Online Political Violence Against Women in Jordan
Summary Report

Introduction

Globally, social media allows people to connect to others, share news and information, and give voice to women and other marginalized groups. Social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, provide space for people to express their opinions, exchange views, and become more actively engaged in a diversity of topics, including politics and forms of activism. However, social media has also become a vehicle to harass others, bully them, promote violence, and spread hatred.

Across the world, women face online stalking, threats to their reputation, high rates of cybercrimes, and surveillance or monitoring of their online activities. Women also face political violence online, a form of gender-based violence that deprives women of their right to express their political opinions online and deter them from active political participation. It manifests in the form of psychological abuse, physical threats, and sexual harassment. Online political violence targets ordinary citizens, as well as women running for Parliament, Municipal Councils, or involved in political parties.

In Jordan, women also face threats to their reputation from online activities and policing and monitoring of their digital activities. However, it is difficult to find available gender-segregated data regarding the topic in Jordan. Female politicians in Jordan also experience cyberbullying and different types of online gender-based violence. Because of the lack of data on the topic, World of Letters undertook original research and social media analysis to identify the types and scope of online political violence that female politicians face in Jordan.

Methodology

From April to October 2020, World of Letters investigated female politicians from across varied demographics, including women from different areas of the country, with different positions (former and current Members of Parliament and government Ministers), and varied personal and religious convictions and political leanings. Our research included five case studies, below:

Case Study	Political Position	Background	Social Media Presence (Accounts/Channels)	Social Media Activity Level	Monitoring
1	Former Minister	• Journalist, editor, and media figure • Liberal	• Facebook – 1 public, 1 private • Twitter – 1 public • Appears on YouTube	Low activity level	Deleted all posts and comments from time in office
2	Former Member of Parliament (Lower House)	• Writer and political analyst • Muslim Brotherhood & Islamic Action Front	• Facebook – 1 public, 1 private • Twitter – 1 public • Appears on YouTube	Very active	Deletes comments with abusive content and blocks followers who criticize her; Regularly files complaints with the Cyber Crime Unit for slander, libel, and defamation
3	Former Member of Parliament (Lower House)	• Media, economic, and political activist • Arab nationalist	• Facebook – 1 public • Twitter – 1 public • YouTube – 1 channel	Active while in Parliament, currently inactive	Deletes abusive comments
4	Former Member of Parliament (Lower House)	• Journalist, TV presenter • Liberal • Secretary-General of a political party	• Facebook – 3 public • Twitter – 1 public • YouTube – 1 channel	Very active on Facebook	Team members delete abusive comments; She sometimes responds to abusive comments
5	Former Member of Parliament (Lower House)	• Works in the education field • Islamic Centrist Party (Wasat)	• Facebook – 1 public • Twitter – 1 public but not active • Appears on YouTube	Very active on Facebook	Team members delete any abusive comments

World of Letters collected qualitative and quantitative data concerning social media accounts of female political figures, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and occasionally, other media and news institutions focusing on the individuals. The type of data collected include what type of platform the individual is active on, the types of posts (text, photos, videos, etc.), the language of the posts, average number of likes/comments, numbers of followers, the average number of posts in the last six months, indications of any

stalking (individuals who repeatedly post comments that contain types of violence) and any comments, shares, responses to comments classified as negative social media interactions.

We classified negative social media interactions into one of five categories: 1) Threats of Physical Violence & Assault, 2) Character Assassination, Defamation, & Allegations of Incompetence, 3) Sexual Remarks, 4) Abusive Comments Based on Gender, and 5) Insults & Offensive Name-Calling. Because political violence can result in psychological, emotional, and social harm, social media interactions were also ranked for the severity of impact, marking interactions as high, medium, and low.

World of Letters used this data to create a Political Violence Indicator (PVI). PVI measures the frequency of occurrences (comments, shares, responses to comments) containing any of the five types of violence and harassment. The PVI was then used to calculate the percentage of violence occurring compared to other types of online activity.

Outcome of Analysis

Our social media analysis revealed that female politicians in Jordan experience high degrees of online political violence. All five women in our study experienced online political violence, each experiencing four to five types of violence. The women experienced online political violence whether they were very active or had low activity on social media, despite their political or religious beliefs, and whether or not they wore "modest" dress or hijab. Comments of a sexual nature or about women's looks were not dependent on their clothing style or choice of hijab.

The majority of online political violence was related to character assassination, defamation, and allegations of incompetence, and all women in our analysis experience this. Likewise, social media analysis revealed high levels of insults and offense name-calling and abusive comments based on gender. All the women received sexual remarks and had at least one case of stalking, and two women received threats of physical violence and assault. However, to note is that the occurrence of online political violence is even higher than what we were able to capture. Many of the women in our analysis delete offensive comments or block followers who are offensive, or even those who criticize in any way. A summary of the type of online political violence the women experienced is below:

Category #	Type of Violence	Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Case Study 3		Case Study 4		Case Study 5		Impact Severity
		PVI	Violence Occurrence (%)	PVI	Violence Occurrence (%)	PVI	Violence Occurrence (%)	PVI	Violence Occurrence (%)	PVI	Violence Occurrence (%)	
Cat. (1)	Threats of Physical Violence & Assault	1	2.5%	2	3.2%							HIGH
Cat. (2)	Character Assassination, Defamation, & Allegations of Incompetence	18	45.0%	30	47.6%	95	42.8%	46	51.7%	37	23.6%	MEDIUM
Cat. (3)	Sexual Remarks	1	2.5%	5	7.9%	7	3.2%	2	2.3%	1	0.6%	LOW
Cat. (4)	Abusive Comments Based on Gender	8	20.0%	2	3.2%	75	33.8%	20	22.5%	42	26.8%	LOW
Cat. (5)	Insults & Offensive Name-Calling	12	30.0%	24	38.1%	45	20.3%	21	23.6%	77	49.0%	LOW
	Cases of Stalking	2		3		7		10		1		HIGH