



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Maryam Ghasemi Educational Charity Institute, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 August 2023]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



# **Global Action to Combat the Promotion of Violence against Children**

## **Introduction**

With the advancement of technology and widespread access to the Internet, the Internet has revolutionized how people connect and communicate lives. In the past decade, with the exponential growth of information technology and widespread access to the Internet, adolescents have tended to spend more time in the cyber world. The Internet provides new information, social-related information, and social networking opportunities but also simultaneously contains risks and a serious form of misbehavior among adolescents, such as Internet addiction, cyberbullying, cyber pornography, health risks, Internet fraud, and cyber victimization that can hurt and distort an adolescent's development.

Access to the internet offers many possibilities for children and young people and can foster learning, personal and professional skill development, creativity, and participation in society. But there are various threats to children in cyberspace, including child pornography, sexual grooming, sexual harassment, and cyberbullying. With the increasing convenience of social networking sites and their interconnectedness with human interaction, verbal and image bullying have turned digital, making cyberbullying a new form of bullying attracting the attention of researchers, social workers, and schools.

## **Cyberbullying against Children**

Most children are unaware of these problems and realize that they have been victimized by a cybercriminal only when the damage has been done. On the other hand, parents either have inadequate information about needs and the means through which they can safeguard their children on the internet or may have little time or resources, or training to ensure they adopt steps to safeguard their children on the internet.

Cyberbullying and other forms of peer-to-peer violence can affect children each time they log in to social media or instant messaging platforms. Over a third of children in 30 countries report being cyberbullied, with 1 in 5 skipping school because of it.

When browsing the Internet, children may be exposed to hate speech and violent content - including messages that incite self-harm and even suicide. Children internet users are also vulnerable to recruitment by extremist and terrorist groups. Many terrorist groups encourage children to make and use homemade weapons or to be present in riots. Digital platforms have also been used as vectors for disinformation and conspiracy theories that hurt children.

Most alarming is the threat of online sexual exploitation and abuse. It has never been easier for child sex offenders to contact their potential victims, share imagery and encourage others to commit offenses. Some 80% of children in 25 countries report feeling in danger of sexual abuse or exploitation online. [1]

Based on the report of the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (the United States of America) received 29.3 million reports of child sexual abuse and exploitation from around the world in 2021, an increase of 35 percent over 2020. The Disrupting Harm research project implemented across 13 countries estimates that at least 1-20 percent of children were subjected to online child sexual exploitation and abuse in the past year alone. Scaled to the general population of Internet-using children, these estimates represent tens of thousands or millions of children, depending on the country. Research undertaken by the We Protect Global Alliance indicates that the rate at which children experienced sexual harm was higher for girls (57 percent) than for boys (48 percent). The devastating impact of sexual violence in childhood is well established. Technology-facilitated abuse creates extra challenges for Children and can also be put at risk when tech companies breach their privacy to collect data for marketing purposes. Child-targeted marketing through apps - and the excessive screen time it often results in - can compromise a child's healthy development.

Drawing on the results of surveys in 11 countries across four regions, the Global Kids Online research initiative has addressed different aspects of violence against children online, including exposure to harmful and inappropriate content. Less than one-quarter of children in surveyed countries said that they had seen online content related to physical self-harm in the past year. Children's exposure to hate content is more common than their exposure to content related to self-harm or suicide. There is evidence that online hate targets mostly race, sexual orientation, religion, nationality or immigration status, sex or gender, and politics. A lower level of happiness and life satisfaction is found to be associated with exposure to content promoting self-injury and suicide, gory or violent content, sexual content, and hate speech[2].

## Recommendations

Emphasizing articles 32 and 36 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child “States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development; and states parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare”. We believe that Investing in children also means involving them as part of the solution. Worldwide, children are increasingly at the forefront of many initiatives for positive and sustainable social change and the effective prevention of and protection against violence, including in the digital environment. Investing in the empowerment of all children in all settings, regardless of their status and without discrimination, including through their active participation and engagement, can generate enormous gains not only for children but for societies at large. We urge the Human Rights to call its member states to:

- Pass comprehensive legislation to ban all forms of violence against children, supported by specific legislation relating to the online risks that children may encounter.
- Pursue international cooperation to safeguard children's right to freedom from violence
- Identify and prosecute extremist and terrorist groups promoting violence in cyberspace
- Follow the key recommendations given by the United Nations and be aware of new legislation and support its effective enforcement
- Inform and educate children about cyberbullying prevention
- Share their experiences and effective initiatives regarding the fight against the promotion of violence in the cyberspace
- Cooperate with Internet service providers and private sector stakeholders to track child sex abusers and to close down channels to this type of crime.

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[1] <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/child-and-youth-safety-online>

[2] [https://documents-dds-](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/617/56/PDF/N2261756.pdf?OpenElement)

[ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/617/56/PDF/N2261756.pdf?OpenElement](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/617/56/PDF/N2261756.pdf?OpenElement)