***REPORT***

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

***2024 third quarterly report***

**

*The Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression regularly presents to the public its reports on the working environment of Armenian media and their personnel, the issues faced by them, the state of freedom of expression and violations of the rights of media and journalists. This report reflects the data from the third quarter of 2024.*

*The facts presented in the report are derived from the following sources:*

*- phone calls received via the CPFE “hotline”,*

*- meetings and discussions held by the CPFE experts with media personnel,*

*- responses to official inquiries sent to state bodies,*

*- materials from court cases involving media entities,*

*- materials disseminated by partner journalistic organizations,*

*- media publications.*

*Contents*

*Overview…………………………………………………………………………………..3*

*Media Activities Environment……………………………………………………………4*

*Violations of the Rights of Journalists and Media (aggregate figures)...………………...9*

*Physical Violence against Journalists.................................................................................11*

*Pressure on Media and Their Personnel…………………………………………………12*

*Violations of the Right to Receive and Disseminate Information.․․․․․․․․………….......34*

*Other Events Related to the Activities of Media and Journalists ․․․․․․․․․․․․..................44*

*Project Lead - Ashot Melikyan*

*Media Expert - Hasmik Budaghyan*

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

***OVERVIEW***

The third quarter of 2024 was marked by a relatively quiet period for the activities of journalists in Armenia, which was largely conditioned by the cessation of internal disputes, protests and clashes that typically accompany them. Thus, no cases of physical violence against media representatives were recorded in the months of July-September. The cases of various other pressures decreased, with 11 recorded incidents—2.5 times less than the indicator of the previous quarter. On the other hand, the number of violations of the right to receive and disseminate information reached 41, representing more than a twofold increase.

Demonstrations of insulting and disrespectful attitude towards certain media and journalists by state officials and politicians continued. These facts serve as clear evidence of intolerance towards free speech and dissent. On the other hand, the majority of the media continue to be polarized and politicized, which does not contribute to the unbiased presentation of information, impartial coverage of events, and the widespread reach of quality journalism in the country. A lot of media and journalists fail to accept or adhere to the norms of professional ethics, which does not allow the development of the media self-regulation system. The draft law on making amendments and supplements to the Law “On Mass Communication,” developed through a partnership involving a number of journalistic organizations, the Ministry of Justice, the relevant parliamentary commission, as well as international organization Freedom House, is aimed at improving the situation. It has been sent to the RA Government, as well as the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe to gain the latter’s expert opinion.

One of the positive aspects of the period under review is the reduction in the number of new lawsuits against journalists and media. This could also be possibly conditioned by the relative calmness of the socio-political situation. There are **6** such lawsuits, all centered on allegations of defamation and insult. Among the plaintiffs is also Alen Simonyan, the Speaker of the National Assembly, who is one of the leading officials involved in legal actions against media.

For journalists, obtaining information from state institutions remains a serious challenge, creating a major impediment to the coverage of high-profile topics, dissemination of accurate information, which often leads to misinformation. One striking example from the quarter under review was disregarding media inquiries concerning the police actions and the use of special means near the National Assembly on June 12, or providing responses that were inadequate, and in some cases misleading. In this regard, the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Health were particularly notable, as they attempted to buy some time by offering “vague” responses to the inquiries and eventually amended their internal legal acts to ensure that the use of special means would be considered as well-founded.

A significant event of the quarter was the competition for the vacant position of director at the Public Radio, which concluded with Armen Koloyan being declared the winner. Prior to this, Koloyan worked as a journalist at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Armenian Service. Out of the 8 participants of the competition, 2—journalist Lusineh Petrosyan and former Public Radio director Garegin Khumaryan—questioning the objectivity of the competition, expressed their intention to challenge the results in court. So far, only Lusineh Petrosyan has proceeded with filing a lawsuit.

Interesting developments have been observed in the case of journalists injured due to police actions on June 23, 2015 on Baghramyan Avenue during the Electric Yerevan protests. To remind, 3 of these journalists turned to the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, which has been representing their interests to this day. One of these cases is under review by the European Court, while the other 2 were submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee in 2020. On September 4, 2024, the UN Human Rights Committee requested a confirmation from the CPFE on whether it still insisted that the Committee address the issue concerning the protection of the injured journalists. Upon receiving a positive response, the UN body requested English translations of the relevant case documents, signaling hope that the brutalities committed against journalists nearly 10 years ago will receive a legal assessment from this institution.

***MEDIA ACTIVITIES ENVIORNMENT***

*In the third quarter of 2024, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression recorded a total of* ***52*** *cases of violations of the rights of journalists and media. These are various pressures and obstructions to journalistic activities, as well as violations of the right to receive and disseminate information. In contrast to the previous quarter, no cases of physical violence against media personnel were recorded during the months of July-September.*

These figures are directly linked to the relatively peaceful political situation in the country during the period under review, as well as the absence of protests. Nevertheless, during this quarter, there were cases of unfriendly, disrespectful, and insulting behavior towards media professionals by representatives from both the authorities and opposition. 4 such cases were recorded.

Thus, on July 12, Alen Simonyan, the Speaker of the National Assembly, in a Facebook post, accused the editorial team of *Zhoghovurd* daily and Taguhi Tovmasyan, an opposition member of the National Assembly associated with the media's activities, of defaming him. “Unfortunately, it has become a frequent occurrence when journalists abandon their professional role, turning into waiters and serving the orders they are given. Here, Taguhi, who gave her employees the “ATTACK!” command against me, is ignorantly seeking any connection to me wherever possible: they regularly inquire about my employees’ comings and goings, and even dig up dirt...” Later, on July 24, on the same occasion, the official filed a lawsuit against *Zhoghovurd* daily, demanding to refute the information considered defamatory and pay 2 million AMD in compensation.

Alen Simonyan is currently involved as a plaintiff in 7 court cases against media and journalists. Moreover, some of these lawsuits are accompanied by substantial monetary demands from the official, which puts additional pressure on the editorial offices. Notably, during this quarter, the first instance court of general jurisdiction rejected Alen Simonyan's claim in one case.

Another official, RA Deputy Military Prosecutor Vahagn Muradyan, filed a lawsuit against *Hraparak* daily*,* demanding to refute the information considered defamatory. Businessman Arsen Papoyan, in turn, filed a lawsuit against *Shamshyan Media Ltd.,* seeking refutation of the information considered defamatory and 6 million AMD in compensation. Another businessman, Davit Yeremyan, also demands 6 million AMD as compensation for defamation in a lawsuit filed against *Zhoghovurd Daily Ltd.*

Thus, in the third quarter, a total of **6** lawsuits were filed in courts against media and journalists, with 2 of them filed by representatives of the authorities, 2 by businessmen, 1 by a lawyer and 1 by a private individual.

Regarding the lawsuits filed by journalists, the first instance court of general jurisdiction ruled in favor of a journalist for the second time. This involved the case of *Aravot.am reporter Hripsimeh Jebejyan v. citizen Khazhak Tananyan*. Earlier, at the end of the previous quarter, the journalist's lawsuit had also been upheld in the case against citizen Diana Martirosyan. Ani Gevorgyan, the editor of *Newday.am*, had also filed a lawsuit against the latter. In this case as well, the court of first instance ruled in favor of the journalist, obliging the defendants to issue an apology and pay compensation. Details are presented in the relevant section of the report.

In the third quarter, opposition figures also stood out for their disrespectful and discriminatory attitude toward journalists, targeting the reporter of *Civic.am* news website. On September 9, in the National Assembly, opposition Deputy Ishkhan Saghatelyan showed an offensive attitude in response to the questions of the website's reporter Davit Levonyan, specifically saying: “Every time you publish something stupid and seek someone's comment,” “You are lying: if I sue you, you along with your owners, team, patrons will face judgment for the next 400 years.” Later, on September 16, in the National Assembly, Gegham Manukyan, a member of “Armenia”faction, stated in response to Davit Levonyan's question that the faction would not answer “libelous” questions. We believe that this kind of discriminatory attitude towards media and journalists, especially within the country's legislative body, does not contribute to the development of civilized relations between officials and journalists and the establishment of healthy discussions on topics of public concern.

Incidents also occurred on September 27 at Yerablur Military Pantheon. *Armlur.am* reporter Christineh Musheghyan asked Hakob Aslanyan, a deputy from the National Assembly’s “Civil Contract”faction, about the country’s development. Without concealing his anger, the deputy called the journalist and all those who do not notice the country’s progress as “blind”.

On another occasion, the questions and comments posed by Ani Gevorgyan, the editor of *NewDay.am*, to the National Assembly Deputy Armen Khachatryan, infuriated the latter, leading to rude and indecent behavior towards the journalist. However, in fairness, it should be highlighted that in this particular case, the journalist also breached the norms of professional ethics, by allowing emotional reactions and artificially creating a conflict situation.

The significant rise in violations of the right to receive and disseminate information during the period under review is also a cause for concern. In the second quarter, the CPFE recorded 19 cases, whereas in the months of July-September the number surged to 41.

In general, journalists continue to face problems when seeking information and clarifications on matters of public concern from state bodies. Requests are mainly denied or ignored under the pretext that the information is classified as a state secret. Very often, no reasoning is provided when authorities request for an additional 30 days to respond; moreover, this is done to conceal the requested information. One demonstration of this is the approach of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, when the body made every effort to conceal the information about the events near the National Assembly building on June 12, directing the media to investigative bodies and buying time. In the meantime, they amended an internal legal act to establish legal foundations for the police actions.

In this context, numerous media requests seeking information regarding the June 12 use of special means (specifically “Zarya-3” stun grenade) by the police during a protest at the intersection of Baghramyan-Demirchyan streets in Yerevan, revealed that the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Health had revised earlier decisions or orders issued by the heads of these ministries, creating legal foundations for the unlawful steps that had been taken earlier. In particular, the *Fact Investigation Platform (fip.am)* discovered that on July 12, exactly one month after the events of June 12, Minister of Internal Affairs Vahe Ghazaryan had made a change in IA Minister’s order No. 48-L (which established the extended departmental list of the MIA information subject to encryption). As a result, information concerning the presence, types and quantities of special means in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, including details related to “Zarya 3” were rendered confidential. In turn, Health Minister Anahit Avanesyan, 14 days after the incident, modified a decision defining the acceptable criteria for using special means against individuals, thereby authorizing “Zarya 3,” which had long been prohibited.

It is worth mentioning that human rights defenders are also consistent in obtaining information about the special means used on June 12. The Protection of Rights Without Borders NGO, failing to receive the requested data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, filed a complaint with the RA Administrative Court on August 16.

Journalists also encountered difficulties in obtaining information related to another sensitive topic—the border village of Kirants in Tavush Marz. It should be reminded that the problematic Armenian-Azerbaijani border demarcation also ran through this area. For instance, the General Prosecutor's Office refused to disclose to Radio Liberty Armenian Service whether they had received a letter from the government to investigate the inaccuracies in the cadastral maps, which served as a basis for issuing property certificates in Kirants. The office classified this query as a secret and refused to provide information despite the fact that they had answered the same question a month earlier without referencing any such confidentiality.

Similarly, the Government classified the inquiry of *Pastinfo.am* news website as a state secret. The media, in particular, had posed the following questions: “How much land from Kirants has been designated as overriding public interest, how much of that land is communal property, how much is private, by what act will compensation be provided, and how many people will receive compensation?.” In the same vein, the Cadastre Committee classified as confidential the question of *Tert.am* regarding the decision based on which the map of Kirants had been changed.

*Thus, our observations indicate that state bodies try to conceal the information that may cause them trouble if made public. And this practice leads to deep doubts, causing mistrust in the work of governmental bodies.*

In terms of tracking the course of high profile court cases and exercising proper public oversight, the disruption of “Datalex” information system also presented a serious challenge for media and human rights NGOs. This disruption persisted for more than three months, causing serious problems for the CPFE to carry out its monitoring activities. Under these circumstances, in order to prepare this quarterly report, obtain the necessary information and finalize it, the CPFE sent numerous letters and inquiries to the Supreme Judicial Council, the Judicial Department, other state bodies, as well as a number of media editorial offices, individual journalists, etc.

In the period under review, the CPFE and partner journalistic organizations had only one occasion to make a statement. It was related to the so-called “Global Media Forum” held in Shushi by Azerbaijan, a country that holds one of the lowest places in international democracy and freedom of expression rankings. The authors of the statement highlighted that such “forums” constitute attempts and means for the regime to mask the bitter reality. What is ridiculous, however, is when representatives from international organizations and media with a certain reputation and authority participate in these events in any capacity. By participating and offering compliments, these individuals, who seemingly disregard the years of sharp criticism their own entities have directed at Azerbaijan, contribute to these “forums” turning into platforms for messages to whitewash official Baku. Armenian journalistic organizations called on international journalistic and human rights organizations, along with leading global media to assess the negative impact of the “forum” held in Shushi on democratic values, review the attitude towards it and the principles of participation, and exclude hypocrisy that is incompatible with the profession.

The Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression continues to actively pursue justice in the criminal case initiated in connection with the events of “Electric Yerevan” of June 2015, which has been under review in international courts since 2021. As a reminder, on March 4, 2019 the Special Investigative Service suspended the case of “Electric Yerevan” on grounds that “the individual to be charged was not identified.” With the support of the CPFE, on April 2 of the same year, three injured journalists, Hakob Karapetyan, Gevorg Ghazaryan and Tehmineh Yenokyan, filed a complaint against the SIS decision to the RA Prosecutor's Office, which on April 15 annulled the decision and instructed to restart the preliminary investigation. The case saw a second suspension in 2020, leading the affected journalists, again with the CPFE’s backing, to submit an appeal to the Prosecutor’s Office. Upon receiving a rejection, they proceeded to take their appeal to the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan. On January 22, the latter upheld the complaint, which was appealed by the Prosecutor's Office. The Court of Appeal upheld the appeal by the Prosecutor's Office, and the injured journalists filed a further appeal with the Court of Cassation, which ultimately rejected it. Hence, with domestic options for defending the victims' rights exhausted, materials were prepared to take the case to international courts. Tehmineh Yenokyan chose to submit her case to the European Court, while Hakob Karapetyan and Gevorg Ghazaryan opted to appeal to the UN Human Rights Committee. And on August 15, 2024, the UN Human Rights Committee requested a confirmation from the CPFE on whether it still insisted that the the rights of the injured journalists be protected. Upon, naturally, receiving a positive response, on September 4, the UN body requested the English translation of the entire case. These actions are ongoing.

Among key developments related to the media field was the announcement on July 29 of Armen Koloyan as the winner of the competition for executive director of the Public Radio. Koloyan will hold the position for a five-year term. Earlier, on July 22, Garegin Khumaryan, the now-former director of the Public Radio, posted on Facebook that he had a reasonable suspicion that the decision had already been made in favor of Armen Koloyan, hinting at political context and patronage in the process. After the announcement of the winner, two of the competition’s eight applicants, journalist Lusineh Petrosyan and former director Garegin Khumaryan, declared their intention to challenge the results in court. As of now, Lusineh Petrosyan is the only one who has filed a lawsuit with the Administrative Court on August 16.

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

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

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

The CPFE’s classification is somewhat conditional. In particular, sometimes hindrances to the access and dissemination of information is accompanied by violence against journalists. Thse incidents are attributed to the type of violation that the authors of the report find to be the closest match. Nonetheless, the classification used allows for a more streamlined and highlighted portrayal of the violations of journalists’ and media rights.

The relevant sections of the report provide details on the violations of the rights of journalists and media in the third quarter of 2024, along with updates on previous incidents.

***In total, there were 52 reported cases of various violations of journalists' and media rights in the third quarter of 2024. Among these, 11 are cases of various pressures, 41 involve violations of the right to receive and disseminate information, with no cases of physical violence registered.***

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

**Quantitative Data on Violations per Quarter in 2024**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 1st Quarter | 2nd Quarter | 3rd Quarter | Total |
| Physical violence against journalists | **0** | **14**  (23 injured) | **0** | **14** |
| Pressure on media and their personnel | **17** | **26** | **11** | **54** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | **41** | **19** | **41** | **101** |

**Quantitative Data on Violations in the 3rd Quarters of 2023 and 2024**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of violations | 3rd Quarter of 2023 | 3rd Quarter of 2024 |
| Physical violence against journalists | **3** | **0** |
| Pressure on media and their personnel | **13** | **11** |
| Violations of the right to receive and disseminate information | **33** | **41** |

**Court Cases against Media and Journalists in 2024**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 1st Quarter | 2nd Quarter | 3rd Quarter | Total |
| On the grounds of insult and defamation | 12 | 17 | 6 | 35 |
| Economic and other disputes | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Cases Filed in the 3rd Quarters of 2023 and 2024**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of court cases | 3rd Quarter of 2023 | 3rd Quarter of 2024 |
| On the grounds of insult and defamation | **6** | **6** |
| Economic and other disputes | **0** | 0 |

Similar to previous reports, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression emphasizes that the data in the tables 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, or opt to resolve problems and overcome illegal restrictions on their own. Therefore, the CPFE is convinced that the actual number of obstructions is higher than what is presented in this report. Outlined below are the most significant cases.

1. ***Physical Violence against Journalists***

*During the third quarter of 2024, there were no documented cases of physical violence against media professionals. Below we present the developments related to the past occurrences of violence in chronological order.*

**On August 16**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the trial regarding the violence against Artak Khulyan, correspondent of *Shantnews.am*, and Hovhannes Sargsyan, cameraman of *Factor.am*.

As a reminder, the criminal case was initiated in connection with the violence that had occurred during the days of the April Revolution in 2018, including against media representatives. It was sent to the court with indictments for 8 persons. The criminal prosecution on some episodes of those events was terminated on the grounds of expiration of the statute of limitations.(For details see the CPFE’s annual and quarterly reports for 2018-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am).

Court hearings in the case were also held on August 23, 30, and September 13. The date for the next court hearing has not yet been set.

**On September 8**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing in the case of violence against *Civic.am* reporter Davit Levonyan.

As a reminder, on April 30, 2024, Artur Sukoyan who accompanies NA Deputy Levon Kocharyan and presents himself as his assistant, near the central building of the National Assembly hit the journalist in the face, accusing him of “blasphemy”.[[1]](#footnote-1) The deputy’s assistant referred to the journalist’s viewpoint shared several days earlier on his personal YouTube channel, where he had stated that Bishop Bagrat Galstanyan, head of the Diocese of Tavush, was serving Russian interests[[2]](#footnote-2). Sukoyan was charged under Article 237 (3) of the RA Criminal Code *(Obstruction of legitimate professional activities of journalists by use of violence)*. On June 13, the criminal proceedings, along with the indictment, was forwarded to the court and accepted for trial on June 17.

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 8.

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

*In the third quarter of 2024, there were* ***11*** *recorded cases of various forms of pressure on media and their personnel. Each of these cases is presented in the following subsection of the report, along with the developments and outcomes related to similar facts from previous years, all listed in chronological order.*

**On July 3**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing in the case of Alen Simonyan, the Speaker of the National Assembly, against Anzhela Tovmasyan, the president of *Hayeli Club*, journalist, with the plaintiff demanding to issue an apology for the insult and pay compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the offensive language used by Anzhela Tovmasyan under the NA Speaker's address titled “We Must Finally Leave Behind a Free, Independent and Peaceful Armenia for Our Children: Alen Simonyan,” published on September 21 on *Tert.am*. [[3]](#footnote-3) The plaintiff demanded 3 million AMD in compensation.

Court hearings in the case were also held on September 3 and 23, with the next hearing scheduled for October 15.

**On July 3**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing in the case of a member of *Alaverdi Council of Elders Simon Zakharov v. ABC Media Ltd.* (the founder of the eponymous website), with the plaintiff demanding to publicly refute the information considered defamatory and pay compensation.

The lawsuit filed on January 9, 2024 was caused by a report titled “Simon Zakharov: the “Éminence Grise” of Alaverdi,” published on ABCmedia.am on December 13, 2023. According to the report, Zakharov took control of the activities of the Council of Elders, he had a background of lathe operation and after a year of training, performed surgeries at Alaverdi Medical Center. The report further claimed that in 2014 he had been able to purchase a plot of land along the river in the city for only 13 thousand AMD, by the decision of the Council of Elders.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The next court hearing in the case was scheduled for October 15.

**On July 3**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Armavir Marz (based in Ejmiatsin) held a regular court hearing in the case of *Armavir Regional State College Director Angin Arshakyan v. Educators Susanna Margaryan and Karineh Harutyunyan* (*ALT TV Company* of Armavir was involved as a third party on March 18).

The lawsuit was filed on September 12, 2022, with the plaintiff demanding compensation for the damage caused to her honor, dignity, business reputation and the right to respect for private and family life. It was caused by a September 2, 2022 report prepared by *ALT TV Company* titled: “The Staff of Armavir Regional State College Demands the Resignation of the Director,” which was broadcast during “Zham” news program of *Armenia TV Company* and published on *ALT TV Company’s alttv.am* website.[[5]](#footnote-5)

A court hearing was also held on September 16, during which the defendant's motion to apply the statute of limitations was discussed. The court set October 3 as the date for issuing the judicial act.

**On July 4**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing in the case of *Olymp Construction Ltd. v. Hetq Ltd.* (the founder of Hetq.am), with the plaintiff demanding to refute the information considered defamatory and pay compensation.

As a reminder, the lawsuit filed on June 29, 2020 was caused by an article, titled “The Construction Company Developing a New Building Refuses to Hand Over the Pumping Station to the Water Committee: Residents Are Complaining,” published on Hetq.am*.*[[6]](#footnote-6) Although the author of the article incorporated a comment from the representative of the construction company as well, the plaintiff disagreed with the residents’ complaint.

On July 19, the court ruled to reject the lawsuit, obliging the plaintiff to pay 100 thousand AMD as the media's attorney fee.

**On July 4**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to reject the lawsuit filed by Alen Simonyan, the Speaker of the National Assembly, against *Mediahub Ltd.* (the founder of *Mediahub.am*), with the plaintiff demanding to refute the information considered defamatory and pay compensation in the amount of 1 million AMD.

The lawsuit filed on April 19, 2023, was caused by an article titled “Government Signs a 79 Million AMD Deal with Alen Simonyan's Brother’s Company Without Tender,” published on April 13 on the website. The article pointed out that the contract signed with the official's brother's company lacked any explanation as to why such a significant sum of money had been allocated for road construction from the Government without issuing an announcement for a tender.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The court ruled to oblige the plaintiff to compensate the media’s attorney fee in the amount of 150 thousand AMD.

**On July 4**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted for proceedings citizen Edgar Manukyan’s lawsuit filed on June 24 against *168 Zham Ltd.*, where the plaintiff demanded publication of a refutation. The lawsuit was caused by an interview with Canadian-Armenian Aris Papikyan, published on May 25 on *168.am* website and the YouTube channel, both owned by *168 Zham Ltd*. The interview carried the headline “For 600 Years, the Turks Didn’t Manage to Bury the Armenian People—Today, the Authorities of Armenia Want to Do It with Their Own Hands: Canadian-Armenian Aris Papikyan.”[[8]](#footnote-8) The interview contained a particular remark claiming that “a former employee of Pashinyan’s family-run newspaper named Edgar Manukyan, who is also known for his divisive role in the Canadian Armenian community, arranged some affairs in Canada for Pashinyan's family.”

No further progress was made in the case during this quarter.

**On July 8**, the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO* filed an appeal with the appellate court against the decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, which had upheld *Civil Contract* party’s claim for a refutation of the information considered defamatory and compensation payment.

The lawsuit filed on August 17, 2023 was caused by an investigative article titled “The CC Uses the Administrative Resources of Other Communities to Secure Votes for Avinyan,” published on the NGO’s *Fip.am* website on July 21.[[9]](#footnote-9) On August 25, the court upheld the motion to secure the claim by imposing a lien on the defendant’s property in the claim amount of 1 million AMD. Following the alert[[10]](#footnote-10) from journalistic organizations, the court ruled to annul the measure to secure the claim. On June 7, 2024, the court ruled to partially uphold the claim, obliging the defendant to publish a refutation, pay 20,000 AMD as state duty and 150,000 AMD as attorney’s reasonable fee. Furthermore, the court ordered the *Civil Contract* party to pay 50,000 AMD to the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO* as a reasonable fee for the defendant’s attorney.

**On July 8**, the Civil Court of Appeal rejected the plaintiff’s appeal on the case of *Alvina Gyulumyan, a former member of the Constitutional Court, v. Dareskizb Ltd., the founder of Haykakan Zhamanak daily*. The appeal contested the prior decision to leave the lawsuit unexamined.

As a reminder, the lawsuit, filed on August 22, 2018, with the plaintiff demanding a refutation of defamation and compensation, was caused by an article in the daily alleging that during her time representing Armenia as a judge at the European Court of Human Rights, Gyulumyan did not spare any effort to delay the investigation of one of the cases in relation to the March 1, 2008 events in Yerevan. The first instance court had rejected Alvina Gyulumyan’s lawsuit on December 6, 2019 on the grounds of the application of the statute of limitations. The plaintiff had filed an appeal on December 30, which had been upheld, and the case had been remanded to the same court for a new trial.

On December 5, 2023, the court ruled to leave the lawsuit without examination, because the plaintiff, despite being notified, failed to attend two consecutive court hearings. On December 27, the plaintiff appealed this decision in the Court of Appeal.

The judicial act entered into legal force.

**On July 9,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori Marz (based in Vanadzor) ruled to reject the lawsuit filed by teacher Susanna Sargsyan against *Hraparak.am* reporter Shushanna Grigoryan (*Hraparak* daily was involved as a third party), with the plaintiff demanding to issue an apology and publicly refute the information considered defamatory.

As a reminder, the case is being re-examined in the court of first instance. The lawsuit, filed on June 6, 2014 was caused by articles, titled “The Headmaster of Vanadzor School N8 was Fired”[[11]](#footnote-11) and “Vanadzor Teacher Received 12 Million AMD for Forced Idleness,”[[12]](#footnote-12) published on the aforementioned website on October 4 and December 5, 2013, respectively (For details see the annual reports of the CPFE for 2016-2023 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am). The court also obliged the plaintiff to pay 11,500 AMD as state duty and 150,000 AMD as the defendant's attorney fee.

**On July 9**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted for proceedings the lawsuit filed on June 27 by *KOK System Ltd.* against businessman Samvel Matinyan and *Tavush Media Ltd.*, with the plaintiff demanding to refute the information considered defamatory and pay compensation. The lawsuit was caused by the information about KOK System Ltd. shared on May 28 by Samvel Matinyan on the air of *Tavush TV*, owned by *Tavush Media Ltd*. Specifically, Matinyan mentioned that a section of a bridge had collapsed due to the construction of a hydroelectric power plant (HPP) by KOK System Ltd., one of the waterways had been blocked by the directors of the HPP to enable construction works, which had led to the destruction of a pillar. The plaintiff demanded to oblige *Tavush Media Ltd.* to publish Samvel Matinyan's refutation, confiscate 1 million AMD from Samvel Matinyan in favor of *KOK Systems Ltd.* as compensation for defamation, an additional 1 million AMD as attorney's reasonable fee, and 70,000 AMD as court costs.

The court scheduled the hearing for October 30.

**On July 9**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary court hearing in the case of the ruling *Civil Contract party v. Hayeli Club NGO* (the founder of *Hayeli.am* website), with the plaintiff demanding a refutation of the information considered defamatory and compensation.

As a reminder, on April 25, 2023, the *Civil Contract* party filed **4** lawsuits with similar claims against *168 Zham, 24 News, News.AM Ltds. and Hayeli Club NGO*, caused by a news piece, published on *168.am, 24news.am, News.am and Hayeli.am* websites on March 26, the day of elections (legally defined as a no-campaign day) in Sisian and Ani communities. In this context, the media were accused of engaging in counter-propaganda against the *Civil Contract* party by reproducing a statement by the *Citizen's Decision* party pre-election headquarters under the headline “Civil Contract Gives out Bribes”. Notably, the publication was later removed from the websites. In the lawsuit against the founder of Hayeli.am, the motion to secure the claim was partially upheld. The next court hearing was scheduled for November 5.

On August 12, a redistribution took place in the case against *168.am*, and the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on August 22. A court hearing was scheduled for October 3.

In the case against *News.am*, on August 12, a **ruling** was issued in favor of the media. The lawsuit of the *Civil Contract* party was rejected. The plaintiff was obliged to pay 150,000 AMD as attorney's reasonable fee. On September 30, the plaintiff appealed the decision to a higher court.

On September 25, a **ruling** was issued in the lawsuit against the founder of *24news*. In this case, the claim was upheld. The court obliged the media to publish a refutation and pay 200,000 AMD as compensation for defamation, along with 200,000 AMD as attorney’s fee.

**On July 9**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the hearing in the case of Ruben Khachatryan, the former director of Yerevan Zoo, against journalist Narineh Kirakosyan, with the plaintiff demanding to refute the information considered defamatory and compensate the damage.

The lawsuit had first been filed on September 24, 2019, then returned upon the plaintiff’s request and refiled on November 13. The lawsuit was caused by the journalist’s August 25 Facebook post, in which she stated that Ruben Khachatryan had caused significant damage to the animals by declaring himself a sole leader (For details see the CPFE’s reports for 2019-2024 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am).

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 15.

**On July 9**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted for proceedings the lawsuit filed by Hovsep Khurshudyan, the head of the *Free Citizen NGO*, against Asekose Ltd., with the plaintiff demanding to refute the information considered defamatory and compensate (in the amount of 1 million AMD) the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

The lawsuit filed on June 3, 2024 was caused by a video published on May 1 on *Asekose.am* website and on the eponymous YouTube channel, both owned by *Asekose Ltd.,* titled “Hayk Manasyan Confronts Hovsep Khurshudyan: You’re Either Spreading False News or Spying.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Hayk Manasyan, a physician and public figure, criticized the news spread by Khurshudyan, according to which, over the previous 5 days, there had been a rise in the volumes of Russian ruble exchange at currency exchange points in Tavush Marz. Manasyan argued that Khurshudyan could not have access to such information, implying that the latter, most probably, just wanted to circulate news that “The Kremlin was distributing money among the local puppets.”

A preliminary hearing was scheduled for October 7.

**On July 11**, RA Deputy Military Prosecutor Vahagn Muradyan filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Hraparak Daily Ltd.,* demanding a refutation of the information considered defamatory. The lawsuit was caused by the article “Accusations Against the Deputy Military Prosecutor,” published on June 18 on *Hraparak.am* website[[14]](#footnote-14), owned by *Hraparak Daily Ltd*. According to the piece, businessman Varsham Gharibyan accuses Muradyan of owing him 19 million AMD. The dispute dates back to 2005 and has been bouncing from court to court in an endless cycle.

The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on July 25. A court hearing was scheduled for October 14.

**On July 12**, NA Speaker Alen Simonyan criticized *Zhoghovurd* daily on his Facebook page, accusing the media of acting on instructions. The official specifically highlighted that the media had published false, untrue information about his brother.[[15]](#footnote-15) Simonyan’s remarks were punctuated with rude and offensive expressions, and he threatened to take legal action.

**On July 12**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary hearing in the case of lawyer Tigran Yegoryan against Gagik Yeghiazaryan and *Hraparak Daily Ltd*., with the plaintiff demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

The lawsuit filed on May 15, 2024 was caused by an April 12 news piece titled “Gagik Yeghiazaryan from ‘Sasna Tsrer’ accuses Yegoryan of embezzling the 2,500 EUR he received as compensation,” published on *Hraparak.am*, owned by *Hraparak Daily Ltd.*[[16]](#footnote-16) The article specified that incarcerated Gagik Yeghiazaryan accused his longtime defense lawyer Tigran Yegoryan of embezzling 2500 EUR allocated to him as compensation, abusing his trust and failing to fulfill his duties.

A hearing in the case was also held on September 11, where the burden of proof was distributed between the parties. The next court session was scheduled for January 21, 2025.

**On July 15**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan partially upheld the lawsuit filed by NA Speaker Alen Simonyan against *V.I.V. Today and Tomorrow Ltd.*, the founder of *Ankakh.com* news website, with the plaintiff demanding compensation for damage caused to his honor and dignity.

The lawsuit filed on December 22, 2022, was caused by an article titled “Are Alen Simonyan and Vahagn Khachaturyan Making Purchases with State Funds?” published on December 9 on the above mentioned website.[[17]](#footnote-17) The article specifically noted that the RA President and the Speaker of the National Assembly documented the purchase of their clothes as state procurement, categorizing it under representative expenses, but the items were added to their personal wardrobes.

The court obliged the media to publish a refutation, pay 20,000 AMD as state duty and 200,000 AMD as reasonable fee for Alen Simonyan’s attorney. On September 13, the defendant appealed the verdict.

**On July 15**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular court hearing in the case of *Yerevan State University Foundation v. Hraparak Daily Ltd.,* the founder of *Hraparak.am* website, with the plaintiff demanding a public refutation of the information considered defamatory, and 1 million AMD compensation for defamation.

The lawsuit filed on January 30, 2023 was caused by a December 30, 2022 article titled “Financial Deficit Emerges at YSU,” published on the aforementioned website.[[18]](#footnote-18) YSU demanded a refutation, which was published with certain comments. Dissatisfied with the outcome, the plaintiff took legal action.

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 4.

**On July 16**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the trial on the case of

businessman Petros Tovmasyan against *Civil Contract* party’s *Civic.am* website, with the plaintiff demanding to oblige the media to publicly refute the information considered defamatory and pay compensation.

The lawsuit filed on October 4, 2021 was caused by an article titled “Taguhi Tovmasyan’s ‘Superman’ Brother Runs a Brewery ‘Single-Handedly’, Produces 1000 Liters of Beer Monthly: SRC Ignores Tax Evasion Hypothesis,”[[19]](#footnote-19) published on the website on September 1. The piece alleged that the businessman engaged in tax evasion, which the State Revenue Committee failed to investigate.

The next court hearing was scheduled for December 19.

**On July 16**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to leave the lawsuit of lawyer Tigran Yegoryan against *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office Ltd*. and *Union of Journalists of Armenia NGO* without examination. The plaintiff demanded compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

The lawsuit filed on November 2, 2022 was caused by the *UJA* October 3 statement in support of *Zhoghovurd* daily. The statement followed a second lawsuit filed by former official Samvel Kharazyan, defended in court by Tigran Yegoryan, against the media.[[20]](#footnote-20) The statement particularly emphasized that the editorial office had reasonable grounds to suspect that the goal of the plaintiff and especially lawyer Yegoryan was to harm the newspaper.

The decision to leave the lawsuit unexamined was based on the plaintiff’s failure to attend two consecutive court hearings, despite being notified. Added to that, the plaintiff did not clearly formulate the demands against each defendant. On August 12, the plaintiff appealed this decision to a higher court.

**On July 17**, the Court of Cassation refused to accept for proceedings the defendant’s appeal against the decision of the appellate court in the case of *Armenian National Interests Fund (ANIF) CJSC v. 168 Zham Ltd*. The appellate court had upheld the plaintiff's complaint, overturned the verdict of the court of general jurisdiction and sent the case back to the same court for a new examination.

As a reminder, the lawsuit was filed on May 13, 2021, with the plaintiff demanding to refute the information tarnishing their business reputation and pay compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article titled “In Anticipation of Investments,” published on *168.am* on April 12, 2021. The piece specifically claimed that the Fund was failing to secure the promised investments.[[21]](#footnote-21) Notably, the lawsuit was examined on two occasions (For details see the CPFE’s reports for 2021-2024 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am).

On November 10, 2023, the court ruled to reject the lawsuit on the grounds of expiration of the statute of limitations, obliging the plaintiff to pay 200,000 AMD as attorney’s reasonable fee. On September 3, the case was received for a new examination after the ruling was overturned.

**On July 17**, following several returns, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan accepted for proceedings the lawsuit filed on April 19 by *Pallada Tsaghkadzor Ltd.* against *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office Ltd.*, with the plaintiff demanding to refute the information considered defamatory and pay 12 million AMD in compensation for the damage caused to their honor, dignity or business reputation.

The lawsuit was caused by an article published on March 5 on *Armlur.am* website owned by *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office Ltd.,* as well as its eponymous pages on social media. The piece titled “Government Efforts to Assist A. Simonyan’s Godfather Thwarted by Nature”[[22]](#footnote-22) specifically read: “Pallada Tsaghkadzor multifunctional residential complex is facing serious construction problems. According to information obtained by *Zhoghovurd* daily, issues began last year, when during the excavation of the foundation, a river was discovered at the intended foundation site, located over 20 meters below the surface, causing disruptions to the construction process. Additionally, the area is impacted by landslides, too.”

The date of the court hearing has not yet been set.

**On July 17**, the defendant in the case of*Armenian National Interests Fund CJSC and the Chair of the Company's Board of Directors Tigran Avinyan v. Pastinfo Ltd.* (the founder of *Pastinfo.am*) filed an appeal against the decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, which had upheld the lawsuit.

As a reminder, thelawsuit, in which the plaintiff demanded to obligate the media to refute the information tarnishing their honor, dignity and business reputation and pay a monetary compensation of 6 million AMD to each plaintiff, was filed on March 16, 2023. It was caused by an article titled “Pastinfo’s Information Confirmed: Avinyan's Tenure as Deputy Mayor Is Illegal as He Heads a Commercial Entity, a Position He Is Prohibited from Holding,” published on February 20 on Pastinfo.am. The piece pointed out that the two positions held by Tigran Avinyan, Chair of the Fund's Board of Directors and Deputy Mayor, were incompatible.[[23]](#footnote-23)

The plaintiffs also demanded payment of 400,000 AMD as state duty, and 800,000 AMD as attorney's fee. The court of general jurisdiction ruled to oblige the defendant to publish a refutation, pay 200,000 AMD to the plaintiffs as pecuniary compensation for defamation and 26,000 AMD as state duty, while rejecting the confiscation of the attorney's fee.

**On July 17**, The Civil Court of Appeal upheld the complaint by the plaintiff in the case of *citizen* *Erik Yeghinyan v. Ararat TV Company and Anna Sirunyan,* ruling to annul the decision of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Lori Marz (based in Stepanavan), which had previously returned the lawsuit.

As a reminder, the lawsuit filed on May 31, in which the plaintiff demanded confiscation of one million AMD from Anna Sirunyan for tarnishing his honor, dignity and good reputation, as well as publication of a refutation, was caused by the statements made on the air of the TV company alleging that the plaintiff had used violence against citizen Sirunyan and had orchestrated a fraudulent scheme by selling the latter's apartment. The plaintiff argued that the journalist had failed to hear his perspective and had published defamatory information. On June 7, the lawsuit was returned due to deficiencies.

On August 14, the lawsuit was accepted for proceedings, while the judge recused himself on the grounds of biased attitude. On August 22, the case was redistributed, and on August 23, it was accepted for proceedings. A hearing in the case was held on September 30, with the next scheduled for October 29.

**On July 19**, the Civil Court of Appeal partially upheld the appeal filed by the defendant in the case of *Larisa Harutyunyan v. Shark Ltd.* (the legal entity representing *5th Channel* TV Company) against the verdict of the court of first instance. The court had ruled to partially uphold the lawsuit, obliging the defendant to publish a refutation, and pay 4 thousand AMD as state duty in favor of the plaintiff.

As a reminder, the lawsuit was filed on October 26, 2021, with the plaintiff demanding to publish a refutation. The lawsuit was caused by the October 16 report of the *5th Channel Haylur* news program titled “She Is Making Me Mourn: the Neighbor Does Not Allow to Install a Khachkar Dedicated to the Heroes”[[24]](#footnote-24).

By this decision of the appellate court, the verdict of the court of general jurisdiction was overturned and modified. The defendant's obligations remained unchanged, while the plaintiff was obliged to pay 50 thousand AMD as attorney's reasonable fee and 10 thousand AMD as state duty.

**On July 19**, Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan issued an additional verdict in the case of *former Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure and current Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan v. Anna Gevorgyan Private Entrepreneur* (the founder of *Hzham.am* news website), obliging the defendant to pay an additional 290,000 AMD as reasonable fee for the plaintiff's attorney. Earlier, on June 10, the court had ruled to partially uphold the claim, obliging to publish a refutation, pay 4 thousand AMD as state duty, as well as annulling the measure to secure the claim.

As a reminder, the lawsuit filed on June 22, 2020, with the plaintiff demanding a public refutation of the information considered defamatory and payment of compensation, was caused by an article titled: “Civil Contract Party Representatives Show Interest in the Real Estate Market,” published on May 15 on Hzham.am. The piece specifically read that marz governors, led by Minister Suren Papikyan, were purchasing properties in the capital city “without reaching their pockets”, and provided services, demanding apartments as donations.[[25]](#footnote-25) On December 17, the motion to apply a measure to secure the claim by placing a lien on the defendant's property was upheld. On March 31, 2022, the court ruled to reject Suren Papikyan's lawsuit. However, following the plaintiffs appeal to a higher court, the ruling was overturned and the case was returned to the same court for a new examination.

**On July 23**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing in the case of Hrachya Sargsyan, the former Mayor of Yerevan, and Hayk Hovhannisyan, the former Chairman of the Board of Directors of Yerevan Metro, against *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office Ltd.*, with the plaintiffs demanding to oblige the defendant to refute the information tarnishing their honor, dignity and business reputation and pay monetary compensation.

The lawsuit filed on April 6, 2023 was caused by an article titled “New Details on the Procurement of Buses: What Happened?” published in Zhoghovurd daily on March 30.[[26]](#footnote-26) According to the newspaper, the acquisition of Chinese buses for Yerevan was accompanied by corruption practices with the involvement of the co-plaintiffs.

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 7.

**On July 24,** the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held the trial on the case of Styopa Safaryan, the former Chairman of the Public Council, against *Livenews.am* reporter Taguhi Aslanyan.

The lawsuit filed on July 13, 2021, with the plaintiff demanding to oblige the defendant to make a public apology for offensive remarks and pay 1 million AMD in compensation, was caused by the journalist's remarks in a Facebook post, particularly the statement “You’re not rejected, you’re urinated upon...”[[27]](#footnote-27) The journalist, citing an unidentified source, wrote that the neighbors had urinated on Styopa Safaryan for serving the Prime Minister.

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 23.

**On July 24**, Alen Simonyan, the Speaker of the National Assembly, filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office Ltd.*, demanding to refute the information considered defamatory and pay 2 million AMD in compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article titled “A Contract Worth 4 Billion 674 Million Drams Signed Between MTAI and Alen Simonyan’s Brother’s Company,” published on July 11 on *Armlur.am* website, owned by *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office Ltd.,* in which accusations were raised about murky deals in the state procurement system. Later, the media updated the report by adding the word “former”[[28]](#footnote-28) before the word “company”.

The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on August 5, with no other developments registered by the end of the quarter.

**On July 30**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor Marzes (based in Vayk) held a hearing for the new examination of the case of Garik Sargsyan, the former governor of Ararat Marz, against *168 Zham Ltd.*

As a reminder, on May 7, 2024, the Court of Cassation ruled to uphold the defendant's appeal against the decision of the appellate court, which had rejected their complaint against the verdict of the first instance. By the initial verdict issued on August 2, 2021, the court had partially upheld the claim, obliging *168 Zham Ltd.* to publish a refutation on their *168.am* website, pay 700,000 AMD as compensation, and 18,000 AMD as state duty.

The lawsuit filed on December 20, 2019 by the plaintiff demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity and a public refutation of the information considered defamatory, was caused by an article titled “Governor of Ararat Involved in Yet Another Incident,” published on *168.am*. According to the piece, a fight took place involving Garik Sargsyan, where a barber named Serob was beaten for refusing to cut the governor’s hair out of turn, and was later barred from continuing his business in Nor Kyank community.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Thus, the Court of Cassation sent the case back for a new examination. This decision was grounded in the lower courts’ failure to carry out a comprehensive examination of the case and assess the factual details. The court must now determine whether the right to freedom of expression was abused, and whether the person’s honor and dignity were tarnished.

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 17.

**On July 31**, the plaintiff in the case of *FDA Laboratory LLC v. Investigative Journalists NGO* filed an appeal against the March 11 ruling of the first instance court of general jurisdiction, by which the claim had been rejected.

The lawsuit filed on August 12, 2021, with the plaintiff demanding a refutation of the published information and a response was caused by an article titled “Two of the Vitamin D Medications Were Registered as Biologically Active Supplements,” published on the NGO’s *Hetq.am* website. The piece pointed out that vitamin-based medications, in violation of regulations, are often registered as supplement or food items to avoid a costly and time-consuming procedure.[[30]](#footnote-30) There were no further developments in the case registered by the end of the quarter.

**On August 1**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing in the case of *Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine CJSC v. Datablog Ltd.* (the founder of *Blognews.am* website), with the plaintiff demanding to publicly refute the information considered defamatory and pay compensation.

The lawsuit filed on February 1, 2024 was caused by an article[[31]](#footnote-31) titled “Trotsenko Will Plunder Syunik with the Attitude of a Seasonal Migrant Worker, Leaving Spin Doctor Aro to Explain to the Locals Why They Are Left Both Without a Mine and Health,” published on December 28, 2023 on Blognews.am. The article claimed that the *ZCMC* was exploiting the mineral resources, with employees earning enormous incomes at the expense of people's health.

A trial regarding the case was held on September 19, with the judicial act scheduled to be published on October 10.

**On August 1**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan decided to leave the lawsuit filed by *Project Inter-Invest LLC* against *Hraparak Daily Ltd.* and journalist Suzan Simonyan without examination. The decision was grounded in the plaintiff’s failure to attend 2 consecutive court hearings, and the defendant's representative submitted a motion on the same grounds to leave the lawsuit unexamined.

The lawsuit filed on April 25, 2024, with the plaintiff demanding a refutation of the information tarnishing their business reputation and monetary compensation was caused by a piece[[32]](#footnote-32) titled “Dark Clouds Loom Over the Head of the Authorities’ Favorite Oligarch,” published on March 6 on *Hraparak.am* website owned *Hraparak Daily Ltd.* According to it, Narek Nalbandyan, the founder of the plaintiff company, evaded taxes through machinations, invented sly schemes to dodge state taxes and eventually got caught.

The court also obliged the plaintiff to pay AMD 200,000 as a reasonable remuneration for the defendant's attorney.

**On August 5**, citizen Vahagn Ghazaryan filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Kotayk Marz against Yeghiazar Baghdasaryan and *Oragir Media Ltd.,* demanding a public apology for the insulting expression, a refutation of the information considered defamatory, and payment of compensation.

The lawsuit was caused by an article titled “Trees Heavy with Fruit Were Sawn Down: Tracking the Tree Massacre in Garni,”[[33]](#footnote-33) published on June 26 on *Oragir.news.* According to the piece, due to a financial dispute with a fellow villager, Vahagn Ghazaryan, along with his lawyer Gegham Margaryan, and 2 other persons entered the Yeghiazar Baghdasaryan's garden and cut down 126 trees, causing, according to preliminary estimates, a damage of 11 million AMD. The lawsuit, having been once sent back, was accepted for proceedings on September 26.

**On August 5**, lawyer Gegham Margaryan filed a lawsuit against the same defendants on the same case and with identical demands. This lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on September 16, and a court hearing was scheduled for October 30.

**On August 5**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan rejected the lawsuit, filed by *Davit Galstyan, Advisor to the former RA Minister of Defense, v. the First Armenian News Website Ltd. and journalist Nver Mnatsakanyan*, with the plaintiff demanding compensation for the damage caused to his honor and dignity, and a public refutation of the information considered defamatory.

The lawsuit filed on March 23, 2021 was caused by an assertion made by host Nver Mnatsakanyan during an interview on the *First Armenian News* portal on February 23, 2024. The host particularly stated, “But look where the trajectory leads—today an advisor to the Minister of Defense is under arrest on corruption charges...”

The court justified rejecting the lawsuit by noting that the defendant neither ever mentioned the plaintiff's name nor provided any other identifying data during the interview. Furthermore, the remarks did not meet the criteria necessary to be considered as defamation.

**On August 8**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing in the case of Yerevan Deputy Mayor (currently Mayor) Tigran Avinyan v. *Oragir Media Ltd.,* with the plaintiff demanding to oblige the defendant to refute the information tarnishing his honor, dignity and business reputation and pay monetary compensation.

The lawsuit, filed on April 13, 2023 was caused by an article titled “Appetite Comes with Eating: Vivacell-MTS on Avinyan’s Radar,”[[34]](#footnote-34) published on March 9 on *Oragir.news* website owned by *Oragir Media Ltd.* Citing its sources, the website claimed that following his acquisition of the Grand Hotel Yerevan, Avinyan sought to also purchase the telecommunications operator Vivacell-MTS. It was further highlighted that he leveraged administrative mechanisms to block a deal with another buyer, pushing for the company to be sold to him.

A hearing in the case was also held on September 24, with the next hearing scheduled for January 14, 2025.

**On August 13**, the Civil Court of Appeal rejected the appeal filed by the plaintiff in the case of *Demi Pharm Ltd. v. Investigative Journalists NGO* (the founder of *Hetq.am*) against the ruling of the court of general jurisdiction, by which the claim had been rejected. Thus, the verdict of the first instance remained unchanged.

The lawsuit filed on June 10, 2021, with the plaintiff demanding to publicly refute the information considered defamatory and to pay compensation, was caused by an article[[35]](#footnote-35) titled “Children's Vitamins Registered with Violations by the National Institute of Health,” published on May 6, 2021 on *Hetq.am*. According to the publication, *Demi Pharm* assured the media that children's vitamins were already state-registered, trying to buy time for conducting the non-existent registration. The National Institute of Health reportedly completed the registration in a suspiciously short timeframe, accompanied by various violations.

**On August 14**, the Civil Court of Appeal ruled to partially uphold the appeal filed on behalf of the defendant in the case of *Mher Derdzyan v. Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office Ltd.,* sending the case back to the same court for a new examination.

As a reminder, the lawsuit filed on April 15, 2019 was caused by a concern expressed by the newspaper that Mher Derdzyan's construction project could be a carefully devised fraud.[[36]](#footnote-36) The plaintiff demanded a public apology, along with 1.5 million AMD compensation for insult and defamation. (For details see the CPFE’s reports for 2019-2024 in the *Reports* section on khosq.am).

The court of general jurisdiction had initially rejected the lawsuit. The appellate court had subsequently upheld the appeal, overturning the verdict and sending the case back for a new examination. Following this, the court had partially upheld the lawsuit, obliging the defendant to issue an apology, publish a refutation, and compensate 300 thousand AMD for insult and 500 thousand AMD for defamation. Additionally, the court had mandated the defendant to pay 500,000 AMD as attorney’s reasonable fee and 68,000 AMD for the pre-paid state duty. The defendant had challenged this decision in the appellate court.

Thus, the verdict was overturned in regard to the compensation-related court costs, and the case was remanded to the same court for a new examination to address this particular aspect.

**On August 19**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing in the case of *Armenian National Agrarian University Foundation v. Hraparak Daily Ltd.,* with the plaintiff demanding to publicly refute the defamatory information and pay compensation.

The lawsuit filed on December 20, 2023 was caused by an article titled “Electoral Chaos at Agrarian University,”[[37]](#footnote-37) published on November 22, 2024 in *Hraparak* daily and on the eponymous website. In the piece, referring to the upcoming rector's elections at the university, the periodical specifically noted that a forgery had been committed, stating that “...In fact, no candidacy was submitted for the rector position; yesterday, the documents of Vice-Rector Hrachik Zakoyan, a close friend of acting Rector Vardan Urutyan, were submitted through backdating.” The plaintiff viewed this information as defamation.

Hearings in the case were also held on September 6, 11, 25, with the next one scheduled for November 26.

**On August 20**, businessman Arsen Papoyan filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Shamshyan Media Ltd.,* demanding to refute the information considered defamatory and pay 6 million AMD in compensation. The lawsuit was caused by an article titled “Aharon Papoyan, the official representative of the Development Foundation of Armenia in Russia, on 22.06.2024, openly embezzled most of the property belonging to Top Market LLC, valued at approximately 10 million AMD. The embezzlement was carried out through his brother, Arsen Papoyan, from the 331st area of Tsarav Aghbyur 55/5 building in Avan, previously owned by their family,”[[38]](#footnote-38) published on June 29 on *Shamshyan.com* website owned by *Shamshyan Media Ltd.*

The lawsuit was accepted for proceedings on August 27. No further developments were registered by the end of the quarter.

**On August 26**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan, after 3 prior returns, accepted for proceedings the lawsuit filed by citizen Arev Vratsyan against *Mediahub.am* news website. The plaintiff demanded to refute the information tarnishing her honor, dignity and business reputation, to issue an apology for the insult and compensate for the damage caused.

The lawsuit was caused by a piece titled “I Was High on Cocaine: Teacher from Masis Exhibited Hatred towards Artsakh Residents (Video),” published on *Mediahub.am* on April 25. According to the piece, Arev Vratsyan, an Armenian language and literature teacher at Masis School No. 4, was displaying a marked bad attitude towards children from Artsakh.[[39]](#footnote-39)

A court hearing in the case was held on September 24, with the next one scheduled for November 18.

**On August 27**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing in the case of shooting at the window of journalist Tehmineh Yenokyan's apartment.

As a reminder, On March 31, 2023, the court received a criminal case from the Prosecutor's Office of Avan and Nor Nork Administrative Districts, in which charges were brought against citizen Hayk Grigoryan.[[40]](#footnote-40) A court hearing was also held on September 20, with the next one scheduled for October 23.

**On August 28**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan granted the motion filed by *Photolure LLC* to modify the subject of the lawsuit.

As a reminder, on October 20, 2023, the news agency filed a lawsuit against *Skizb Media Kentron Ltd.* (the founder of *1in.am* news website), demanding to stop the use of copyrighted content. The lawsuit was caused by the illegal publication of the agency's photos on *1in.am.*

As per the granted motion, the subject of the lawsuit was supplemented with the following claims: to compel the defendant to stop the reproduction, dissemination and any other use of photographic works of *Photolure LLC* news agency, to compensate 2 million 400,000 AMD calculated as double the honorarium, 550,000 AMD as attorney's reasonable fee, along with the state duties paid by the plaintiff.

By the end of the quarter, no court hearing in the case was held.

**On August 30**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan continued the trial on the case of *Lara Aharonyan, the Head of Women's Resource Center NGO, v. Hayeli Club and Live News Media Ltd.*, with the plaintiff demanding 2 million AMD in compensation for the damage caused to her honor and dignity.

The lawsuit was caused by an April 24, 2019 video titled “Lara Aharonyan, a Member of the CC Board of Trustees, Is Engaged in Corrupting Children: Hayk Ayvazyan,” in which Hayk Ayvazyan, one of the guests at Hayeli Club, commented on Aharonyan's activities during a press briefing. The video was published on *Hayeli.am* and *Livenews.am* websites.

The next court hearing in the case was scheduled for November 29.

**On September 6**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary hearing in the case of Vazgen Galstanyan (also known as Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, the leader of the “Tavush for the Motherland” movement) against journalist Davit Levonyan and the *Civil Contract* party (the founder of *Civic.am* news website).

As a reminder, the lawsuit was filed on May 24. The plaintiff demanded to refute the information he deemed defamatory. The following claims were shared on April 29 via the defendants’ YouTube channels and Davit Levonyan's Facebook page: “He is selling homeland, tries to drag Armenia into a war, in exchange for millions of dollars from the Kremlin, he led an entity to bankruptcy, squandered funds and may have used them for personal indulgence, he tried to dethrone Garegin II, serves as a KGB agent, incites war on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, attempts a coup, he has received an order from the KGB, he promotes the Russian-Azerbaijani interests, he has turned the church into a business.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

The next court hearing in the case was scheduled for November 11.

**On September 9**, in the National Assembly, opposition Deputy Ishkhan Saghatelyan showed disrespectful attitude in response to the questions of *Civic.am* reporter Davit Levonyan, specifically saying: “Every time you publish something stupid and seek someone's comment,” “You are lying: if I sue you, you along with your owners, team, patrons will face judgment for the next 400 years.”[[42]](#footnote-42) The journalist's question was about the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun 2022 circular regarding Russia's role in the future of Artsakh and Armenia.

**On September 10**, the Court of General Jurisdiction held a preliminary hearing in the case of *Yerevan State University Foundation v. Oragir Media Ltd.* (the founder of *Oragir.news* website), with the plaintiff demanding to oblige the defendant to publicly refute the factual data considered defamatory, and pay compensation for defamation.

The lawsuit filed on October 10, 2023 was caused by an article titled: “STEM—Another Disgrace from YSU,”[[43]](#footnote-43) published on *Oragir.news* on September 5, 2023. According to the piece, the project for the YSU-affiliated school with a strong emphasis on natural sciences and mathematics failed due to the enrollment of only 36 students. Additionally, the article claimed that the allocated funds had not been used as intended.

The next court hearing was scheduled for January 30, 2025.

**On September 10**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing in one of the 2 lawsuits filed by Senik Julhakyan, the Director of *Armhydroenergy Project CJSC* against Hmayak Hovhannisyan, the Chairman of *the Political Scientists Union of Armenia* and *BAC TV* online TV Company. The plaintiff demanded from the defendant to make a public apology for insult. Regarding defamation, the plaintiff demanded from the court to oblige the defendant to refute the information and pay monetary compensation. During the hearing, a decision was made to distribute the burden of proof.

As a reminder, On March 17, 2022, Senik Julhakyan, the Director of *Armhydroenergy Project CJSC* filed **2 lawsuits** with identical content. The lawsuits were caused by the December 21, 2021[[44]](#footnote-44) and January 15, 2022[[45]](#footnote-45) remarks made by Hmayak Hovhannisyan on the air of the online TV platform. Hovhannisyan alleged that the plaintiff had obtained a construction permit through corrupt deals and further claimed that former RA President Serzh Sargsyan, through Julhakyan, intended to take control of the *Armhydroenergy Project Institute* building, housing the office of the *Political Scientists Union of Armenia*. The next court hearing was scheduled for October 29.

A hearing for the **second lawsuit** was held on September 24, with the judicial act expected to be issued on October 15.

**On September 11**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing in the case of *Medisar LLC v. NewsAM Ltd.,* the founder of *News.am* website, with the plaintiff demanding compensation for the damage caused to their business reputation.

The lawsuit filed on July 2, 2021 was caused by an article titled “Excess Profits from the Purchase of a DNA Identification Device for War Victims? Uncovering New Facts from the Questionable Deal,” published on May 29, 2021 on the above-mentioned website. The website specifically reported that following a tender held by the *Scientific-Practical Center of Forensic Medicine SNCO* under the RA Ministry of Health, *Medisar LLC*, a company specializing in the import and supply of laboratory equipment and chemicals, secured a contract worth 295.8 million AMD, earning a profit of no less than 111 million AMD from the purchase process.

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 30.

**On September 16**, in the National Assembly, Gegham Manukyan, a deputy from “Armenia”faction, stated in response to *Civic.am* reporter Davit Levonyan's question that the faction would not answer “libelous” questions.[[46]](#footnote-46)

**On September 17**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing in the case of *NewsAM Ltd. v. Dareskizb Ltd.,* the founder of *Haykakan Zhamanak* daily.

The lawsuit was caused by an article titled “Ararat, Armnews, H2, News.am, Yerkir Media, Fake Profiles: Which Media Have Been “Bought” by Kocharyan?”[[47]](#footnote-47) published on August 21, 2018 in Haykakan Zhamanak. According to the plaintiff, their business reputation was damaged by a number of statements about *News.am* in the publication, as well as by the article’s headline. *NewsAM Ltd.* demanded 200 thousand AMD in compensation from the founder of *Haykakan Zhamanak*.

The next court hearing in the case was scheduled for November 6.

**On September 19**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan ruled to partially uphold the lawsuit filed by National Assembly Deputy Khachatur Sukiasyan against Vazgen Saghatelyan, the spokesman of the *Reviving Armenia* *Party* (with *NewsAM Ltd.* as a third party), with the plaintiff demanding to issue a public apology, refute the information considered defamatory, as well as pay compensation.

The lawsuit filed on August 12, 2022 was caused by remarks made by Vazgen Saghatelyan during an opposition rally held in Yerevan on July 29, 2022. Saghatelyan claimed that the deputy had a role in the licensing of gas cylinders for cars and was benefitting from a relevant Government decision. His controversial speech was published by *News.am*, which is owned by *NewsAM Ltd.*, a third party in the case.

The court obliged the defendant to issue an apology on the mentioned website, pay 200 thousand AMD for insult and another 200 thousand for defamation, along with 250 thousand AMD as attorney’s fee and 20 thousand AMD as state duty. The court also ruled that Khachatur Sukiasyan was obligated to compensate the defendant's attorney’s fee, amounting to 250 thousand AMD.

**On September 20**, the Civil Court of Appeal partially upheld the appeal filed by the plaintiff in the court case of *citizen Mariam Hovsepyan v. International Media Holding LLC (*the founder of *Lurer.com* news website*)* against the ruling of December 12, 2023. In the original verdict, the court had partially upheld the lawsuit, obliging the media to publish a refutation pay 50 thousand AMD each for insult and defamation, as well as 50 thousand as attorney’s remuneration and 43 thousand as state duty.

The court upheld the plaintiff’s appeal centered on the confiscation of the attorney's reasonable fee. The court revised the remuneration and set it at 150 thousand AMD, leaving the rest of the verdict unchanged.

As a reminder, the lawsuit filed on August 23, 2022, with the plaintiff demanding from the defendant to issue a public apology, refute defamation, and pay compensation, was caused by an article titled “Citizen Mariam Hovsepyan Fined by Court for Offensive Social Media Behavior, and Forced to Issue a Written Apology,” published on *Lurer.com* on July 7, 2022.[[48]](#footnote-48)

**On September 20**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary hearing in the case of *Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine CJSC v. Oragir Media Ltd.,* with the plaintiff demanding to publicly refute the information considered defamatory and pay compensation.

The lawsuit filed on October 17, 2023 was caused by an article published on September 2 on *Oragir.news* website owned by *Oragir Media Ltd.* The piece titled “Employee: Trojan Horse in Syunik: Azerbaijani Appointments in the ZCMC” specifically read that “5 to 6 persons were sent from Baku in May. They are destroying various structures, etc. I have no information on whose order they have arrived, but they are destroying all the structures.”[[49]](#footnote-49)

A trial was scheduled for October 17.

**On September 20**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing in the case of *citizen Siranush Abelyan v. Lilit Silanyan, the Executive Director of Politcom.am* news website. The plaintiff demanded to make an apology for defamation and publish a refutation.

The lawsuit filed on September 3, 2021 was caused by a news piece published on the website, which concerned an issue surrounding the provision of loans by a specific bank. The person responsible for managing the media suggested publishing also the bank's viewpoint, but the plaintiff rejected the suggestion, taking the matter to court. The next court session was scheduled for December 3.

**On September 20**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing in the case of *Arayik Harutyunyan, the Chief of Staff at the Office of the RA Prime Minister, v. Hraparak Daily Ltd.,* with the plaintiff demanding to refute the information considered defamatory and pay compensation.

The lawsuit filed on August 19, 2022 was caused by an article titled “Hrach Indoors, Avinyan Outdoors: Clashes Averted,” published on July 31 on *Hraparak.am* website owned by *Hraparak Daily Ltd.* The article highlighted that Arayik Harutyunyan and his brother—who owns a private company and takes over the management of big-budget projects[[50]](#footnote-50)—also play an active role in matters related to managing the city.

The next court hearing was scheduled for December 3.

**On September 24**, the Civil Court of Appeal upheld the plaintiff's appeal against the ruling of the court of first instance in the case of *Luyser CJSC v. Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office Ltd.*, by which the claim had been rejected.

The lawsuit filed on July 11, 2023 was caused by an article titled: “Luyser Residential Buildings Yard Teeming with Snakes and Scorpions: Residents Sound the Alarm,”[[51]](#footnote-51) published on June 8 on *Armlur.am* website owned by *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office Ltd.* The plaintiff demanded to publicly refute the information considered defamatory and pay compensation.

The appellate court ruled to overturn the verdict of April 11 and send the civil case back to the same court for a complete re-examination.

**On September 25**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a preliminary hearing in the case of Alen Simonyan, the Speaker of the National Assembly, against Anzhela Tovmasyan, the President of *Hayeli Club* (the founder of *Hayeli.am*), with the plaintiff demanding an apology for insult, compensation of 1 million AMD and payment of 530,000 AMD for court costs.

The lawsuit filed on January 16, 2024 was caused by Anzhela Tovmasyan's remark about Alen Simonyan during a December 25, 2023 press briefing at *Hayeli Club* where she appeared alongside Ambassador Edgar Ghazaryan. Tovmasyan specifically stated: “...He kept bustling around beneath Khachatur Sukiasyan's feet, Alen kept bustling around beneath his feet.”[[52]](#footnote-52) On January 24, the court accepted the lawsuit for proceedings, granting the plaintiff’s motion to secure the claim by placing a lien on the defendant's property in the amount of the claim.

The date of the next court hearing has not yet been set.

**On September 25**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a new trial in the case of *Artur Vanetsyan, former Director of the RA National Security Service, former deputy from the NA “With Honor” faction, v. Gurgen (Gagik) Melkonyan, a deputy from the NA “Civil Contract” faction* (the *Public Television Company of Armenia CJSC* was involved as a third party in the case).

As a reminder, the lawsuit filed on August 19, 2021 was caused by the remarks made by Melkonyan on July 20, 2021 on the air of the *Public TV*. Regarding Vanetsyan’s actions during the 44-Day War, Melkonyan specifically stated: “Vanetsyan departed and fled. They reached the scene, picked up the weapons and brought them to Armenia, knowing that there were plenty of weapons scattered around. Their goal was to bring weapons.”[[53]](#footnote-53) The plaintiff demanded to publicly refute the information considered defamatory and compensate the damage caused to his honor and dignity.

The court of general jurisdiction had ruled to partially uphold the lawsuit. Following an appeal of the verdict by the defendant, on January 12, 2024, the Civil Court of Appeal partially granted the appeal, sending the case back to the court of first instance. On February 14, the plaintiff appealed to the Court of Cassation, which rejected his appeal.

The next court hearing was scheduled for October 15.

**On September 25**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a regular hearing in the case of *Livenews.am* reporter Artur Hovhannisyan against journalist Levon Sardaryan, with the plaintiff demanding to oblige the defendant to make an apology for the insult and publicly refute the information considered defamatory.

The lawsuit filed on June 22, 2020 was caused by Levon Sardaryan's May 21 Facebook post regarding a *Livenews.am* May 21 article titled “The Situation in Armenia Is Terrible: Survive if You Can, Die if You Can’t”. Sardaryan quoted the article headline and wrote: “...I will agree to live in a barn if anyone can prove that the owner of this website is a human after all this. In my subjective view, however, I'll pass the pleasure of living in a barn to G.I.” (Referring to Garnik Isagulyan, whose name is tied to the ownership of *Livenews.am* website - CPFE). A trial in the case was scheduled for December 25.

**On September 26**, businessman Davit Yeremyan filed a lawsuit with the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against *Zhoghovurd daily Ltd.,* demanding compensation in the amount of 6 million AMD for defamation and 1 million 680 thousand AMD for court costs, along with the publication of a refutation.

The lawsuit was caused by an article titled “Businessman Yeremyan’s Dinner with the Prosecutor Leads to Case Terminations,”[[54]](#footnote-54) published with an accompanying video on *Armlur.am* on September 4. The article contained accusations against the businessman, alleging him of making corrupt deals with the authorities. Notably, the plaintiff intends to donate the claimed compensation to the *Foundation for Servicemen Insurance.*

The lawsuit was not accepted for proceedings as of the end of the quarter.

**On September 27**, at Yerablur Military Pantheon, in response to the question posed by *NewDay.am* editor Ani Gevorgyan on what he had done for the motherland and with what conscience he came to Yerablur while being labeled as a Turkish-Azerbaijani agent, Armen Khachatryan, a deputy from the NA “Civil Contract” faction said: “Just go away... you foreign agent! Stop provoking on this day. This is a holy site, not your place, it is not a place for profaners.”[[55]](#footnote-55) Arpi Davoyan, a deputy from the same faction, in her turn, reproached Ani Gevorgyan for the behavior unbefitting a journalist. To be fair, however, it should be noted that the aggressive behavior of the media editor and the wording of her questions were actually not in line with the norms of journalistic ethics.

**On September 27**, at Yerablur Military Pantheon. *Armlur.am* reporter Christineh Musheghyan asked Hakob Aslanyan, a deputy from the National Assembly’s “Civil Contract” faction, about the country’s development and the lessons learnt after the war. Without concealing his anger, the deputy called the journalist and all those who do not notice the country’s progress as “blind”.[[56]](#footnote-56)

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

*In the third quarter of 2024, the CPFE recorded* ***41*** *cases of violation of the right to receive and disseminate information. The facts recorded during the period under review, as well as new developments related to the events from past periods are presented below in chronological order.*

**On July 1**, Kristineh Hovhannisyan, a reporter of *Pastinfo.am*, submitted 3 inquiries to the Government, which covered the following topics: 1. When will the second phase of demarcation in Tavush begin and what settlements will it cover? 2. Does the Government consider the issue of reinstalling the highway gas pipeline that runs from Georgia to Armenia? 3. How much land from Kirants has been designated as overriding public interest, how much of that land is communal property, how much is private, by what act will compensation be provided, and how many people will receive compensation?

Regarding the **first** question, the Government staff referenced a press release published months ago, which was actually outdated, without providing information on the developments. For the **second** question, they stated that there was no such issue, and for the **third**, they requested 30 days to provide a response without offering any rationale why additional time was needed. On July 22, they replied, by stating that the process was being conducted based on a Government decision, which was confidential. In fact, it took 30 days to realize that the information sought in the inquiry contained secrets, rendering the delay in providing a response unreasonable.

**On July 2**, *168.am* sent an inquiry to the RA National Security Service, requesting details about the fences and engineering barriers being installed in the villages of Kirants and Voskepar as part of the delimitation and demarcation process carried out in Tavush.[[57]](#footnote-57)   
In its response sent on July 10, the NSS refused to provide any comment citing the information as a state secret. Nonetheless, the website reminded its readers that just days before the NSS communication, Nikol Pashinyan had visited the Kirants section of the Armenia-Azerbaijan state border and already shared a video showing the installed barbed wire fence or engineering barriers.

**On July 4**, *Armlur.am* sent an inquiry to the National Academy of Sciences, inquiring about the academic performance of Davit Arakelyan,[[58]](#footnote-58) the Chief of Staff at the National Assembly, including information about the institution of his internship, his supervisors, and the results achieved. In his response, Atom Mkhitaryan, the NAS Acting Director, presented a several-page justification stating that information about the academic journey of high-ranking official Davit Arakelyan could not be provided on the grounds of protection of his private life. The response is considered an unfounded rejection, since the Law “On Personal Data Protection” itself cannot serve as grounds for denying access to such information.  
 The website also **submitted** an inquiry to the National Assembly, requesting information from Davit Arakelyan about his academic performance, the number of his absences, the reasons for them being considered excused, his thesis supervisor, the institution where he had done his internship, etc. Eduard Khanzradyan, the Deputy Chief of Staff replied, stating that Davit Arakelyan had completed his internship at the National Assembly, leaving the rest of the questions unanswered.

On September 24, *Zhoghovurd* daily **posed** the same question to Zhanna Andreasyan, the RA Minister of Education, Science, Sport and Culture, and received a broad response regarding the legal basis for organizing students' internship, directing the media to forward their question to the NAS.[[59]](#footnote-59) Meanwhile, it was already mentioned in the inquiry that the NAS had also been approached but had refused to provide a response regarding the issue.

**On July 9**, *Infocom.am* news website reported that they had submitted a written inquiry to the Yerevan Municipality, requesting information on why the road leading from the Tbilisyan Highway to nearby buildings had not been constructed, whether there were plans for its construction, and how an alternative road’s plot of land ended up privatized (Yerevan Community had initially donated this land to the Republic of Armenia, which subsequently granted it to citizen Armen Movsesyan under the right of gratuitous ownership). The Municipality sidestepped the questions regarding the failure to construct the road and future plans, merely stating that relevant services were working on options to solve the issue.

The same questions were also **directed** to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, and instead of providing substantive responses, the ministry referred to the background of the issue and the legal documents underpinning the donation.[[60]](#footnote-60)

**On July 9**, *Citizens’ Special Service CNCO* delayed its response to the June 26 inquiry submitted by *Infocom.am* about the execution of the budget for 2021-2023. Notably, the CNCO first verbally stated that they were not going to provide a response, since it was necessary to reach out to the Yerevan Municipality for obtaining information. The following day, on June 27, the website also applied to the Municipality, but ultimately received a response from the CNCO, as mentioned, in violation of the 5-day timeframe prescribed by law.

**On July 15**, *Radio Liberty Armenian Service* reported that the General Prosecutor's Office refused to disclose whether they had received a letter from the Government to investigate the inaccuracies in the cadastral maps, which served as a basis for issuing property certificates in Kirants.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Regarding the inaccuracies in the cadastral maps, the media also reached out to the Government to verify whether a letter had been sent to the General Prosecutor's Office. The inquiry submitted on July 8 was redirected to the Cadastre Committee, which **refused** to respond, citing the issue as a state secret.

**On July 17**, *Factor.am* reported that the Ministry of Internal Affairs refused to provide information about the grenades used against protesters near the National Assembly building on June 12 and the person who had made a decision on their use.[[62]](#footnote-62) The ministry avoided providing a direct response, stating that criminal proceedings had been initiated in relation to the incidents, and urging the media to contact the investigative body for relevant details.

According to the website, the Investigative Committee, which had initiated criminal proceedings, in turn, **did not** **specify** what type of stun grenades had been used and who had given the order for their use. The spokesperson of the committee told *Factor TV* that there was no information available to be published at that time.

**On July 18**, *168.am* reported that on June 14 they had submitted an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Internal Affairs, seeking information on who had ordered the use of special means by the police troops against protesters at Yerevan Baghramyan-Demirchyan intersection, the necessity behind the action and the legal grounds for the use of such measures.[[63]](#footnote-63) The Ministry of Internal Affairs requested an additional 30 days to respond, later stating that for the relevant information, the media should contact the investigative body.

**On July 18**, *Fip.am* fact-checkingplatform sent a letter to the RA Ministry of Internal Affairs, seeking clarifications on the piece titled “Shooting on Erebuni Street: One Injured, Shooter Arrested,” published on July 10 on *police.am*. In particular, *Fip.am* inquired why the person had not been searched during the arrest, before being taken to the police department, and whether an internal investigation had been initiated. The inquiry received no response.

**On July 23**, *Fip.am* fact-checking platform reported that on June 18 they had sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Internal Affairs seeking a clarification on the special means used against the protesters at Yerevan Baghramyan-Demirchyan intersection on June 12 (The same inquiry had been submitted to the MIA on June 14 by the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO*, which founded *Fip.am*). However, the MIA requested an additional 30 days to reply. After the 30-day period expired, they failed to provide a clear response, informing that criminal proceedings had been initiated by the Investigative Committee in relation to those incidents, and therefore, the inquiry should be directed to the investigative body.[[64]](#footnote-64)

**On July 23**, *Fip.am* directed the same question to the RA Prosecutor General, but received no response.

Additionally, the website did not receive a response to their **June 27** inquiry to the RA Ministry of Health, in which they requested information on the number of civilians and police officers who had sought medical assistance due to the June 12 events on Baghramyan Avenue in Yerevan, as well as the number of persons with shrapnel injuries among them.

**On July 29**, the Administrative Court upheld the lawsuit filed by the *Investigative Journalists NGO* (the founder of *Hetq.am*) against the RA Ministry of High-Tech Industry, obliging the latter to provide the plaintiff with the list of organizations that had received state support under the Government's December 1, 2022 decision.

As a reminder, the lawsuit was filed on June 5, 2023 after the ministry refused to provide the above information. The court also obliged the HTI Ministry to pay 10,000 AMD as pre-paid state duty and 40,000 AMD as attorney's fee in favor of the *Investigative Journalists NGO.*

**On August 1**, *Hetq.am* submitted a written inquiry to the Health and Labor Inspection Body to clarify whether the agency had independently taken any steps to detect unregistered medications. As part of its investigation, the media also purchased 12 unregistered medications from 6 different pharmacies in Yerevan and provided this information to the inspection body.[[65]](#footnote-65) On August 7, the HLIB Department of Information, Consultation and Public Relations responded, stating that additional work was required to provide the requested information. Later, the website reported that even 163 days were not sufficient for the inspection body to complete their examination. And this occurred under conditions where *Hetq* had provided all the necessary data - the names of the pharmacies, the list of the 12 medications purchased, and the payment receipts.

**On August 1**, the plaintiff in the case of the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of Fip.am, v. the Ministry of Defense*, filed an appeal with the appellate court. The plaintiff challenged the June 26 ruling of the RA Administrative Court, which had dismissed their demand to oblige the defendant to provide a thorough response to their inquiry.

As a reminder, the lawsuit was filed on August 30, 2023, when the ministry failed to provide information on the total funds spent by the Republic of Armenia for weapon acquisitions in 2008-2022. Both the ministry and the court considered this information a state secret.

**On August 1**, the Administrative Court ruled to reject the lawsuit filed by the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO*, the founder of *Fip.am*, against the RA Ministry of Internal Affairs, with the plaintiff demanding to oblige the defendant to provide a response to their February 13, 2023 inquiry. The inquiry referred to the description of the locations of stationary cameras monitored by the police in public areas, including the devices not used for recording road traffic. The lawsuit was filed on March 1, 2023.

The court reasoned the dismissal by stating that the requested information constituted a state secret. On August 7, the plaintiff appealed the decision to a higher court.

**On August 1**, *Infocom.am* reported that they had spent the past 4 months trying to summarize and categorize the data regarding the humanitarian aid for the needs of those displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh.[[66]](#footnote-66) To obtain information, the editorial team, along with international structures and embassies, also reached out to the RA Government, requesting data on how the collected funds had been distributed—specifically, the amounts used for salaries, consultations, event organization, and those allocated directly to displaced persons.

The requested information was not provided, which, according to the website, restricts the possibility to determine the amount of money allocated to direct beneficiaries.

**On August 2**, *Fip.am* fact-checking platform reached out to the RA Ministry of Defense, requesting the name of the person in charge of managing integrity issues within the structure. The media also sought clarification on the principles used for assigning that role to that particular official. No response was received.

**On August 2**, *Infocom.am* sent an inquiry to Armen Pambukhchyan, the First Deputy Mayor of Yerevan, requesting to clarify the financial discrepancies in his and his wife's declarations. No response was received.

**On August 5**, *168.am* reported that since June 27, they had sent an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Defense, requesting information on a number of issues related to the army.[[67]](#footnote-67) The response they received was incomplete. Thus, under former Minister of Defense Vigen Sargsyan, the provision of information related to the apartment allocation process had been refused, with the justification being the protection of personal and official data. Additionally, the media asked on what grounds RA Defense Minister Suren Papikyan had approved the idea by ​​the Chair of the NA Committee on Defense and Security concerning the voluntary trench-digging initiative. In response, it was stated: “You can obtain information regarding the details of the project to establish engineering squads from students from the National Assembly.”

**On August 13**, Shoghik Galstyan, a correspondent from *Radio Liberty Armenian Service*, reported that even after a month and a half, the Office of Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan, who chairs the Border Delimitation Commission, did not clarify why Yerevan and Baku had failed to reach an agreement by July 1 on the document establishing the principles of border delimitation. A written inquiry was sent by the radio station to the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, seeking information on the current stage of the work on agreeing the regulations, whether Azerbaijan was creating obstacles, whether the parties had set a new deadline for completing the work, and whether, after all, negotiations were ongoing to reach an agreement on the delimitation of other parts of the border.

Despite promising a response within a month, the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, even 30 days later, offered no clarity and simply reminded of prior agreements stating that the negotiations on coming to terms on the regulations were proceeding in a constructive way.

**On August 18**, *Tert.am* reported that they had sent an inquiry to the Cadastre Committee to clarify the decision behind the Kirants map change.[[68]](#footnote-68) In response, the committee stated that the information could not be provided as it contained a state secret. The website reminded that, according to procedure, map changes are made in the Cadastre Committee based on a community decision, following the submission of the relevant communication.

**On August 21**, *Aliqmedia.am* news website submitted an inquiry to the Ministry of Economy, seeking to find out whether any studies had been conducted on the sale of fruits and vegetables in the Armenian market after the export ban introduced by the Russian side.[[69]](#footnote-69) Additionally, the media asked the ministry to clarify whether there were problems related to the sale of agricultural produce, and, if so, how the ministry had resolved the issue. The ministry responded that these issues did not fall within their purview. The website also addressed the above questions to the Food Safety Inspection Body and received an identical response. The website reminded that in 2019, the RA Ministry of Economy was formed through the merger of the RA Ministry of Economic Development and Investments and the Ministry of Agriculture. Consequently, the issues related to the agricultural sector should be regulated by this ministry, but the responses provided suggest otherwise. In that case, it remains unclear to which institution the media should address these inquiries.

**On September 5**, the *Freedom of Information Center* submitted a request to the Gyumri Municipality, asking for a copy of the technical passport of Gyumri Ghandilyan 48a residential building and its adjacent plot. The request was denied without proper justification. The Municipality referenced Article 8, paragraph 1, point 2 of the RA Law “On Freedom of Information” and Article 3, paragraph 1, point 1 of the RA Law “On Personal Data Protection,” which, according to the FOI, did not constitute a sufficient basis for rejection.[[70]](#footnote-70)

**On September 6**, *Armlur.am* sent an inquiry to the RA Government, seeking information about the construction process of the new nuclear power plant. The Government redirected the request to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure within the designated period. However, no response was provided by the ministry.

**On the same day**, the website also sent an inquiry to the Government regarding the 15 percent share held by the Government in the *Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine*, specifically asking who managed the share of the Prime Minister's Office, who had joined the ZCMC, in what role and at what salary, given that Armenia was already undergoing universal declaration, and such information could no longer be considered confidential. No response was received for this inquiry either.

**On the same day**, the media also sent an inquiry to Sasun Khachatryan, the Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Committee, regarding the involvement of NA Deputy Taguhi Tovmasyan as a witness in a criminal case. In particular, the media sought information on the current stage of the investigation into the criminal proceedings initiated under part 1 of Article 486 (2) of the RA Criminal Code (Interference with the administration of justice or an investigation through the use of governmental or official powers or the influence stemming from them), the persons involved and their roles in the case. No response was provided to the inquiry.

**On the same day**, the media also sent an inquiry to Father Yesayi Artenyan, the Director of the Information Center of the Mother See, requesting data related to the financing of the renovation of the Mother Cathedral. This request also received no response.

**On September 12**, the RA Administrative Court of Appeal held a hearing in the case of the *Investigative Journalists NGO* (the founder of *Hetq.am*) against the National Assembly (the RA Ministry of Finance was involved as a third party) in newly initiated proceedings.

As a reminder, the lawsuit was filed on December 14, 2021, with the plaintiff demanding to oblige the defendant to provide information. The media's questions concerning the assignment of the 43 National Assembly vehicles and the expenses tied to each received no response, after which they turned to court. On June 30, 2022, the court issued a ruling obliging NA Speaker Alen Simonyan to provide the requested information, pay 80 thousand AMD to the plaintiff's attorney and 8 thousand AMD as state duty. The defendant challenged the verdict in the appellate court, after which the judge was replaced, and the case is currently being examined in new proceedings.

The judicial act was scheduled to be released on October 10.

**On September 12**, *Fip.am* fact-checking platform submitted an inquiry to the RA Ministry of Internal Affairs requesting data on the number of cases registered in 2023 and 2024, involving individuals driving vehicles while having their driving rights revoked despite the revocation period having ended and the right not restored. By the end of the quarter no response was received.

**On September 12**, *Pastinfo.am* sent a written inquiry to the RA Government, asking whether the RA Prime Minister's Office had received the resignation request of Yeghisheh Kirakosyan, the Representative on International Legal Issues, and if so, when it had been submitted to the Government and whether the discussion of the matter had concluded.[[71]](#footnote-71) A written response was received from the Government, stating that the request was considered personal data.

The website pointed out that previously the Government staff had not viewed such matters of public interest as personal data, publishing the information regarding the submission of motions to the President for dismissal or appointment. In this case, however, it was presented as personal data.

**On September 18**, *Factor.am* reported on their inquiries submitted to the Prosecutor's Office, which had not received any response.[[72]](#footnote-72) The inquiries were related to the biographical data of judges involved in criminal cases. Specifically, Davit Sargsyan, a judge of the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor Marzes, prior to becoming a judge in 2023, had been involved in a criminal case, which had been terminated. In a written inquiry to the Prosecutor's Office, the media requested information about the case Sargsyan was involved in and the grounds for its termination. However, the state body refused to provide information under the pretext of protection of privacy. According to the website, the Prosecutor's Office took a different approach in this case, as the official website of the state body published announcements containing data on criminal cases involving various officials or judges. For example, detailed announcements were available regarding the charges against Hrayr Tovmasyan, the former President of the Constitutional Court, and now a judge there, as well as Sergey Smbatyan, the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra, and his father, along with the actions attributed to them.

In a response letter, the journalist of the website **asked** for clarification on the difference between Davit Sargsyan's and others' right to privacy. The Prosecutor's Office requested a one-month period to respond to this simple question, but failed to do so. The media concludeed that the Prosecutor's Office was simply avoiding providing information regarding judge Davit Sargsyan's criminal case.

In another inquiry, the journalist tried to **obtain information** on the current status of judge Masis Melkonyan, who had been involved in a criminal case, specifically, whether he was an accused party or not and in what capacity he had compensated the damage. However, the Prosecutor's Office merely informed that Melkonyan at the moment did not hold the status of an accused party, while again not providing other details, citing preliminary investigation confidentiality. “It is noteworthy that this issue is of such public significance that when President Vahagn Khachaturyan was presented with his candidacy, he returned the proposal from the Supreme Judicial Council with objections. ...Melkonyan became a judge by virtue of the law and took his judicial oath not at the presidential residence, but at the Supreme Judicial Council,” the website wrote.

**On September 19**, the RA Administrative Court held a hearing in the case of the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO*, the founder of *Fip.am* website, against the RA Anti-Corruption Committee, with the plaintiff demanding to oblige the defendant to provide a thorough response to their inquiry.

The lawsuit was filed on April 10 following the committe’s failure to respond to a media inquiry regarding the decision to terminate a criminal proceeding.

The judicial act was scheduled to be released on October 9.

**On September 21**, *Radar.am* news website reported that the Ministry of Internal Affairs had refused to respond to the question about the number of patrols in Armenia.[[73]](#footnote-73) The ministry considered the requested information confidential.

**On September 23**, *Armlur.am* sent an inquiry to RA Prosecutor General Anna Vardapetyan regarding NA Speaker Alen Simonyan's act of spitting on Stepan Hakobyan, the son of former Minister of Culture Hasmik Poghosyan. Specifically, the media inquired under which proceedings Stepan Hakobyan was prosecuted that resulted in his leaving Armenia, and whether he was on the wanted list. The inquiry received no response.

**On September 25**, *Infocom.am* sent an inquiry to the Yerevan Municipality, requesting information regarding the granted construction permits in the capital in 2018-2024, including permit codes, the names of the companies or natural persons carrying out the construction, the construction addresses, as well as the issuance and expiration dates of the permits. On September 30, the Municipality responded that the Department of Special Urban Development Programs did not compile data in that format. They further pointed out that information about permits was available in the “Doing business” section of the Municipality website. However, according to *Infocom.am,* the map in that section is incomplete, making it impossible to download without knowledge of programming languages.

**On September 26**, *Infocom.am* reported that 4 years after the war, no comprehensive data on the Armenian side’s casualties was available. Although various officials had released figures in the past, the RA Investigative Committee refused to provide such information to the media, referencing the Criminal Procedure Code article prohibiting the disclosure of preliminary investigation data.

**On September 27**, *Pastinfo.am* reported that they had sent an inquiry to the RA Investigative Committee, requesting information on the number of criminal proceedings initiated concerning the cases of torture and murder of captured civilians, soldiers, the number of persons recognized as victims, and whether the Azerbaijani servicemen responsible for mistreating the captives had been identified. If so, the inquiry requested clarification on how many persons were being prosecuted, the articles of law under which they were charged, and whether search warrants had been issued against them, etc.[[74]](#footnote-74) 20 days after the submission of the request, the IC responded, refusing to provide digital information, citing the confidentiality of the preliminary investigation. The website argued that digital data, especially information about a wanted person, could not be classified as a preliminary investigation secret, as sharing their name and image was essential for their identification. A few months earlier, Pastinfo had again submitted an inquiry to the IC, to which the response indicated that a criminal prosecution had been initiated against approximately 20 representatives of the military-political leadership and armed forces of Azerbaijan. The media was unable to find out whether the criminal prosecution against the Azerbaijanis had already been terminated, which might explain the current classification of the information as confidential.

**On September 27**, the Administrative Court of Appeal held a hearing of the complaint filed by the defendant in the case of the *Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the founder of the Fip.am website, v. the RA Police*. The court of first instance had ruled to uphold the lawsuit filed by the NGO on June 6, 2022, with the plaintiff demanding to oblige the defendant to provide through information. As a reminder, the website's request to provide the names, surnames and work telephone numbers of all regional police departments, their divisions and heads, as well as their deputies, had remained without a response. The judicial act was scheduled to be released on October 18.

***OTHER EVENTS RELATED TO THE ACTIVITIES OF MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS***

**On July 3**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing in the case of *Zhoghovurd Newspaper Editorial Office v. Deputy Artur Hovhannisyan*, with the plaintiff demanding to refute the publicly made statement, issue an apology, and compensate the damage caused (in the amount of 4 million AMD). The lawsuit filed on January 3, was caused by a December 15, 2023 statement made by the defendant from the NA rostrum, alleging that some media, in particular, *Zhoghovurd* and *Hraparak* dailies, and *Asekose.am* news website, could publish articles for money.[[75]](#footnote-75)

A court hearing in the case was also held on September 24, with the judicial act scheduled to be released on October 15.

**On July 10**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Tavush Marz (based in Ijevan) upheld the lawsuit filed by *Aravot.am* reporter Hripsimeh Jebejyan, against citizen Khazhak Tananyan, with the plaintiff demanding to protect her honor and dignity from publicly made insult.

The lawsuit filed on August 28, 2023, was caused by the statements made against the journalist online.[[76]](#footnote-76)

The court obliged the defendant to issue a public apology to the journalist, pay 400 thousand AMD as compensation for the insult and 200 thousand AMD as attorney’s fee. On August 26, the defendant filed an appeal with the appellate court.

**On July 11**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Kotayk Marz (based in Abovyan), continued the hearing in the case of *Newday.am editor Ani Gevorgyan v. citizen Diana Martirosyan*, with the plaintiff demanding to protect her honor and dignity from publicly made insult and compensate 400,000 AMD.

The lawsuit filed on October 13, 2023 was caused by an incident on September 11 during the Yerevan Council of Elders election campaign, in which Diana Martirosyan attacked Ani Gevorgyan. The attack was accompanied by verbal insults and threats.[[77]](#footnote-77)

On August 1, the court ruled to uphold the lawsuit, obliging the defendant to issue an apology, pay 400,000 AMD as compensation for the insult, and 27,000 AMD as state duty. Although the judicial act entered into legal force, the defendant announced in a Facebook post that she was not going to pay the compensation.

**On August 29**, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan held a hearing in the case of the same plaintiff against citizen Lala Bernetsyan, with Ani Gevorgyan demanding to protect her honor and dignity from publicly made insult. The lawsuit filed on August 28, 2023 was caused by a social media campaign against the journalist involving insults, threats, and calls for physical harm, which began after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's July 25 press conference.[[78]](#footnote-78)

The next court hearing was scheduled for November 7.

**On July 11**, the RA Administrative Court held a hearing in the case of Knarik Manukyan, journalist and editor of *Zhoghovurd* daily, against the RA National Assembly Staff. The plaintiff sought the annulment of the decision 1/6399-2023 issued by the NA Chief of Staff on December 15, 2023, which revoked the plaintiff’s accreditation to the parliament. During the hearing, the parties presented their arguments.

The next court hearing was scheduled for December 10.

**On September 18**, the Administrative Court of Appeal held a hearing in the case of *MELTEX Ltd., the founder of A1+ TV Company, v. the RA Government and the Commission on Television and Radio,* where the plaintiff presented arguments regarding the discrimination in the licensing competition. It is noteworthy that the lower court did not address this issue at all. The judges of the Administrative Court of Appeal focused on whether the plaintiff had the right to appeal to the court based on those grounds and with such a demand. The plaintiff argued that they did, but if the Court of Appeal determined that the administrative proceedings did not envisage that, they would file a motion to appeal to the Constitutional Court to declare the RA Administrative Offenses Code unconstitutional.   
As a reminder, the lawsuit was filed with the Administrative Court on December 18, 2019, with the plaintiff demanding the annulment of the acts related to 7 broadcasting licensing tenders held in 2003. *Armenia TV CJSC, Mo TV Media Holding CJSC, ArmenAkob Ltd., AR Television Company Ltd. and Husaber CJSC* were involved in the case as third parties. On April 6, 2021, the court rejected the lawsuit, and on June 1, 2022, the Civil Court of Appeal rejected the plaintiff's appeal. *MELTEX Ltd.* subsequently appealed 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 a new examination.  
Notably, at the most recent session, the representative of the Government stated that they had no position regarding the case, as the process did not concern them. The date of the next court session has not yet been set.

\*\*\*

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

1. [**https://civic.am/society/145250--civicam-i-.html**](https://civic.am/society/145250--civicam-i-.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [**https://khosq.am/en/2024/04/30/statement-118/**](https://khosq.am/en/2024/04/30/statement-118/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [**https://shamshyan.com/hy/article/2023/10/29/1249079**](https://shamshyan.com/hy/article/2023/10/29/1249079) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LINGkpRwwjw**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LINGkpRwwjw) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4unCQxNB84**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4unCQxNB84) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [**https://hetq.am/hy/article/117483?fbclid=IwAR0hsTR937FaVgio0ipQqDWOCWaowzo-wrFssO3DmGQSjifkf41bwR9js04**](https://hetq.am/hy/article/117483?fbclid=IwAR0hsTR937FaVgio0ipQqDWOCWaowzo-wrFssO3DmGQSjifkf41bwR9js04) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [**https://www.mediahub.am/post/a2d1943f03c54cf4**](https://www.mediahub.am/post/a2d1943f03c54cf4) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [**https://168.am/2024/05/25/2049917.html**](https://168.am/2024/05/25/2049917.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [**https://fip.am/23243**](https://fip.am/23243) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. [**https://khosq.am/en/2023/09/06/statement-107/**](https://khosq.am/en/2023/09/06/statement-107/) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. [**https://hraparak.am/post/591fb734e3d84d0d37fd972c**](https://hraparak.am/post/591fb734e3d84d0d37fd972c) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. [**https://hraparak.am/post/591fb531e3d84d0d37fd8835**](https://hraparak.am/post/591fb531e3d84d0d37fd8835) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX\_\_MItBVkw&t=1s**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX__MItBVkw&t=1s) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. [**https://hraparak.am/post/eaf38754391a1f17558bd4e9dfd9e260**](https://hraparak.am/post/eaf38754391a1f17558bd4e9dfd9e260) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. [**https://www.facebook.com/simonyanalen/posts/pfbid0jrnxoiaiJ38BiJaWqD5EcZciXAoETZMnks1gv8rpee8qQMminMH7dNt6NVkVv49Tl**](https://www.facebook.com/simonyanalen/posts/pfbid0jrnxoiaiJ38BiJaWqD5EcZciXAoETZMnks1gv8rpee8qQMminMH7dNt6NVkVv49Tl) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. [**https://hraparak.am/post/9b0db6454fecc2af9fda1c4f89034172**](https://hraparak.am/post/9b0db6454fecc2af9fda1c4f89034172) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. [**https://ankakh.com/hy/article/115380**](https://ankakh.com/hy/article/115380) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. [**https://hraparak.am/post/ff7810334141e584152bd44530212699**](https://hraparak.am/post/ff7810334141e584152bd44530212699) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. [**https://civic.am/society/13806--1000-.html**](https://civic.am/society/13806--1000-.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. [**https://www.aravot.am/2022/10/03/1295422/**](https://www.aravot.am/2022/10/03/1295422/) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. [**https://168.am/2021/04/12/1493119.html**](https://168.am/2021/04/12/1493119.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. [**https://armlur.am/1350017/**](https://armlur.am/1350017/) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. [**https://www.pastinfo.am/hy/news/2023/02/20/7bccnlg16/1536743**](https://www.pastinfo.am/hy/news/2023/02/20/7bccnlg16/1536743) [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK6HT5ihmKQ**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK6HT5ihmKQ) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. [**http://hzham.am/articles/1666759386392681.html**](http://hzham.am/articles/1666759386392681.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. [**https://armlur.am/1254318/**](https://armlur.am/1254318/) [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. [**https://www.facebook.com/taguhi.aslanyan/posts/4325353364182778**](https://www.facebook.com/taguhi.aslanyan/posts/4325353364182778) [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. [**https://armlur.am/1383994/**](https://armlur.am/1383994/) [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. [**https://168.am/2019/11/25/1210193.html**](https://168.am/2019/11/25/1210193.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. [**https://hetq.am/hy/article/132716**](https://hetq.am/hy/article/132716) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. [**https://shorturl.at/dkrKU**](https://shorturl.at/dkrKU) [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. [**https://hraparak.am/post/cfa95459a7b0fb3d09421fcd54b9f2a6**](https://hraparak.am/post/cfa95459a7b0fb3d09421fcd54b9f2a6) [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. [**https://oragir.news/hy/material/2024/06/26/121656**](https://oragir.news/hy/material/2024/06/26/121656) [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. [**https://oragir.news/hy/material/2023/03/09/73385**](https://oragir.news/hy/material/2023/03/09/73385) [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. [**https://hetq.am/hy/article/130541**](https://hetq.am/hy/article/130541) [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. [**https://armlur.am/889450/**](https://armlur.am/889450/) [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. [**https://hraparak.am/post/784d07c164dcd1120286795b9080f4d1**](https://hraparak.am/post/784d07c164dcd1120286795b9080f4d1) [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. [**https://shamshyan.com/hy/article/2024/06/29/1264671**](https://shamshyan.com/hy/article/2024/06/29/1264671) [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. [**https://mediahub.am/post/df66cbb6a43473b8**](https://mediahub.am/post/df66cbb6a43473b8) [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. [**https://www.facebook.com/tehmine.yenoqyan/posts/pfbid0j3RTd3FidFgdUMJfjpMFsL5kZWjhtn8h1GbWiXjeEr3Y9gsarusreta1ESYrMk7nl**](https://www.facebook.com/tehmine.yenoqyan/posts/pfbid0j3RTd3FidFgdUMJfjpMFsL5kZWjhtn8h1GbWiXjeEr3Y9gsarusreta1ESYrMk7nl) [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. [**https://www.facebook.com/100002611105728/videos/835993668415952/**](https://www.facebook.com/100002611105728/videos/835993668415952/) [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJroYnrFyeE**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJroYnrFyeE) [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. [**https://oragir.news/hy/material/2023/09/05/89547?fbclid=IwAR1EYdXXIrO31MQ6ynRLsBD9LTSy4\_vrWpVBLd3X9Tnt\_kqQfvK9CkNNRXs**](https://oragir.news/hy/material/2023/09/05/89547?fbclid=IwAR1EYdXXIrO31MQ6ynRLsBD9LTSy4_vrWpVBLd3X9Tnt_kqQfvK9CkNNRXs) [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQ1cf6LhYj0**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQ1cf6LhYj0) [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etKjEn\_RcQ4**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etKjEn_RcQ4) [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IepXzZyo7oA**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IepXzZyo7oA) [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. [**http://armtimes.com/hy/article/142602**](http://armtimes.com/hy/article/142602) [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. [**https://lurer.com/?p=471857&l=am**](https://lurer.com/?p=471857&l=am) [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. [**https://oragir.news/hy/material/2023/09/02/89321?fbclid=IwAR1NueeLo\_GX7WUE\_dmCkTAQD8xjc9MGxaIIL5R5QV-RgXyyfMy0-lUZws8**](https://oragir.news/hy/material/2023/09/02/89321?fbclid=IwAR1NueeLo_GX7WUE_dmCkTAQD8xjc9MGxaIIL5R5QV-RgXyyfMy0-lUZws8) [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. [**https://hraparak.am/post/c1cf0ec5169a39e8e7e5db4d031b7b1d?fbclid=IwAR1ODzrsCZX5jSXQfctEl0VKB3tFTZHCt06PmXvZ0fITgupOXw9TEGAQlWg**](https://hraparak.am/post/c1cf0ec5169a39e8e7e5db4d031b7b1d?fbclid=IwAR1ODzrsCZX5jSXQfctEl0VKB3tFTZHCt06PmXvZ0fITgupOXw9TEGAQlWg) [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. [**https://armlur.am/1270427/**](https://armlur.am/1270427/) [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUNDTk4EvlI&t=2662s**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUNDTk4EvlI&t=2662s) [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. **https://bit.ly/3Ozibca** [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. [**https://armlur.am/1397718/**](https://armlur.am/1397718/) [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHPUSug\_1vg&t=69s**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHPUSug_1vg&t=69s) [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68OdMCnO1K0**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68OdMCnO1K0) [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. [**https://168.am/2024/07/10/2070620.html**](https://168.am/2024/07/10/2070620.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. [**https://armlur.am/1402281/**](https://armlur.am/1402281/) [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. [**https://armlur.am/1403488/**](https://armlur.am/1403488/) [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. [**https://infocom.am/hy/article/133548**](https://infocom.am/hy/article/133548) [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. [**https://www.azatutyun.am/a/datakhazoutyouny-kadastrayin-kartezneri-veraberyal-groutyoun-stanal-chstanalou-hartsy-hamaroum-e-gaghtnik/33037037.html**](https://www.azatutyun.am/a/datakhazoutyouny-kadastrayin-kartezneri-veraberyal-groutyoun-stanal-chstanalou-hartsy-hamaroum-e-gaghtnik/33037037.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. [**https://factor.am/793287.html**](https://factor.am/793287.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. [**https://168.am/2024/07/18/2074660.html**](https://168.am/2024/07/18/2074660.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. [**https://fip.am/25587**](https://fip.am/25587) [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. [**https://hetq.am/hy/article/168612**](https://hetq.am/hy/article/168612) [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. [**https://infocom.am/hy/article/135400**](https://infocom.am/hy/article/135400) [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. [**https://168.am/2024/08/05/2081794.html**](https://168.am/2024/08/05/2081794.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. [**https://www.tert.am/am/news/2024/08/17/cadastre/4166109**](https://www.tert.am/am/news/2024/08/17/cadastre/4166109) [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. [**https://www.aliqmedia.am/2024/08/21/166835/**](https://www.aliqmedia.am/2024/08/21/166835/) [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. [**https://www.givemeinfo.am/hy/case/3591/**](https://www.givemeinfo.am/hy/case/3591/) [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. [**https://www.pastinfo.am/hy/news/2024/09/12/qadejo4z4/1824757**](https://www.pastinfo.am/hy/news/2024/09/12/qadejo4z4/1824757) [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. [**https://factor.am/810834.html**](https://factor.am/810834.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. [**https://radar.am/hy/news/social-2653318236/**](https://radar.am/hy/news/social-2653318236/) [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. [**https://www.pastinfo.am/hy/news/2024/09/27/dh27hzyjf/1832460**](https://www.pastinfo.am/hy/news/2024/09/27/dh27hzyjf/1832460) [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXwgJH0KASU&t=592s**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXwgJH0KASU&t=592s) [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. [**https://www.aravot.am/2023/07/28/1358203/**](https://www.aravot.am/2023/07/28/1358203/) [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSHJT2LY\_J0**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSHJT2LY_J0) [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. [**https://www.aravot.am/2024/02/07/1398511/**](https://www.aravot.am/2024/02/07/1398511/) [↑](#footnote-ref-78)