



ACTION BRIEF

ONLINE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

GENDER, SEXUALITY & IDENTITY PROGRAM

Women should be able to express themselves without fear of violence



I have basically reconciled myself with the fact that I'm prepared to die for the work that I do. That might happen. If you get 200 death threats, it only takes one person who really wants to kill you.

*Pamela Merritt,
US blogger and activist*

For many women, the Internet is not a safe space. Although social media platforms in particular have become a critical space for women to express themselves and make their voices heard, they have also become spaces where women are targeted for expressing their views. Online violence and abuse denies women the right to express themselves equally, freely, and without fear. Women are targeted at higher rates and in different ways than men are. Women are specifically targeted because of their gender and the threats are specific to their identity. Hate and abuse on Twitter are not merely mean words. Women face rape and death threats, racist and sexist language, and hate speech. Women have their addresses, work, and personal information revealed. Women face “targeted harassment” where one or more people organize to attack, harass, and abuse the woman repeatedly. In addition to the negative psychological impact of experiencing online abuse, the inadequate response to online violence by social media platforms means women often end up self-censoring or even leaving social media platforms altogether.

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TAKE ACTION

- 1 Sign up for the Decoder Project. Participate as a digital volunteer to read and categorize Tweets to classify the abuse that women face online. The Decoder Project will begin on April 4. Sign up at amnestyusa.org/decoder
- 2 Tweet at Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey @jack and tell him that that you think Twitter should enforce its own policies to protect women from violence on its platform. Use the hashtag #ToxicTwitter.
- 3 Go to amnestyusa.org/onlineviolence to access the Toolkit to find out about ways that you can help stop online violence against women.

Nearly 1 in 4 women experience online abuse or harassment; many change how they use social media and changed how they express themselves online. ALL women deserve the right to express themselves equally, freely, and without fear.

STOP ONLINE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Twitter started with a simple, but powerful idea: Let people tell their story about what's happening in the world right now.

Well, this is what's REALLY happening – abuse is running rampant on Twitter, making it a toxic place, particularly for women. And when Twitter fails to follow its own rules on abuse, this can drive women off the platform.

Twitter has become a conduit and megaphone for powerful movements like #MeToo and #TimesUp – movements designed to defend women's freedoms. Twitter wants to be a part of this, publicly announcing that it "stands with women to make their voices heard." And yet, women's freedom to express themselves and freedom to live free from violence, including psychological violence, is routinely silenced by toxic abuse on the platform.

It's time Twitter put its own rules into practice to stop this from happening. This means consistently enforcing their own policies that explicitly say violence and abuse against women has no place on Twitter.

Women should be able to express themselves – without fear of being shut down by prejudice and hate.

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