

# Tackling Online Abuse and Disinformation Targeting Women in Politics | Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

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In 2017, soon after then Ukrainian member of parliament Svitlana Zalishchuk gave a speech to the United Nations on the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on women, a fake tweet began to circulate on social media claiming that she had promised to run naked through the streets of Kiev if Russia-backed separatists won a critical battle. Zalishchuk said, “The story kept circulating on the Internet for a year,” casting a shadow over her political accomplishments.

Zalishchuk is not alone in her experience. Around the world, women in politics receive an overwhelming amount of online abuse, harassment, and gendered defamation via social media platforms.

Social media companies have come under increasing pressure to take a tougher stance against all forms of hate speech and harassment on their platforms, including against women, racial minorities, and other marginalized groups. Yet their patchwork approach to date has proven insufficient. Governments and international institutions need to press for more action and develop new standards for platform transparency and accountability that can help address the widespread toxicity that is currently undermining online political debate. If effectively designed and implemented, the EU’s Digital Services Act and U.S. President-elect Joe Biden’s proposed National Task Force on Online Harassment and Abuse will represent steps in the right direction.

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