**Overview of** [**Lawsuits filed by Lydian Armenia**](https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/lydian-international-lawsuits-against-activists-re-defamation-on-environmental-hazards-armenia/) **against environmental activists for defamation surrounding a gold mining project**

1. *Nazeli Vardanyan, lawyer & Head of Armenian Forests NGO*

On 21 December 2018, Lydian Armenia filed a civil law complaint (Court Case No. ԵԴ/30203/02/18) with the Yerevan District Court of First Instance, against Nazeli Vardanyan alleging she discredited its business reputation. The lawsuit is based on comments Ms. Vardanyan made during a press conference held on 29 November 2018. She was assigned by the government to write a legal analysis of suspected violations related to the Amulsar project, which would then be sent for discussion to various stakeholders. During a public presentation of the document, Vardanyan raised one example of suspected corruption related to the Lydian’s Jermuk foundation that operates in the town near the mine.

The comment in particular is "Why does Jermuk fund 80 million when Jermuk is not an affected community ... what does it mean?... it is a form of bribery, there is no other option...". The company considers the expression defamatory and requests the defendant retract her statement. They also request the court to order that Nazeli Vardanyan pay 1 million Dram (approx. 1,870 Euros) in favour of Lydian Armenia as compensation and to pay the judicial costs.

On 12 December 2019, Yerevan District Court of First Instance held a hearing on the lawsuit. The defendant, Nazeli Vardanyan, was not notified of the court hearings because Lydian Armenia had incorrectly stated her address in the summons to appear in court. Subsequently she filed filed a motion to reopen the preliminary hearing so she could present evidence and defend her rights. The court did not address her motion.

On 11 June 2020, the Court of First Instance upheld the lawsuit filed by Lydian. It ordered Nazeli to publicly retract the statement in question.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Tehmine Yenoqyan, journalist*

In December 2018, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation lawsuit against journalist Tehmine Yenoqyan who stated in Jermuk square that Lydian Armenia is a corrupt and criminal company. Lydian Armenia asked Ms. Yenoqyan to publicly retract her comments and pay one million Dram (approximately 1,870 Euros) in compensation for undermining its business reputation as well as pay judicial costs.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Levon Galstyan, Coordinator, Armenian Environmental Front (AEF) civil initiative*

On 10 August 2018, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation complaint (Court Case No. ԵԴ/16785/02/18) before the Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction against Levon Galstyan, an environmental activist, for accusing the company of bribery. The lawsuit is based on comments about the Amulsar project Mr. Galstyan made during his interview with CivilNet news agency and posts on AEF Facebook page and his personal Facebook page. Lydian Armenia requested that Levon publicly retract his comments, pay 1 million Dram (approx. 1,870 Euros) to compensate for reputational damage and pay judicial costs.

A series of preliminary court hearings were held. The next preliminary hearing is scheduled for 26 August 2020.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Ani Khachatryan, Coordinator, Armenian Environmental Front (AEF) civil initiative*

On 16 November 2018, Lydian Armenia filed a civil law complaint (Court case No. ԿԴ3/1445/02/18) before the Court of General Jurisdiction of Kotayk against Ani Khachatryan for spreading ‘slandering information’ after she regularly posted information online concerning the situation of the Amuslar mine project. Lydian Armenia asked Ms. Ani Khachatryan to publicly retract her comments, pay one million Dram (approximately 1,870 Euros) in compensation for undermining its business reputation and pay judicial costs.

On 3 December 2018, the court ordered Ms. Ani Khachatryan not to disseminate information negatively impacting Lydian Armenia’s reputation and that do ‘not reflect the reality’ of the project. Ani Khachatryan appealed this ruling. The appeal was upheld by the court on 3 July 2019.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Hayk Grigoryan, Coordinator, Armenian Environmental Front (AEF) civil initiative*

On 31 January 2019, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation complaint (Court Case No. ԵԴ/2192/02/19) before the Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction against Hayk Grigoryan. The lawsuit is based on a post Mr. Grigoryan published on his personal Facebook page on 26 December 2018. Lyndian Armenia asked Hayk Grigoryan to publicly retract his comments, pay 1 million Dram (approx. 1,870 Euros) to compensate for reputational damage, and pay judicial costs.

A series of preliminary court hearings were held. The next preliminary hearing is scheduled for 23 July 2020.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Shirak Buniatyan, Jermuk resident, member of Amulsar Without Mine Initiative*

On 28 March 2019, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation complaint (Court case No. ԱՎԴ2/0560/02/19) with the Court of First Instance of Ararat and Vayots Dzor regions against Shirak Buniatyan. The case is based on Mr. Buniatyan’s post on the Facebook page of Maxinfo.AM group questioning the legitimacy of operations conducted by Lydian Armenia. The company requested Shirak Buniatyan to publicly retract his comments, pay one million Dram (approximately 1,870 Euros) in compensation for undermining its business reputation, and to pay judicial costs.

A preliminary court hearing scheduled for 4 June 2020 did not take place due lockdown related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The next preliminary court hearing is scheduled for 15 July 2020.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Edmon Aghabekyan, local activist*

On 28 March 2019, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation complaint (Court case No. ԱՎԴ2/0551/02/19) with the Court of First Instance of Ararat and Vayots Dzor regions against Edmon Aghabekyan. The lawsuit arises from Mr. Aghabekyan’s comments questioning the legitimacy of operations conducted by Lydian Armenia in a Facebook post and at a press conference of activists fighting against the exploitation of Amulsar mine held in Yerevan on 22 February 2019. Lydian Armenia asked Edmon Aghabekyan to publicly retract his comments, pay one million Dram (approximately 1,870 Euros) in compensation for undermining its business reputation, and to pay judicial costs.

A series of preliminary court hearings were held. The next preliminary hearing is scheduled for 14 July 2020.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Gagik Grigoryan, resident of Gndevaz village*

On 13 January 2020, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation complaint (Court case No. ԱՎԴ3/0004/02/20) with the Court of First Instance of Ararat and Vayots Dzor regions against Gagik Grigoryan for questioning their operations in a Facebook post and during a public gathering. Lydian Armenia requested that Gagik Grigoryan publicly refute his comments, and pay compensation for undermining its business reputation, as well as judicial costs.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Vahagn Avagyan, activist, member of Sasna Tsrer movement*

On 14 January 2020, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation complaint (Court case No. ԵԴ/0654/02/20) with the Yerevan City Court of First Instance against Vahagn Avagyan. The lawsuit is based on comments Mr. Avagyan made during a live broadcast on his personal Facebook page. Lydian Armenia requested Vahagn Avagyan to publicly refute his comments, pay one million Dram (approximately 1,870 Euros) in compensation for undermining its business reputation and pay judicial costs.

The next preliminary hearing is scheduled for 28 September 2020.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Gevorg Safaryan, activist, member of Sasna Tsrer movement*

On 10 December 2019, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation complaint (Court case No. ԿԴ2/2677/02/19) with the General Jurisdiction Court of Kotayk region against Gevorg Safaryan for criticizing the Amulsar gold mine project. Lydian Armenia asked Mr. Safaryan to publicly refute his comments, pay one million Dram (approximately 1,870 Euros) in compensation for undermining its business reputation and pay judicial costs.

The company appealed this ruling in the Civil Court of Appeal, which ruled on 5 March 2020 to reject the appeal and to leave the ruling of the court of first instance unchanged.

The next preliminary court hearing is scheduled for 12 August 2020.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Skizb Media LLC*

On 11 October 2019, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation complaint (Court case No. ԵԴ/33691/02/19) with the Yerevan City Court of First Instance against Skizb Media for publishing an article titled [“What is the way out? Armen Sargsyan can change the situation”](https://www.1in.am/2611361.html). The article alleges that Lydian Armenia received the right to operate the Amulsar gold mine through corrupt deals. Lydian Armenia asked Skizb Media to retract the article, publish a statement clarifying the article was false, pay compensation for damaging its business reputation, and pay judicial costs.

The trial is scheduled for 18 September 2020.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Atom Margaryan, "Lragir" electronic newspaper*

On 27 September 2019, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation complaint (Court case No. ԵԴ/31633/02/19) with the Yerevan City Court of First Instance against economist Atom Margaryan and "Lragir" electronic newspaper. The case arises from comments by Atom Margaryan criticising the Amulsar gold mine project in an interview published on the Lragir electronic newspaper’s website. Lydian Armenia asked Atom Margaryan and "Lragir" electronic newspaper to retract information considered defamatory, pay compensation for damaging its business reputation, and pay judicial costs.

The company appealed this ruling in the Civil Court of Appeal, which ruled on 2 December 2019 to reject the appeal and to leave the ruling of the court of first instance unchanged. On 13 February 2020, the company appealed this ruling in Cassation Court. On 26 February 2020, the Cassation Court rejected the company’s appeal.

The first preliminary court hearing was held on 16 June 2020. The next preliminary hearing is scheduled for 4 September 2020.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Sergey Bagratyan, Member of Parliament*

On 22 February 2019, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation complaint (Court case No. ԵԴ/5106/02/19) with the Yerevan City Court of First Instance against Sergey Bagratyan. The case is based on comments made by Mr. Bagratyan about the Amulsar project during an introductory meeting with Members of Parliament held in Jermuk Educational Complex on 17 February 2019. Lydian Armenia requested that Mr. Bagratyan publicly retract his comments, pay one million Dram (approximately 1,870 Euros) in compensation for damaging its business reputation, and pay judicial costs.

The trial is scheduled for 18 August 2020.

Case status: Ongoing

1. *Sergey Bagratyan, Member of Parliament (second lawsuit)*

On 24 September 2019, Lydian Armenia filed a defamation complaint (Court case No. ԵԴ/31151/02/19) with the Yerevan City Court of First Instance against Sergey Bagratyan. The case arises from a speech Mr. Bagratyan made during a Parliamentary sitting on 12 September 2019, in which he alleged that the cost of construction work at the Amulsar mine presented in Lydian reports was significantly exaggerated. Lydian Armenia requested that Mr. Bagratyan publicly retract his statement at a Parliamentary sitting, pay one million Dram (approximately 1,870 Euros) in compensation for damaging its business reputation, and pay judicial costs.

The company appealed this ruling in the Civil Court of Appeal, which ruled on 22 November 2019 to reject the appeal and to leave the ruling of the court of first instance unchanged.

The trial is scheduled for 3 September 2020.

Case status: Ongoing