

Press release

International Day of Democracy 2023: Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, joint statement

Members of the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse gave a statement on women's and girls' rights to participate in public life.

From: **Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office**
(</government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office>) and **Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon KCMG** (</government/people/lord-ahmad-of-wimbledon>)

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“Today, on International Day of Democracy 2023, the undersigned country members of the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse call attention to the pressing need to protect and promote women’s and girls’ right to participate in public life.”

“This is a pivotal year for the status of democracy globally with more than 100 countries scheduled to hold elections in the coming year. The active participation of all people, including women and girls in all their diversity, is essential for healthy and prosperous democracies. Yet women and girls engaged in public life are increasingly targeted by online threats and attacks, with insufficient avenues for response and redress. A global study* found that the majority of women parliamentarians surveyed had experienced psychological violence, primarily through social media, including threats of death, sexual violence, beatings or abductions. Some women face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including on the basis of age, race, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

“Online threats to women and girls in public life have proliferated with the increased adoption of digital technologies and are likely to continue to grow with new and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, which has led to the rise of malicious deepfakes, non-consensual pornography, reinforced stereotyping and bias, and other harms. Multiple forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence have been shown to prompt women’s self-censorship and disengagement from the public sphere and can occur alongside offline intimidation and violence.

“This undermines women’s ability to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression. Orchestrated, digital attacks deliberately use misogyny and disinformation to discredit, intimidate and silence women politicians, journalists, and activists. In addition to harming individual targets, these attacks are an affront to democracies globally. They should therefore be prioritised as an urgent concern given the serious threat they pose to inclusive, open societies. All people – including women and girls in all their diversity – should be able to speak out and actively participate in the

public sphere without fear of harassment, discrimination, or violence. We must prevent and address technology-facilitated gender-based violence to safeguard the very well-being of our democracies and economies.

“We call upon states to join us in recognising the threat of technology-facilitated gender-based violence to democracies globally. We urge states and technology companies to take appropriate action to prevent and respond to this threat, support a Safety by Design approach to the development and deployment of platforms and technologies and defend women’s right to participate in public life freely, safely and without fear.”

Co-signatories and sponsoring country members of the Global Partnership:

Australia: Minister for Communications, the Hon Michelle Rowland; Chile; Denmark: Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy, Dan Jørgensen; Iceland: Minister for Foreign Affairs, Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir; New Zealand: Minister for Women, Hon Jan Tinetti; Republic of Korea: Second Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Oh Youngju; Sweden: Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tobias Billström; United Kingdom: Minister of State for the Middle East, South Asia, Commonwealth, UN and the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon; United States of America.

*Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2016). Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians. Geneva. [Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Preliminary Landscape Analysis \(publishing.service.gov.uk\) \(PDF, 2.44MB\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1168818/Technology_facilitated_gender_based_violence_preliminary_landscape_analysis.pdf) (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1168818/Technology_facilitated_gender_based_violence_preliminary_landscape_analysis.pdf) p.32

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