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César do Paço

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By

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Photo: DR

The Portuguese businessman, based in the United States of America, César do Paço, is suing Sábado, CMTV and SIC, for what he classifies as "attacks on his honour and image, due to the imputation of false facts". César do Paço was accused, across several journalistic pieces, of being the main financier of Chega.

César Manuel Cardoso Matos do Paço, better known as César de Paço, is the CEO of Summit Nutritionals International Inc., as well as of its Portuguese branch, and was honorary consul for Portugal and Cape Verde in Palm Coast, Florida. The businessman deals internationally, in raw materials, for the pharmaceutical, veterinary and food industries. Despite all this, he became known to most Portuguese people, for having been referred to, in the press, as the "main financier of Chega".

The businessman now reacts against Sábado magazine, CMTV, SIC and the journalists and information directors, involved in the news, which, in his opinion, "keep on spreading lies about him and diffusing contents, which are considered as harmful to his image".

In a criminal complaint, for libel and insult and for violation of the Press Law, against Cofina Media SA (the owner of Sábado Magazine and CMTV) and against the journalist Alexandre Malhado and Eduardo Dâmaso (director of Cofina), to which O MINHO has had access, César do Paço complains that he is "suffering a serious damage" as a result of being named as the "main financier" and "sympathiser or supporter of the extreme right-wing party Chega", which, he alleges, "is the way all the media correlate his name".

At issue is the news article, published in Sábado Magazine, on March 11th, 2021, with the headline "[The security schemes of the financier of Chega](#)", still available online. The news story focuses on João Vida, a GNR military officer, convicted, in October 2017, for document forgery and coercion. César do Paço was one of the witnesses in these proceedings, but he was never called to be heard.

The news article says, citing the court's verdict, that João Vidal would make illegal collection services, at the behest of César do Paço. The businessman begins by denouncing the title of the news article as "false", since, as he says, he was never a financier of Chega, although he recognizes having made a donation to the party, within legal limits.

In relation to the accusation of surrounding himself with members of the military and security forces to "threaten and settle scores", César do Paço sees this as a libel that "cannot let pass unnoticed".

César do Paço questions the way in which the journalist approached him, by giving the impression that he was doing a journalistic piece on the conviction of GNR's officer João Vidal, and ended up doing a news-report on the complainant, "insinuating that he is the mastermind of crimes".

The businessman complains that the journalist, the information director, Sábado Magazine and CMTV have harmed his honour and seriousness, "although there is no evidence against him, did not restrain himself from naming him as an illegal financier of a political party".

According to the criminal complaint, filed at DIAP, the journalists "knew and know that the whistleblower (César do Paço) was never a financier of Chega, much less its main financier". The aim was, according to César do Paço, to stick his name, not only to Chega, but to "a xenophobic and racist party".

SIC also denounced for libel, slander and violation of the Press Law

On what concerns to SIC, another criminal complaint denounces not only the Sociedade Independente de Comunicação, but also the journalist Pedro Coelho and the information directors, Ricardo Costa and Marta Reis. At issue is a series of three episodes of the tv programme Grande Reportagem, in which César do Paço considers himself portrayed, in a way that offends him "in his honour".

"The party is starting to become attractive (...) This very short, but very concrete, sentence is a good motto for this news-report, which, as I say, starts with André Ventura and begins following the paths around the leader of Chega, into reaching a North American multimillionaire, César Manuel Cardoso do Paço, as this multimillionaire is officially called, who is a key player in Chega, due to his close relationship to André Ventura, his close relationship to the party and other situations, which we will have to see in the news-report," said journalist Pedro Coelho, at the presentation of the television programme, in an interview with another SIC's journalist.

The businessman considers that "this is where the falsehoods begin", while trying to place him as a key element of the party of which he is not a militant, nor a leader, and to which he simply made a donation, within the legal limits.

César do Paço complains to having been confronted with a law suit, in which he was a defendant, in 1989, and of which he had no knowledge. That the journalist did not give him time to consult the case-file, as it came the weekend. According to the complaint, the journalist failed to mention that the case was closed, due to lack of evidence, and that César do Paço was never summoned or confronted by the justice system, on the due accusation.

The criminal complaint goes further and accuses the journalist of manipulating the quotes he took from the case file, in order to give a more negative image of César do Paço.

Although SIC's journalistic piece says that the trial never took place "because the accused has never appeared", César do Paço claims that he never had any problem in obtaining Portuguese documents and that he has even been an employee of the Portuguese State, during the referred period.

In the complaint, it is referred that the businessman would have no way of obtaining a green card (residence permit document, in the USA), if he had not been issued with a clean criminal record certificate.

César do Paço claims that he is being "condemned, as if he were a criminal... without having been condemned in court. This happens, the prosecution contends, "because, at a certain moment, he had decided to enter a public rally of a political party, legally established according to the Portuguese Republic's Constitution, and of having made a donation."

The rally, to which he refers, is the one held in Porto, where the Nazi salute gave rise to an investigation, by the Public Prosecutor's Office. The complainant claims that he was only at the dinner/rally, because he "met its president at a certain moment" and that he

is not its financier, adviser or militant, nor even an active member. César do Paço said, in his complaint, against SIC and the journalists, that his person's association to an event where the Nazi salute was made "is extremely serious, disturbing and defamatory, since even if such a salute had been made, which is unknown, at no time binds the complainant, contrarily to what the journalist would have made people believe.

According to the criminal complaint, the aim was damaging the businessman's image, honour and reputation. It was, refers the accusation, a "clear use of a television channel and its broadcasting capacity, in order to destroying the honour and credibility of the complainant, with lies, speculation and insinuations".

The criminal complaint accuses SIC and Pedro Coelho of having used metaphorical television language, to disclose an image of César de Paço as a "marginal, a man without any kind of principles, a criminal". In the news-report, there is a sequence, filmed in an underground, where pictures with symbols and references to extreme right-wing parties can be seen hanging, ending up with the image of a single person, in the same place: César do Paço.

"Caesar dePaço, born César Manuel Cardoso Matos do Paço, is the financier of Chega and the central character of the last episode of Grande Ilusão. The European extreme-right wing finances itself, by creating schemes, which come to life in the underworld of politics. Multi-millionaires with obscure past-lives, terrorist networks, Russian oligarchs, the extreme-right wing is born and lives, supported by those who create and feed themselves on chaos", the journalistic piece refers, in which the underground seems to be used as an illustration of the aforementioned underworld, which César do Paço would be part of.

"But has the businessman stuffed the party's safes by non-legal means?" – asks the journalist, at a certain point, in the news-report. For the prosecution, this, in itself, constitutes an insinuation and a libel, since the businessman recognizes the donation he made, by having made it within the legal limits.

"Pedro Coelho's journalistic piece, on SIC, refers that he was exonerated by Cape Verde's Government. This does not correspond to the truth, he himself was the one who requested the duties' termination. The criminal complaint adds this example to the narrative that, according to César do Paço's evaluation, was built against his image. In the news-report, he [the journalist] confirms that this happens, but he does not do so expressly, in order to set the idea that this happens and perhaps, thus, trying to avoid the criminal assessment of his entire behaviour", it can be checked on the criminal complaint that has now been filed.

The various journalistic pieces and news-reports, to which the complaints against the journalists, Cofina and SIC refer, are still available online, thus making reference to César do Paço as the main financier of Chega, by being the first internet search result, when one searches for the name of the complainant.

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