden of proof. The next court hearing was scheduled for September 16.

**On May 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of*Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC and the Chairman of the Company's Board of Directors Tigran Avinyan v. Pastinfo LLC*, demanding to obligate the media outlet to refute the information discrediting his honor, dignity and business reputation and pay a monetary compensation of 6 million AMD to each plaintiff. The plaintiffs also demanded the confiscation of 400,000 AMD as state duty, as well as 800,000 AMD as an attorney's fee.

The lawsuit, filed on March 16, 2023, was caused by the article published on the Pastinfo.am news website on February 20, stating, "The information of Pastinfo was confirmed. Avinyan's tenure as Deputy Mayor is illegal. He leads a commercial organization, which he has no right to do.", in which the two positions of Tigran Avinyan, Chairman of the Fund's Board of Directors and Deputy Mayor, are considered incompatible.[[88]](#footnote-88) By the way, the plaintiffs did not provide the information requested by the website on that subject.

The court partially upheld the claim with its judgment published on June 12, obliging the media outlet to refute the expressions defaming Tigran Avinyan's honor, dignity and business reputation, and the business reputation of Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC. In addition, the court decided to oblige the defendant to pay 200,000 AMD to the plaintiffs as material compensation for defamation and 26,000 AMD as a state duty, and the confiscation of an attorney's fee was rejected.

 **On May 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *the Union of Journalists of Armenia NGO*, *its President Satik Seyranyan and 168 Hours Ltd. v. Civic.am news website and Chairman of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression NGO Ashot Melikyan* to oblige them to refute defamatory information, publish the refutation text, as well as pay a compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity and/or business reputation.

 The lawsuit, filed on February 28, 2022, was caused by an interview with Ashot Melikyan published on Civic.am news website on January 31, where the latter, referring to the January 29 congress of the Union of Journalists of Armenia, particularly said: “It was not a congress of the Union of Journalists, but more an alliance of Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan's propagandists, who had gathered to decide what to do next and elect the head of that organization serving their camp ... .”

The next hearing on the case was scheduled for July 30.

 **On May 22,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan reassigned the case of *Photolur LLC (news agency) v. Skizb Media Kentron LLC*, the founder of the 1in.am news website, and on June 6 the case was accepted for new proceedings.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on October 20, 2023, demanding to stop using copyright objects. The lawsuit was caused by the illegal use of the agency's authorial photos in 1in.am.

The court hearing on the case was scheduled for July 10, 2024.

 **On May 23,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing on the case of *NA MP Khachatur Sukiasyan v. Alternative Media LLC (founder of Alternativ.am website) and Media Plus LLC (founder of Yerevan.today)*, demanding public apology, publication of the court judgement, refutation of the defamatory information, as well as a compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on January 5, 2023, 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"[[89]](#footnote-89), 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".[[90]](#footnote-90) The judicial act, which was planned for June 12, has not been published in the Datalex information portal yet.

 **On May 24**, Vazgen Galstanyan (a.k.a. Bagrat Archbishop Galstanyan, who leads the "Tavush for the Motherland" movement) filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against journalist Davit Levonyan and the Civil Contract party (the founder of the Civic.am news site). The plaintiff demands to refute the following information, considered as defamatory and disseminated on the YouTube channels of the defendants and on Davit Levonyan's Facebook page on April 29: "He is selling the motherland, trying to pull Armenia into a war, in return he receives millions of dollars from the Kremlin, he lead to bankruptcy, wasted money, maybe used it for personal pleasures, tried to dethrone Garegin B, is a KGB agent, he is provoking a war on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, he is trying to carry out a coup, he has received an order from the KGB, he is advancing Russian-Azerbaijani interests, and has turned the church into an instrument of business."[[91]](#footnote-91)

On June 6, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings.

 **On May 27,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of a member of *Alaverdi Council of Elders Simon Zakharov v. ABC Media LLC* (the founder of the eponymous website), demanding to publicly refute the defamatory information and pay compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on January 9, 2024, was caused by a report published on the abcmedia.am website on December 13, 2023, entitled: "Simon Zakharov: the "Éminence Grise" of Alaverdi", according to which Zakharov took control of the activities of the Council of Elders, that he received education of a machinist and after a year of training, he performed surgeries in Alaverdi Medical Center, and in 2014 he was able to buy a plot of land in the city, on the bank of the river, by the decision of the Council of Elders, only for 13 thousand AMD.[[92]](#footnote-92) The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on January 22.

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 3.

**On May 27**, citizen Arev Vratsyan filed a lawsuit against the "Mediahub.am" news site in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan with demands to refute the information defaming the honor, dignity and business reputation, apologize for the insult and compensate for the damage caused. The lawsuit was caused by the video, entitled "I was under the influence of cocaine. The teacher from Masis showed hatred towards the people of Artsakh (video)" and published on the website Mediahub.am on April 25. According to the video, Arev Vratsyan, the teacher of Armenian language and literature at School No. 4 in the town of Masis, obviously maltreats children from Artsakh.[[93]](#footnote-93)

 On June 7, the lawsuit was returned due to deficiencies, and on the 17th, it was submitted again.

**On May 27,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing on the case of *the Speaker of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan v. the president of the Hayeli club, journalist Anzhela Tovmasyan*, demanding an apology for the insult and payment of a compensation. The lawsuit, filed on October 26, 2023, was caused by Anzhela Tovmasyan's swearing posted under the NA Speaker's address on the Tert.am website on September 21, entitled: "We must Finally Inherit a Free, Independent and Peaceful Armenia to Our Children. Alen Simonyan".[[94]](#footnote-94)
 The next court hearing was scheduled for July 3.

**On May 29,** the Court of Cassation returned the complaint of the plaintiff on the case of *NA MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Hraparak Daily LLC,* appealing the judgment of the Civil Court of Appeal which ruled to uphold the defendant’s appeal against the judgement of the Court of General Jurisdiction*,* which upheld the lawsuit partially. The Court of Appeal had overturned and amended the judgment of the first instance court, rejecting the lawsuit in its entirety. It should be mentioned that the lawuit, filed on June 21, 2019, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity and reputation through defamation and insult, was caused by a June 19, 2019 article, entitled: “Pashinyan Showed a Yellow Card to Hayk Sargsyan”[[95]](#footnote-95), where the plaintiff is portrayed as a "new-Sashik", an odious figure in My Step faction, known for a series of scandalous stories.

**On May 30,** 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 was not scheduled as of June 30.

 **On May 31**, Park Group LLC filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Makarun AM LLC, the founder of "Araratnews.am" news website, claiming a refutation of the information contained in the May 7 publication, under the heading “Yerevan Park Staff are Threatened to be Fired.”[[96]](#footnote-96) In particular, the fact that the employees of Yerevan Park were being forced to participate in the May 9 rally, organized by Reverend Bagrat, otherwise they were threatened with dismissal. The plaintiff also demanded 6 million AMD as compensation for defamation and discreditation of business reputation.

On June 13, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings.

**On May 31**, citizen Erik Yeghinyan filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori Marz (Stepanavan residence) against Ararat TV Company and Anna Sirunyan, claiming confiscation of one million AMD from Anna Sirunyan for banishing his honor, dignity and good reputation, as well as publication of a refutation. The lawsuit was caused by the statements made on the air of the TV company that the plaintiff used violence against the citizen Sirunyan and engaged in schemes for selling the latter's apartment. According to the plaintiff, the journalist did not hear him and published defamatory information.

On June 7, the application was returned due to deficiencies. The plaintiff appealed this decision in the Court of Appeal, where the appeal was accepted for proceedings on June 26. July 17 was set as the date of publication of the judicial act.

 **On May 31,** the Administrative Court of Appeal turned down the complaint of the plaintiff in the case of *Armenian Second TV Channel LLC v. the Commission on TV and Radio,* leaving the judicial act issued by the first instance court in legal force.

This lawsuit was filed on March 15, 2021, demanding to obligate the Commission on TV and Radio to make a decision on recognizing Armenian Second TV Channel LLC as a winner and granting a license to the given channel in the tender for licensing the use of slots in the Public Multiplex. ArmNews CJSC, Shark LLC, Multi Media Center TV CJSC, Armenia TV CJSC, A-TV LLC, Skizb Media Kentron Ltd., Free News LLC, Meltex LLC, Public TV Company of Armenia CJSC, Husaber CJSC, Shant LLC, and the Ministry of High-Tech Industry were involved as a third party. On August 30, 2022, the Administrative Court partially upheld the motion of Armenian Second TV Channel LLC on applying an injunction, prohibiting the Commission on TV and Radio to hold a tender for assigning a slot of national broadcast in public multiplex until the judicial act resolving the merits of this case took effect. According to the judgment of March 17, 2023, the lawsuit was rejected, and the measure to secure the claim was also abolished. On May 25, 2023, the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Appeal.

 **On June 3**, lawyer Meline Zakaryan filed a lawsuit against Shamshyan Media LLC in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, claiming an apology, published refutation and 1.5 million AMD as compensation for offensive expressions and 2.5 million AMD for defamation, along with a payment of 160,000 AMD as state fee. The lawsuit was caused by a publication shamshyan.com website and the eponymous Facebook page of May 30: “The Armenian Character, Known for Respect of the Elderly for Centuries, Is Gone Now. A 72-year-old Woman in a Critical Condition Finds Herself on the Street. The Lawyer does not Want to Delay Eviction for a Few Days.”[[97]](#footnote-97) The plaintiff specifically disputes the statements according to which she threatened the officers of the Enforcement Service, forcing them to carry out the eviction, promised that she would file a complaint to the highest leadership, even when she learned that the old lady was in an extremely serious condition, and her life was hanging by a thread.

On June 12, the lawsuit was returned due to deificiencies in the documents, on the 13th it was submitted again, on June 20 it was accepted for proceedings.

**On June 3**, Hovsep Khurshudyan, the head of Free Citizen NGO, filed a lawsuit against Asekose LLC, claiming refutation of the information considered as defamatory, and compensation of the damage caused to honor and dignity in the amount of 1 million AMD. The lawsuit was caused by a video published on May 1 on the Asekose.am website, owned by the LLC, and on the eponymous YouTube channel: “Either you are spreading false news or you are a spy. Hayk Manasyan told Hovsep Khurshudyan.”[[98]](#footnote-98) Accordingly, the doctor and public figure Hayk Manasyan criticized the news spread by Khurshudyan, according to which, in the previous 5 days, an increase in the volumes of Russian ruble exchange was detected at the foreign currency exchange desks in Tavush marz. According to Manasyan, Khurshudyan could not have access to such information, meaning that the latter, most probably, just wanted to spread news that “The Kremlin was Distributing Money among the Local Puppets.” On June 13, the lawsuit was returned due to deficiencies, and on the 26th, it was submitted again.

**On June 4,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Livenews.am journalist Arthur Hovhannisyan v. journalist Levon Sardaryan*, claiming an apology for the insult and a public refutation of the information considered as defamatory.

The lawsuit, filed on June 22, 2020, was caused by Levon Sardaryan's Facebook comment, dated May 21, on the article, entitled: “The Situation in Armenia is Terrible: Some will Survive, the Rest will Die” published on Livenews.am website on the same day. Sardaryan quoted the title of the article and wrote: “If anyone proves that after all this the owner of this website is a human being, I will agree to live in a barn. But in my subjective opinion, I will let G.I. enjoy the life in the barn.” (G.I. is Garnik Isagulyan, who is identified as the site owner. *Comment by CPFE*).
 The next court hearing was scheduled for September 25, 2024.

**On June 6**, the National Assembly deputy Hrachya Hakobyan filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against Yerkir Editorial Office LLC, claiming refutation of defamatory information and confiscation of 500,000 AMD as compensation. The claim was caused by a video posted on May 15 on the Yerkir.am news website owned by LLC, on the eponymous Facebook page, and on Yerkri Lurer (News of the Country) telegram channel, under the heading "The Money-Monger Revolutionaries. Hrachya Hakobyan,"[[99]](#footnote-99) which delivered information on the real estate acquired by the MP in recent years, his large share in drug trafficking in Armenia, and engagement in growing drug plants in the USA. The plaintiff considers all that as defamation. On June 17, the claim was accepted for proceedings.

**On June 7,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to leave the case of *Sofia Hovsepyan, MP of the National Assembly, v. Anna Gevorgyan, editor of the Haykakan Zham news-analytical agency* without trial. The notified plaintiff failed to show up at two successive hearings.

The lawsuit, filed on July 29, 2020, claiming compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity and business reputation and refutation of defamation, was caused by a series of publications on the Hzham.am website: namely, "They are Worried that Money will be Distributed for the Elections", dated March 13,[[100]](#footnote-100) "Velvet Corruption", dated June 1,[[101]](#footnote-101) and "Civil Contract Members about Their Achievements", dated July 10.[[102]](#footnote-102)

 **On June 7,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted for retrial proceedings the case of *citizen Arthur Vardanyan v.* *168 Hours Ltd*. *and citizen David Pirumyan*, after its judgment was quashed by the higher instance.

We should remind that the lawsuit, with claims of obligating the defendant to apologize, refute the defamatory information and confiscating a compensation, was filed on July 10, 2020, and was caused by an article, entitled: “Nikol Pashinyan Talked to Arthur Vardanyan during His Campaign” and published on March 6 in 168.amwebsite.[[103]](#footnote-103) The website quoted Pirumyan: “The Prime-Minister warmly greeted the terrorist Arthur Vardanyan who was incomprehensibly released by the court during the former’s rule”.

On March 22, the Civil Court of Appeal partially upheld the appeals of both the plaintiff and the defendant against the judgment of the first instance court, which had partially upheld the claim.

David Pirumyan was obliged to apologize and pay state duties, and both parties were at the same time obliged to pay 100,000 AMD each, as attorneys' reasonable fees. Both the plaintiff and the defendant filed appeals against the judgement. The Court of Appeal ruled to send the case for retrial.

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

**On June 10**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Project Inter-Invest LLC v. Hraparak Daily LLC and journalist Suzan Simonyan*, demanding to refute the information discrediting its business reputation and pay monetary compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on April 25, 2023, 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.”[[104]](#footnote-104) 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 July 10, according to the court decision, the plaintiff's motion to apply an injunction was rejected.

The next court hearing was scheduled for August 1, 2024.

 **On June 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *MP Hayk Sargsyan v. Armdaily News Agency Ltd*., demanding compensation of the damage caused to his honor, dignity and good reputation through defamation and insult.
 The lawsuit was filed on November 25, 2020, and was caused by an article, entitled: “URGENT. Criminal Authorities Ara and Alik Banduryans from Noratus Intimidate My Step MPs. Mediaport” and published on Armdaily.am website on November 20, in particular, the phrase “the one who held bottles”, used about the MP.[[105]](#footnote-105) On June 2, 2022, the court ruled to leave the case without trial, on the grounds that the notified plaintiff failed to appear in 2 successive hearings. The Court of Appeal upheld the plaintiff's appeal against this judgement.

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

 **On June 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan decided to partially uphold the claims in the case of *the former Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure and current Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan v. Anna Gevorgyan Private Entrepreneur* (founder of *Hzham.am* news website).

The lawsuit was filed on June 22, 2020, demanding public refutation of the defamatory information and payment of a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article published on Hzham.am website on May 15, entitled: “My Step Party Members are Interested in the Real Estate Market”, which states in particular that the province governors, led by Minister Suren Papikyan, are buying houses in the capital city “without paying” as they provide services, demanding an apartment as a donation.[[106]](#footnote-106) On December 17, the motion to apply an injunction of a freezing order on the property was upheld.

On March 31, 2022, the court ruled to reject Suren Papikyan's lawsuit, however, after the judgment was quashed by a higher instance due to the plaintiff's appeal, and the case was sent to the same court for retrial.

This time, the defendant was obliged to publish a refutation and pay 4,000 AMD as state duty. The measure to secure the claim was removed. And on June 14, the court decided to issue an additional verdict and scheduled the trial for July 2.

 **On June 10**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC and its Executive Director Davit Papazyan v. Hraparak Daily LLC and journalist Suzan Simonyan*, claiming refutation of the information that discredited business reputation and payment of a monetary compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on August 2, 2021, was caused by the article on Hraparak.am website, published on July 24, entitled: “State Interest or Business of a Group of People?”, which particularly states that Davit Papazyan published a monologue in a Q&A format, addressing the deal signed with Air Arabia company on July 14.[[107]](#footnote-107)

So far, no information is available about the next court hearing.

 **On June 10,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the court hearing on the case of *businessman Ashot Khlghatyan v. lawyer Lernik Hovhannisyan* (with Investigating Journalists NGO involved as third party), with claims to publicly refute the defamatory information and pay a compensation.

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.[[108]](#footnote-108) According to this piece, the gas station belonging to the lawyer's client was illegally operated by the plaintiff Ashot Khlghatyan.

 The date of the next court hearing was not set as of June 30.

 **On June 11,** the Civl Court of Appeal rejected the complaint of the plaintiff in the case of *citizen* *Erik Yeghinyan v. CMG LLC (the founder of Pastinfo news website)*, appealing the judgment of the first instance court which rejected the plaintiff’s claim.

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”.[[109]](#footnote-109) (For details see CPFE’s reports for 2019-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am website). The plaintiff claimed the confiscation of 1 million AMD in compensation for insult and defamation, obliging the defendant to apologize in writing and publish a refutation.

The judgment of the Court of Appeal has entered into legal force.

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

The lawsuit, filed on November 2, 2022, was caused by the statement, made by the Union of Journalists of Armenia on October 3 in defense of the *Zhoghovurd* Daily after an incident, when the former official Samvel Kharazyan, as Tigran Yegoryan's client, filed a second lawsuit against the media outlet.[[110]](#footnote-110) In particular, the announcement stated said that the editorial office had reasonable suspicion that the plaintiff and especially lawyer Yegoryan were pursuing the goal of harming the newspaper.

The next court session was scheduled for July 16, 2024.

**On June 12,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the preliminary hearinf on the case of *former Yerevan Deputy Mayor (currently Mayor) Tigran Avinyan v. 168 Hours Ltd. and journalist, commentator Davit Sargsyan*, demanding an apology, refutation of the information discrediting his honor, dignity and business reputation and confiscation of monetary compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on March 31, 2023, was caused by the video published on the YouTube channel of the 168.am website on February 25, under the heading: "Tigran Avinyan: the Newly Discovered Oligarch", where Davit Sargsyan, characterizing Avinyan as having unlimited administrative powers and steadily getting rich, accused him of economic and political corruption.[[111]](#footnote-111)

On May 2, the court accepted the case for proceedings and granted the motion to apply an injunction, putting a freezing order on the property and bank accounts of the media outlet and the journalist in the amount of 9 million AMD. After the condemning statement, published by the journalistic organizations, the decision to grant the motion was canceled.

The next court hearing was scheduled on October 9, 2024.

**On June 12**, the Speaker of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan filed a lawsuit against Yerkir Editorial Office LLC, claiming confiscation of 1 million AMD as compensation for defamatory information, 410,000 AMD for court expenses and publication of a refutation. The lawsuit was caused by a video posted on May 14 on the "Yerkir.am" website owned by LLC, the eponymous Facebook page, and “Yerkri Lurer” (News of the Country) telegram channel: "Money-monger Revolutionaries: Alen Simonyan". It was later removed from the Internet, but the court previously granted the plaintiff's motion to secure the evidence. On June 24, the claim was accepted for proceedings.

 **On June 18,** Irina Mkrtchyan, the reporter of the News program of the Public Television Company, was targeted by the opposition movement. The opposition parties were outraged by the journalist's report on the events that took place near the Parliament building on June 12. According to them, the speakers in the report justified the Police, who used special means against the protesters, and the point of view of the opposition parties was not presented. Irina Mkrtchyan’s photo was posted on the Telegram channel of the movement that was demanding the removal of the government. They accused her of feeding the people with lies. In this regard, the leader of the opposition Bagrat Archbishop Galstanyan said that they had only condemned the journalist's lie.

 **On June 21,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *Veolia Jur CJSC v. the citizen of France and French military and investigative journalist of Armenian descent Leo Nikolian, Hayeli Club NGO (founder of Hayeli.am website) and Live News Media LLC (Livenews.am website)*, with demands to oblige the defendant to remove defamatory publications, refute them, and confiscate monetary compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on **May 18, 2023**, was caused by Leo Nikolian's statements on May 2[[112]](#footnote-112) and 14[[113]](#footnote-113) on the YouTube channel of Hayeli.am that the French Ambassador to Armenia received a bribe from Aliyev to carry out espionage, and in Armenia, the management of French Veolia Jur CJSC is a corrupt entity and cooperates with Ambassador Anne Louyot in order to gain a stronger footing with the RA authorities. The cause of the lawsuit is also an interview with the French-Armenian journalist on the YouTube channel of Livenews.am on May 4, where he reiterated that "the French Ambassador to Armenia is spying for Azerbaijan in Yerevan, and Veolia Jur bribed Anne Louyot, so that the Ambassador would put in a good word for Director General Marianna Shahinyan before the RA authorities to enjoy their protection."[[114]](#footnote-114)

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 25.

**On June 24**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan received the case of *Karen Melik-Tangyan, the already former Director of the Mother Armenia Museum of Military History under the RA Ministry of Defense v. Social Media LLC* for retrial.

The lawsuit, demanding compensation for the damage caused to honor and dignity, was filed on December 10, 2021, and was caused by the article, entitled: “Military or Gangster? The Head of the Museum is Out of Order” and published on the page “Spokesperson” in Mamul.am website owned by Social MediaLLC on November 11. The article was later removed from the page.

With the judgment dated April 27, 2023, the court partially upheld the claim. The defendant filed an appeal against the judgement in the Court of Appeal. By the decision of March 11, 2024, the appeal was partially upheld, the judgement was overturned, the case was sent to the same court for retrial.

  **On June 24**, citizen Edgar Manukyan filed a lawsuit against 168 Zham LLC in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, claiming publication of refutation. The lawsuit was caused by an interview with Canadian-Armenian Aris Papikyan, published on May 25 on the 168.am website, owned by the LLC and on the YouTube channel. The interview bore the heading of “The Turks could not bury the Armenian people for 600 years, today the authorities of Armenia want to do it with their own hands. Canadian-Armenian Aris Papikyan.”[[115]](#footnote-115) The interview contained a specific statement that “a former employee of Pashinyan’s family-owned newspaper named Edgar Manukyan, who is also known as a divisive person in the Canadian Armenian community, arranged for some affairs in Canada for the sake of Pashinyan's family.”

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

 **On June 25,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing on the case of *NewsAM LLC v. Hraparak Daily LLC* with claims to oblige to refute the information considered as defamatory, make a public apology for the insult and compensate the damage caused to the business reputation.

The lawsuit, filed on September 13, 2022, was caused by an article, published on Hraparak.am website on August 10,[[116]](#footnote-116) which stated that upon a request from the Ministry of Defence, News.am refuted a news story on an unpleasant event, featuring the Minister.[[117]](#footnote-117)

 The next court hearing was scheduled for October 31, 2024.

**On June 25,** 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?”.[[118]](#footnote-118) 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 through manipulation.

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 16, 2024.

 **On** **June 27**, KOK System LLC filed a lawsuit in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against businessman Samvel Matinyan and Tavush Media LLC, claiming refutation of the defamatory information and payment of a compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the information about KOK System LLC that Samvel Matinyan gave on the air of Tavush TV, owned by Tavush Media LLC on May 28. Specifically, it said that the bridge had collapsed due to the HPP built by the latter, that one of the waterways was closed by the directors of the HPP to enable construction works, which is why the pillar was destroyed. The plaintiff demands to oblige Tavush Media LLC to publish Samvel Matinyan's refutation, confiscate compensation for defamation in the amount of 1 million AMD from Samvel Matinyan in favor of KOK Systems LLC, another million AMD as an attorney's reasonable fee, in addition to court expenses in the amount of 70,000 AMD.

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

***3․******Violations of the Right to Receive and Disseminate Information*** *In the second quarter of 2024, the CPFE recorded* ***19*** *facts on the violation of the right to receive and disseminate information. The facts recorded during the period under review, as well as the new developments related to the events from past periods are presented below in chronological order.*

 **On April 1**, the *Zhoghovurd* newspaper editorial office appealed to the RA General Prosecutor Anna Vardapetyan with a request for information about the borders of the Republic of Armenia and the demarcation process. The request remained unanswered.

 **On April 8**, the Infocom.am news website sent an inquiry to Yerevan Municipality, requesting information about the contractors who violated the quality standards or deadlines specified in the contracts awarded within the frames of state procurement, as well as the fines incurred as a result of such violations. On April 15, the Municipality responded that these data can be found on the Armeps.am website, but the requested information was not published there.

**On April 30**, the same website sent a request to the Yerevan Municipality to provide the contract signed with Comfortshin Plus LLC, as it was not published on the Armeps.am website. No answer to the survey was received as of the end of the quarter, with an excuse that there were some issues to be clarified.

**On May 22**, the same media outlet sent another letter to the Municipality with a request to provide information on the violations, recorded by the organizations that carry out technical control of pitting and repair works in Yerevan, their interim and final reports, as well as data from the registers. The Municipality requested 30 days to accomplish this task. They sent in a late response on June 28, which was past the deadline.

 **On April 4**, the RA Administrative Court held a court hearing on the case of *Investigative Journalists NGO, the founder of Hetq.am online periodical, v. the RA Ministry of High-Tech Industry*.

By the lawsuit, filed on June 5, 2023, the NGO demanded to oblige the Ministry of High-Tech Industry to provide the information, requested on May 22, namely on the organizations which had signed contracts with the agency and specify the amount of state support provided to them.

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 4, 2024.

**On April 4**, the appeal of the defendant in the case of *the Union of Informed Citizens NGO (the founder of Fip.am website) v. the RA Police*, against the ruling of the first instance court, which upheld the claim, submitted on June 6, 2022, requesting a court order for the provision of exhaustive information. We should remind that the website's request to provide the names, surnames and working phone numbers of the heads and deputy heads of all regional police departments, their divisions and units remained unanswered.
 A hearing was scheduled for September 27 at the Court of Appeal.

 **On April 10,** the Union of Informed Citizens NGO (the founder of Fip.am website) submitted a lawsuit to the Administrative Court against the RA Anti-Corruption Committee, requesting a court order for the provision of an exhaustive answer to their inquiry H-2748, dated February 23, 2024. The request was about the decision to terminate a criminal proceeding.
On April 15, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, a court hearing was scheduled for September 19.

 **On April 11**, Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Khachatryan's office responded to the inquiry of Infocom.am news website, sent to the RA Government on March 14, regarding the financial support provided to the people displaced from Artsakh. On March 19, the request was forwarded to the Ministry of Finance. After many calls, the answer provided by Tigran Khachatryan's office on April 11 was incomplete, there were still open questions, which the media later tried to fill in with oral interactions with the Deputy Prime Minister's staff, including the Deputy Prime Minister's assistant. Again, not having received sufficient information on the issues in question, the website wrote a letter to the Deputy Prime Minister's adviser on **May 3**, presenting the outcomes of the written correspondence and oral interactions, highlighting some inconsistencies in the received data, and asked to provide complete and detailed information. The answer was received on May 17, with a delay.

 **On April 25,** the Administrative Court held a court hearing on the case of the *founder of Fip.am website – the Union of Informed Citizens NGO – v. the Ministry of Defense*, claiming to oblige it to give an exhaustive response to the inquiry.
The lawsuit was filed on August 30, 2023, when the agency failed to provide information on how much money the Republic of Armenia spent on acquiring weapons in 2008-2022.
A court session was also held on June 5, and the date of publication of the judicial act was set on the 26th, but the verdict was not published in Datalex information portal as of June 30.

**On May 7,** the Administrative Court of Appeal accepted the appeal of the defendant of the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the Fip.am website, v. the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia* against the judgment of the court of general jurisdiction, which upheld the claim for ordering to provide an answer to the inquiry, as included in the lawsuit, filed on March 1, 2023.
We should remind that the NGO asked the Ministry to provide exhaustive information on how many cases and of what nature each of the 4 officers presented for the promotion of the police patrol service in December 2022 had resolved. On December 27, the lawsuit was upheld by the court judgement. The Ministry of Internal Affairs was obliged to provide complete information as per the request. The Ministry appealed to the Court of Appeal.
A court hearing was scheduled for February 20, 2025.

 **On May 23,** the Administrative Court held a trial on another case, filed by *the Union of Informed Citizens NGO v. the Ministry of Internal Affairs*. By the lawsuit, filed on March 22, 2023, the NGO requested to oblige the agency to answer the inquiry dated February 17 as to the purpose of installing flashing red and blue beacons on some military police vehicles. On June 7, the the case was dismissed on the grounds of the provision of a response to the inquiry.

 **On May 13**, Fip.am fact-checking platform sent an inquiry to the RA Prosecutor General Anna Vardapetyan and asked for information on whether a criminal proceeding had been initiated in connection with the news in the media, according to which the mayor of Stepanavan tried to cut open the throat of the citizen who turned to him, and whether the proceedings detected the actual facts of the case, whether the mayor was under criminal prosecution. No response to the inquiry was received before the end of the quarter.

 **On June 4**, in another letter, the website asked the RA Prosecutor General for information about the dismissal of Samvel Danielyan, director of the Hematology Center after Yolyan. In particular, the point of view that his release "has political grounds" and apparently contains the elements of the crime provided for in Article 441 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia (*Abusing State or Official Authorities or the Influence Caused Thereby or Exceeding Authority by an Official*). With the request, the website also asked to inform about the actions taken to verify the news. The answer from the Prosecutor's office was not received as of the end of the quarter.

 **On May 21**, Fip.am fact-checking platform appealed to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia, requesting information on the grounds of why Gazprom Armenia considered the data on gas storage volumes over the past 5 years to be a trade secret. What is the reason for this information having a real or potential commercial value by virtue of being unknown to third parties? No response to the inquiry was received before the end of the quarter.

 **On May 21**, the defendant again appealed against the 2023 judgment of court of general jurisdiction on upholding the claim in the case of *Investigative Journalists NGO, founder of "Hetq.am" online periodical, v. the Board of Trustees of the National Scientific Laboratory after A. I. Alikhanyan (Yerevan Institute of Physics)*. The lawsuit was examined twice.
We should remind that after receiving a rejection from the Foundation, Investigative Journalists NGO filed a lawsuit with the Administrative Court on July 8, 2019, with a request to order to provide copies of all decisions made by the board in the years 2011-2019, and on July 15, the case was forwarded to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan. According to the judgment of May 22, 2020, the claim of Investigative Journalists was partially upheld, and on October 23, the defendant's appeal was upheld. The verdict was overturned, and the case was sent to the same court for retrial. On January 14, 2022, a new proceeding was initiated in the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan. According to the judicial act of October 13, 2023, the claim was upheld again. The defendant’s appeal was accepted for proceedings on June 24.

 **On May 23**, a regular court session was held in the Administrative Court in the case of the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the "Fip.am" website, v. the RA National Security Service,* claiming a court order on the provision of exhaustive information to the requests.
The claim was submitted in on August 15, 2022, when the NGO did not receive the requested information from the state agency. The request was for the provision of the number of NSS and border guard troops who were subject to disciplinary action in 2012-2022.
On June 14, the claim was rejected. The court found that the information requested by the plaintiff contained a state secret. There was no information about appealing the verdict.

 **On May 24**, the *Zhoghovurd* newspaper sent **3** requests to RA General Prosecutor Anna Vardapetyan. They had to do with the renovation of the stadium of the Football Federation of Armenia, the Hayrapet hotel complex in Sevan and the possible corruption transactions related to Pallada Tsaghkadzor LLC, which was also flagged by MP Taguhi Tovmasyan. Responses to these inquires came in with a delay of over 10 business days, after follow-up calls.

 **On May 30**, Roza Vardanyan, the reporter of the "Factor.am" news site, flagged that she had sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Finance 2 days before, having previously coordinated it with the press spokesperson and having received an assurance that the answer would be given the same or the next day. However, the promise was not fulfilled, after many calls it was found that the inquiry sent two days before was registered on that day only, and the expected response period was to be until June 6. The journalist expressed a concern that the answer would no longer be relevant. Meanwhile, the journalist was inquiring about something that would need a very simple answer, which could be provided even verbally. And indeed, the information received from the Ministry was already outdated and was of no value for publication.

 **On May 31**, the Medialab.am website sent a written request for information to Yerevan Municipality, asking for information on the cost of the invitation to Akram Khan's *Giselle* ballet performed by the English National Ballet, which was on a “historic” tour – as it was described – in Yerevan in May. The media outlet did not receive any response.

 **On June 2**, the Infocom.am news website requested Vedi municipality to provide information on procurement procedures in 2022 and 2023. No response was provided as of June 30, the end of the quarter.

 **On June 5**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of "Fip.am" website, v. Public Television Company CJSC*, with claims for an order to answer the inquiry. The lawsuit was submitted on August 11, 2023 (the case was transferred from the administrative to civil court on October 2, 2023), because the plaintiff did not receive answers to the following questions: why was specifically Tigran Avinyan interviewed as a Deputy Mayor right before the Yerevan Council of Elders elections? Would the Public Television Company provide a similar interview opportunity to the mayoral candidates of other political forces?
The next court session was scheduled for November 27.

 **On June 12**, 2 requests for information were addressed to the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Narek Mkrtchyan, regarding housing construction projects for forcibly displaced persons from Artsakh and the financial assistance given to them by the editorial office of the *Zhoghovurd* newspaper. The requests remained unanswered.

 **On June 12**, in the Administrative Court held a court hearing on the case of *the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of Fip.am website v. the staff of the Supreme Judicial Council of RA, the Judicial Department and the head thereof Nairi Galstyan*, claiming to oblige him to provide an exhaustive response to the inquiry and also to impose administrative liability on Nairi Galstyan.
The lawsuit was filed on May 22, 2023, upon failure to provide a response on desertion cases in a set period. On May 25, the application was returned on the grounds that the claims were related to different disputes, were unrelated and targeted different defendants. On June 14, the amended application was submitted again, with claims only against the RA Supreme Judicial Council and the Judicial Department staff.

 **On June 12**, the Administrative Court held a court hearing on the case against the head of the Judicial Department, Nairi Galstyan under the lawsuit filed on June 14, 2023, the occasion of which is the same. The plaintiff demands to hold the defendant administratively liable on the ground of Article 189.7 (*Failure to provide information*) of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Armenia.

 **On June 12**, the Administrative Court held a court hearing on the case of the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the "Fip.am" website, v. the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, claiming to oblige to answer the February 13 inquiry. The inquiry was requesting a description of fixed camera locations in public spaces monitored by the Police, including the ones that did not monitor traffic. The lawsuit was submitted on March 1, 2023. On July 1, a court hearing was scheduled for July 1 to publish the judgment.

 **On June 25**, the Infocom.am news website turned to Vanadzor municipality with a request to provide information on procurement procedures for 2022 and 2023, but did not receive a response.

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

 **On April 2,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on thelawsuit filed by *Hraparak Daily LLC v. MP Artur Hovhannisyan*, with claims to publicly refute the defamatory information, as well as to pay compensation for the damage caused to the business reputation.

 The lawsuit, filed on December 25, 2023, was caused by the statement of the defendant from the NA podium on December 15, according to which some media, in particular, Zhoghovurd, Hraparak newspapers, and Asekose.am can publish an article for money.[[119]](#footnote-119)

 Court hearings were also held on April 18 and june 4, and the trial was scheduled for October 29.

 **On April 4,** a court hearing was held on the case of *the Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office LLC v. Artur Hovhannisyan.* This lawsuit was filed on Janurary 3 for the same reason, with claims to refute the public statement and oblige him to apologize, compensate the damage caused (in the amount of 4 million AMD). Court hearings on the case were also held on April 29 and June 5, with the nex one scheduled for July 3.

**On April 3,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Tavush Marz (Ijevan residence) held a regular court hearing on the case of *Aravot.am news website journalist Hripsime Jebejian v. citizen Khazhak Tananyan*, with claims to protect honor and dignity from publicly expressed insults.

 The lawsuit, filed on August 28, 2023, was caused by the remarks about the journalist on the Internet.[[120]](#footnote-120)

Court hearings on the case were also held on April 18 and 23, May 30 and June 18. July 10 was set as the date of publication of the judicial act.

 **On April 5**, the Administratve Court of Appeal changed the judge on the case of *MELTEX LLC, the founder of A1+ online TV, v. RA Government and Commission on TV and Radio,* and on the 10th the case was accepted for proceedings for retrial.

We should remind that the lawsuit was filed with the Court of Appeal on December 18, 2019, in relation to the annulment of acts from 7 broadcast licensing competitions held in 2003. Armenia TV CJSC, Mo TV Media Holding CJSC, ArmenAkob LLC, AR TV LLC and Husaber CJSC are involved as the third party in the case. On April 6, 2021, the court rejected the lawsuit, and on June 1, 2022, the Civil Court of Appeal rejected the plaintiff’s appeal and MELTEX LLC applied to the Court of Cassation.
On November 10, 2023, the cassation appeal was upheld, and the case was sent to the Court of Appeal for retrial. The next court hearing was scheduled for September 18.

 **On April 16,** a regular court hearing was held on the case of *Shark LLC (founder of Channel 5) v. the NA Vladimir Vardanyan*, with claims to refute the information considered as defamatory and pay a compensation. We should remind that the lawsuit was filed on November 16, 2022, and was caused by the MP's words to the TV company during a briefing at the National Assembly on October 18: "The worse for your channel, the better." According to the media outlet, the MP targeted journalist Karine Mangasaryan.[[121]](#footnote-121) On June 11, the case was accepted for proceedings under the preidency of a new judge. A hearing was scheduled for July 24.

A hearing on the case was also held on October 5, 2023. The next one was scheduled for January 26, 2024.

**On April 26,** theCourt of Appeal rejected the complaint of the plaintiff against the judgment of the first instance court in the case of the same plaintiff v. NA deputy Khachatur Sukiasyan which had rejected the claim.

The lawsuit, filed on November 25, 2022, and claiming to order public refutation of the information considered as defamatory and the levy of a monetary compensation, was caused by an incident that happened in the National Assembly on November 7. During a briefing with journalists, Khacahtur Sukiasyan shouted at Channel 5 TV reporter Arpi Sukiasyan, did not let her finish the question, then referred to the media's political patronage, linking it to the Second President of the Republic of Armenia, Robert Kocharyan, and called the latter a thief, a bandit, who was engaged in looting: “You should join your owner and bring the billions back, you have no right to be called a media outlet...”.[[122]](#footnote-122)
 On May 30, the plaintiff went to the Court of Cassation where the appeal was received on June 24.

 **On April 18,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a court hearing on the case of *Ani Gevorgyan, editor of the Newday.am website, v. citizen Lala Bernetsyan*, with the demand to protect honor and dignity from publicly expressed insults. The lawsuit, filed on August 28, 2023, was caused by the campaign against the journalist on social networks, in the form of insults, threats, and calls for physical reprisals, started after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's press conference on July 25.[[123]](#footnote-123)

Another court hearing was held on June 27, with the next one scheduled for August 29.

 **On May 7,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Kotayk Marz (Abovyan residence) continued the court hearing on the case of the same plaintiff against citizen Diana Martirosyan, with claims to protect honor and dignity from publicly expressed insults and confiscate 400 thousand AMD in compensation.

This lawsuit was filed on October 13, 2023, and was caused by the attack of Diana Martirosyan on Ani Gevorgyan, which was accompanied by insults and threats, on September 11, during the Yerevan Council of Elders election campaign.[[124]](#footnote-124)
The next court hearing was scheduled for July 11, 2024.

 **On April 25,** the Administrative Court of Appeal conducted the judicial examination of the complaint, filed by plaintiff in the case of *Armenian Second TV Channel LLC against the Commission on TV and Radio,* challenging the judgment of the first instance court which had refused the lawsuit.

The lawsuit filed by Armenian Second TV Channel LLC against the Commission on TV and Radio dated February 18, 2022, demanding to recognize the lack of legal relationship of imposing a fine in the amount of one hundred times the minimum wage specified in the RA Law "On Audiovisual Media" Article 57, Part 28, mentioned in the decision of the Commission on TV and Radio No. 86-A dated May 27, 2021. That fine was imposed on the grounds that, according to the Commission on TV and Radio, the TV company did not submit information on the size of the previous year's proceeds and the breakdown of the proceeds and generation sources to the state regulatory body.

The judgment dated March 15 rejected the lawsuit. On April 20, the plaintiff filed an appeal.

On May 20, the Court of Appeal rejected the complaint, leaving the judgment of the Admistrative Court unchanged.

**On June 11,** the Administative Court of Appeal rejected the complaint of the defendant in another case of *Armenian Second TV Channel LLC v. Commission on TV and Radio*. The lawsuit was filed on August 2, 2022, demanding to recognize the absence of the legal relationship to impose a fine of four hundred times the minimum wage specified in Article 57, Part 22 of the Law "On Audiovisual Media" on the LLC, mentioned in the drawn up but not signed Decision No. 85-A of the Commission on TV and Radio dated June 13, 2023. On October 16, 2023, the lawsuit was upheld, on November 10, the defendant filed an appeal.

**On April 26**, the plaintiff in the case of 168 *Zham LLC and journalist Gohar Savzyan v. citizen Ashot Davinyan*, filed an appeal against the judgment of the court of general jurisdiction, by which the claim was rejected. The lawsuit, demanding an apology for insult, refutation of defamatory information, obligation to publish the refutation text and confiscation of compensation for the damage caused to honor, dignity and business reputation, filed on July 14, 2023, was caused by 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.[[125]](#footnote-125)

On May 21, the complaint to the Court of Appeal was returned, and the motion of the applicant on deferring the payment of state duty was rejected. No other developments were recorded as of the end of the quarter.

**On April 26**, the Administrative Court of the Republic of Armenia accepted the lawsuit filed by *Knarik Manukyan, a journalist and editor of the Zhoghovurd daily newspaper, v. the staff of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia*, claiming to annul Decision 1/6399-2023 of the Chief of Staff of the National Assembly, dated December 15, 2023 on terminating the plaintiff’s accreditation in the parliament.

 A court session was held on May 29, the next one was scheduled for July 11.

 **On June 6,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the retrial on the case of *News AM LLC v. Styopa Safaryan*, demanding a compensation for the damage caused to business reputation.

We should remind that the lawsuit, filed on August 28, 2019, was caused by the defendant’s post on Facebook on July 29 of the same year, stating that the website had received an order from Robert Kocharyan’s office to publish some articles about judges.[[126]](#footnote-126) On July 15, 2022, the lawsuit was partially upheld. The court obliged the defendant to refute the impugned statements on his personal Facebook page. The defendant filed an appeal in the Court of Appeal, which was partially upheld, the judgement of the Court of First Instance was overturned, and the case was sent to the same court for retrial.

The next court hearing was scheduled for July 30, 2024.

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1. [**https://shorturl.at/FcM0T**](https://shorturl.at/FcM0T) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **https://shorturl.at/FclkA** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **https://shorturl.at/BpCeB** [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **https://shorturl.at/36Z6N** [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. **https://shorturl.at/yBZ5J** [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [**https://rsf.org/en/protests-armenia-rsf-denounces-deliberate-police-violence-against-reporters**](https://rsf.org/en/protests-armenia-rsf-denounces-deliberate-police-violence-against-reporters) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [**https://www.facebook.com/usembarmenia/posts/pfbid02xhG8pP3TVepmoauLeFiz9UF442MwZy5x7EE6NU31moSkTbHKZ7PxvMFuFFw6FpKCl**](https://www.facebook.com/usembarmenia/posts/pfbid02xhG8pP3TVepmoauLeFiz9UF442MwZy5x7EE6NU31moSkTbHKZ7PxvMFuFFw6FpKCl) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [**https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/528267\_ARMENIA-2023-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf**](https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/528267_ARMENIA-2023-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [**https://www.amerikayidzayn.com/a/7565506.html**](https://www.amerikayidzayn.com/a/7565506.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. [**https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/armenia/report-armenia/**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/armenia/report-armenia/) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. [**https://rsf.org/en/country/armenia**](https://rsf.org/en/country/armenia) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. [**https://idcarmenia.am/conclusion/aravot-oratherthi-lragroghi-havatarmagrman-dimumeh-hh-varchapeti-ashxatakazmi-koghmic-merzhelu-masin/**](https://idcarmenia.am/conclusion/aravot-oratherthi-lragroghi-havatarmagrman-dimumeh-hh-varchapeti-ashxatakazmi-koghmic-merzhelu-masin/) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. [**https://www.facebook.com/watch?v=1479442062696622**](https://www.facebook.com/watch?v=1479442062696622) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. [**https://oragir.news/hy/material/2024/04/27/114986**](https://oragir.news/hy/material/2024/04/27/114986) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMfAI5uMSKU**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMfAI5uMSKU) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. [**https://khosq.am/2024/04/25/%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%b6-120/**](https://khosq.am/2024/04/25/%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%B6-120/) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. [**https://civic.am/society/145250--civicam-i-.html**](https://civic.am/society/145250--civicam-i-.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. [**https://khosq.am/2024/04/30/%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%b6-122/**](https://khosq.am/2024/04/30/%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%B6-122/) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. [**https://khosq.am/2024/05/11/%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%b6-124/**](https://khosq.am/2024/05/11/%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%B6-124/) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yILo2xBTw0I&t=5s**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yILo2xBTw0I&t=5s) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd1CEIloTnI**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd1CEIloTnI) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ib5H\_iDlYYw&t=25s**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ib5H_iDlYYw&t=25s) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OVJka6-iwk**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OVJka6-iwk) [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. [**https://www.facebook.com/lilo.sargsyan.7/posts/pfbid0ufXwnLW2i3z9dx5dgigTgNEt5SLZxXUByDHYh5RNAGxRHoGvQuV8HMa7wnXAuQAJl**](https://www.facebook.com/lilo.sargsyan.7/posts/pfbid0ufXwnLW2i3z9dx5dgigTgNEt5SLZxXUByDHYh5RNAGxRHoGvQuV8HMa7wnXAuQAJl) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKP-wttP3jw**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKP-wttP3jw) [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. **https://bit.ly/3Ozibca** [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. [**https://www.mediahub.am/post/a2d1943f03c54cf4**](https://www.mediahub.am/post/a2d1943f03c54cf4) [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. [**https://lurer.com/?p=471857&l=am**](https://lurer.com/?p=471857&l=am) [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. [**https://www.pastinfo.am/hy/news/2024/03/06/ldpuluk4h/1725664**](https://www.pastinfo.am/hy/news/2024/03/06/ldpuluk4h/1725664) [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. [**https://www.pastinfo.am/hy/news/2024/03/12/mwvhc5yi4/1728849**](https://www.pastinfo.am/hy/news/2024/03/12/mwvhc5yi4/1728849) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. [**https://armlur.am/1348775**](https://armlur.am/1348775) [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. [**https://idcarmenia.am/conclusion/aravot-oratherthi-lragroghi-havatarmagrman-dimumeh-hh-varchapeti-ashxatakazmi-koghmic-merzhelu-masin/**](https://idcarmenia.am/conclusion/aravot-oratherthi-lragroghi-havatarmagrman-dimumeh-hh-varchapeti-ashxatakazmi-koghmic-merzhelu-masin/) [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. [**https://lurer.com/?p=255408&l=am**](https://lurer.com/?p=255408&l=am) [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. [**https://hraparak.am/post/ac0a57cd162fe9fac32b3ae0719f2877**](https://hraparak.am/post/ac0a57cd162fe9fac32b3ae0719f2877) [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK6HT5ihmKQ**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK6HT5ihmKQ) [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. [**https://hraparak.am/post/e5eb9e1a3fe1d1de585085441c07db0e**](https://hraparak.am/post/e5eb9e1a3fe1d1de585085441c07db0e) [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. [**https://hraparak.am/post/ba096f3bd924d6beb458715caf9c34cd**](https://hraparak.am/post/ba096f3bd924d6beb458715caf9c34cd) [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
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