

CALL FOR ACTION

TECHNOLOGY FACILITATED GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PREPARED BY
ETHIOPIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS CENTER (EHRDC) & ETHIOPIAN WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK (EWHRDN)

We, the undersigned organizations, acknowledge the urgent need to address gender-based violence (GBV), including the pervasive issue of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV), in Ethiopia. In addition to gender-based violence and conflict-related gender-based violence that is demeaning the lives of women in Ethiopia, TFGBV is spreading like wildfire, impacting the lives of young kids, women, and women human rights defenders across the country. It is imperative that all stakeholders explicitly condemn TFGBV and take decisive steps to prevent, investigate, and prosecute perpetrators of these crimes. By working together and prioritizing the eradication of TFGBV, we can create a safer and more equitable digital space for all Ethiopians. Therefore, we call up on all stakeholders, including government authorities, civil society organizations, and social media platforms to take immediate action to address TFGBV in Ethiopia. and urge all parties to fulfill their obligation to ensure the protection of all individuals, especially women and children, from all forms of violence and abuse facilitated by technology.

The recent research conducted by the Center for Information Resilience (CIR) has shed light on the alarming prevalence of online harassment, hate speech, and abuse targeting women and girls across various social media platforms. This phenomenon compounds the already existing challenges faced by women in Ethiopia in the aftermath of conflicts in Tigray and the ongoing war in the Amhara region, as well as conflicts in several parts of the country.

Among the challenges concerning GBV, particularly in the realm of digital media, is the need for enhanced media discipline and ethics. As Civil Society organizations, we recognize the gaps in digital media and journalism that perpetuate harmful narratives surrounding GBV. There is a pressing need to advocate for and uphold media discipline, ensuring that reporting and documenting GBV is conducted responsibly and ethically across all forms of media platforms. This includes refraining from gaslighting issues and avoiding inappropriate jokes and comments that trivialize the seriousness of GBV. Additionally, we recognize to the lack of awareness about digital threats and limited access to capacity-building opportunities for professionals, especially women, in the media and digital space. Women, including human rights defenders, face threats and violence, both online and offline. Platforms like TikTok pose significant safety threats for children and women, exposing them to exploitation, harassment, and abuse. There is an urgent need for enhanced safety measures, including robust content moderation and education on digital literacy and online safety.

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As a commitment to fostering a society free from GBV, we must urgently address TFGBV in Ethiopia. TFGBV encompasses various forms of violence perpetrated against women, girls, and HRDs through digital platforms. We must take decisive action to combat TFGBV and create a safer online environment for all.

Therefore, we urge:

- **Government Authorities:** to allocate resources for prevention programs, victim support services, and law enforcement training. Although we acknowledge the efforts made by the government to enact and enforce legislation and policies that are targeting online violence, we urge for the need to enact specific legislations and policies that can address TFGBV.
- **Ministry of Education (MOE):** to integrate comprehensive digital literacy and safety programs into school curricula and foster a culture of respect and equality within educational settings.
- **Social Media Companies:** to swiftly identify and remove content related to TFGBV, including posts made in Amharic and other Ethiopian languages. We recognize the urgent need for social media companies to strengthen their content moderation policies and mechanisms. This includes investing in advanced technology and personnel dedicated to enhancing platform safety and providing support to victims. Platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and others play a significant role in shaping online discourse and must prioritize the eradication of TFGBV content to create a safer and more inclusive digital environment.
- **Human Rights Defenders:** to mobilize advocacy efforts aimed at raising awareness about TFGBV in Ethiopia and to apply preventive measures that can protect themselves from violence.
- **Civil Society Organizations:** to design and implement projects that proactively protect our society from technology-facilitated threats and harm, including initiatives that promote digital literacy, online safety, and the responsible use of technology.
- **Community Leaders and Influencers:** to challenge harmful gender norms expressed in the digital realms and promote positive masculinity and allyship. Use platforms and influencers to create inclusive and supportive communities.
- **Social Media Users:** To refuse to perpetrate or condone TFGBV, Support victims, amplify their voices, and report abusive content to authorities and platforms.

Together, we can and must work towards eradicating TFGBV in Ethiopia and build a society where all individuals can live in safety, dignity, and equality. Join us in the fight against TFGBV!

PLACE YOUR NAME AND SIGNATURES BELOW

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