

Joint Press Statement

We urge Ethiopian based mass media and social media companies, content producers, civil society organizations, governmental authorities, and other stakeholders to work together to take immediate action to address the alarming developments in the rise of sexist and misogynistic content creations.

We, the undersigned local Civil Society Organizations, are deeply concerned about the alarming rise of sexist and misogynistic content and content creators on mass media and social media platforms in Ethiopia. We believe that the spread of such harmful content not only perpetuates gender inequality but also poses significant threats to women's rights and societal well-being.

From mass media to social media platforms, diverse media platforms provide space and powerful tools for individuals to express themselves and reach a wide audience. These platforms also provide the space for Women Human Rights Defenders who leverage media platforms to join forces and advocate for human rights issues. However, it is disheartening to witness these platforms being misused to promote sexist and misogynistic ideologies and undermine women and the works of women human rights defenders. This is specially witnessed on social media platforms in which content creators are using and promoting discriminatory contents, harmful language and gender based violence against women and WHRDs. The undersigned Civil Society Organizations condemn any form of hate speech, discrimination, or violence against women, and/or WHRDs both online and offline. The consequences of such content are far-reaching as they not only demean women but also contribute to the normalization of gender-based violence, discrimination, and inequality in our society. This directly undermines the progress made towards achieving gender parity and perpetuates harmful stereotypes that limit women's participation and potential in both public and private spheres throughout the country.

In light of these concerning developments, we the undersigned civil society organization calls upon all stakeholders, including social media platforms, content creators, civil society organizations, and government authorities, to join forces in addressing this issue urgently. We emphasize the following actions:

1. Mass media and Social Media Platforms:

- Challenge harmful stereotypes and biases by avoiding and removing sexist narratives and unconscious biases that perpetuate discrimination and violence against women.
- Establish clear reporting mechanisms that allow users to report offensive content easily.
- Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to develop comprehensive policies and guidelines that explicitly prohibit the spread of sexist and misogynistic content.
- Practice balanced and sensitive reporting on issues related to violence against women, ensuring sensitivity and respect for the victims

1. Sexism is a term that reflects “prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, based on sex”. Misogyny is “related to feelings of hatred toward women.” Both terms indicate Gender specific discrimination which results in the violation of women’s human rights; create a power imbalance and result in a men-dominant environment creating violence and abusive situations

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2. Content Creators:

- Assume responsibility for the content they produce and ensure it adheres to principles of equality, respect, and non-discrimination.
- Actively promote positive narratives that challenge harmful gender stereotypes and empower women.
- Engage in self-regulation by fostering dialogue and learning within the content creator community to collectively address this issue.

3. Media and Advertisement Companies

- Ensure their advertisements and contents are gender-sensitive

4. Civil Society Organizations:

- Conduct awareness campaigns to educate both content creators and social media users about the impact of sexist and misogynistic content.
- Provide training and resources to help content creators develop media literacy skills and critical thinking to produce responsible and inclusive content.

5. Government Authorities:

- Enforce existing laws that prohibit hate speech, including sexist and misogynistic content, on social media platforms.
- Foster collaboration among media entities, social media platforms and civil society organizations to develop strategies and policies that effectively address online gender-based violence and discrimination.
- Take action against online gender-based violence and hate speech by developing regulations that define and prohibit such violence, establishing mechanisms for reporting and addressing it.

As an organization committed to equality and justice, we pledge our support to collaborative efforts aimed at combating the rise of sexist and misogynistic content and content creators in Ethiopia. We urge all individuals and entities to contribute actively towards creating an online environment that respects the rights and dignity of all. Together, we can build a society where every woman can participate freely, enjoy equal opportunities, and live without fear of discrimination or violence.

The undersigned CSOs:

1. Ethiopian Women Human Rights Defenders Center (EWHRDN)
2. Ethiopian Human Rights Defenders Center (EHRDC)
3. Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD)
4. Ethiopian Woman's Rights Advocate (EWRA)
5. Setawee
6. Ethiopian Media Women Association
7. Ethiopian Women with Disabilities Association
8. Addis Power House
9. Timran
10. Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia
11. Ethiopian Women Lawyer Association
12. Network Ethiopian Women Association

