



محامون من أجل العدالة في ليبيا



'We will not be silenced:' Online Violence Against Women in Libya

Key facts

March 2021

WHY DID LFJL PRODUCE THIS REPORT?

Lawyers for Justice in Libya's (LFJL) report, *'We will not be silenced: Online violence against women in Libya,'* provides a first comprehensive study examining the scale and impact of online violence against women (OVAW) in Libya.

The report documents numerous incidents of OVAW and ends with a number of recommendations to the Libyan state, international bodies and Internet intermediaries. LFJL will use the information in the report for advocacy and campaigning and where possible will take cases to litigation in line with our overall goal of accountability.

LFJL Head of Research and Capacity Building, Mohamed Elmessiry: "Online violence against women in Libya is a serious problem that receives very little attention. We wanted to correct this and put the voice of women at the forefront of discussions on how to solve it."

LFJL Research Fellow Dr Olga Jurasz: "Tragically, far too often in Libya online abuse has been followed by physical attacks including enforced disappearances and brutal killings, committed in broad daylight. Over 80% of survey respondents said that online violence against women was just as serious as offline violence."

Marwa Mohamed, LFJL's Head of Advocacy and Outreach: "Online violence is a weapon used to silence women, undermining respect for human rights and the rule of law. This issue needs to be given the attention it deserves. Libya must pass a law on gender-based violence, including online violence against women, and prosecute perpetrators in line with its international obligations under key human rights treaties."

WHAT IS OVAW?

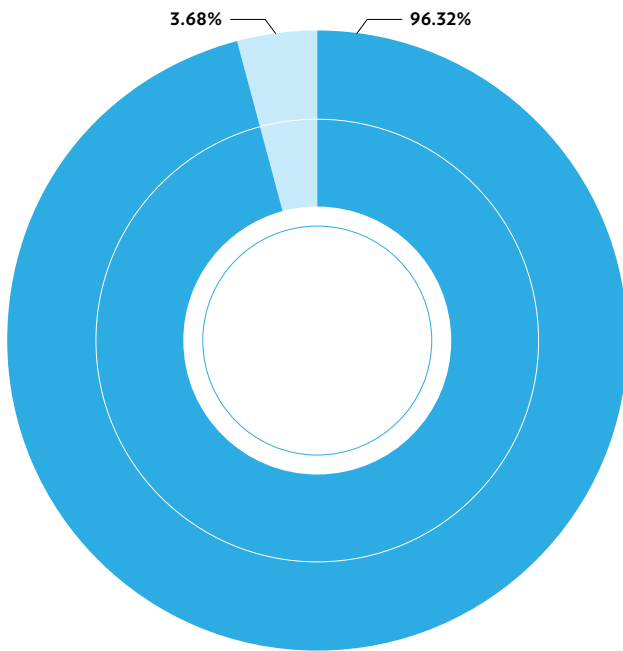
OVAW is a form of gender-based violence committed on the internet against women because they are women. It can include harassment, threats, misogyny, text-based abuse, image-based sexual abuse, the use of deep fake pornography, doxing and cyberstalking.

In some cases, it may amount to torture.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS OVAW IN LIBYA

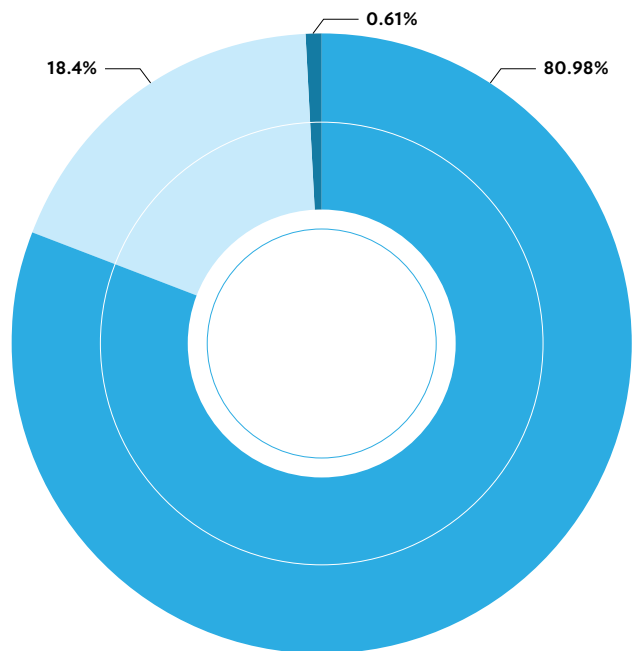
LFJL conducted a survey on OVAW between June and October 2020. The survey was widely circulated, attracting 163 respondents, over 99% of whom identified as Libyan and 81% of whom said they were currently living in Libya.

Is online violence against women a serious problem?



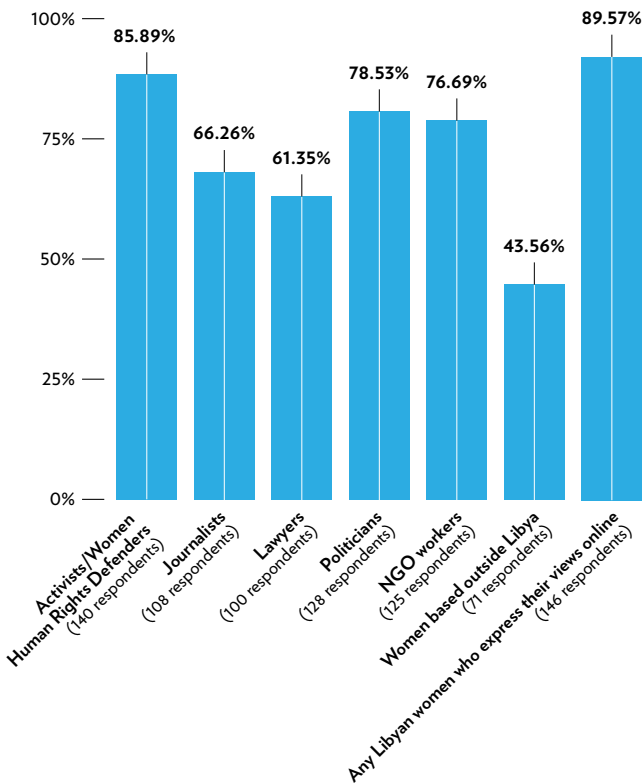
- Yes (157 respondents)
- No (6 respondents)

How serious is online violence against women?

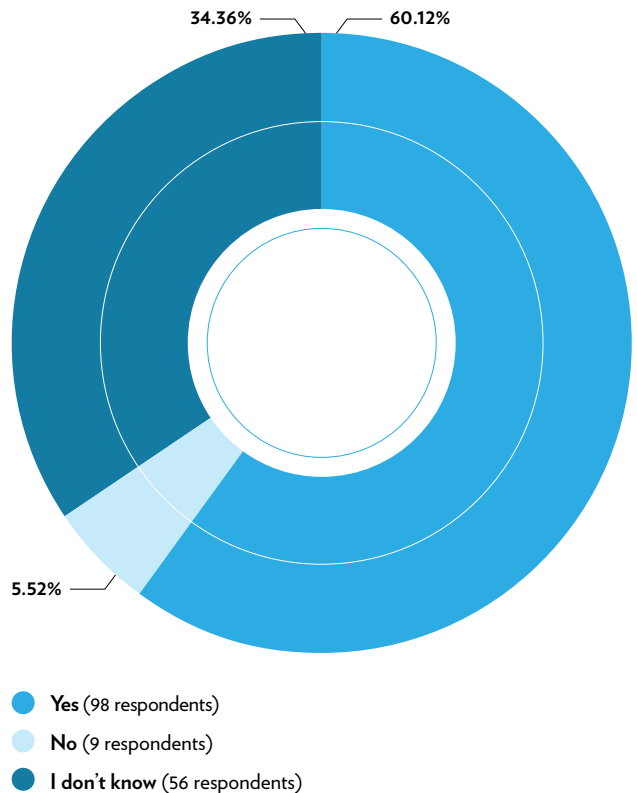


- As serious as offline forms of VAW (132 respondents)
- Less serious than offline forms of VAW (30 respondents)
- Not serious at all (1 respondent)

Which group of women are mostly targeted and subjected to OVAW?

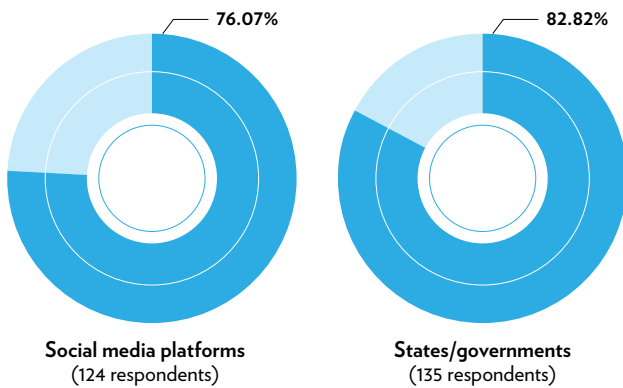


In your opinion, are the government or its militias involved in the perpetration of OVAW?



- Yes (98 respondents)
- No (9 respondents)
- I don't know (56 respondents)

Who should be responsible for preventing OVAW?



QUOTES FROM LIBYAN WOMEN ON OVAW

Especially in the Libyan context, when you're threatened online, it is not just a comment or a message – it can very easily turn into physical danger. There are numerous women activists or commentators outside of Libya who have had their families in Libya threatened because of comments they made online.

- Nadine Dahan, legal consultant

The impact is significant, as many women prefer to withdraw from public space due to the attempts to undermine, defame and slander them, not to mention death threats. Its effect is also clear on the electoral process, as women now avoid the process of participating in elections, whether as candidates or voters, and this may be the result of a personal decision, or an imposition by the family.

- Abeir Imneina, political activist

As a television presenter, I was subjected to online violence many times and still am to this day, it used to impact my self-confidence and how I see and value myself, but with time I learned how to ignore it, particularly given the nature of my work, but the impact [of online violence] is very dangerous and affects women's participation in life in general and perhaps it is more dangerous to the younger generation.

- Raghda Ibraheem, Libyan TV and radio presenter

Libyan women face abuse every day on the streets and online. This is because many people still believe that they are an inferior gender (oppressive mentality). There is no awareness spread about violence against women. Domestic violence isn't even a crime in Libya, so there are no laws protecting women from cyber bullying or any bullying to date.

- Anonymous survey respondent

I posted my picture with some activists in a workshop on one of the Facebook pages, but the comments were all threats and bullying. Some commentators asked for information about our place of residence in order to hand us over to one of the security brigades under the pretext of espionage, according to what he said. I came across a number of hurtful comments targeting activists including insults, bullying and slander. I used the Facebook feature to report abuse. However, unfortunately, Facebook did not respond and did not regard the comments as offensive.

- Anonymous survey respondent

The government is the one that gave militias that much power and such unlimited freedom with total impunity. Sometimes, the government benefits from silencing dissenting voices of women speaking the truth. The government hasn't taken any action to protect women from threats, intimidation and violence.

- Anonymous survey respondent

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE LIBYAN STATE

- Publicly acknowledge the widespread pattern of violence against women, including its online forms, and commit to preventing, investigating, combatting, and punishing such forms of gender-based violence against women as a part of the realisation of UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

TO INTERNATIONAL BODIES

- For the United Nations Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya created by UN Human Rights Council resolution 43/39, investigate the pattern of OVAW and identify the perpetrators with a view to holding them to account.

TO INTERNET INTERMEDIARIES

- Commit to the eradication of OVAW by adopting a human rights-based approach to regulation and their responsibilities and ensure that data evidencing OVAW is made available for use in investigative and legal proceedings aimed at establishing accountability for perpetrators.



For more information or to arrange an interview with a spokesperson please contact:

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Spokespeople available for interview:

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