



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is pleased to invite you to take part in a side event that will be held on the occasion of the 59th Session on the Commission on the Status of Women on:

Countering cyber violence against women

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are double-edge tools. They can be powerful devices to enhance gender equality and empower women. They can also be a threat to women's physical and emotional integrity when used to perpetrate violence.

Cyber violence against women can be defined as any form of gender-based and sexual violence expressed through ICTs such as the Internet, mobile phones and video games¹. Many features of these technologies make them ideal weapons for committing gender violence. The ease with which these tools can spread defamation and public humiliation and their ability to allow perpetrators to act remotely and anonymously, make it all the more difficult to take action against an attacker or simply stop the spread of unwanted content online.

Greater attention is being paid today to cyber violence against women as this type of technology-related violence affects all women and is reported everywhere around the world. Recently, women politicians in the United Kingdom, Italy and other European countries decided to speak out against online sexual harassment and Internet threats of torture and murder to which they had been subjected. A survey conducted by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) in Pakistan revealed that 94 per cent of women respondents had received harassing calls and messages from men they did not know.² In India, half of cybercrime cases reported are filed by women who discover their faces superimposed onto pornographic images and posted online with their private phone number.³ Some other tragic stories have revealed the multiplier effect of technology on violence and its devastating consequences on individuals. This is the case of three young girls - Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd in Canada and Audrie Pott in the United States - who killed themselves because they were not only sexually assaulted or sexually exploited, but also subjected to harassment and humiliation resulting from the wide online dissemination of the crimes committed against them.

These shocking examples of continuous victimization and harm perpetrated through online means have highlighted the lack of legal measures available for victims/survivors to seek redress or protection of their rights.

The event will discuss how cyber violence against women challenges parliamentarians, policymakers and Internet service-providers everywhere. It will examine what action can be taken to promote safe and responsible use of online technology. Special emphasis will be placed on strong legislation to address and provide avenues of redress for cyber violence against women. Based on the experience of some countries, the event will identify emerging trends and lessons learned from them. The panel will also discuss how Internet service-providers can be more accountable for the protection of users' privacy and security and what proactive steps could be taken to eradicate violence against women online.

Date and time: Monday 9 March 2015, from 10 to 11.15 a.m.

Location: Conference Room E, GA Building, United Nations, New York

N.B. Conference Room E does not have interpretation facilities and the side event will be held in English only.

¹ It can take many forms, including, among others, insults, demeaning comments, mockery on blogs and forums; online harassment or cyber stalking, including sending threats via e-mail or mobile phone; sexual coercion or threats aimed at leading the victim to perform sexual acts; stealing a person's identity or data; spying and monitoring a person's computer and Internet use; publishing or sharing online sexually explicit photos or videos without the consent of the person concerned, for purposes of revenge, often after a break-up (revenge porn); recording, photographing and documenting acts of sexual violence for further distribution and sharing.

² Association for Progressive Communications, "How Technology is Being Used to Perpetrate Violence against Women – And to Fight it", www.apc.org

³ Ibid.