



# DIGITAL BATTLEFIELDS: POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ABUSE OF MYANMAR WOMEN ONLINE

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SISTERS TO SISTERS  
JANUARY 2023

## 1. Executive Summary

### 1.1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of increasing political repression, gaps in accountability by social media platforms operating in Myanmar, and abuses highlighted by women's rights groups, **Myanmar Witness** launched a mixed-methods study into politically-motivated, online abuse targeting women in and from Myanmar<sup>1</sup> and the impact on their lives. The research was carried out in partnership with **Sisters to Sisters**, a grassroots organisation supporting women in and from Myanmar.

The research looked at: i) the scale and nature of the abuse; ii) the perpetrators of abuse; iii) the online and offline impact of the abuse on women's lives; and, iv) social media platform accountability. The findings are based on:

- A quantitative study of 1.6 million Telegram posts by 100 Myanmar-language Telegram channels.
- A qualitative analysis of 220 posts, predominantly from Facebook and Telegram.
- Five in-depth case study analyses investigating the relationship between online and offline abuse, and abuse targeting prominent Myanmar female politicians.
- Five in-depth interviews with survivors of politically-motivated, online abuse.

The time period assessed falls between February 2021 and December 2022.

**Warning:** While this report has made every effort to minimise use and exposure to graphic imagery, it does contain content relating to racist, misogynistic and homophobic abuse that some readers may find distressing.

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<sup>1</sup> Women facing online abuse because of their political view or actions



## 1.2. Summary of Key Findings

**Since the military coup of 1 February 2021, women in and from Myanmar have used social media powerfully as a means of expressing their political views. In doing so, they have faced growing levels of online abuse and harassment.**

- Quantitative analysis of 1.6 million Telegram posts found that politically-motivated, online abuse of Myanmar women was at least five times more prevalent at the end of 2022 compared with the weeks following the coup. The overall prevalence of abusive posts targeting women on Telegram was up to 500 times higher than international baselines for abuse prevalence on social media, where these exist.
- Qualitative case study analysis and survivor testimony speak to the volume and severity of online abuse. However, without full access to platform data it is impossible to accurately assess the true scale or prevalence of abuse. This is particularly relevant for Myanmar's most widely used social media platform, Facebook, where Meta's data access policy prevented large-scale quantitative analysis.
- Politically-motivated abuse occurs within a wider online environment of abuse and privacy violations targeting women and girls. Myanmar Witness' quantitative study uncovered up to 8,338 abusive Telegram posts targeting women with hateful rhetoric and up to a further 15,000 doxxing posts, many of which appear to target women for their political beliefs and activities.

**The overwhelming majority of abusive posts were authored by male-presenting profiles supportive of Myanmar's military coup and targeted women who opposed the coup.**

- 90% of abusive posts in the qualitative analysis were authored or shared by pro-SAC (State Administration Council) accounts. Just under 80% of abusive posts in the quantitative analysis were authored by pro-SAC channels.
- 83% of posts analysed in the qualitative investigation were directed at women who support the Myanmar National Unity Government (NUG) or People's Defence Forces (PDF).
- Male-presenting accounts were responsible for 70% of abusive posts in the qualitative study.

**Doxxing<sup>2</sup> is the main form of abuse and appears linked to offline violence and arrests targeting women who oppose the SAC. There is some evidence of coordination among and between online abusers and Myanmar security forces to facilitate violence and arrests.**

- At least 50% of the abusive posts in the qualitative study were doxxing women. Doxxing was also prevalent within the quantitative dataset and survivor testimony. Case-study analysis found women were targeted for doxxing attacks at a considerably higher rate than men with the same political profile and visibility online. Many targeted women were not well-known, and appear singled out simply for positively commenting on pro-PDF or NUG posts.
- 28% of all doxxing posts analysed in the qualitative study include an explicit call for the targeted women to be punished offline. Almost all of these called on Myanmar military authorities to arrest the targeted woman and/or seize her property.

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<sup>2</sup> Doxxing is the act of sharing private information about a person without their consent - data such as their address, contact details, personal photos may be shared and used as a form of intimidation or social punishment.



- There was evidence showing coordination of doxxing campaigns across pro-SAC Telegram channels, through the frequent sharing and mutual amplification of doxxing posts. Some pro-SAC Telegram channels appear to be coordinating with the SAC, doxxing women who oppose the SAC, proactively alerting the SAC, and celebrating news of the women's arrests.

**Language that sexualises women is used to shame and humiliate women in an attempt to silence them. Sexualised disinformation narratives are used to undermine politically-active women, consistent with narratives perpetuated by the official SAC media of opposition women as morally corrupt and racially impure.**

- Sexualised disinformation narratives depict female PDF and NUG supporters as morally corrupt and promiscuous and as sexual prey for PDF and ethnic armed organisation (EAO) leaders and foreigners. The online attacks are often in coded slang that is extremely vulgar, and perpetuates attitudes that normalise and trivialise sexual abuse.
- These narratives are perpetuated and endorsed by official SAC media. This plays into a moral panic around PDF groups implicitly tied to religious values and paternalistic views of purity, drawing on ultranationalist rhetoric.
- Use of dehumanising sexualised language and imagery mirrors tactics known to have been used by the Myanmar military to dehumanise the Rohingya population.

**There is evidence of abuse targeting women from minority ethnic or religious backgrounds, women who were perceived as too lenient towards Muslim minority groups and, because of their perceived sexuality.**

- Qualitative analysis showed sexualised, anti-Muslim rhetoric aligned with ultra-nationalist narratives were used in an attempt to discredit prominent pro-democracy women. This included claims using explicit language stating that the women were having sexual relations with Muslim men.
- The level of anti-Muslim hate directed towards politically active women in pro-SAC groups on Telegram was approximately 25 times higher than within pro-democracy groups. However, within the quantitative and qualitative analysis, the overall number of posts containing anti-Muslim hate directed at women, or appearing to target women from minority ethnic or religious backgrounds, was low. This likely underrepresents the scale of anti-Muslim rhetoric in the social media ecosystem and may stem from research design created to limit the number of false positives in the quantitative findings.
- 6% of posts within the qualitative study contained anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric. This was the only category of abuse analysed which was more often carried out by pro-democracy accounts. The majority of anti-LGBTQIA+ hate identified targeted SAC politician Thet Thet Khine.

**Online abuse and doxxing attacks are having a silencing effect and causing women to retreat from public life. Survivors report attacks on their views, person and dignity, and threats of rape, death and violence with severe emotional and psychological impacts.**

- In-depth interviews with survivors found that online abuse - doxxing attacks in particular - are leading to women retreating from public life and censoring themselves from public discussions



on and offline. Survivors report living in fear; facing difficulties with friends and family and; experiencing feelings of shame, depression and distress.

- There is some further evidence of this in the qualitative study, with a number of female survivors of doxxing removing or making changes to their accounts which reduce their public presence online. However, it is unclear how many women who were doxxed knew that this had occurred before taking measures to protect themselves.

**The findings of this report are likely the tip of the iceberg in terms of the scale and severity of the abuse affecting women in Myanmar.**

- The findings in this report are based on publicly available posts on platforms of interest. Interviews with survivors of abuse highlighted significant abuses occurring in other forums.
- Abuse in other forms included: i) the posting of images and contact details to adult sites; ii) abusive messages and threats sent in private groups, direct messages and via messaging apps such as WhatsApp; and, iii) the existence of Telegram channels dedicated to sexually explicit material (excluded from this study due to safeguarding concerns).

**Survivors feel strongly that social media platform moderation practices have been inadequate in stopping the abuse. The majority of abusive posts analysed were in clear violation of platform terms and conditions and driven by a relatively small number of highly active accounts and channels.**

- In the quantitative study, just four Telegram channels were responsible for 50% of abusive posts detected. Across the qualitative and quantitative studies, 13 Telegram channels with a combined following of more than 150,000 were responsible for a majority of the abuse.
- A majority of prolific doxxing channels remain active on Telegram despite acting in clear breach of platform policy. Takedowns of a small number of channels are having limited positive effect. This is due to the prevalence of backup channels and a lack of swift action to tackle new channels created by known, malicious actors.
- Telegram's policy fails to capture doxxing, misogynistic and racist posts that implicitly call for violence or retaliation against an individual and abuse that may happen in closed groups.
- 185 of the 220 abusive posts identified through the qualitative study remained live on social media platforms for at least six weeks. 100 (79%) of 126 posts on Telegram violated Telegram's Terms of Service. 71 (90%) of 79 Facebook posts violated Facebook's Community Standards.
- In some cases, abusive posts may be avoiding detection through coded language and use of gifs/moving images, memes or image filters. 42% of qualitatively analysed abusive posts on Facebook had features that make moderation difficult without specialist monitoring.



## 1.3. Summary of Recommendations

### 1.3.1. Social Media Platform Accountability

- i. Commit to a collaborative, specialist and survivor-led approach to tackling online abuse. This will involve dedicating more resources to monitoring Myanmar-language content, in consultation with Myanmar women's rights organisations and survivors with insight into the evolving nature and impact of the abuse. It would also require platforms to make data accessible to affected communities so that they can work with platforms to track abuse and the effectiveness of countermeasures.
- ii. Review existing policies and platform features to encompass types of abuse not currently captured in their terms of use which may aid in the doxing of women.
- iii. Improve response times to threats reported on the platform to reduce the time it takes to remove abusive accounts following a report(s) of threatening activity.

### 1.3.2. Survivor Support

- iv. Dedicate resources to women and women's groups providing support to online abuse survivors and campaigning to increase awareness about the problem of gender-based violence on and offline.
- v. Support efforts that help destigmatise the topic of abuse through partnerships with Myanmar media, NGOs, and support groups.

### 1.3.3. Avenues for Future Research

- vi. Proactively monitor public Telegram and other channels and groups engaging in doxing to better understand the relationship between online and offline abuse and the impact of doxing.
- vii. Appoint specialist teams to proactively document sexual abuse online, including potential cases of child sexual exploitation and human trafficking which co-exist in spaces dedicated to sexual abuse online.
- viii. Expand data collection of abusive posts to enable robust comparisons between different groups of women.
- ix. Work with research practitioners, policymakers, NGOs and first responders to further develop a framework for ethical online research.



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# 1. Introduction

This research was undertaken as part of the Myanmar Witness project, implemented by the Centre for Information Resilience. Myanmar Witness is an open-source investigations unit dedicated to documenting and verifying potential evidence of human rights abuses in Myanmar to hold those responsible to account. The research was undertaken in collaboration with Sisters to Sisters, a Myanmar women's rights initiative dedicated to raising awareness and supporting survivors of violence against women in and from Myanmar.

Following the military coup of February 2021, social media became part of the battleground between the pro-democracy movement and the Myanmar State Administration Council (SAC), with [millions](#) of social media posts by young people in Myanmar protesting the coup. In response, the SAC launched a communications crackdown, resulting in the largest drop in internet freedom scores ever recorded by [Freedom House](#). The same Freedom House report notes that high profile women and female rights defenders in Myanmar face regular gender-based intimidation, harassment and threats of violence online. This report seeks to further explore and document these dynamics, and develop practical recommendations for making the internet a safer and more inclusive space for women in and from Myanmar.

**Warning:** While this report has made every effort to minimise use and exposure to graphic imagery, it contains content relating to racist, misogynistic and homophobic abuse that some readers may find distressing.

## 1.1. Research Questions

Based on a combination of desk-based analysis and in-depth interviews with survivors of politically-motivated abuse, the research addresses the following questions:

### **1. SCALE AND NATURE OF ABUSE: How widespread is politically-motivated online abuse of women in and from Myanmar?**

Section One of the report considers the type and intensity of abuse, whether this varies by platform, and who appears to be most at risk of experiencing online abuse. It also considers whether the problem appears to be improving, worsening or stabilising over time.

### **2. ATTRIBUTION: Who appears to be carrying out politically motivated abuse of women online?**

Section Two examines evidence pertaining to political motivation, coordination and tools, techniques and procedures (TTPs) within abusive posts, drawing on the methodology used by [Meta's Threats team](#) to determine attribution. Possible links with the Myanmar State Administration Council (SAC) were documented where these were present.



### 3. IMPACT: What are the online and offline impacts of online abuse?

Section Three draws on case study analysis and survivor interviews to explore the impacts of online abuse on women's lives, and to add an urgent, human voice to the picture of abuse taking place online.

### 4. SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM ACCOUNTABILITY. Does the abuse violate social media platform terms of use/code of conduct?

Section Four explores whether abusive posts targeting women for their political views and actions are in violation of platform terms of use and if so, the speed and extent to which they are being removed from platforms. It also considers whether abusers are taking steps to evade moderation.

## 1.2. Research Scope

The research examines politically-motivated, online abuse targeting women in and from Myanmar. The assessed time period falls between February 2021 and December 2022. The research consists of qualitative analysis of abusive posts predominantly from Facebook and Telegram, and a quantitative analysis of posts on Telegram.

Due to safeguarding considerations - most significantly the high risk of encountering child sexual exploitation content on groups and channels dedicated to sharing revenge porn - the Myanmar Witness team did not proactively collect instances of 'revenge porn' - defined in Appendix 5.1.1. However, some instances and online communities disseminating 'revenge porn' were encountered and documented. Myanmar Witness reported dedicated 'revenge porn' groups and suspected instances of child abuse encountered during this research to the relevant platforms and online safeguarding institutions.

## 2. Methodology

The paragraphs below provide an overview of Myanmar Witness' methodology. Full details of the research methodology, limitations and ethical considerations can be found in Appendix 5.2

### 2.1. Quantitative Analysis: Telegram

Telegram was the focus of Myanmar Witness' quantitative study due to: i) its popularity with hate groups, identified through preliminary, original research by investigators on the team, and ii) limitations on bulk collection and analysis of current and historic data in Meta and Twitter.

Contextual, **quantitative** analysis examined posts created and/or shared by 100 politically-engaged Telegram groups. These 100 groups were selected by experts on the Myanmar Witness team through prior social media monitoring and snowball sampling. 64 of the groups included in the research represent broadly pro-SAC views, and 36 broadly pro-democracy views. Any findings comparing the activity and outputs of the two groups are weighted to account for the



difference in the numbers of groups representing each broad political category.

1,680,361 Telegram posts - scraped from these groups using the open source tool Telethon - were analysed to map trends over time since the coup. Keywords and phrases selected and tested by Burmese-speaking members of the Myanmar Witness team were used to identify certain types of abuse within the posts. These key terms and phrases were paired with names of prominent, politically-active women (see Appendix 5.1.3 for full list) to increase the confidence that the abuse being captured through keyword pattern matching was politically-motivated and targeting women. Automatic keyword search was performed using a syllable n-gram based approach. Based on a manual validation of 100 random samples, Myanmar Witness estimates the precision (true positive rate) of abusive posts targeting women identified using this methodology to be ~70%, while the overall volume of abusive posts will be significantly higher, as discussed in Section 2.4 below.

To identify doxxing, posts containing at least three doxxing keywords are considered doxxing posts to reduce false positives. This approach is used for pro-SAC channels but not the pro-democracy ones because the same methods do not provide sufficiently reliable results for pro-democracy channels.

## 2.2. Qualitative Analysis: Facebook, Telegram, Twitter

Myanmar Witness also carried out an in-depth, **qualitative** analysis of 220 posts: 126 from Telegram, 79 from Facebook, and 15 from Twitter, to aid the investigation into attribution and social media accountability. Posts were collected, analysed and validated manually. Myanmar Witness analysts used a set of keywords (see Appendix 5.2) to manually search for politically-motivated, abusive posts targeting women on each platform. Twitter is less popular than Facebook in Myanmar, accounting for the difference in the number of posts analysed. Analysts endeavoured to spend an approximately equal amount of time searching for each abuse type under consideration in the study, and to supply examples of posts representative of the types of politically-motivated abuse targeting women from each platform.

## 2.3. Approach by Research Question

Table 1 below provides an overview of the methodological approaches applied to each research question.

Research strand	Methodological approach
Scale and nature of abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Quantitative analysis</b> of Telegram posts over time</li> <li>● <b>Qualitative analysis</b> of abusive posts across major platforms, including Telegram and Facebook</li> </ul>
Attribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Qualitative analysis</b> of abusive posts across major platforms, including Telegram and Facebook</li> </ul>



Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Qualitative analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Investigation into the level of public, online visibility and activity of doxxed accounts, post-attack</li> <li>○ Case study analysis drawing on publicly available social media posts, news articles and databases on detentions in Myanmar</li> <li>○ In-depth interviews</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Social media platform accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Quantitative analysis</b> of Telegram posts over time</li> <li>● <b>Qualitative analysis</b> of abusive posts across major platforms, including Telegram and Facebook</li> </ul>

Table 1. Overview of methodological approaches applied within each research strand.

## 2.4. Summary of Limitations

All findings in this report are likely to underestimate the scale of the problem and should be regarded as a sample of the wider landscape of abuse facing politically-active women in Myanmar. This is due to:

- **Limitations of data access.** In-depth interviews found that a great deal of abuse women experience online takes place within private groups and/or is sent to them directly through messages - a dataset unavailable to the researchers. Additionally, Meta does not allow large-scale, bulk collection and analysis of posts, resulting in a smaller study of posts on Facebook. Many women were also reluctant to come forward to speak about their experiences, even on the condition of anonymity.
- **Possible takedowns.** While Myanmar Witness found that a considerable amount of online abuse targeting politically-active women in Myanmar remains live months after it was first posted, some publicly available abuse will have been removed before researchers could archive and analyse it.
- **Subset of groups on Telegram.** In order to keep politically-motivated abuse central to the research, Myanmar Witness limited the qualitative analysis to posts from 100 channels known to be broadly pro-SAC or pro-democracy. This is a subset of a wider network of active channels in Myanmar. Additionally, due to the nature of the search terms used in doxxing posts, it was not possible to accurately assess at scale the level of doxxing posts that were targeting women as opposed to men. Therefore, the figures for politically-motivated abuse targeting women on Telegram exclude doxxing and therefore are likely to underestimate the overall prevalence of abuse targeting women.
- **Subset of abuse.** Due to safeguarding considerations (outlined in Section 1.2), the research did not proactively collect and analyse instances of revenge porn - a form of



abuse identified as prevalent in Myanmar by subject matter experts consulted during the research design phase. Revenge porn is therefore under-represented in the findings.

- **Risk and mitigation of false positives.** Quantitative results were manually validated to minimise false positives that could be created from using abusive terms out of context (e.g. out of context uses of abusive phrases, awareness raising or satire). Gendered hate terms were paired with the names of prominent women politicians and political activists from Myanmar to increase the likelihood that specifically politically-motivated abuse against women was being captured, as opposed to gendered hate rhetoric more generally. All search terms used were selected, tested and refined by Burmese-speaking specialists on the team. Due to the nature of the quantitative search term approach, designed to reduce false positives, it is likely that the findings underestimate the volume of abusive posts targeting women on Telegram.



## 3. Findings

### 3.1. Q1: What is the scale and nature of politically-motivated online abuse targeting women in and from Myanmar?

*This section of the report considers the type and intensity of abuse, whether this varies by platform, and who appears to be most at risk of experiencing online abuse. It also considers whether the problem appears to be improving, worsening or stabilising over time.*

#### 3.1.1. Summary

Politically-motivated, online abuse of women in and from Myanmar on Telegram has increased significantly in the months following the military coup of 1 February 2021. Myanmar Witness found that most of the politically-motivated abuse against women online is directed at women with pro-democracy views, carried out by SAC and/or Ma Ba Tha supporters. However, pro-SAC women are also targeted for their views. SAC politician and former businesswoman Thet Thet Khine is frequently targeted with anti-lesbian slurs following rumours about her sexual orientation. There is some evidence of abuse targeting women from minority ethnic or religious backgrounds; women who were perceived as too lenient towards Muslim minority groups and; because of their perceived sexuality.

Language that sexualises women is used to shame and humiliate women in an attempt to silence them. Sexualised disinformation narratives are used to undermine politically-active women, consistent with narratives perpetuated by the official SAC media of pro-PDF women as morally corrupt and racially impure.

#### 3.1.2. Increase in Abuse Over Time

Politically-motivated, online abuse of prominent women on Telegram appears to be increasing over time since the coup. Figure 1 shows hate speech terms used in conjunction with the names of more than 20 prominent, politically-active women on Telegram,<sup>3</sup> based on a sample of 36 pro-democracy and 64 pro-SAC channels.<sup>4</sup> A majority of posts in the sample (which excludes doxing posts) were directed at deposed NUG leader **Aung San Suu Kyi**. The lack of women in positions of power within the SAC meant there were fewer prominent pro-SAC women within the sample and therefore as a target of abuse. Those pro-SAC women who did feature received proportionately less abuse than pro-democracy women.

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<sup>3</sup> See Annex 5.1 for full list of names

<sup>4</sup> See Annex 5.2 for full methodology, including list of terms used.



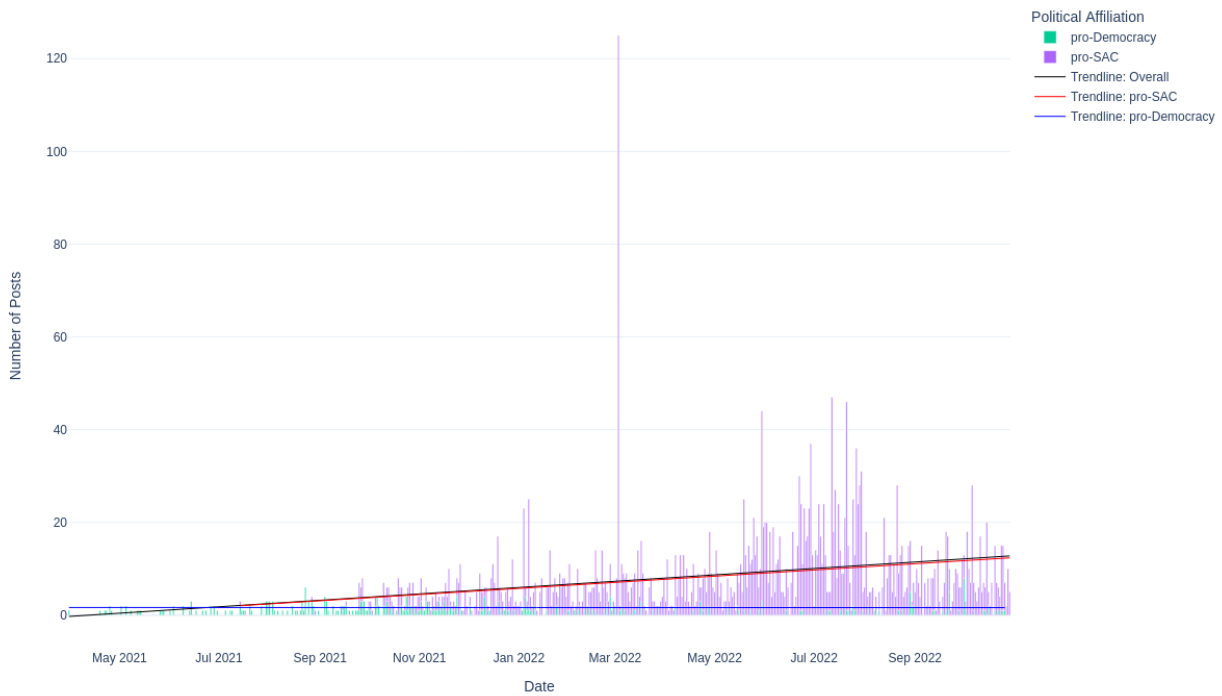


Figure 1. Number of posts containing abusive terms targeting prominent, politically-active women - based on activity by 100 Telegram channels since their first post and November 2022.

In the months immediately following the coup, politically-motivated abuse targeting prominent women among the 100 groups observed occurred fewer than five times per day on average. Towards the middle-end of 2022, the number of abusive posts per day shared in those groups often reached above 10, sometimes reaching over 20. This is based largely on activity by pro-SAC channels. Over the studied period, 7,361 posts (0.43%) were found to contain politically-motivated hate speech targeting prominent, politically active women. A prevalence of 0.43 can be considered high compared to existing, [international industry baselines](#), which estimate abuse severe enough for social media platforms to take action at a prevalence of 0.001%.

The spike that occurs in March 2022 is correlated with hate targeting Aung San Suu Kyi. Further investigation into this spike and anti-Aung San Suu Kyi sentiment in March 2022 suggests that it may be linked to backlash against the 8 March Women’s Strike; claims that Aung San Suu Kyi should not have been awarded the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) and; claims that the Rohingya Genocide and post-coup [atrocities](#) in Myanmar were carried out by [pro-democracy forces](#).

Figure 2 below shows that posts containing abusive terms against women in general - i.e. **not** coupled with the names of prominent, politically-active women - have also dramatically increased since the coup. The findings are disaggregated by the political affiliation of the Telegram channels. During the observed period for the quantitative study in which 1.6 million Telegram posts were analysed, Myanmar Witness identified 8,338 abusive posts (posts hateful rhetoric - doxxing posts are analysed separately, below) that targeted women in general (not necessarily prominent and politically active). This corresponds to a prevalence of 0.5%, which can be considered high compared to existing, [international industry baselines](#), as outlined above. 86% (78% when

weighted to account for the difference in the number of pro-SAC versus pro-democracy channels) of these abusive posts were by pro-SAC Telegram channels.

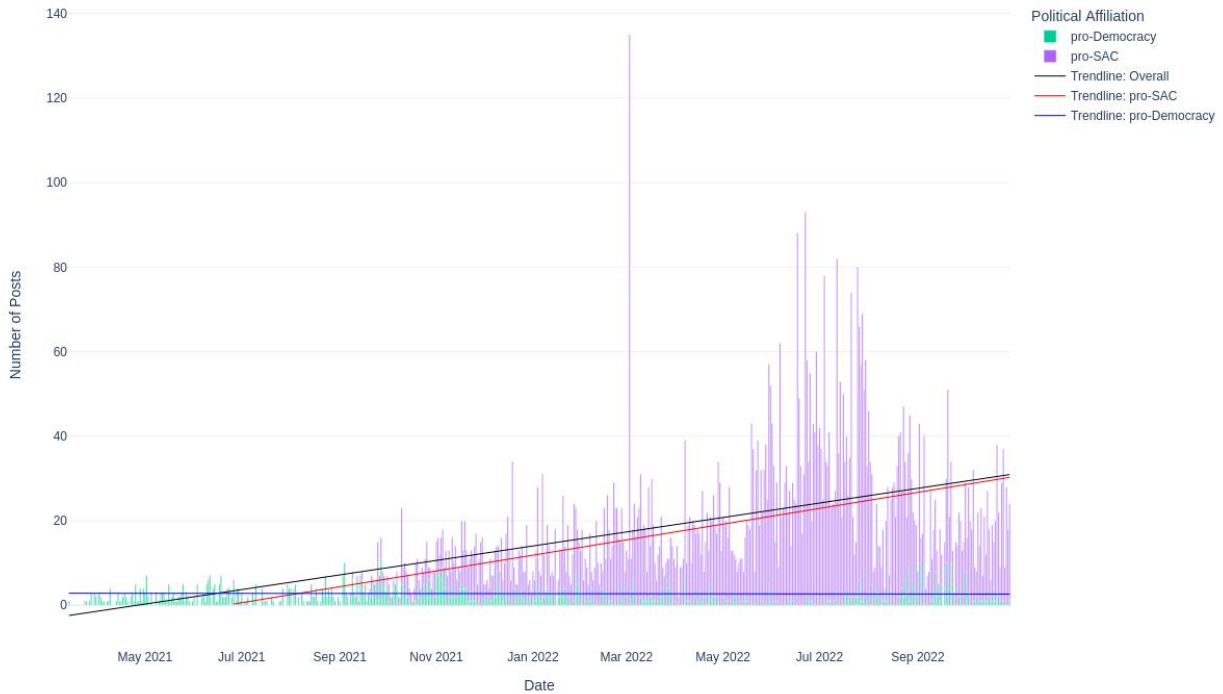


Figure 2. Number of posts containing abusive terms targeting women - based on activity by 100 Telegram channels between March 2021 and November 2022.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 indicate that the level of abuse targeting women shared in groups deemed to be broadly pro-democracy has decreased slightly throughout the observed period. Hateful rhetoric directed at women by pro-SAC groups appears to have significantly increased. This may be explained by the fact that a large majority of Telegram channels included in this analysis became active in 2022 and that pro-SAC channels tend to post in higher volumes than pro-democracy channels. The most-frequently active pro-SAC channel produced more than twice as much content than the most-frequently active pro-democracy channel during the research period (Figure 3).

It is possible that the increase in activity from pro-SAC groups in 2022 on Telegram was a result of a migration from Facebook following [Facebook’s increased restrictions](#) introduced throughout mid to late 2021. It is also possible that gendered hate speech on pro-SAC channels in early 2021 had been taken down by the time this analysis could be carried out. Myanmar Witness recommends that future research into this area is based on long-term, proactive monitoring of Telegram groups as they emerge (and, in some cases, are taken down) to ensure channel behaviours are fully captured.

Though these channels may not be officially coordinated, there appears to be a more concerted effort by pro-SAC channels to push content than by pro-democracy channels.

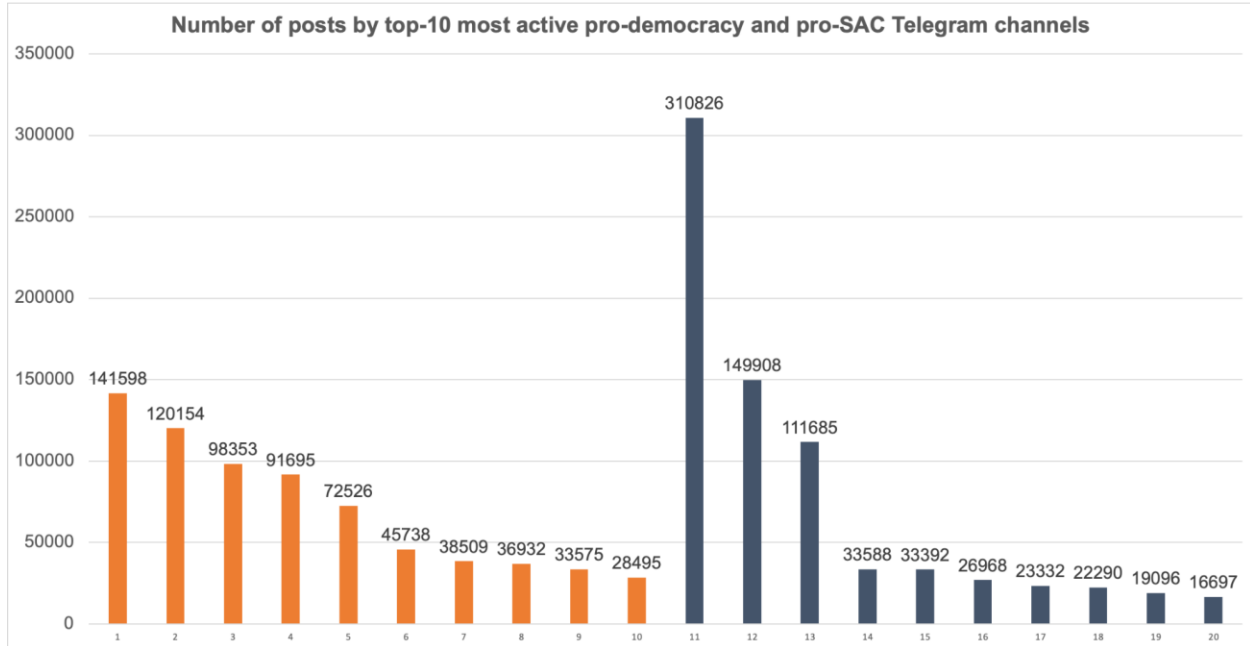


Figure 3. Number of posts by the top-10 most active pro-democracy (orange) and pro-SAC Telegram channels (dark grey). Date range: channel start date to November 2022.

Within the qualitative study, 24% of abusive profiles with pro-SAC views also appeared to be supportive of the Burmese Buddhist ultranationalist movement [Ma Ba Tha](#). Within the quantitative study, posts containing anti-Muslim sentiment were approximately 30 times more prevalent on pro-SAC channels than pro-democracy channels in the quantitative analysis of Telegram posts (Figure 4).

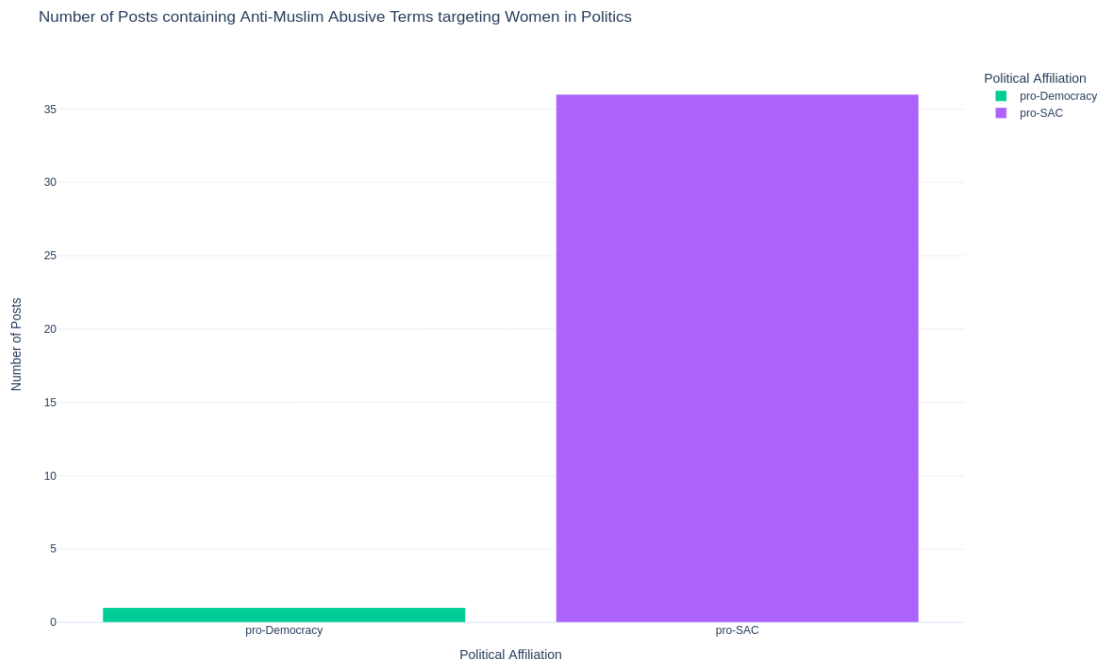


Figure 4. Level of anti-Muslim rhetoric targeting women in quantitative study of Telegram posts (not weighted).



Myanmar Witness’ qualitative analysis of posts found that pro-SAC accounts sometimes target non-Muslim, anti-SAC women with anti-Muslim slurs, which include accusations of them sleeping with Muslim men on the basis of the women being perceived as too lenient to Myanmar’s Muslim population. This is explored in more detail in the following sections.

### 3.1.3. Overview of Abuse Target Characteristics and Vulnerabilities

Myanmar Witness analysed abusive post content and target profiles to examine the targets’ characteristics and whether they had any additional, [protected characteristics](#). A summary of findings is provided below, with full data tables available in Appendix 5.6.

#### Political views

83% of posts in the qualitative study targeted women with pro-NUG or PDF views. 15% of those posts were specifically targeting women with ties to the military (e.g., women known to be from military families) who support the NUG or PDF. These women are referred to as ‘watermelons’ - green (representing the military) on the outside, e.g., due to external factors like family ties, but red (the colour of the National League for Democracy flag) on the inside, representing their true political beliefs. The term ‘watermelon’ itself is non-gender specific.

8% of posts were targeting women with pro-SAC views. A majority of these were directed at SAC politician Thet Thet Khine. 2% of posts in the qualitative analysis were targeting women known to support other political or resistance groups.

Doxxing, some of which includes calls for arrest, is the most common form of abuse targeting women who oppose the SAC. Based on evidence gathered in the qualitative study, pro-SAC women are significantly less affected by doxxing compared to women with pro-democracy views.

Main or most extreme abuse type in post	% posts targeting pro-NUG/PDF women - no known military ties	% posts targeting pro-NUG/PDF women - military ties	% posts targeting pro-SAC women	% posts targeting women pro-other groups
Anti-LGBT hate	1	0	72	0
Anti-Muslim hate	5	0	0	0
Calling for death of abuse target (non-doxxing post)	1	0	0	0
Doxxing	34	86	6	25
Doxxing encouragement/ crowdsourcing of information for doxxing	0	0	0	0



Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of arrest	16	11	0	50
Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of vigilante violence	2	0	0	0
Woman political figure named or depicted in derogatory way	28	0	11	25
Misogynist rhetoric	1	0	0	0
Other	3	0	0	0
Political stance referred to in derogatory way	6	4	0	0
Threat of rape (non doxxing post)	1	0	6	0
Threat of, or actual, release of intimate images	4	0	0	0

Table 2. Prevalence of different abuse types depending on abuse target political affiliation.

Abuse target's political position	Number of posts
Pro-NUG/PDF	154
Pro-NUG/PDF but expected to be pro-SAC due to factors such as family ties ('watermelon')	28
Pro-SAC	18
Unknown	16
Pro-other political or armed group	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>

Table 3. Number of posts targeting women by political affiliation of abuse target.

### Minority ethnic or religious background

7% of posts in the qualitative analysis appeared to be targeting women from **minority ethnic or religious backgrounds**. 6% of the total posts analysed in the qualitative study were identified as targeting Muslim women, 40% of which were targeting specifically Rohingya women. In 10% of posts, it was not possible to establish whether the abuse target was a member of a minority ethnic or religious group. Due to the relatively small number of posts targeting ethnic or religious minorities in the dataset, it was not possible to make robust comparisons between women known to be from minority groups and women without a minority ethnic or religious identity.



### Mental or physical health conditions

There were very few posts (1%) in the qualitative analysis targeting women known to have a **mental or physical health condition**. Further research on a larger dataset is required to enable robust comparisons between levels of hate affecting different communities of women based on ethnic and religious factors, in addition to physical and mental health.

### LGBTQIA+ identity

9% of abusive posts in the qualitative analysis were found to be targeting individuals known or claimed to be **LGBTQIA+**. Fewer than 1% of posts targeted non-binary women. 8% were targeting women known or believed to be **lesbian or bisexual**. Most of these instances were abusive posts targeting SAC politician Thet Thet Khine for her (alleged) sexual orientation. This is explored in further detail in Section 3.1.6.

### Social standing

42% of the posts within the qualitative dataset of 220 posts targeted **well-known women**; 57% of posts targeted women who are not well-known.<sup>5</sup> Myanmar Witness compared the main types of abuse identified in posts targeting these two groups of women and found that:

- Doxxing is four times as prevalent in posts targeting women who are not well known, compared to posts targeting well-known women.
- Posts targeting well-known figures had a prevalence of anti-LGBT sentiment more than six times higher than posts targeting women who are not well known. This may be due to the high volume of anti-lesbian rhetoric directed at one individual - Thet Thet Khine.
- At least 7% of posts targeting well-known figures contained anti-Muslim sentiment (often calling prominent pro-NUG/PDF women ‘Muslim wife’ - ‘ကုလားမယား’<sup>6</sup>), and 1% of posts targeting lower-profile women contained anti-Muslim sentiment as the main type of abuse within the post.

Main or most extreme abuse type in post	% posts targeting women who are well-known <sup>7</sup>	% posts targeting women who are not well-known <sup>8</sup>
Anti-LGBT hate	14	2
Anti-Muslim hate	7	1
Calling for death of abuse target (non-doxxing post)	1	0

<sup>5</sup> 1% of posts did not target a specific, individual woman

<sup>6</sup> ‘ကုလား’ (‘kalar’) is a highly abusive word used against Muslims. Facebook has attempted to ban its use on the platform. ‘မယား’ means ‘wife’

<sup>7</sup> Rounded to whole number

<sup>8</sup> Rounded to whole number



Doxxing	10	60
Doxxing encouragement/ crowdsourcing of information for doxxing	0	2
Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of arrest	8	18
Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of vigilante violence	1	2
Woman political figure named or depicted in derogatory way	51	0
Misogynist rhetoric	2	2
Other	1	2
Political stance referred to in derogatory way	1	8
Threat of rape (non doxxing post)	0	2
Threat of, or actual, release of intimate images	0	2

Table 4. % prevalence of different abuse types depending on whether abuse target is well known.

### 3.1.4. Overview of Main Types of Abuse

Of the 220 examples of publicly accessible, abusive posts Myanmar Witness collected for labelling and in-depth qualitative analysis, the most prevalent categories of abuse were **doxxing** and **derogatory references to female political figures**.

Doxxing is a term used to describe the public identification of a person or the spreading of private information about a person, usually online and especially as a form of punishment or revenge.

**At least 50%** of the abusive posts in the qualitative study were found to be **doxxing women** – revealing information such as their address or phone number - in apparent retaliation for their political views or actions. **28% of doxxing posts contained explicit threats or encouragement of offline punishment**. Most of these called for intervention from the authorities in carrying out the punishment. **25% of doxxing posts included explicit encouragement or calls for arrest**, or in one case state seizure of property of the doxxed women. **3% included explicit encouragement of vigilante violence** against the doxxing targets.

15,000 doxxing posts were detected in the quantitative study.<sup>9</sup> Due to the keyword-based approach to detecting abuse types within the quantitative analysis and the nature of the Burmese

<sup>9</sup> Estimated precision rate 70%, see methodology for detail.



language, Myanmar Witness cannot establish with confidence how many of these doxxing posts target women as opposed to men. However, the qualitative analysis shows that women are frequently targeted with doxxing attacks, and these attacks are presented in greater detail in the subsequent section of this report. The quantitative study of Telegram posts shows an overall increase in doxxing posts following the coup. This started at fewer than 10 posts per day in early 2021 and peaked at over 100 posts per day in 2022. Figure 5 below shows the volume of doxxing posts by pro-SAC channels over time.

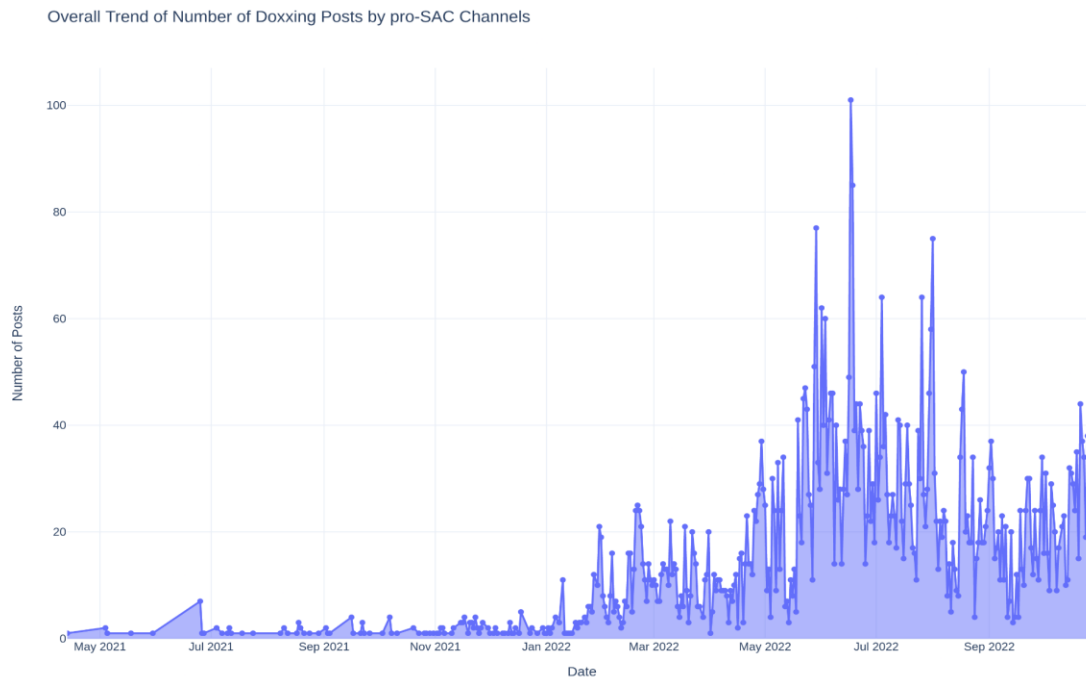


Figure 5. Doxxing posts by pro-SAC channels over time: channel first posting date to November 2022.<sup>10</sup>

The short drop in the volume of doxxing posts in September 2022 may be linked to [increased international scrutiny](#) of Myanmar-focused doxxing channels on Telegram, resulting in channel takedowns. Myanmar Witness found at least five accounts - three past, one present and one backup - for the notorious pro-SAC, doxxing channel **Han Nyein OO (HNO)** on Telegram during the research period. Newer and backup accounts were not captured in this research and the chart above is, therefore, likely to underestimate the scale of the doxxing after some of the most prolific doxxing channels (HNO and **hostnews**) appeared to have been taken down in late 2022.

Sexualised terms were prevalent among the derogatory references to women political figures in the qualitative study. **30% of all posts in the qualitative analysis contained sexualised terms and/or imagery** relating to the woman targeted in the post. The quantitative analysis of Telegram posts showed an overall increase in the use of sexualised, derogatory terms towards women, such as 'prostitute' (ပျော်ပျော်). Approximately 0.125% (~2000 posts) of the 1.6 million posts scraped from the 100 Telegram channels in the quantitative study contained these sexualised,

<sup>10</sup> Quantitative and manual, qualitative evaluation found doxxing to be negligible on pro-democracy channels compared with pro-SAC channels



abusive terms. These terms were considerably more widely used by pro-SAC groups compared with pro-democracy groups.

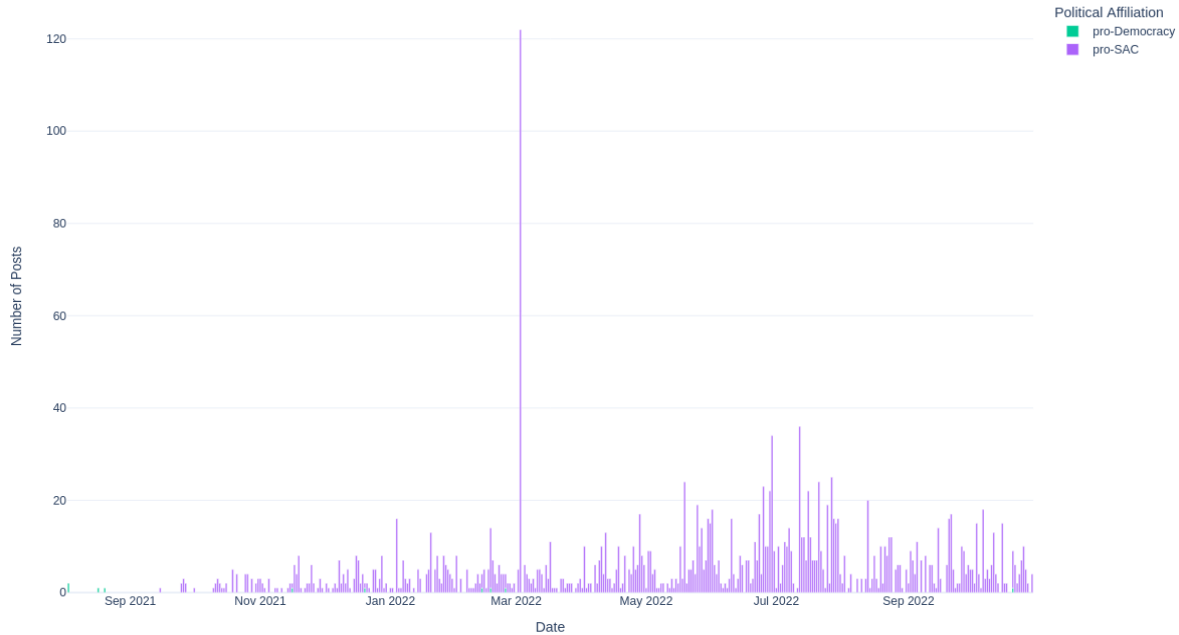


Figure 6. Sexualised abuse targeting prominent, politically-active women on Telegram.

Of the 220 posts in the qualitative study, 8% (17 total posts) were overtly sexually threatening, threatening sexual assault or rape. This is likely to underestimate the level of threatening, sexualised content within the dataset due to the euphemistic, implicitly, rather than explicitly, sexually threatening nature of some of the posts. In addition to the 3% of posts (6 posts) that threatened to release ‘HDs’ (sexually explicit images of the women), and the 1% (2 posts) that threatened women with rape as punishment for their political stance, 16% (5 of 31) of posts that doxxed women and called for them to be arrested were sexualised in nature.

7% of posts in the qualitative analysis contained anti-Muslim sentiment. These posts often claimed pro-NUG/PDF women were ‘Muslim wives’ and sleeping with Muslim men.

Table 5 below summarises the main types of abuse collected in the qualitative study for which Myanmar Witness conducted an individually-validated, keyword-informed collection of abusive posts, predominantly from Facebook and Telegram.

Main or most extreme abuse type	Number of instances recorded in qualitative study
Doxxing	85
Woman political figure named or depicted in derogatory way	46
Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of offline punishment: arrest by authorities	31



Anti-LGBT hate	15
Abuse target's political stance referred to in derogatory way	11
Anti-Muslim hate	9
Threat of, or actual, release of intimate images	6
Misogynist rhetoric	4
Other	4
Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of offline punishment: vigilante violence	4
Doxxing encouragement/crowdsourcing of information	2
Threat of rape	2
Calling for death of abuse target (non-doxxing post)	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>

Table 5. Main or most extreme abuse types, in order of prevalence.

It is important to note that the different types of abuse often overlap. For instance, doxxing posts often also include incitement, sexualised language, and/or implicit threats of online and offline violence. Similarly, posts referring to women political figures in a derogatory way sometimes also include sexualised slurs and disinformation, including anti-LGBT hate. These overlaps are captured in qualitative analysis throughout this report.

The following sections provide more detail and context on the main abuse types identified in the qualitative research: **doxxing** posts and **derogatory** references to, and depictions of, politically-active women.

### 3.1.5. Nature of Doxxing Posts

Section 3.1.3 showed that doxxing is one of the most common forms of online abuse used against politically-active women who oppose the SAC.

As noted previously, 28% of doxxing posts in the qualitative study contained explicit threat or encouragement of offline punishment. Most of these called for intervention from the authorities in carrying out the punishment. 25% of doxxing posts included explicit encouragement or calls for arrest, or in one case state seizure of property, of the doxxed women. 3% included explicit encouragement of vigilante violence against the doxxing targets.

Further to this, Myanmar Witness has noted a wider pattern of specific behaviours, or TTPs (tools, techniques and procedures) used by abusers in their doxxing of women.



- Pro-SAC groups and individuals are involved in targeting women due to their associations with the NUG and pro-democracy movement and sharing their personal photos.
- Pro-democracy accounts engage in doxxing SAC members and supporters, though at a significantly lower rate than pro-SAC accounts targeting their opponents.
- Female family members and friends of activists who are not explicitly involved in any protest activity, are also targeted in doxxing attacks. Military employees and wives are targeted if they support the pro-democracy movement.
- Based on a case study analysis, women are selected for doxxing attacks by pro-SAC Telegram channels at a considerably higher rate than men with the same political profile and visibility are online. This is often in relation to online comments made or public support of the NUG or pro-democracy movement. In rare cases, women are doxxed for engaging in doxxing themselves. Women have been targeted after engaging with the comment sections of famous activists - including that of **Pencil**, a prominent female advocate against the 2021 military coup in Myanmar.
- Statements by doxxing channels on Telegram imply that famous activists are being watched and that anyone – even ‘ordinary’ civilians who are not activists - can be targeted if their online comments are noticed.

#### Encouragement of Sexualised Violence: Doxxing, Threat of Rape and Non-Consensual Release of Intimate Contents

16% (5 of 31) of posts that doxxed women and called for them to be arrested were sexualised in nature. 5% (4 of 85) of general doxxing posts that did not overtly call for the arrest of the women or vigilante violence against them were overtly sexualised in nature. This figure is likely to underestimate the level of threatening, sexualised content within the dataset due to the implicitly, rather than explicitly, sexually threatening nature of some of the posts.

Sexualised threats are not unique to pro-SAC accounts, with a small number of pro-democracy accounts also using threatening or inappropriate sexual language towards pro-SAC women within the qualitative dataset. However, the overwhelming majority of channels posting the most abusive, sexualised content are pro-SAC.

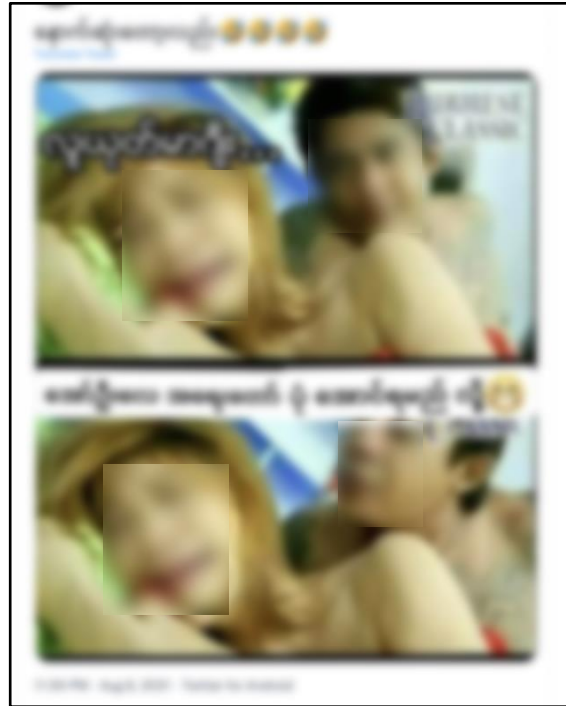


Figure 7. A sexually threatening post on Twitter targeting women SAC opponents. This picture seems to be taken from a film scene depicting rape. The woman is depicted as screaming, “you jerk” while the man is depicted as mocking: “say the revolution will win one more time”.

### Systematic Targeting of Women as Opposed to Men

On 12 July 2022, anti-SAC activist [Pencilo posted a statement](#) to Facebook criticising the military regime. As of December 2022, there were over 900 comments on the post. Myanmar Witness found that at least six of the people commenting supportively on that post had been doxxed by a single Telegram account in succession. Five out of those six doxxed individuals were women. This is not representative of the gender presentation of accounts commenting on Pencilo’s post (figure 8). It is also significant that this Telegram account appears to be outwardly doxxing individuals specifically from Pencilo’s posts, which implies that this, in itself, is a reason for doxxing the women affected. Facebook-specific tools such as the ‘Top Fan’ feature on posts could create a space where it is easier for those with ill intentions to target those engaging frequently with political activism. However, further research would be required to establish whether the ‘Top Fan’ label affects a woman’s chances of being targeted for abuse.

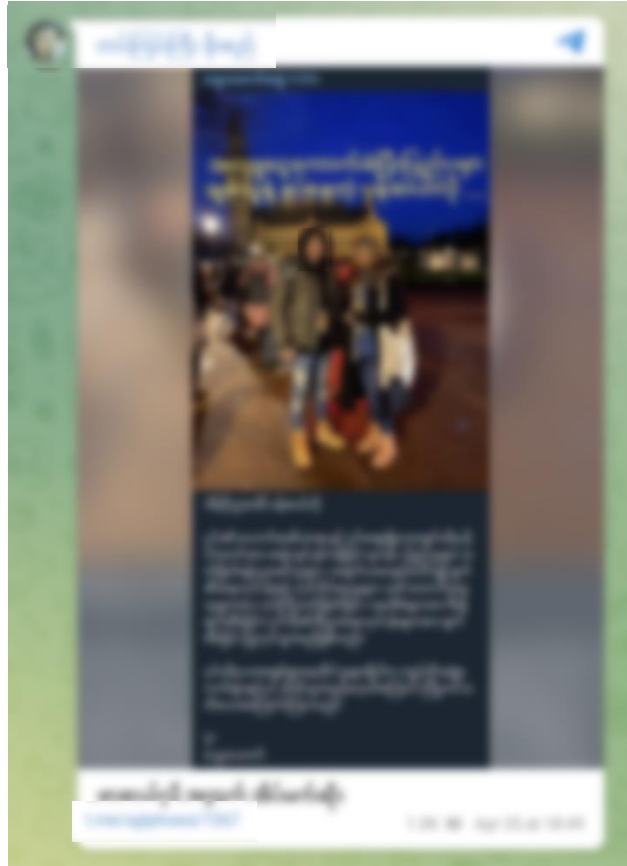


Figure 8: Screenshots taken from a Telegram channel dedicated to doxxing from the previous Pencilo post. The women targeted appear to be surrounded by comments by other female and male presenting accounts with similar sentiments. At least one of the doxxed women appears to be a 'Top fan' of the page.

### Doxxing of Family Members

Throughout the investigation, Myanmar Witness also identified threatening language used towards family members of women being doxxed. Figure 9 below is a screenshot taken from the Thwe Thout (YGN) group on Telegram, a group which has taken credit for graphic murders of NUG supporters and NLD members on its Mandalay Telegram group, a claim [corroborated by local media](#). The post identifies the man in the photo with anti-SAC activist Pencilo as her relative.





*Figure 9: Image taken from the Thwe Thout (YGN) group on Telegram and reposted in other doxxing channels, threatening the family members of well-known, anti-SAC activist Pencilo. The group has taken responsibility for incredibly graphic murders of NUG supporters and those related to the group.*

### Doxxing of Women Who Engage in Doxxing

Myanmar Witness also identified that some doxxed women appear to have partaken in doxxing of members of the SAC armed forces. This suggests that some women are targeted due to their own doxxing activities.

### 3.1.6. Nature of Derogatory Posts Targeting Politically-Active Women

#### Sexualised Disinformation Deployed to Undermine Women Supporting or Participating in Armed Resistance

As shown in Table 5 above, a substantial proportion of posts analysed in detail show or describe politically-active women in a derogatory way. This is further evidence in case-study analysis outlined below. This section examines how exactly the abusive posts undermine politically-active women who support armed resistance groups.

As the armed resistance front of the pro-democracy movement gains momentum, many women, including former celebrities and actors, have joined the armed resistance - loosely referred to as **People Defence Forces (PDF)** - to fight back against the military. [Women from all walks of life](#)





[have been reportedly training](#) with groups such as **Myaung Women Guerilla Group** (MWGG) and are also heavily involved with fundraising efforts for the armed resistance, both in Myanmar and abroad. Myanmar Witness identified substantive threats and abuse directed against women supporting or participating in PDF-related activities. In addition, there is a common narrative that the women in the PDF are:

1. Morally corrupt - engaging in illegal and promiscuous behaviours.
2. Sexual 'prey' for male PDF members, leaders of ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and/or foreigners.
3. Pregnant out of wedlock due to their alleged promiscuity and as a consequence of trusting the opposition groups, especially the NUG and PDF.

In many sample posts that Myanmar Witness collected, the language takes a condescending and misogynistic tone, sometimes mocking these women. The online attacks are often in coded slang that is extremely vulgar and sexually suggestive, often perpetuating societal attitudes that normalise and trivialise sexual abuse, including rape. New slurs and derogatory words to describe women in the PDF have also emerged. This includes the terms 'PadatSar', 'PadatSarMa' or 'PadatMa' - word plays on the abbreviation PDF, mocking them. 'PadatSar' is also a type of vegetable. It is not possible to capture the severity of further extreme slurs in translation.

Sexualised cartoon-like imagery, or images in which the target's face is superimposed onto another, sexualised body, were sometimes used alongside abusive, written comments.

One of the most prevalent narratives targeted against women participating or suspected of participating in the PDF is that they are immoral and scandalous women. This is 'demonstrated' by posts attempting to tie these women to drugs and sexual promiscuity. On occasion, posts imply that women are joining the revolutionary militias to sleep with men - reflecting misogynistic views of women in armed groups generally, but specifically within pro-democracy forces. These women are often accused of having sexual relations with their fellow members, being taken as mistresses by the male leaders of the EAOs, or being sexually violated by members and foreign men. This plays into a victimisation narrative around these women, as well as negative stereotypes against minority groups.



Figure 10: Translation: Photo caption says “The nurse from [...] Hospital [...] who joined CDM and then joined the jungle, now she has been violated by a foreign man.” While the post caption says “Those Padatma who entered the jungle to do revolution are being undressed and smashed in the jungle instead.”



Figure 11: Translation: In the cartoon, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) soldiers are portrayed as saying, “Useless PDFs, if you don’t finish the tasks I asked you to do, you all prepare to die” towards to male PDF soldiers, and towards the female soldiers, they are saying, “Ladies, if you want to learn close action attacks, come to the room [implies sex].” The post says, “KIA treats women differently than men. But these days, it is embarrassing to hear about how they are treating the women. Those PDFs who went to the KIA trusting them, the men are going to become fertiliser [implies they will die] and women are going to end up as sex slaves.”

Some posts also use these harmful narratives around female members of the PDF and other armed resistance organisations to perpetuate homophobic rhetoric around PDF members.



Figure 12: Translation “They say revolution and went into the jungle and mountains. But even though they get to live in the same base with the girls Padatma, those Padatma are reserved for the EAOs leaders only. They can only look at them but not touch. So then they have to eat what they get and men are getting entangled with men. Look how the revolution is succeeding.”

The images and footage of women training in the PDF or taking positions on the frontline have also been sexualised in attacks against them. Some posts claim women are preparing for pornographic content and for sexual activities. Many of the posts suggest that the PDF women are being violated sexually, with underlying tones of emphasis on cultural and racial purity, echoing Ma Ba Tha narratives.

Being pregnant out of wedlock is another facet of abuse targeted towards female members of the PDFs and pro-democracy supporters. This plays into a moral panic around PDF groups implicitly tied to religious values and paternalistic views of purity.

In these pregnancy-themed attacks, there is also a trend of mockery against the pro-democracy side by mimicking one of the main pro-democracy revolutionary mottos: “The Revolution will Succeed. (*Ayaydawpone Aung Ya Myi*)”. Another trend among abuse posts that Myanmar Witness collected is of concluding with something along the lines of “Look at the Revolution succeeding, in pregnancy.” Here, referring specifically to the end of the sentence, the Burmese phrase ‘ဇီးအောင်တယ်’ (‘Zee Aung Tal’ - ‘in pregnancy’) is employed with a strong derogatory tone.

This is a phrase most commonly used to refer to breeding livestock or sometimes to describe when a pet animal gets pregnant. The term is not typically used to refer to women becoming pregnant. **It serves to dehumanise as well as degrade the target of the abuse.**



Figure 13 (left): Translation: “Like Pharcilo [a play on words referring to female activists Pencilo as a ‘slut’] often says, here are those who endure/put out. The revolution is going to succeed... in pregnancy.” The channel uses the Burmese word “Taunt Khan” which translates to endure/persist but can also be sexually suggestive. Instead of people who will persist under tyranny, the phrase is being used to refer in a derogatory manner to women’s sexuality.

Figure 14 (right): Translation: “[...] who went into the jungle and into the bush is now left with a child. She got pregnant in the KNU (Karen National Union)-controlled area and still doesn’t know who the father is. Didn’t I warn about this? If you get knocked up in the jungle, there is no pill for you to take.”

Military-owned media channels and newspapers have also broadcast narratives perpetuating the idea that pro-PDF women are morally corrupt. Some official channels accuse female detainees arrested for their affiliations with PDF of drugs-related offences and sexual depravity. There is a heavy emphasis on purity culture and cultural purity in these narratives, often taking similar undertones of ultranationalist Ma Ba Tha’s “Protection of Race and Religion” narratives. The aim of these narratives appears to be to frighten and deter women supporting the PDF and to defame the opposition groups by questioning the treatment of women within their ranks.

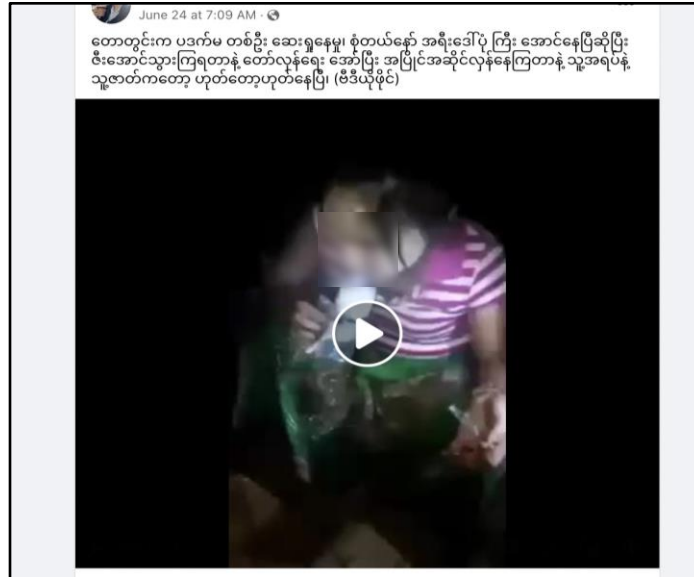


Figure 15: Translation: “A PadatMa from the jungle smoking drugs. See, they do all shenanigans. They say, the Revolution will succeed, but they succeed only in pregnancy [animal husbandry term for getting pregnant]. They say, Revolution, but they are only revealing [having sex].” Terms in square brackets added by Myanmar Witness to convey the severity of language used against the woman targeted in this post.

In the quantitative study of posts on Telegram, Myanmar Witness found that sexualised, abusive terms targeting women were almost 30 times more prevalent on the pro-SAC channels analysed than on the pro-democracy channels included in the analysis, when weighted to account for the difference in the number of pro-democracy versus pro-SAC channels on Telegram. Figure 16 shows the total (non-weighted) number of sexualised posts by pro-democracy versus pro-SAC Telegram channels. These posts were not specifically targeting women participating in armed resistance.



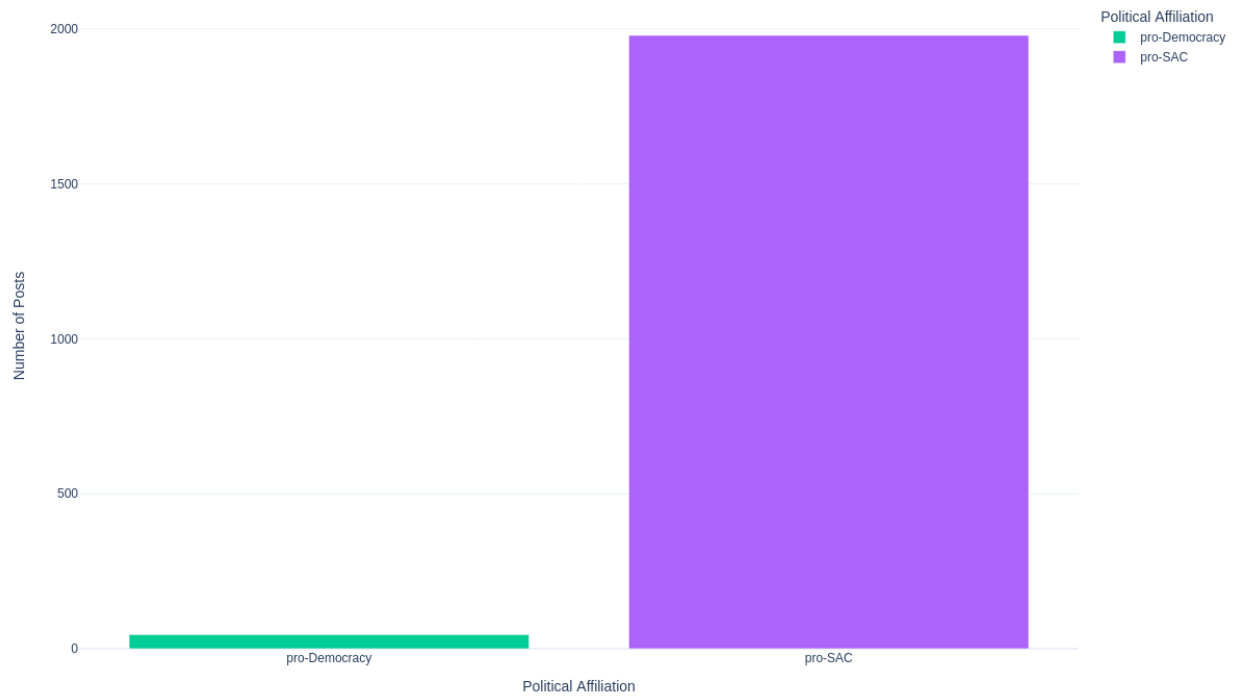


Figure 16. Total number of Posts Containing Sexualised, Abusive Terms Targeting Women on Telegram, by Political Affiliation of Channels (not weighted)

### Defamation of Prominent Female Activists and Political Figures

As many women public figures continue to use their powerful online media platforms to support the movement through fundraising and other means, they have been a target of politically-motivated online attacks. The attacks come in multiple forms; from doxing posts to posts threatening to release sexually explicit videos.

Based on a case study analysis of posts identified in the qualitative study, Myanmar Witness found that women associated with the pro-democracy movement face misogynistic, nationalistic and racist abuse online. Analysis of the posts found that:

- The attackers often try to discredit the pro-democracy side as corrupt and leading the country in the wrong direction. They accuse the activists and political figures of embezzling donations and killing innocent civilians through terrorist acts.
- Narratives that reflect the anti-Muslim, nationalist narratives of the Ma Ba Tha movement are also prominent, portraying the pro-democracy side as harmful for the nation and national religious (Buddhist) values.
- Like the attacks on female members of armed resistance groups, attacks on prominent female activists can be of a violent, sexualised, and dehumanised nature, with some posts calling for harm and death of the target. New derogatory slurs have been crafted to attack female activists and political figures. These new terms may be hindering abuse detection efforts by platforms - something this report explores under the Social Media Accountability section.

Examples based on the case-study analysis are provided below, with further examples and analysis in Annex 5.2.4.

The deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi is often abused online with posts containing derogatory terms that often adopt misogynist, nationalist, and anti-Muslim undertones. These include ‘*Phar Suu Kyi*’ (meaning Whore Suu Kyi), ‘*Mote Soe Ma*’ (Widow), and ‘*Moot MaYar*’ (Muslim Wife). Some of these posts also wish, call for, or celebrate the idea of her death, claiming that she has ruined the country and disregarded the importance of race and religion. Myanmar Witness found a number of accounts that claimed to be ‘nationalists’ or ‘patriots’. These accounts disseminate the narrative that the pro-democracy civilian government (Aung San Suu Kyi’s government) is in favour of Muslims and Islam while being an existential threat to “race and [Buddhist] religion”.



Figure 17: Translation “Myanmar... the devil woman, the slut that deserves a death sentence, deserves to be chopped off with a knife and fed to the dogs.”





Figure 18 (left): Translation: This post contains a rhyme that metaphorically compares Aung San Suu Kyi with an anus (a Burmese word play on being old) and accuses her of sleeping with a group of Muslim men. It translates as, “Once dreamt of a throne, the fool Muslim wife is now shedding tears. The throne has now fallen apart, so the anus is now tearing up. When the sun is high, with random group of Muslim men, her hole is now burst.” Figure 19 (right), Translation, “If one is not on the side for the race, then one should be hanged instead.”

Other female political figures and activists from the pro-democracy side face similar attacks. In September 2022, there were attempts to discredit Ei Thinzar Maung, the NUG’s Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Children Affairs by spreading false information that she married a Muslim man. The abusive posts included pictures of a couple in which the woman looks similar to the Deputy Minister. Some of the posts also accuse her of supporting underground operations and ordering to kill military-linked families.



Figure 20 (left): Translation “Please share. This is the evidence that the NUG itself is the mastermind that is killing civilians from behind the scenes. The person who ordered to kill the retired general Ambassador U Ohn Thwin and his son-in-law Ye Tay Za is the Muslim wife Ei Thinzar Maung, deputy minister of the NUG. Keep this as evidence.



Send this to the officials.” Figure 21 (right): Translation “The NUG Deputy Minister Ei Thinzar Maung could not even wait until the Revolution is over to get married to a Muslim man [use of the derogatory word K-lar]. Next is going to be those PadatMa who will soon become Muslim wives too. They won’t even take your consent. From bottom to up, everyone is going to get eaten up.”

The NUG Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Daw Zin Mar Aung** has also been targeted with abuse online that is highly nationalist in nature. These attacks depict the NUG as more favourable to Muslims, while restricting Buddhism and tradition. She has also faced doxxing attacks in which the attacker offers prize money to those who can take revenge actions on her, her family and her supporters. Examples of attacks on Daw Zin Mar Aung are shown below.



Figure 22. In response to a statement wishing Happy Eid by Daw Zin Mar Aung, the post says “the NUG works for the other race and religion while disregarding our own religion. I feel afraid to think of the future of our nation, race, and religion if the country were to be ruled by an organisation like them.” The cartoon accompanying the post depicts a derogatory picture of a Muslim man and the woman is depicted as saying, “Just like the hunter’s feet aren’t afraid of thorns, we will not kneel to military boots.” The woman’s words are meant to present revolutionaries as tough hunters and the SAC armed forces as inconsequential thorns, while the image itself is ridiculing the revolutionary woman.



Figure 23. The post says, “For social punishment of all Ni Pain [dumb NLD followers], because of the power hunger of the Foreign Minister Daw Zin Mar Aung of the NUG terrorist group, innocent people are dying. Because of their wrong encouragement, many young people are now on the wrong path, fighting in the jungle. From JSG (Justice Seeker Group)’s investigation, we found her personal address. If you were to conduct actions to revenge on Daw Zin Mar Aung, her family and relatives, and her supporters, terrorist supporters, the JSG will award you prize money.”

Myanmar Witness’ case study analysis shows that celebrities and public figures who have powerful platforms and are openly supportive of the pro-democracy movement have been targeted for arrest. Since the onset of the military coup on 1 February 2021, many of Myanmar’s highest-paid [celebrities and public figures](#) have actively joined anti-coup protests, persuading others to join the mass protests and the **Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM)**. Consequently, the military has cracked down on them, issuing warrants and conducting high-profile arrests. Many [actors, social influencers, and models](#) have been arrested, while arrest warrants have been issued for others. Some of these arrests are known to have been preceded by doxxing attacks. Case study examples are provided in Section 3.2 of possible coordination between doxxing channels and the SAC.

### Derogatory Posts Targeting Pro-SAC Women

Women on the pro-SAC side are also faced with politically-motivated attacks against them online, although to a much smaller extent than pro-democracy women based on data analysed. The wives of the generals, public figures who support the military, or women who work for the military (such as the TV hosts of the military-owned channel **Myawaddy** - MWD - and women ministers and public servants) have been subject to online abuse by pro-democracy accounts.



Figure 24: The Twitter post by an NUG supporter referring to the MWD (a military-owned news channel) TV host as a “slut” who should be forced to shut up with penetration.

As discussed in Section 3.1.3, the most common targets for this politically-motivated abuse has been **Thet Thet Khine**, the Minister of Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement under the SAC. In the past, Thet Thet Khine was an ally of Aung San Suu Kyi and a member of the opposition party **National League for Democracy (NLD)**. However, after [clashing with the NLD in 2018](#), she founded her own **People’s Pioneer Party (PPP)** and later joined the military to serve in the current SAC administration. Due to her fallout with the NLD and her open criticism of Aung San Suu Kyi, she faces particularly strong scrutiny and dislike from many Aung San Suu Kyi, NUG, and pro-democracy supporters in Myanmar.

Thet Thet Khine has often been attacked on the basis of her rumoured sexual orientation. The rumours of her being a lesbian cisgender woman married to a transgender man have been circulating in Myanmar society long before her political career started when she was still a businesswoman. Many attacks towards her use anti-LGBTQ slurs, misogynist insults, and are sexually explicit.



Figure 25 (left): The post contains a derogatory meme depicting senior general Min Aung Hlaing and Thet Thet Khine, calling her anti-LGBTQ terms. Figure 25b (right). A post insulting Thet Thet Khine’s husband, who some claim is a transgender man.

### 3.2. Q2: Who appears to be carrying out politically motivated abuse of women online?

#### 3.2.1. Summary

To determine attribution, Myanmar Witness collected and analysed indicators listed in Meta’s [framework](#) for attributing online activity to certain actors. These were: evidence of political intent behind malicious activity; evidence of coordination and; TTPs known to be used by certain actors.

**Political intent:** 90% of abusive posts in the qualitative study and almost 80% of abusive posts in the quantitative study were authored by pro-SAC accounts or in pro-SAC channels. 24% of the pro-SAC accounts in the qualitative study also appeared to have pro-Ma Ba Tha (Buddhist nationalist) views.

**Coordination:** Myanmar Witness found evidence of pro-SAC channels claiming credit for getting the authorities to arrest pro-democracy women. Case study examples of such activity are provided in this report’s section on Impact. Narratives used by unofficial, pro-SAC groups and individuals online often echo the narratives used by official SAC media to undermine pro-democracy women. Myanmar Witness also found frequent sharing of doxxing posts by pro-SAC channels on Telegram, showing mutual amplification by some of the most prolific, pro-SAC doxxing channels. Within the quantitative study, just four Telegram channels were responsible for more than 50% of the abusive posts detected. Within the qualitative study, fewer than 15 accounts were responsible for a large proportion of the doxxing posts. These accounts were brought to the attention of Meta and Telegram as part of this research.





**TTPs:** The prevalence of doxxing and derogatory images, including memes and the superimposition of the abuse target’s faces onto animals or other bodies mirrors tactics known to have been used by the military against the Rohingya population, in which the Rohingya population are [dehumanised and compared to animals through online hate campaigns](#).

### 3.2.2. Gender

Researchers analysed publicly available profile images to determine the gender presentation of the profiles. Manual analysis and validation of abusive posts showed that **male-presenting accounts were responsible for 70% of abusive posts** in the qualitative study of 220 posts.

Female-presenting profiles were responsible for 10% of the abusive posts, and abuser gender presentation could not be ascertained for 20% of abusive posts.

### 3.2.3. Political Affiliation

90% of abusive posts in the qualitative study and almost 80% of abusive posts in the quantitative study were authored by pro-SAC accounts or were posted in pro-SAC channels. 24% of the pro-SAC accounts in the qualitative study also appeared to have pro-Ma Ba Tha (Buddhist nationalist) views.

Myanmar Witness determined the political affiliation of accounts by examining their profile images, banners and shared content, where this was publicly available. Pro-SAC accounts tended to be very overt in their support for the SAC and SAC armed forces, and often included posts that showed compassionate acts by the military, such as tending to monks - an account characteristic identified in Myanmar-focused [account analysis and takedown reporting](#) by social media analytics firm Graphika.

Social media users across platforms and Telegram channels with broadly pro-SAC views produced a significantly greater volume and proportion of politically-motivated, abusive content targeting women compared with social media users and online communities with broadly pro-democracy views. Table 6 shows the abusers’ political positions, where this was discernible from publicly-available profile information in the qualitative study.

Abuser political position	Number of posts
Pro-SAC/SAC armed forces	149
Pro-SAC and pro-Ma Ba Tha	48
Pro-NUG/PDF	21
Unknown	1
Pro-other political and/or armed group	1



TOTAL	220
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i. *Table 6. Political positions of abusers.*

### 3.2.4. Coordination

#### Coordination between doxxing channels and SAC to arrest women who oppose SAC

In Section 3.1, Myanmar Witness noted that almost all of the doxxing posts analysed that explicitly called for the targeted women to face offline punishment were calling for arrests by authorities, as opposed to vigilante violence.<sup>11</sup> This suggests that doxxing accounts - whether or not they are official SAC channels - are confident that the SAC can be reliably called upon to target women with unfavourable political views. Myanmar Witness also found evidence of pro-SAC channels claiming credit for getting the authorities to arrest pro-democracy women. Case study examples are provided in Section 3.3

Myanmar Witness found frequent sharing of doxxing posts by pro-SAC channels on Telegram, showing mutual amplification by some of the most prolific, pro-SAC doxxing channels. **Within the quantitative study, four pro-SAC channels were responsible for more than 50% of all the posts containing hateful rhetoric directed at women.** Within the qualitative study, **fewer than 15 accounts were responsible for a large proportion of the doxxing posts.** These accounts are being brought to the attention of Meta and Telegram as part of this research.

All of the most prolific doxxing channels identified in this research were pro-SAC. At least three of these accounts - **Han Nyein Oo (HNO)**, **Sergeant Phoe Si** and **Kyaw Swar** - have been previously highlighted in [international reporting](#) on doxxing campaigns being used against citizens in Myanmar. Myanmar Witness' qualitative analysis found that doxxing posts by Han Nyein Oo and Kyaw Swar were among the most shared - both within Telegram and cross-platform, on Facebook. Between them, as of December 2022, Kyaw Swar and Han Nyein Oo accounts have more than 140,000 followers; Kyaw Swar more than 75,000; Han Nyein Oo more than 54,000; and Sergeant Phoe Si more than 6,000.

Building on previous reporting on the [link between the SAC and doxxing groups](#), case studies below and an interview in Section 3.3 of this report provide further evidence that **Telegram channels may be collaborating with the SAC armed forces.** This includes channels helping them to identify women to target with arrests and offline intimidation through online doxxing campaigns, and taking credit following the target's arrest, as seen in the case study on Survivor A (see Annex 5.7 for full case study).

<sup>11</sup> 28% of all doxxing posts in the qualitative study called for offline punishment of the women that were being doxxed; almost all of these (25% doxxing posts) called for arrest and/or seizure of the women's property by authorities, and a small minority (3% of doxxing posts) called for vigilante violence.

## Doxxing followed by offline violence and arrest: Case Studies

Myanmar Witness has identified instances in which doxxing attacks are believed to have led to women's arrests. In Annex 5.7, Myanmar Witness provides full detail on examples of women who have been doxxed and later arrested. The case studies summarised below are on the arrests of a model and actor (Survivor A) and of a model (Survivor B).

Survivor A's doxxer, HNO, targeted her as a result of her attendance at a **Shan State Progressive Party** event and claimed she was promoting pornographic content. It appears that the military were not aware of her alleged activity prior to the doxxing attacks. HNO later took credit for her arrest.



Figure 26: A post signing off as HNO - likely a repost from Han Nyein Oo - appears to take responsibility for the arrest of Survivor A, whose arrest was called for in a previous, doxxing post by HNO.

In Survivor B's case, police and plainclothes officers - who Myanmar Witness were able to identify as likely belonging to the SAC armed forces or police due to the BA-93 submachine gun they are carrying in footage from the arrest - came to Survivor B's house to arrest her following a doxxing attack that targeted her for her support of the NUG.





Figure 27: Stills from livestream footage of Survivor B's arrest show plainclothes officers armed with BA-93 submachine guns and Lon Htein police, all wearing facemasks, approach the home of Survivor B.

#### Links to official SAC channels and individuals

The case studies summarised above and survivor interviews in Section 3.3 of this report show evidence of military informants supplying information to pro-SAC Telegram channels and vice versa.

Additionally, as outlined in this report's section on the Nature of Derogatory Posts, narratives used by unofficial, pro-SAC groups and individuals online often echo the narratives used by official SAC media to undermine pro-democracy women.

Myanmar Witness' qualitative investigation found that at least 17% of posts were authored by users with overt connections to SAC channels and individuals within the SAC. An abuser profile or group was considered linked with official SAC channels or individuals if they:

- appeared to moderate prominent or official pro-SAC groups/channels;
- had their content repeatedly endorsed by official SAC groups/channels/individuals;
- appeared to be in the SAC/ SAC armed forces; or
- appeared to have close friends/family/profile or group links with individuals, groups or channels in the SAC/ SAC armed forces.

17% may be an underestimate, noting studies by Meta which show that actors with official links to the military [take steps to conceal their identity](#) on Facebook.

### 3.2.5. TTPs (Tools, Techniques and Procedures)

#### Doxxing

The SAC and associated actors are known to have used doxxing to [target opponents](#) and punish them for their political views and actions. Evidence of doxxing is provided in Section 3.2.4. Table 2 on page 20 highlights the fact that doxxing is used considerably more by pro-SAC actors against their political opponents than against pro-SAC women.

#### Use of derogatory imagery and language

The superimposition of the abuse target’s faces onto other bodies, particularly [sexualised images](#), the use of [dehumanising rhetoric comparing people to animals](#) is known to have been used by the military in hate campaigns against the Rohingya population. Pro-SAC channels sometimes share doctored images of prominent, politically-active women in which their faces are superimposed onto pornographic or animal imagery (figure 28). Some of this type of abuse violates platform guidelines, as discussed in Section 3.4.

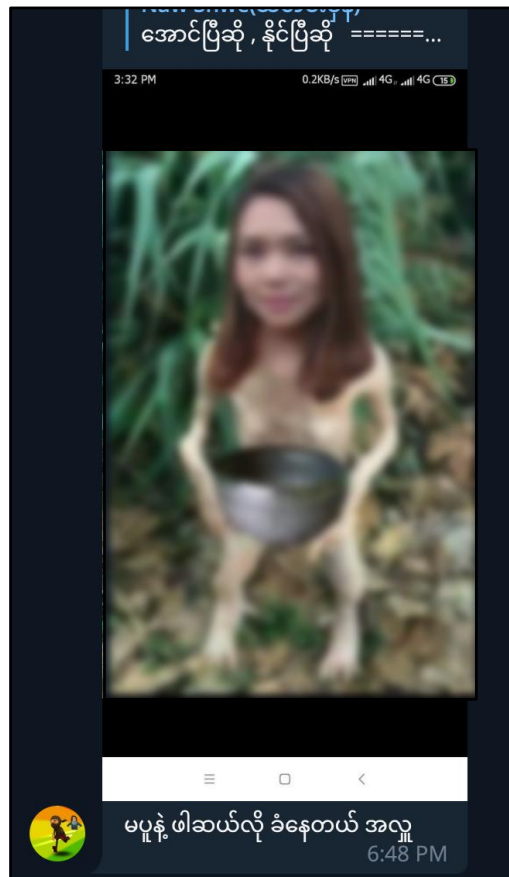


Figure 28. The image shows pro-democracy activist Pencilo’s face superimposed onto a non-human body holding a begging bowl.

As noted in Section 3.1.6, abusers use the Burmese phrase ‘ဇီးအောင်တယ်’ (‘Zee Aung Tal’ - ‘in pregnancy’). This is most commonly used to refer to breeding livestock or sometimes to describe

when a pet animal gets pregnant. It is not traditionally used to refer to women becoming pregnant and is therefore dehumanising in nature.

### 3.3. Q3: What are the online and offline impacts of online abuse?

#### 3.3.1. Summary

Politically-motivated, online abuse is leading to women’s withdrawal from public life online, an increase in the level of threats and harassment they face in their personal lives; heightened feelings of fear and psychological distress and; to being targeted with offline violence and arrests.

#### 3.3.2. Arrest

In Section 3.2, Myanmar Witness found evidence of accounts that engage in online doxxing calling for women’s arrests and celebrating news of arrest when this subsequently occurred.



Figure 29 (left) shows a doxxing post on Facebook which calls for the arrest of a woman from a military family thought to be supporting the NUG. Figure 29b (right) shows a post on Twitter celebrating the arrest of a woman from a military family accused of supporting the NUG.



Below, Myanmar Witness examines other consequences of online attacks targeting women for their political views and actions.

### 3.3.3. Withdrawal of women from public life online

Out of 120 examples of doxxing collected by Myanmar Witness, at least 24 examples (20%) demonstrate women whose accounts appear to have been altered in some way since the doxxing incident, possibly for the protection of their own information. 22 had the same public accounts as can be seen in the original doxxing screenshots. 54 examples could not be assessed for impact due to limited information that would not allow for comparison between the profile pre-doxxing versus post-doxxing incident.

Following the doxxing incidents, the doxxed account links are either broken - implying the account itself has been taken down and cannot be found - or names, pictures or privacy settings have been altered. This does not confirm that these women did alter or remove their accounts due to doxxing - as accounts change naturally through the months since their doxxing incident. However, this could also suggest that, as a result of doxxing, women have themselves been forced to alter their behaviour perhaps to avoid any more of their information being leaked online.

In the case study example of systematic targeting of women who had interacted positively with Pencilo's post (outlined previously in this report) we can also observe a silencing of women through doxxing. Four out of the five doxxed women appear to have removed their profiles or taken steps to be less visible online (such as locking their accounts and replacing profile pictures).

Interviews with survivors of online abuse shed important additional light on the impact of doxxing attacks and other, politically-motivated, online abuse on women.

### 3.3.4. Interviews

In collaboration with **Sisters to Sisters** and a local LGBTQIA+ support organisation, Myanmar Witness interviewed women in and from Myanmar about their experiences of politically-motivated, online abuse. Five women agreed to have their experiences shared in this report on the condition of anonymity. Interviews were conducted in Myanmar language and translated into English.

#### Interviewee One: LGBTQIA+ Rights and Pro-Democracy Activist

Interviewee One became active online after sustaining an injury when the SAC armed forces violently cracked down on a pro-democracy rally she attended. The activist says she was initially targeted by pro-SAC accounts after a post she wrote on Facebook - which included a photo of her - unexpectedly went viral. She told Myanmar Witness that she now feels unsafe in her home as SAC armed forces are nearby and she fears she will be recognised. The activist emphasised the power of shaming tactics, in addition to more violent threats, used by SAC supporters online to silence women and, in some cases, force them to flee their homes.

*"I think there are a lot of online threats towards women in this political conflict. Even if it's not death threats, there is a lot of shaming and group attacks. One of my friends also had to run because she was threatened*



*by Han Nyein Oo. Han Nyein Oo released her address and threatened that they [SAC supporters] would kill her so she had to run.”*

### Interviewee Two: Pro-Democracy Activist and Advocate for Rohingya Rights

Interviewee Two is a pro-democracy activist who advocates for Rohingya rights and speaks against their persecution in Myanmar as a core part of her activism. She is not a member of the Rohingya community. The interviewee described the online abuse she has received both before and since the coup.

*“Before the coup, since I was involved with advocating the Rohingya, I would get attacked with phrases like, ‘you are trying to destroy race and religion’. ... These attacks were from Buddhist nationalists.”*

The interviewee noted that since the coup, attacks have come from both the pro-SAC side and from the pro-democracy side.

*“Whenever we talk about the revolution, the SAC side usually attacks us as ‘puppets of the West’ or ‘dollar eaters’. The influence of the West is what they really like to emphasise. And then there are attacks for being young and being a woman, also from the SAC side. The SAC attacks also come when we host video panels, especially relating to People’s Soldiers or armed resistance. Even when we use pseudonyms, they direct the attacks at the moderators and panellists for specific events.”*

*“From the pro-revolutionary side, the attacks come when we criticise Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and for pointing out that she didn’t do enough when it comes to the Rohingya issue. We get criticised for that, and also when we criticise the NUG and CRPH [Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw - a pro-democracy, Burmese legislative body in exile], and when we disagree with famous pro-revolutionary figures, like Pencilo and Saung Oo Hlaing. For instance ... when we point out factual errors in some of their posts, and if someone with a high reach shares it, that can induce attacks.”*

The interviewee was confident that they would be a target for doxxing channel Han Nyein Oo if the channel knew about her activity. She mentioned the prevalence of threats - including threats of rape - shared via direct message on Facebook and in closed groups, meaning she is not able to keep track of all of the abuse targeting her.

*“I don’t think I am noticed by Han Nyein Oo yet because if they knew about me there would already be photos and posts spread about me. I am not very active on Telegram and Twitter, so it is usually on Facebook that I get a lot of attacks and usually regarding the Rohingya*





*issue. ... Usually, the attacks are through Facebook and Messenger, sometimes phone calls and then sharing photos with captions that if you see this women, do this, do that, rape her ... Sometimes, [the threatening posts] are shared in [private] groups, so I can't even see them."*

When Myanmar Witness asked the interviewee about the impact online abuse has had on her, the interviewee said she has felt less safe, faced difficulties with family members and experienced victim blaming following online abuse targeting her. She said her life had been affected in three main ways following online attacks:

*"1) **Feeling unsafe.** I feel unsafe when I am alone. If someone looks at me or seems to follow me, I feel unsafe that they might do something to me, thinking something like 'are they the people who said online that they would rape me?' I am always on edge. I feel distrustful of people. ... I have not faced any threat in real life yet. I keep a lot of my personal information about family, relationships etc. very private [to keep everyone as safe as possible].*

*2) **Relationship with family.** Since I have been attacked like this, my family feels hurt too. My family is thinking things like 'we have raised this precious daughter well and someone is saying those horrible things to her'. They feel sad that I get attacked, and it hurts me to see them feel that way.*

*3) **Mental health.** I experience sadness and depression because people who don't even know me say such horrible things to me. I had to take a break two months ago as things were getting so bad. I have to go to therapy sessions to deal with this. Sometimes, it turns into a spiral of self-blaming because I start thinking this is because of me, because I posted something that led me to get attacked when I could have just stayed quiet. And my friends also sometimes blame me for this and I face victim blaming. They say things like: why would you go poke the bear - it's your fault for saying things. There are a lot of people who do not speak out about these attacks but I know I am not alone."*

Beyond the impact the online abuse has had on her personal life, the interviewee emphasised that the online abuse is having a widespread effect silencing politically-engaged women in Myanmar.

*"The attacks are terrible because they stamp out the voices of women. They terrorise ordinary women who fear they might get attacked by groups [which engage in abuse]... When we organise things like panels etc, it is really difficult to find women to speak on those panels now. It is*



*not surprising that a lot of women want to stop speaking up about politics in fear of attacks.”*

The interviewee also believes that politically-motivated abuse online is more extreme and often sexualised and threatening in nature when targeting women as opposed to men.

*“Originally, I thought that we get attacked because they do not like the topics that we speak about. But then I realised that if it is the same topic but discussed by a man, abusive responses would tend to argue against the topic, rather than engaging in gender-based attacks. But for women, they just go straight to saying sexually harassing things and identity-based attacks rather than saying anything about the topic itself... Some of the male activists that I work with are surprised that I get such horrifying sexual verbal abuse.”*

The interviewee does not believe the situation will improve without women-led solutions:

*“there are going to be more attacks like this, and we need to solve this one way or another.”*

### Interviewee 3: Member of Armed Resistance (PDF)

Myanmar Witness interviewed a PDF member who spoke about the role of military informers in supplying information and photos of women involved in armed resistance groups to influential, SAC-supporting doxxing channel Han Nyein Oo. She herself was doxxed by Han Nyein Oo, leading her to deactivate her social media for several months, cutting off her ability to advocate on behalf of the PDF online during that time.

The interviewee also spoke about sexualised disinformation used by SAC supporters online to discredit the PDF, claiming women fighters are ‘sluts’ who are sexually exploited in the jungle by male PDF members.

*“There are a lot of attacks targeted towards women and politically-motivated attacks... They often post really horrible things like, these PDFs are sluts of the PDF soldiers, trying to hurt our dignity. They are trying to terrorise us mentally. But the women soldiers here are strong emotionally. I know a couple of younger women here who were doxxed on Han Nyein Oo with their classic attacks of how we are being sexually abused/violated by other PDF soldiers. But for women in the jungle, it rarely gets to them emotionally. They just keep doing what they need to do.”*

### Interviewee 4: Pro-Democracy Activist - Rally Organiser

The pro-democracy activist interviewed described politically-motivated online harassment of





women by pro-military actors as predating the coup, and often coupled with offline harassment and intimidation. This harassment was often sexualised in nature and included death threats.

*“Online abuses have been happening even way before the coup. When we planned protests, they would usually spread and upload photos, especially those of women, to the adult websites. And when we go to protests, we have to give out phone numbers for the media and stuff like that, so our numbers would be public. And the attacks would use the photos from our social media pages and together with our phone numbers to post them on the adult websites, and say that ‘you can call them and sleep with them’ - things like that. There are often also death threats through messenger, especially for peace advocates. Those [aYatWit - plainclothes military personnel] from Sit Tat [SAC armed forces] would come to protest in disguise and beat people up. They would also send vulgar messages to women on messenger and send death threats as well.”*

The activist also highlighted the frequently hidden nature of the abuse targeting women, with direct messages being used by abusers to reach women on their social media pages. The problem is significantly more widespread than could be determined from public post monitoring alone, as noted in the limitations of this report.

*“In Myanmar now, I think almost every woman is now facing online abuse targeted towards them. There are attacks from messengers where no one can see.”*

The interviewee described the content of the abuse as being political and sexualised in nature, with some women also receiving death threats.

*“Attacks are directed against our beliefs or our dignity. There are also death threats. There are attacks like, ‘Do you want to be embarrassed and shamed?’”*

The interviewee also described the emergence of accounts systematically targeting politically-active women post-coup, including the Telegram channel mentioned previously in this report, Han Nyein Oo (HNO). The interviewee claimed that doxxing by this account has led to the doxxed individuals being arrested.

*“In the post-coup era, there are pages like Han Nyein Oo that women fear. Because of pages like Han Nyein Oo, over 100 people have been arrested already.”*

The interviewee noted that sexualised online harassment and the societal repercussions of this type of abuse was an additional barrier to political participation faced by young women in Myanmar, who already risk physical violence if they attend a protest.



*“In terms of political activities, since we are often organising protests, we have to think about the security of everyone participating, because they will come and beat everyone in the public etc. Young women these days are now more fearful to express their opinions and organise protests because they have to think of consequences, not only for life-threatening situations but also regarding dignity.”*

#### Interviewee 5: Member of the Rohingya Community

Myanmar Witness interviewed a member of the Rohingya community about her experiences of politically-motivated, online abuse. The interviewee spoke about women being targeted both from outside and within the community.

*“Women have to walk the line between being palatable to both communities so that we can continue to exist.”*

The interviewee recalled a doxxing and harassment campaign targeting her after she spoke out against some Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) members incentivising recruits by promising them any bride they want and against the mistreatment of women at Rohingya camps.

Following her criticism, she received dozens of unwanted calls and was called a “sell-out”, a “white man’s slave”. She was bombarded with pornographic messages and death threats by men within the Rohingya community, some living as far away as Chicago and Malaysia. The interviewee noted that she tends to receive more abuse from within her community on Facebook compared with other platforms, but that some of it has taken place via WhatsApp as a result of her phone number being publicly shared in retaliation for her critical comments about some Rohingya men. The interviewee said during this period she lived in “panic mode” and was afraid for her safety.

The interviewee said that attacks against Rohingya women from outside the community tend to be less personally-targeted and more dismissive in nature, ranging from “what does she know, she doesn’t speak Burmese” to the denial of the Rohingya as a whole.

The interviewee noted that coordinated, anti-Rohingya abuse has been present since long before the coup.

*“Myanmar bots and trolls and genocide deniers [have targeted] me more [as a result of some of my public comments], but they have been there ... even before the coup.”*

The interviewee says she now expects to receive abuse whenever she posts anything political online.

*“It shouldn’t be a thought process, but I now think about bracing myself for potential attacks when I post something critical. It is not just the*



*Burmese trolls or the ARSA attacks. When I post things on social media, then I risk public scrutiny. I am already from a very marginalised group, so I get more scrutiny and attacks. It always comes back to 'she doesn't know sh\*t', despite the fact that I am from the community. So, I always tell myself that attacks will happen. I also tell some people [before I post] who I know I can count on so that they can help keep me sane."*

The interviewee also provided reflections on how social media platforms could mitigate the abuse women are currently experiencing.

*"The platforms should have special mechanisms for activists and women activists to ensure that we can deal with mass attacks that we face on every day basis.*

*There should be a specific mechanism that we can report targeted threats and get an account suspended easily before they could do more harm to ourselves and the community. For example, I think it was earlier last year, there were a lot of attacks I faced on Facebook for talking about gender equality within the community.*

*These people came to Twitter and opened an account specifically to attack me, and I had to rally so many people and followers to report it and elicit a lot of help for it to get taken down. It should not be that difficult."*

### 3.4. Q4: Social Media Accountability: Does the abuse violate social media platform terms of use/code of conduct?

*This section examines whether abusive posts targeting women for their political views and actions are in violation of platform terms of use and if so, the speed and extent to which they are being removed from platforms. It also considers whether abusers are taking steps to evade moderation.*

#### 3.4.1. Summary

84% of abusive posts - occurring between February 2021 and November 2022 - identified in the qualitative analysis of 220 posts on Facebook, Telegram and Twitter remained live as of December 2022 and prior to Myanmar Witness reporting them to the platforms.<sup>12</sup> As a percentage of abusive posts on a by-platform basis:

- 85% of 79 Facebook posts remain live
- 81% of 126 Telegram posts remain live
- 100% of 15 Twitter posts remain live

<sup>12</sup> Link status last updated 6 December 2022



90% of the 79 examples of politically-motivated abuse targeting women on Facebook violated Facebook's existing Community Guidelines. During the analysis period, 14% (11) of the abusive posts violating Community Guidelines on Facebook had been taken down.

79% of posts from the qualitative study on Telegram violated Telegram's platform policy. 18% of abusive posts on Telegram are no longer live. 29% of these appear to have been removed as a result of an entire channel being taken down, rather than because of violating Telegram's platform policy.

In a minority of cases, abusive posts may be avoiding detection by platforms through coded language and use of gifs or memes. 42% of abusive posts on Facebook analysed as part of this research were found to have features that make moderation difficult without specialist monitoring.<sup>13</sup> Facebook was - proportionately - home to twice as many posts containing features that may impede human and/or algorithmic detection of abuse compared with Telegram.

The abuse does not always violate any existing platform rules, indicating a blind spot in social media guidelines designed to prevent abuse. This is particularly prevalent on Telegram, where 21% of the 126 abusive Telegram posts analysed in a qualitative analysis carried out by Myanmar Witness did not violate existing platform guidelines.

Telegram's policy - which prohibits calls for violence on public channels, bots, and chat groups - fails to capture doxxing posts that implicitly (rather than explicitly) call for violence, arrest or retaliation against an individual, in addition to failing to capture any abuse that may happen in closed groups.

Misogynist and anti-Muslim rhetoric that does not explicitly call for violence also fails to violate existing guidelines on Telegram. In this respect, other platform policies, such as Facebook's Hate Speech policies, which take hateful, if not overtly violent, rhetoric into account are a more appropriate fit to tackle online harms.

### 3.4.2. Platform Policy Violations

This section examines the policies that were found to be violated on each platform, in addition to the policy gaps identified in this research. Myanmar language-speaking team members at Myanmar Witness - with an understanding of linguistic nuances and developments in derogatory slang terms used informally online - assessed platform policy violations by qualitatively analysing post content against the criteria stated in platform policy documentation for each platform assessed.

Qualitative analysis of posts found that the majority of abuse violates existing platform policies, as shown in Table 7 below. In total, 87% of the abusive posts manually collected by Myanmar Witness were found to be in violation of platform policies.

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<sup>13</sup> Please see Appendix for information on how these features were determined.



Platform	Policy violated	Number of posts	% posts still live
Facebook	Privacy Violation (AND likely to violate 'Coordinating harm and promoting crime')	18	89
	Hate Speech - Other (Tier 2 or Tier 3)	39	85
	Hate Speech - Tier 1	11	91
	Not applicable	5	80
	Privacy Violation	3	67
	Violence and Incitement	3	67
Telegram	Not applicable	26	73
	Promoting violence on public channels, bots, chats	100	83
Twitter	Harassment/intimidation through insults/slurs/profanity	6	100
	Not applicable	5	100
	Wishing/hoping/calling for harm	4	100

Table 7. Violations across platforms from qualitative analysis of 220 posts, including whether the link remains live as of 8 December 2022.

## Telegram

In spite of some evidence of malicious channel takedowns, Myanmar Witness has found evidence of internationally-known, malicious Telegram channels targeting women in Myanmar that successfully use backup accounts to stay active with a healthy follower base on the platform. These backup accounts stay live for months, amassing tens of thousands of followers.

All of the most prolific doxxing channels identified in this research were pro-SAC. At least three of these accounts - **Han Nyein Oo (HNO)**, **Sergeant Phoe Si** and **Kyaw Swar** - have been previously highlighted in [international reporting](#) on doxxing campaigns against citizens in Myanmar.

13 Telegram channels with a combined following of more than 150,000 appear to be responsible for a majority of abuse detected across the qualitative and quantitative studies. These channels have been documented and, with the help of media partners, Myanmar Witness has provided this channel list to Telegram. Myanmar Witness' qualitative analysis found that doxxing posts by Han Nyein Oo and Kyaw Swar were among the most shared - both within Telegram and cross-platform, on Facebook. Between them, as of December 2022, just two channels - Kyaw Swar and Han Nyein Oo - have more than 140,000 followers. Kyaw Swar has more than 75,000 followers, Han Nyein Oo more than 54,000, and Sergeant Phoe Si more than 6,000.

As of December 2022, all of these actors appear to remain active on Telegram - with Han Nyein Oo potentially using backup accounts that were not present at the start of the research period. During the research period, two Han Nyein Oo accounts appeared to have been removed, though at least two are currently active and have amassed more than 50,000 followers, as of 8 December 2022. The resilience of Han Nyein Oo channels following possible platform takedowns suggests that Telegram is not acting quickly enough to shut down new accounts belonging to known, malicious actors that have previously been removed from the platform.

The largest, current Han Nyein Oo channel has been growing steadily since at least November 2022 (figure 30).



Figure 30. Follower growth for known doxxing channel Han Nyein Oo's new account.

79% of Telegram posts examined in the qualitative analysis were in violation of platform policy.

Platform	Violation	Number of instances
Telegram	Promoting violence on public channels, bots, chats	100
Telegram	Not applicable (Abusive content does not violate existing guidelines)	26

Table 8. Telegram policy violations.

Telegram’s [Terms of Service](#) prohibit “promoting violence on public channels, bots, chats”. Myanmar Witness analysed the posts that do not appear to violate existing rules on Telegram and found that posts that are violative and offensive, without overtly calling for violence, are prevalent. The table below shows that seven instances of doxxing, and three posts threatening to release sexual images of the abuse targets, on Telegram did not violate Telegram’s platform rules, in spite of being a clear violation of an individual’s privacy and, potentially, safety. This finding highlights the urgency of current, ongoing [discussions](#) of how violence, including gender-based violence, is defined in an online context.





Additionally, where violence is not directly promoted, some misogynistic and anti-Muslim rhetoric fails to violate existing guidelines. In this respect, other platform policies which take hateful, if not overtly violent, rhetoric into account are a more appropriate fit to tackle online harms.

In the short term, it is recommended that Telegram explicitly bans hateful rhetoric targeting [protected characteristics](#), individuals’ right to privacy and sexualised, online violative behaviours within its guidelines, due to the subjective nature of existing guidelines that allow non-explicitly violent doxxing and hateful rhetoric to thrive. Based on survivor interviews, which discuss the fact that abuse is sometimes coordinated in private, online spaces, it is further recommended that Telegram expands its policy to include private channels, in addition to public channels.

Not applicable	Anti-Muslim hate	1
	Doxxing	7
	Female political figure named or depicted in derogatory way	12
	Misogynist hate	1
	Political stance referred to in derogatory way	2
	Threat of, or actual, release of intimate images	3
Promoting violence on public channels, bots, chats	Anti-LGBT hate	1
	Anti-Muslim hate	2
	Doxxing	66
	Doxxing encouragement/crowdsourcing of information	2
	Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of arrest	22
	Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of vigilante violence	3
	Female political figure named or depicted in derogatory way	3
	Misogynist hate	1

Table 9. Count of main or most severe type of abuse on Telegram, grouped by policy violation type.

Myanmar Witness also identified at least one [Telegram-verified](#)<sup>14</sup> account belonging to Han Nyein Oo to which other doxxing channels direct their users for information-gathering purposes. In other words, channels that doxx women for their political views or actions are, in some cases, proactively **crowdsourcing information about potential, new doxxing targets via an official, Telegram-verified channel**. In conjunction with media partners, Myanmar Witness has reported this channel to Telegram.

## Facebook

90% of the 79 examples of politically-motivated abuse targeting women on Facebook violated Facebook’s existing [Community Standards](#).

The 79 Facebook posts qualitatively assessed by Myanmar Witness had a minimum combined total of almost 33,000 interactions (14,371 likes, 15,962 comments, 1,369 shares and 1,051 views). Myanmar Witness assesses the true number of interactions to be significantly higher as some users who had shared popular posts (indicated by high share and/or comment numbers) had restricted the total number of likes from public view, and ‘view’ data was not always available.

<sup>14</sup> Verified status evident in the blue tick next to the account name





Violation	Number of instances
Hate Speech - Other (Tier 2 or Tier 3)	39
Privacy Violation (AND may also violate 'Coordinating Harm and Promoting Crime')	18
Hate Speech - Tier 1	11
Not applicable (Abusive content does not violate existing guidelines)	5
Privacy Violation	3
Violence and Incitement	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>

Table 10. Facebook policy violations.

Policy_violated	Main_or_most_extreme_abuse_type_in_post	Count
Coordinating harm and promoting crime	Doxxing	10
	Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of arrest	4
	Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of vigilante violence	1
	Political stance referred to in derogatory way	1
	Threat of, or actual, release of intimate images	2
Hate Speech - Other (Tier 2 or Tier 3)	Anti-LGBT hate	4
	Anti-Muslim hate	3
	Female political figure named or depicted in derogatory way	22
	Misogynist hate	2
	Other	1
	Political stance referred to in derogatory way	6
	Threat of, or actual, release of intimate images	1
Hate Speech - Tier 1	Anti-LGBT hate	9
	Female political figure named or depicted in derogatory way	2
Not applicable	Anti-LGBT hate	1
	Female political figure named or depicted in derogatory way	2
	Political stance referred to in derogatory way	2
Privacy Violation	Doxxing	2
	Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of arrest	1
Violence and Incitement	Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of arrest	2
	Other	1

Table 11. Count of policy violations by type of abuse on Facebook.

A majority of the politically-motivated abuse that did not violate Facebook’s Community Standards appeared to be purely political in nature, mocking a woman’s political stance rather than promoting violence or attacking further, protected characteristics.



While all 20 doxxing examples on Facebook violate Facebook’s ‘Privacy Violation’ guidelines, 15 (75%) of them were assessed to also be ‘Coordinating Harm’ against the target, and two (10%) were explicitly inciting violence.

Six posts on Facebook contained the highly pejorative term ‘ကုလားမယား’/‘ကုလား’ (‘kalar’), which is a highly abusive word used against Muslims. Facebook has [previously attempted to ban its use](#) on the platform. ‘မယား’ means ‘wife’. As of December 2022, two of the six posts containing the term ‘Muslim wife’ appear to have been taken down.

## Twitter

As the focus of Myanmar Witness’ qualitative study was Facebook and Telegram, detail on the categories of violations from the small number of Twitter examples collected for in-depth analysis is not included in the main body of this report and can be found in Annex 5.2.3

### 3.4.3. Possible Takedowns to Date

Across all platforms, 84% of 220 abusive posts from Facebook, Telegram and Twitter identified in the qualitative analysis - spanning February 2021 to November 2022 - remained live as of December 2022.<sup>15</sup>

As a percentage of abusive posts on a by-platform basis:

- 85% of 79 Facebook posts remain live
- 81% of 126 Telegram posts remain live
- 100% of 15 Twitter posts remain live

With the exception of Telegram links that are no longer live, there does not appear to be a clear pattern or explanation for which types of abuse or platform policy violations lead to the links becoming inactive or remaining live. On Telegram, a majority of posts that are no longer live were authored by accounts belonging to Han Nyein Oo, a pro-military figure who has received both [regional](#) and wider, [international](#) media attention for his involvement in doxxing campaigns and coordination with the SAC to secure the arrest of SAC opponents. One of HNO’s channels appears to have been taken down in late 2022 but, as shown in figure 30 above, a backup Han Nyein Oo account quickly took its place, amassing more than 50,000 followers in a matter of weeks.

### 3.4.4. Abusive Nature of Posts May Be Evading Detection

67% of the 220 posts documented within the qualitative study contained no features that would be likely to impede abuse detection. 33% of posts included at least one feature that would make the abuse more difficult for platform moderators to detect. Disaggregated:

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<sup>15</sup> Link status last updated 6 December 2022. Some posts and channels have been removed subsequent to Myanmar Witness and media partners engagement with platforms.



- 16% used coded slang, making detection difficult without specialist monitoring and keyword risk assessment by country experts.
- 10% relied on conveying the abuse through visual content (image, video, meme or GIF) - a format more difficult for both humans and machines to make sense of, particularly without specialist contextual knowledge in the case of memes.
- 1% used image filters, which may impact machine classification.
- 6% relied on miscellaneous other techniques that would potentially impede a human or machine’s ability to detect abuse within a post.

Post features that may impede abuse detection	Number of posts
Not applicable	148
Use of coded slang	35
Use of image, video, meme or GIF	21
Other	13
Use of image filters	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>

Table 12. Post features that could impede abuse detection.

### Telegram

Among the 126 Telegram posts analysed, 21% of posts contained features that may impede algorithmic and/or human detection of abuse. Use of coded slang was the most prevalent feature on Telegram that may impede abuse detection.

### Facebook

Among the 79 Facebook posts analysed, 42% of posts contained features that may impede algorithmic and/or human detection of abuse. 34% of posts contained coded slang that would be difficult to classify as abuse without specialist knowledge and monitoring.

A table giving a by-platform view of each means of potential censorship evasion is shown in Annex 5.6.3.



## 4. Recommendations

### 4.1. Social Media Platform Accountability

#### ii. **Commit to a collaborative, specialist and survivor-led approach to tackling online abuse.**

This is in light of evidence collected by Myanmar Witness that shows the volume and intensity of abuse and hate speech targeting women in Myanmar and its impacts; instances of posts remaining online despite clearly violating platform policies on abuse and hate speech; and, the lack of platform data available to affected communities and researchers to seeking to better understand the situation and develop effective responses.

The recommended approach would involve dedicating more resources to monitoring Myanmar-language content, in consultation with Burmese women's and digital rights organisations and survivors with insight into the nature and impact of the abuse. This proposed approach will also require platforms to make data accessible to affected communities so that they can work with platforms to track abuse and the effectiveness of countermeasures.

While Facebook in particular has reportedly [stepped up](#) its Myanmar monitoring efforts since news broke about the platform's role in spreading anti-Rohingya hate, these efforts are still failing to capture dangerous rhetoric which is, in some cases, overtly inciting people towards violence against women. Human expertise is needed to stay abreast of rapidly evolving derogatory slang terms used informally online and to design strategies that capture as many abusive posts as possible, including those that use coded slang and/or imagery in their abuse, while avoiding removing valid content, including commentary on and documentation of human rights violations.

For example, this research has found that the word 'ကုလား' ('kalar') - which Facebook has tried to ban - appears used in conjunction with the term 'မယား' ('wife') and is used online to discredit Burmese women who are perceived to be too lenient in their views of Myanmar's Muslim population. It is possible that close monitoring of the term 'ကုလားမယား' by platforms would have a positive impact in reducing hate speech that is both sexist and anti-Muslim in nature.

Given the low number of accounts responsible for a high proportion of abusive and threatening posts on Telegram, it is clear that more active monitoring and timely banning of known, malicious accounts and their backup channels by Telegram would have a significant impact on the prevalence of hate speech on the platform.



- iii. **Review existing policies and platform features to encompass types of abuse not currently captured in their terms of use and features which may aid in the doxxing of women.**

Based on this research, Telegram in particular should consider reviewing existing policies to encompass more types of abuse not already captured in the platform terms of use.

As of January 2023, [Telegram informs](#) its users that they are not to:

- “Use our service to send spam or scam users.”
- “Promote violence on publicly viewable Telegram channels, bots, etc.”
- “Post illegal pornographic content on publicly viewable Telegram channels, bots.”

On Telegram, sexualised and hateful content, including content that could be used for harm (such as a person’s personal contact information) should be included in the platform’s prohibited content policy, in addition to content that is overtly violent or explicitly calling for violent acts to be carried out. It is recommended that Telegram explicitly bans hateful rhetoric targeting protected characteristics, individuals’ right to privacy, and sexualised, online violative behaviours within its guidelines, due to the subjective nature of existing guidelines that allow non-explicitly violent doxxing and hateful rhetoric to thrive.

Survivor interviews have highlighted the prevalence of hate speech received and coordinated through private online spaces and direct messages. It is recommended that Telegram’s Terms of Service are expanded to private groups and channels, and to malicious intelligence-gathering accounts like Han Nyein Oo’s blue-tick intelligence-gathering channel.

On Facebook, it appears that the ‘Top Fan’ feature for Pages may be aiding abusers’ ability to identify and target politically-active women online. Myanmar Witness recommends further investigation into this feature and its potential negative consequences. If further research confirms that the feature is putting users identified as ‘top fans’ of certain pages at greater risk of targeted, online attacks, it is recommended that the ‘Top Fan’ feature is restricted to be viewable by page admins only.

- iv. **Reduce the time it takes to remove abusive accounts following a report of threatening activity.**

Interviews revealed that accounts making threats to women online remain active long after a report is filed, allowing the abuser account to further doxx the victim and increase the threat and harms they are facing. Platforms must invest in reviewing and quickly actioning reports, as well as transparently communicating report responses to targets of abuse. Further, it is critical that platforms take a broader view on reported content, looking not just at the single post reported, but at other activity from an abusive account, including the networks it may be involved in to further abuse.



## 4.2. Survivor Support

- v. **Dedicate resources to women, and women and digital rights groups providing support to online abuse survivors, and campaigning to increase awareness about the problem of gender-based violence on and offline.**

Where possible, support should be given to groups working to support women in and from Myanmar who have survived online abuse to help survivors hold their digital ground and break the cycle of stigma attached to abuse which affects many survivors' lives. Useful forms of support include: direct financial support and training resources - from psychological support training to operational security training and resources. This could be delivered through expanding support to organisations already delivering valuable support to women who have survived offline abuse, and to organisations working on online hate speech and violence to further provide survivor support.

- vi. **Support efforts that help destigmatize the topic of abuse.**

This research highlighted the prevalence and power of sexualised online abuse when it is used to shame women with 'unfavourable' political beliefs into retreating from public life. Myanmar Witness recommends that every effort is made by various stakeholders to support and amplify efforts by actors that seek to counter victim-blaming narratives that shame women; highlight the humanity of abuse survivors and; attribute the abuse to the abuser(s), and not the survivor of abuse. This can and should be done with the help of media partners in addition to local NGOs, support groups and activists.

## 4.3. Avenues for Future Research

- vii. **Proactively monitor public Telegram and other channels and groups engaging in doxxing to better understand the relationship between online and offline abuse and the impacts of doxxing.**

Both desk-based research and interviews highlighted instances where a politically-motivated doxxing attack preceded an offline arrest and/or physical attack. Myanmar Witness observed some doxxing channels being shut down and reappearing under slightly altered names, making it impossible to access historic channel data from channels that had not been previously archived. Going forward, proactive monitoring would allow researchers to cross-check the names of doxxed individuals with any offline instances of arrests and/or attacks that might occur post-doxxing, and to keep monitoring groups as they evolve over time.

Myanmar Witness also recommends further, proactive research into the impact of doxxing. Firstly, to establish whether changes were made to doxxing target profiles as a direct result of the doxxing attacks. Secondly, to capture the wider impact of doxxing on women's lives. To do this, larger-n monitoring coupled with further survivor interviews are recommended.





viii. **Appoint specialist teams to proactively document sexual abuse online.**

Myanmar Witness recommends that organisations with the resources to ethically, securely and systematically document instances of sexual abuse online - including potential cases of child sexual exploitation and other sexual violence (a risk inherent in proactively documenting revenge-porn-type online abuse) - conduct further investigations into this type of abuse to ensure that it is properly documented and its scale better understood. It is recommended that this includes further investigations into Telegram, where preliminary research identified channels involved in the distribution of revenge porn, with a risk of encountering child sexual exploitation material.

ix. **Expand data collection of abusive posts to enable robust comparisons between different groups of women on different platforms.**

Myanmar Witness recommends further research with a larger dataset to enable robust comparisons between levels of hate affecting different communities of women taking into account ethnic and religious factors, in addition to physical and mental health. Based on insights from subject-matter experts within the team, Myanmar Witness further research could also encompass an examination of additional platforms, including YouTube and TikTok.

x. **Work with research practitioners, policymakers, NGOs and first responders to further develop a framework for ethical online research.**

While Myanmar Witness sought to deploy a robust ethical framework for carrying out this piece of research, Myanmar Witness recognises that there is a lack of widely applicable or applied best practice guidelines for researchers looking at online abuse of women from an open source data perspective. Myanmar Witness therefore recommends that OSINT organisations, on-the-ground support organisations, and policymakers collaborate on a formal set of guidelines designed to avoid (re-)traumatising a survivor of online abuse or putting them at risk as a result of their inclusion in a research project, to be on par with similar efforts made for in-person research interviewing abuse survivors.



## 5. Appendix

### 5.1. Definitions

#### 5.1.1. Abuse-Related Terms

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Politically-motivated abuse</b>	Abuse targeting women for their political views and/or activities
<b>Women</b>	Cisgender and transgender women
<b>Anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric</b>	Posts referring to LGBTQIA+ individuals or status in a derogatory or hateful way
<b>Anti-Muslim rhetoric</b>	Posts referring to Muslim individuals or Islam in a derogatory or hateful way
<b>Death threat</b>	Death threats made against a targeted individual and/or group
<b>Threat of violence</b>	Threatening the abuse target with physical violence
<b>Threat of sexual violence or rape</b>	Threatening to sexually assault or rape the abuse target
<b>Threats against family members</b>	Threatening the abuse target’s family, rather than/in addition to the abuse target themselves
<b>Doxxing</b>	Revealing the abuse target’s personal information, such as their full name, home address. Email or phone number. This is often shared with an explicit or implicit call for retaliation against the doxxed individual
<b>Threat of doxxing</b>	Threatening to expose someone’s personal information
<b>Inciting violence</b>	Encouraging others to commit violent acts against an individual or group
<b>Misogynist rhetoric</b>	Language attacking women, often promoting negative and harmful stereotypes of women
<b>Political intolerance</b>	Attacking an individual or group based on their political views
<b>Revenge porn</b>	The sharing of explicit or intimate pictures of a person without their



	consent, often intended as a form of social punishment
<b>Tech-facilitated gender-based violence</b>	“An act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media against a person on the basis of their gender.” ( <a href="#">UNFPA, 2021</a> )
<b>Gendered disinformation</b>	A subset of tech-facilitated gender-based violence “that uses false or misleading gender and sex-based narratives against women, often with some degree of coordination, aimed at deterring women from participating in the public sphere.” ( <a href="#">Jankowicz et al, 2021</a> )

Table 13. Working definitions of key terms and phrases.

Where possible, we have also categorised the posts collected for our research according to the platform terms of service for Facebook, Telegram and Twitter. These are listed below.

### 5.1.2. Platform Policy Terms

PLATFORM	RELEVANT POLICY
Facebook	Coordinating Harm and Promoting Crime
Facebook	Hate Speech - Tier 1 [implicitly the most severe forms of hate speech, including dehumanising language]
Facebook	Hate Speech - Tier 2 [implicitly medium severity hate speech]
Facebook	Hate Speech - Tier 3 [implicitly medium-low severity hate speech]
Facebook	Privacy Violation
Facebook	Violence and Incitement
Telegram	Promoting violence on public channels, bots, chats
Twitter	Violent threats
Twitter	Wishing/hoping/calling for harm
Twitter	Unwanted sexual advances/sexualisation
Twitter	Harassment/intimidation through insults/slurs/profanity
Twitter	Encouraging others to harass an individual
Twitter	Denying mass casualty events took place

Table 14. Relevant platform terms of use



More detail on each policy can be found within [Facebook's Community Standards](#), [Telegram's Terms of Service](#) and [Twitter's Hateful conduct policy](#).

### 5.1.3. Political Terms, Figures and Abbreviations

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>SAC</b>	State Administration Council - the government administration established by the military after their takeover by coup in February 2021
<b>SAC armed forces</b>	Also referred to in some reporting on Myanmar as the 'Tatmadaw', or simply the 'military' or 'sit tat'
<b>Ma Ba Tha</b>	A Buddhist nationalist movement within Myanmar, also referred to in some reporting on Myanmar as the 'Patriotic Association of Myanmar' and/or the 'Association for the Protection of Race and Religion'
<b>NUG</b>	National Unity Government - the democratic government ousted by the military coup
<b>PDF</b>	People's Defence Force of Myanmar - armed groups, some of which are affiliated to varying degrees with the NUG, fighting SAC armed forces
<b>NLD</b>	National League for Democracy - leading political party overthrown by military coup in 2021

*Table 15. Terms relating to the main political and armed organisations discussed in this report.*



## 5.2. Methodology

### 5.2.1. Determining Abuse Scale and Nature

#### Telegram Trend Analysis

Myanmar Witness launched a quantitative study of Telegram posts to help determine the **scale and nature** of the abuse and to provide additional, temporal context for the **social media accountability** question.

Myanmar Witness carried out quantitative analysis - enabling the mapping of broad trends over time - examining posts created and/or shared by 100 public Telegram channels and groups. 64 of these groups were labelled as being broadly pro-SAC, and 36 were labelled as being broadly pro-democracy. Any findings comparing the activity and outputs of the two groups are weighted to account for the difference in the numbers of groups representing each broad political category. Telegram was the focus of Myanmar Witness' quantitative study due to its popularity with hate groups - identified through preliminary, original research by investigators on the team - and limitations on bulk collection and analysis of current and historic data in Meta and Twitter.

Telegram post data were collected using open-source tool [Telethon](#) and subsequently cleaned and filtered for occurrences of gendered hate speech terms (shown in Annex X) that closely co-occur with mentions of prominent political figures who are women.

For analysis, only the text content of the posts are used. The posts are transformed into machine analysis-friendly, text-only format by:

- removing extra whitespaces and invisible characters;
- detecting and converting Zawgyi Burmese character encoding to Unicode using [Google's Myanmar Tools](#);
- removing extra whitespaces and invisible characters (repeated after conversion);
- removal of any duplicate posts, identifiable by 'post-id' variable; and
- syllable-segmentation of posts is carried out for more accurate keyword matching.

To reduce false positives that could be created from using gendered hate and doxxing terms alone within the quantitative analysis, results were manually validated to ensure that false positives (e.g. out of context uses of abusive phrases, instances of irony, awareness raising or satire) were minimised. To capture online abuse of women that was specifically politically-motivated as accurately as possible, the gendered hate terms were paired with the names of prominent women politicians and political activists from Myanmar to increase the likelihood that specifically politically-motivated abuse against women was being captured, as opposed to gendered hate rhetoric more generally. All search terms used were selected, tested and refined by Myanmar language-speaking specialists on the team.

1,680,361 posts from the 100 selected groups were collected and analysed in our quantitative study to map trends over time since the coup. Of these posts, 7,361 posts (0.43%) were found to



contain politically-motivated hate speech targeting prominent, politically active women, and more than 8,338 (0.5%) contained hateful rhetoric directed at women in general.

Significant efforts were made to include an even number of groups representing different political views. However, researchers found there were significantly more pro-SAC groups on Telegram than other groups with a clearly discernible political preference. As a result, 36 of the 100 groups were classified as including members holding broadly pro-democracy views, and 64 of these groups were assessed to include members with broadly pro-SAC views. Subsequent analyses were weighted to reduce any biases occurring as a result of including more pro-SAC groups in the analysis.

### Cross-Platform Analysis

Focusing on Facebook and Telegram, Myanmar Witness conducted a qualitative study of social media posts to help address the questions of the **scale and nature of abuse**, in addition to abuse **attribution** and **social media accountability**, which are outlined in more detail in their respective sections of this Methodology. Myanmar Witness carried out in-depth, qualitative analysis of 220 posts: 126 from Telegram, 79 from Facebook, and 15 from Twitter. Facebook was a significant focus within the qualitative study due to its status as the [most widely used social media site](#) in Myanmar.

Myanmar Witness used a wide range of search terms determined and validated by Myanmar-speaking analysts on the team to identify politically-motivated, abusive posts on different platforms. Several team members reviewed the search terms to ensure that abuse targeting women of different backgrounds and political opinions were captured in addition to general, misogynistic terms. Myanmar Witness analysts then manually collected the abusive posts and logged data on key variables pertaining to the type of abuse, whether and how the abuse violated platform policies, and abuser and abuse target demographics.

Researchers initially spent an equal amount of time searching for posts under each search term, and also divided their time equally between Facebook and Telegram during the qualitative data collection phase. In some cases, search terms yielded misogynistic or abusive posts with no clear political motivation. Such posts were not included in the analysis. Many of the posts collected were clearly retaliatory in nature - including screenshots or descriptions of the woman's alleged political transgressions within the abusive posts.

Summary statistics of the key variables aided Myanmar Witness' assessment of the **nature** of politically-motivated, online abuse targeting women.

Annex 5.2. includes a list of variables collected and examined for the qualitative analysis.

### Search Terms

The following terms were used to aid the detection of politically-motivated, abusive rhetoric directed at women online. Terms not specific to women are included as some terms are gender-neutral - these were included in the qualitative data collection process where each post was manually validated by native Myanmar-language speakers.





Myanmar Witness analysts note that derogatory slang terms used informally online are ever-evolving and that future research and monitoring efforts must be done in collaboration with country specialists to maximise search term efficacy.

Abusive terms	English translation	Sexualised rhetoric	Anti - Muslim rhetoric	Anti - LGBTQIA + rhetoric
ဘောပြားမ	Tomboy (negative connotations)	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE
မုဆိုးမ	Widow	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
ကုလားမ	Muslim woman	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE
ကောင်မ	Rude word for women	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
နို့ပြားမ	Woman with small breasts	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE
စပျံ့မ	Rude word for women	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE
\$ကောင်မ	\$ = 'F word', combined with rude word for women	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
နီပေါမ	NLD coward woman supporter; Derogatory reference to political position	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
လင်ဒရူးမ	Woman pervert	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE
ဖလူးမ	Rude word for woman	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE
ကြက်မ	Woman prostitute (also means 'hen')	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
နီကြောက်မ	Rude word for woman NLD supporter	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
သက်သက်ခံ	Derogatory reference to woman politician (rude pun on name)	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE
အစိမ်းမ	Derogatory reference to woman politician	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
ခရိုနီ ဘီလူးမ	A woman crony monster	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
ခေါမစိန်	Rude word for woman with buck tooth	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
ဖာစုကြည်	Prostitute Su Kyi	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE



မာဆယ်လို့	Prostitute [Pan]Cilo	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE
ကုလားမယား	Wife of a Muslim	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE
နီပိတ်မ	Dumb Red Woman	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
ခံဆယ်လို့	Accepting for having sex [Pen] Cilo	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE
မွတ်စု	Muslim Su	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE

Table 16. Seed list of keywords used to search for abusive posts

Doxxing terms	English translation
address	-
street	-
violence encouraged	-
နေရပ်	address (variation 1)
လိပ်စာ	address (variation 2)
လမ်း	street
အမှတ်	number (as in building no.)
အိမ်နံပါတ်	house number
အိမ်အမှတ်	house number (formal)
ရပ်ကွက်	neighbourhood
နေတယ်	to live
အလုပ်လုပ်	to work
အကြမ်းဖက်မှုကိုအားပေးတယ်	violence encouraged

Table 17. Doxxing keywords



Name (Burmese)	Name (English)	Political affiliation	Additional Keywords
သက်သက်ခိုင်	Thet Thet Khine	Pro-SAC	
အောင်ဆန်းစုကြည်	Aung San Suu Kyi	Pro-democracy	assk suu kyi su စု စုကြည် ဒေါ်စု အမေစု
ပန်ဆယ်လို	Pencilo	Pro-democracy	ဆယ်လို စပပုံ pencilo အမေပန်
သင်ဇာရွှန်းလဲ့ရည်	Thinzar Shoon Lei Yi	Pro-democracy	ကုလားမ
အိသဉ္ဇာမောင်	Ei Thinzar Maung	Pro-democracy	သာကူး ဝန်ကြီးမမ ဒုဝန်ကြီး မမ
အက်စတာဇေနေ	Esther Ze Naw Bamvo	Pro-democracy/ minority rights	ကချင်မ စစ်ဗိုလ်သမီး
စန်နုပန်	Seng Nu Pan	Pro-democracy/ minority rights	
ဒေါ်သီရိရတနာ	Daw Thiri Yadanar	Pro-democracy	
ဒေါ်ထုမေ	Daw Htoot May	Pro-democracy	
ဒေါ်ဇင်မာအောင်	Daw Zin Mar Aung	Pro-democracy	အမေ့သမီး
ဝေဝေနု	Wai Wai Nu	Pro-democracy/ minority rights	
<to-add>	Yasmin Ullah	Pro-democracy/ minority rights	



မေစံပယ်ဖြူ	May Sabe Phyu	Pro-democracy	
ချောစုစံ	Chaw Su San	Pro-democracy	
အေးမြင့်အောင်အောင်	Aye Myint Aung Aung	Pro-democracy	
နော်ဝါးခူးရိုး	Naw Wah Ku Shee	Pro-democracy/ minority rights	
ပိုင်ဖြိုးသူ	Paing Phyo Thu	Pro-democracy	
နော်ဇော်နော် လှလှစိုး	Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe	Pro-democracy	
နော်မေဦး	Naw May Oo	Pro-democracy/ minority rights	
ထားထက်ထက်	Htar Htet Htet	Pro-democracy	
ယဉ်လတ်	Yin Latt	Pro-democracy	
နေခြည်ဦး	Nay Chi Oo	Pro-democracy	
အငြိမ်း	A Nyein	Pro-democracy	

Table 18. Names of prominent, politically-active women

### 5.2.2. Examining Attribution

Myanmar Witness conducted a qualitative evaluation of abuser profiles, where these were publicly viewable, from the dataset of the 220 manually-collected and validated examples outlined in section 6.1.1.

Myanmar Witness collected and analysed indicators in line with Meta’s [framework for attributing online activity](#) to certain actors. These were: evidence of political intent behind malicious activity, evidence of coordination, and TTPs - tools, techniques and procedures known to be used by certain actors.

To address the attribution question around the perpetrators of the abuse, Myanmar Witness logged publicly-available profile and/or group information, noting demographic variables, evidence of coordination, and evidence of links with official, political channels, individuals or groups. An abuser profile or group was considered ‘linked with’ official SAC channels if they:

- appeared to moderate pro-SAC groups/channels;
- had their content repeatedly endorsed by official-SAC groups/channels/individuals;
- appeared to be in the SAC/ SAC armed forces; or



- appeared to have close friends/family/profile or group links with individuals, groups or channels in the SAC/ SAC armed forces.

### 5.2.3. Platform Accountability Analysis

To address the **social media accountability** question, Burmese-speaking members of the Myanmar Witness team with an understanding of linguistic nuances and newly-emerging derogatory slang terms assessed whether the collected, abusive posts violated the platform policies of Facebook, Telegram and Twitter respectively, and logged which policies were violated.

Researchers also considered and logged how perpetrators of politically-motivated online abuse against women are able to evade detection. For example, through use of non-standard characters, gifs/moving images, abbreviations and image filters. These features were considered for inclusion based on an evaluation of post features in Myanmar Witness' dataset, coupled with an assessment of [features that are known to pose challenges to automated, online abuse detection](#).

### 5.2.4. Determining Impact

#### Interviews

In partnership with **Sisters to Sisters**, a grassroots organisation supporting women in and from Myanmar, Myanmar Witness carried out in-depth interviews with five women who have experienced politically-motivated, online abuse. Research partners from grassroots organisation Sisters to Sisters and local LGBTQIA+ organisation helped to ensure that intersectional voices were included; at least two of the interviewees had an intersectional background.

To ensure the interviews were conducted as safely and sensitively as possible, Myanmar Witness analysts and Sisters to Sisters members participated in training sessions dedicated to Operational Security, delivered by experts within the Myanmar Witness team. Sisters to Sisters and Myanmar Witness team members also took part in an Ethical Interview Practices upskilling session delivered by the DART Center.

Informed by guidelines developed by the [DART Center](#) and the [Sexual Violence Research Initiative](#), interviews were conducted on the basis of:

- **Informed consent.** After reviewing the purpose and terms of the interview process, interviewees were asked to provide written consent. They were again asked for their consent at the start of each interview.
- **Anonymisation** of interviewees and removal of potentially personal-identifying information from both the interview transcripts and final report, unless otherwise agreed. This is in addition to interviewees being advised not to disclose any personally-identifying information in advance of the interview itself, should they need to feel additionally secure in the process.



- **Respect and sensitivity.** With every reasonable effort made to accommodate the needs, timings and wishes of the interviewees.

Interviewees were women who had experienced politically-motivated abuse online. Questions were developed and interviewees contacted in collaboration with partner organisation, Sisters to Sisters. Interviewees were asked the following questions (shown below in English):

1. Do you consent to your answers being included in the research project, on the condition that all information is anonymized?
2. Can you introduce your background? How do you think the abusers became aware of you and/or your political activities or beliefs?
3. Regarding online abuses, please describe what happened – including when and how you were targeted, noting any relevant social media platforms, the language or tactics used to bully you, and others' reactions.
4. How widespread do you think the problem of politically-motivated online abuse against women from Myanmar is?

The interviewers were given the freedom to ask additional, follow-up questions based on the respondents' answers to each of the main questions, provided the follow-up questions did not violate Myanmar Witness' ethical standards and trauma-informed interview approach.

### Doxxing Impact Analysis

Drawing on the manually-collected, cross-platform database of abusive posts, Myanmar Witness examined instances of doxxing. Myanmar Witness analysts recorded whether the doxxed profiles remained visible, active and/or public as a means of determining whether doxxed women were appearing to withdraw from online, public life and discourse, following the doxxing attack.

### Case Study Analysis

Myanmar Witness performed case study analyses of publicly-available posts pertaining to the doxxing and arrests of women to help establish possible, causal links between online and offline attacks. At the centre of the case study analyses were the arrests of Survivor B and Survivor A. These cases were brought to Myanmar Witness' attention through local media coverage. The team performed open-source analysis of posts by and about the two women, mapping the sequence of their alleged transgressions, the doxxing posts targeting them, the dates of their arrests and subsequent claims of responsibility or celebration by doxxing channels.





### 5.2.5. Variables Assessed in Qualitative Analysis

Variables pertaining to the nature of the politically-motivated abuse

Main type of abuse
Anti-LGBT rhetoric
Anti-Muslim rhetoric
Death threat
Doxxing (general)
Doxxing (including calls for arrest)
Doxxing (including calls for vigilante violence)
Doxxing (encouragement/ crowdsourcing of information to doxx an individual)
Female political figure named or depicted in derogatory way
Inciting violence (encourages others to carry out violent action)
Misogynist rhetoric (rhetoric undermining or promoting hate against women - noting that many of the other types of abuse listed can be inherently misogynistic)
Political stance referred to in derogatory way
Threat against family
Threat of doxxing
Threat of rape
Threat of violence (directly threatens target with violence)
Other

Variables pertaining to intersectionality and protected characteristics

Myanmar Witness notes that not all minority groups within Myanmar are captured by some of the groups of variables below. However, due to the relatively small-n qualitative study, for analysis purposes it made sense to broaden the groupings of potential vulnerabilities. In the



Recommendations section of this report, Myanmar Witness states that larger-n, future research is needed to address issues of intersectionality in greater depth.

Abuse target ethnic or religious identity	Abuse target minority known to be lesbian or bisexual	Abuse target known to have trans or non-binary gender identity	Abuse target known to have physical or mental health condition	Political leaning of target	Target well-known politician or activist
Ethnic minority Buddhist	Yes	Yes	Yes	Pro-SAC	Yes
Rohingya	No	No	No	Pro-SAC AND Pro-MaBaTha	No
Other Muslim minority	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Pro-NUG/PDF	Not applicable
Christian				Pro-other political or rebel group	
Other minority				Unknown	
Unknown					
Not applicable					

Attribution-related variables

Abuser political position	Abuser minority ethnic or religious identity	Abuser gender presentation (how they present online)	Abuser connected with SAC channel(s) or individual(s)
Pro-SAC	Ethnic minority Buddhist	Male	Yes
Pro-SAC AND pro-Ma Ba Tha	Rohingya	Female	No
Pro-NUG/PDF	Other Muslim minority	Non-binary	Unknown
Pro-other political or rebel group	Christian	Other	
Unknown	Other minority	Unknown	
	Unknown		
	Not applicable		



Variables relevant to social media accountability

Policy violated	How was censorship evaded
FACEBOOK Coordinating harm and promoting crime	Use of abbreviations
FACEBOOK Hate Speech - Tier 1	Use of coded slang
FACEBOOK Hate Speech - Other (Tier 2 or Tier 3)	Use of image filters
FACEBOOK Privacy Violation	Use of image, video, meme or GIF
FACEBOOK Violence and Incitement	Use of non-standard characters
TELEGRAM - promoting violence on public channels, bots, chats	Not applicable
TWITTER - Violent threats	Other
TWITTER - Wishing/hoping/calling for harm	
TWITTER - Unwanted sexual advances/sexualisation	
TWITTER - Harassment/intimidation through insults/slurs/profanity	
TWITTER - Encouraging others to harass an individual	
TWITTER - Denying mass casualty events took place	
Not applicable	
Other	

### 5.3. Research Limitations

#### 5.3.1. Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis of Social Media Posts

Without full access to social media platform data, particularly Myanmar’s most popular social media site, Facebook, it is impossible to accurately assess the true scale of the problem. It is highly likely that the data gathered in this investigation underestimates the scale of the problem and represents a small sample of politically-motivated online abuse targeting women in and from Myanmar.

It is also possible that some abusive posts were taken down before Myanmar Witness could archive and analyse them.

Within the quantitative study, the lack of prominent, politically-active, pro-SAC women means that more anti-SAC women were included in the list of possible abuse targets compared with pro-SAC



women. Overall, the analysis is representative of the fact that there appear to be more prominent, politically active women opposing the SAC than promoting it.

Within the quantitative study, more pro-SAC groups were identified than pro-democracy groups (64 pro-SAC; 36 pro-democracy). However, this unevenness is mitigated in the analysis as all findings that compare the volumes of different types of abusive posts are weighted proportionate to the total number of groups for each category.

### 5.3.2. Interviews

Many women were reluctant to come forward about their experiences, even on the condition of anonymity. This reduced the project's ability to humanise the issue of online abuse targeting women for their political views and activities through in-depth survivor interviews. It was particularly hard to ensure that intersectional voices were heard and represented in the in-depth interviews.

### 5.3.3. Ethical Constraints

Due to safeguarding considerations, most significantly the high risk of encountering child sexual exploitation, the Myanmar Witness team did not proactively collect instances of 'revenge porn' - defined below. However, some instances and online communities disseminating 'revenge porn' were encountered and documented. Myanmar Witness reported dedicated 'revenge porn' groups and suspected instances of child abuse encountered during this research to the relevant platforms and online safeguarding institutions. Revenge porn is therefore under-represented in the findings. Myanmar Witness recommends that specialist teams with the resources to securely and systematically document potential cases of child exploitation (a risk inherent in proactively documenting revenge porn) conduct further investigations into this type of abuse.

## 5.4. Ethical Standards

Myanmar Witness (MW) follows the Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open-Source Investigations and WITNESS Ethical Guidelines for the Use of Eyewitness Testimony in its reporting.<sup>16</sup>

- **Accuracy:** Reports should accurately represent the data collected. Exculpatory information and contextual background should be included, as well as an explanation of any redactions or gaps. Only content that has been verified through MW's verification process may be published.
- **Attribution:** Reports will distinguish between content in the public domain, general unclassified information, classified or restricted information, and content that reflects the judgement of MW and/or other professional investigators. Where safe and appropriate to do so, MW will credit the source of content. Where doing so would compromise the privacy

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/OHCHR\\_BerkeleyProtocol.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/OHCHR_BerkeleyProtocol.pdf), <https://vae.witness.org/video-as-evidence-field-guide/>



and safety of the source, MW will describe how the content was found and why we believe it to be authentic.

- **Completeness:** Findings must provide an indication of the completeness of the underlying data. Where data has been verified but certain facts e.g. on the broader context remain unknown, these must be acknowledged.
- **Confidentiality:** MW assigns a privacy rating to content which prevents the publication of any material where the safety, privacy and dignity of those involved in or creating the content could be compromised. Where such content is published, MW will always anonymise it (blurring faces and distinguishing feature, distorting or subtitling audio, removing identifying information and metadata) to protect the identity and privacy of victims, witnesses, alleged individual perpetrators and sources.
- **Language:** Reports will be written in objective and neutral language and state facts clearly without overusing objectives or emphasis. Reports must be written in gender neutral language. MW has developed a data coding protocol in consultation with legal experts which sets out which terms we use to describe certain events and actions. This should be used consistently in reporting. Our general rule is 'describe what you see' and avoid imposing judgements, particularly those relating to the legality of the conduct portrayed.
- **Transparency:** Reports should state clearly how MW went about this work, our aims, processes and methods or provide a link to where this data is provided.
- **Informed Consent:** Where safe and practical to do so, MW will obtain the informed consent of an individual to record and publish their image and story. When this is not possible, MW uses VAE Witness guidelines to establish whether using that footage could violate the consent, privacy or dignity of those involved and to establish whether publication is in the public interest.
- **Minimising exposure to traumatising content:** MW will seek to minimise exposure to graphic content by: i) only using this where necessary (e.g. to collaborate findings); ii) providing advance warning of graphic content and iii) providing options for readers not to view it.

## 5.5. Further Examples of Defamation of Prominent, Pro-Democracy Women



Figure 32: The post attacks three different women, political figures and actors, by accusing them of being mistresses of the EAO leaders.

Those targeted in Figure 32 are celebrities who decided to join the armed resistance; and an important ethnic political figure. The post can be translated as:

*“.... who joined the resistance in the jungle with .... is now taken as a mistress by [a Karen National Defence Organisation’s (KNDO) General]. .... is taken as the ninth mistress of [a Karen National Liberation Army’s (KNLA) General]. ... who is the main wife of [General] who is now in the US is now threatening to kill .....”*

The account that authored this post is male-presenting and explicitly states that he is a patriot and will “serve for the race and religion forever.” The account also has a “No Rohingya” banner as the cover photo.





The picture on the right is a Telegram post on 5 August 2022 from a pro-military channel announcing that Survivor A and a female model have been arrested and charged with the Section 33a of the Electronic Transactions Law for spreading sexually revealing photos on social media.



*Figure 35: The Telegram post from another pro-military channel suggests to the military that Survivor A needs to be taught well so that she will learn to respect the Myanmar culture. It is translated as, “Before Survivor A is released, the Generals should make sure to teach her to live accordingly to Myanmar traditions and cultures. Because she pioneered to sell sex videos online on illegal websites such as Exantria, so many Myanmar women are now selling HD sex videos. But all of those women who are selling are all whores who are protesting with three fingers. I wonder if they are intentionally destroying the country. It is so incompatible with Myanmar culture. We are going to become a Whore Country like General [Aung San] said.”*



Figure 36: Telegram post by infamous doxxing channel HNO takes a female actor’s personal pictures to accuse her of having a child with a random man, although the actor remains single. The post is translated as “Don’t know if your revolution will succeed or not. But [actor] already got a child while doing revolution.”

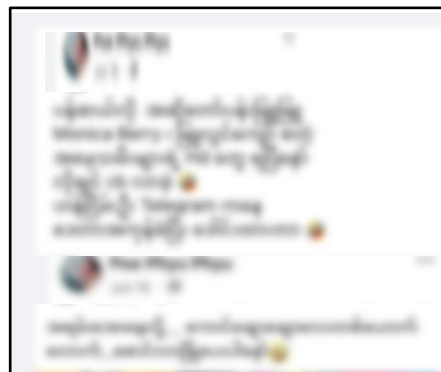


Figure 37: The Facebook post in here claims that he has sexually intimate videos of a list of celebrities and public figures that he will send upon request from the comment box. It is translated as, “The HDs of [celebrities] – all those daughters of mother Suu – are now out. Come to the comment box to request them. I downloaded them all from the Han Nyein Oo channel.”

Anti-SAC activist, Pencilo is also a target of sexualised, dehumanising abuse online. Pencilo is a writer and public figure who is one of the top supporters of the NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi. She is known for her explicit online attacks targeting the military and is hated by SAC supporters. She is a controversial figure as she is known to engage in online hate herself. Qualitative and quantitative research suggests that Pencilo is one of the most attacked female public figures from Myanmar online. Many Telegram channels call her not by her real name but as Pharcilo which translates as Whore Pencilo. New terms such as “flying vagina” and “On Chaung Ma” have been

coined in their attacks on her. She has been attacked with dehumanising memes. Pro-military Telegram channels talk about sexually violating her, and Myanmar Witness identified at least three separate instances of channels claiming to release HD videos of her (Myanmar Witness did not proactively collect videos of explicit content in this research due to safeguarding concerns outlined in the Methodology sections of this report and its Annex). The examples below demonstrate how extreme some of these attacks can be.



Figure 38. The image shows Pencilo’s head photoshopped onto another woman’s body. Translation: “The happiest person today is probably Pencilo. She’s living a rich life in “dick” America with the money she is begging for (referring to asking for donations to PDF).”

## 5.6. Data Tables

The tables below show the summary statistics from the qualitative analysis of 220 politically-motivated posts targeting women.

### 5.6.1. Abuse Target Characteristics, Potential Vulnerabilities

Abuse target ethnic or religious identity	Count
Not applicable	184
Unknown	21
Other Muslim minority	7



<b>Rohingya</b>	5
<b>Other minority</b>	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>

Table 19. Abuse target ethnic or religious identity.

<b>Target well known/ in public eye (e.g., prominent politician, activist or celebrity)</b>	<b>Number of posts</b>
<b>No</b>	126
<b>Yes</b>	90
<b>Not applicable</b>	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>

Table 20. Abuse target public prominence.

<b>Abuse target known to be lesbian or bisexual</b>	<b>Number of posts</b>
<b>No</b>	190
<b>Yes</b>	17
<b>Unknown</b>	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>

Table 21. Abuse target sexuality.

<b>Abuse target transgender or nonbinary identity</b>	<b>Number of posts</b>
<b>No</b>	197
<b>Unknown</b>	20
<b>Yes</b>	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>



Table 22. Abuse target nonbinary or transgender identity.

Abuse target known to have a physical or mental health condition	Number of posts
No	207
Unknown	11
Yes	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>

Table 23. Abuse target physical or mental health conditions.

### 5.6.2. Attribution-Related Data

Abuser gender presentation	Number of posts
Male-presenting	152
Unknown	43
Female-presenting	22
Other	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>

Table 24. Abuser gender presentation.

Abuser political position	Number of posts
Pro-SAC	150
Pro-SAC AND Pro-MaBaTha	48
Pro-NUG/PDF	21





<b>Pro-other political or rebel group</b>	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>

Table 25. Abuser political position.

<b>Abuser connected with official SAC channels or individuals</b>	<b>Number of posts</b>
<b>Unknown</b>	176
<b>Yes</b>	37
<b>No</b>	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>

Table 26. Abuser links with official SAC channels or individuals.

### 5.6.3. Social Media Accountability

#### Twitter Policy Violations Summary

<b>Platform</b>	<b>Violation</b>	<b>Number of instances</b>
Twitter	Harassment/intimidation through insults/slurs/profanity	6
Twitter	Wishing/hoping/calling for harm	4
Twitter	Not applicable	4
Twitter	Other	1

Table 27. Twitter policy violations.



Twitter	Harassment/intimidation through insults/slurs/profanity	Anti-Muslim hate	2
		Female political figure named or depicted in derogatory way	2
		Threat of rape	2
	Not applicable	Anti-Muslim hate	1
		Doxxing including explicit threat/encouragement of arrest	2
		Female political figure named or depicted in derogatory way	1
		Other	1
	Wishing/hoping/calling for harm	Calling for death of abuse target (non-doxxing post)	1
		Female political figure named or depicted in derogatory way	2
		Other	1

Table 28. Platform policy violations by abuse type on Twitter.

### Social Media Accountability: Post Features That May Impede Abuse Detection

Platform	Measures taken in possible attempt to evade detection/ censorship	Number of posts
Facebook	Not applicable	45
	Other	1
	Use of coded slang	27
	Use of image filters	1
	Use of image, video, meme or GIF	5
Telegram	Not applicable	100
	Other	12
	Use of coded slang	8
	Use of image filters	1
	Use of image, video, meme or GIF	5



Twitter	Not applicable	3
	Use of coded slang	1
	Use of image, video, meme or GIF	11
TOTAL		220

Table 29. Post features that may impede abuse detection - by platform.

## 5.7. Doxxing Case Studies

### 5.7.1. Doxxing Followed by Offline Violence and Arrest: Survivor A Case Study

On 5 July 2022, it was reported that model and actress **Survivor A** had been arrested. She was reportedly released 15 July 2022. At the time of writing, her social media accounts remain inactive since the time of her arrest. An official from the **Shan State Progressive Party/ Shan State Army (SSPP/ SSA)** was reportedly among the first to have confirmed news of the arrest to the media.

On 4 July 2022, SSPP Info announced that Survivor A had gone to Hippar Waterfall and Wan Hai in Kethi Township, southern Shan State, to film a documentary for the development of Wan Hai area, at the invitation of SSPP/ SSA. These films were allegedly around local development projects such as religion, education, health and transportation. However, after filming ended, it is reported that a car carrying Survivor A was stopped and she was detained at the checkpoint on the way out of Wan Hai.

When **Maj-Gen Zaw Min Tun**, the leader of the Information Team of the SAC, was contacted in relation to the arrest of Survivor A, he initially replied that he did not know anything about the matter. The military’s eventual reasoning for opening a legal case against both Survivor A and another female model is that they were accused of harming Myanmar’s culture through distributing sexually explicit photos and videos on social networks. According to an announcement by state controlled media MRTV (Figure 39), they had been arrested under Section 33(a) of Electronic Law for earning money by posting sexually revealing photos on the websites OnlyFans and Extrania.



Figure 39: MWD TV showcasing the arrest of Survivor A and another model.

Survivor A was also reported and spotted in photos uploaded by the SSPP at what is alleged to be the headquarters of Wan Hai and appears to have attended the wedding of a chief's daughter on 3 July 2022. In these images Survivor A dons an SSPP uniform.

The day after these images were posted - on the 4 July 2022 - the prolific, pro-SAC Telegram account dedicated to doxxing, **Han Nyein Oo (HNO)**, posted about Survivor A's attendance at the wedding as a reason for why she should be arrested, as well as implying she participates in pornographic content distribution - the reason that the military later gave for her arrest the day after this post, on 5 July 2022 (Figure 40). This narrative is one echoed online, with individuals re-posting HNO's claims (Figure 21) as well as making jokes online about Survivor A's alleged pornographic content being released (Figure 42).



Figure 40: The poster disparages Survivor A for her association with the SSPP and accuses her of selling HDs - slang for pornographic images/footage of women targeted in this data.

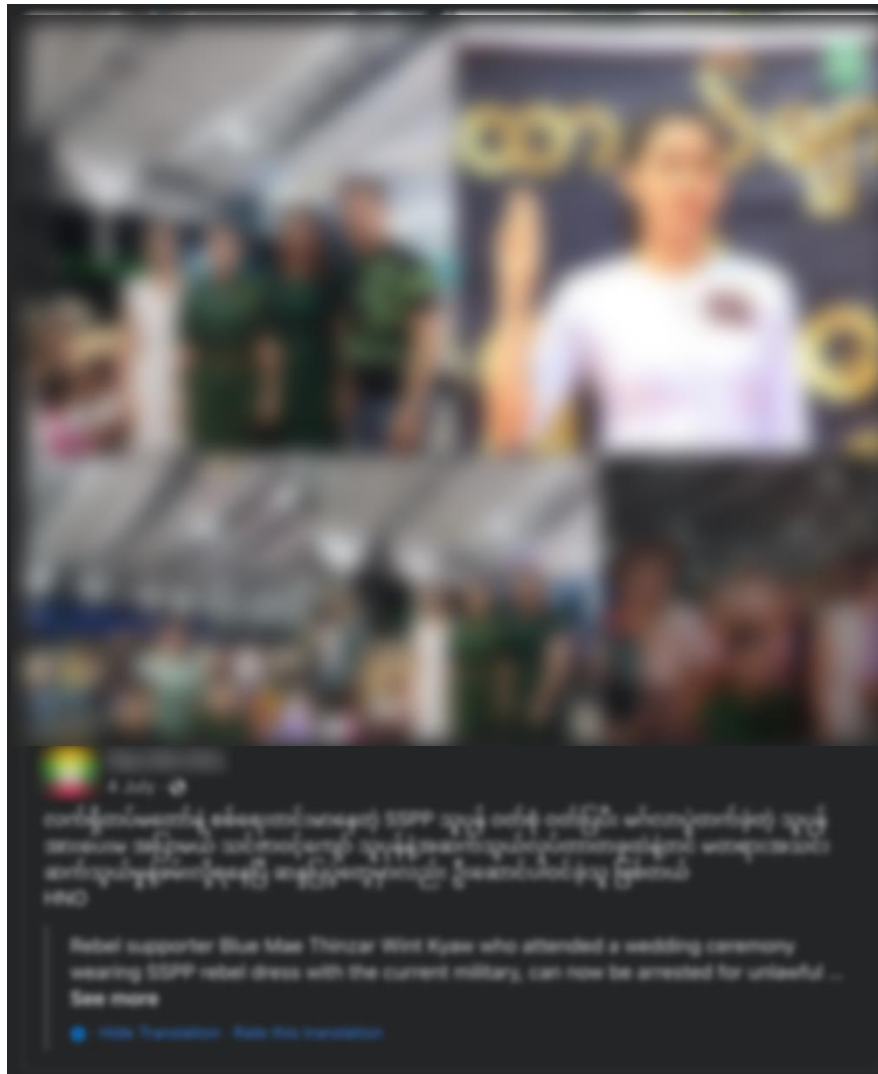
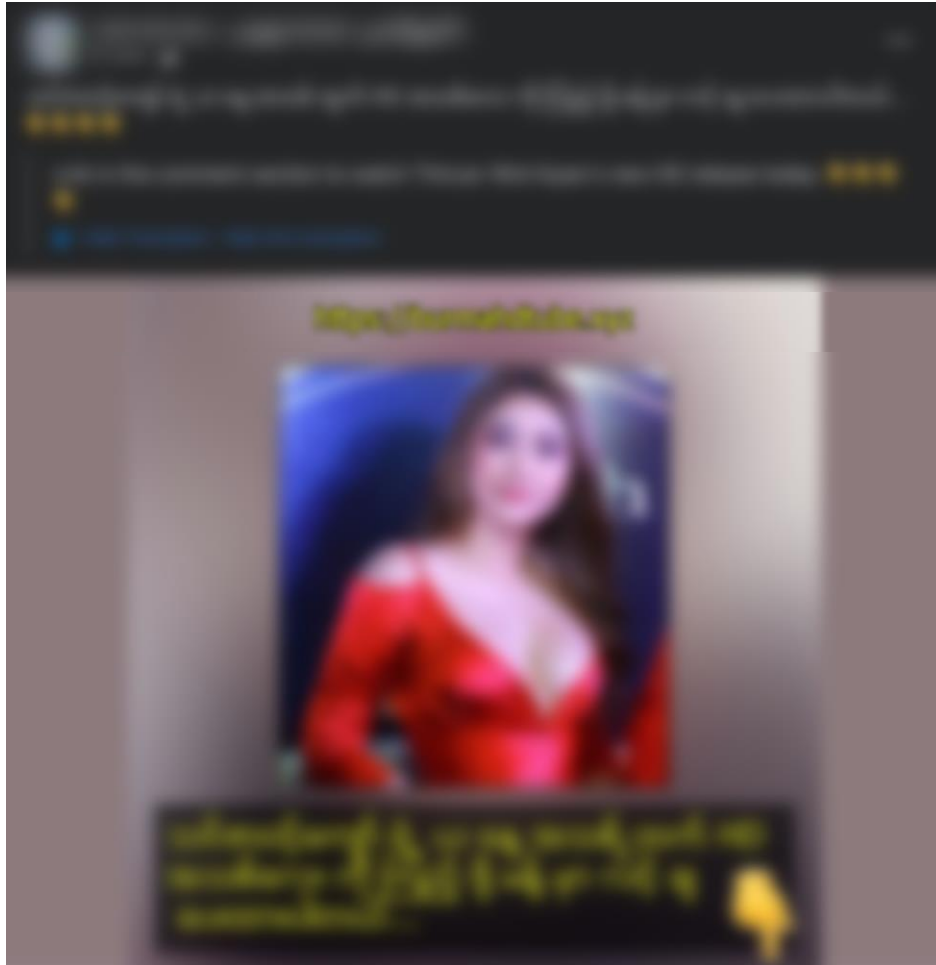


Figure 41: Han Nyein Oo's posts being circulated around other social media platforms, including Facebook. It reads "The rebel supporter [Survivor A] - who attended the rally dressed in the SSPP rebel uniform, which is currently in military conflict with the army, can now be arrested for communicating with the rebels. She also participated in the protests. HNO".



*Figure 42: The poster implies, on the day of Survivor A's arrest, that pornographic content of her will be released online.*

This behaviour clearly demonstrates Survivor A being harassed and doxxed online before her arrest by the military. It is notable that the charges she faced echoed those she had been accused of online. Following this, what is likely a repost of a Han Nyein Oo post on Facebook - due to the usage of the 'HNO' sign off attributed to this poster as well as the fact his messages are posted cross-platform regularly - directly alludes to them being the reason for Survivor A's arrest.





Figure 43: A post signing off as HNO - likely a repost from Han Nyein Oo - appears to take responsibility for the arrest of a woman whose arrest was called for in a previous, doxxing post by HNO.

### 5.7.2. Doxxing Followed by Offline Violence and Arrest: Survivor B Case Study

Model **Survivor B** was doxxed online for support of the NUG, with one example on 4 February 2022. Pro-military news organisation Myanmar National Post announced in February 2022 that Survivor B had been arrested - though she was subsequently released.

Though the Myanmar National Post article does include images of her at a protest - which could be implying this is why she was arrested - it is clear her Facebook posts had something to do with these arrests from the article. Images on which she has applied pro-NUG statement filters taken directly from her Facebook - the same images that were used to doxx her on social media posts at the beginning of the month - were used in the article. At the time of her arrest, Survivor B does not appear to have been engaging in any type of protest, but was visited at her home - as shown in a live broadcast claiming to show her arrest.



*Figure 44: The article includes images taken from Survivor B's Facebook account. These images were also used in posts doxxing Survivor B.*

In what purports to be a live broadcast of her arrest, Survivor B appears to be cautious about opening the door to the village administrator. She is heard saying something about a previous incident in which she was targeted and attacked; her door is closed. According to the video audio, this is the second time people have come to her home and searched it. In the video, she describes that, on 16 July 2021 at 2230 local time, five men in plainclothes had come to check her home under the guise of checking if everyone at the house was registered and if there were any unregistered 'guests'. She states that these men struck her twice and went home at 0500 local time the next day. There is no record of this incident occurring officially, no arrests were made, and thus Myanmar Witness cannot confirm a pattern of targeted harassment.

Due to this alleged attack, for the most part of the video, she refuses to open the door citing this first incident. She then asks to see the face of the ward administrator - when this is agreed she opens the door, however she claims the people gathered outside include a different ward administrator from the one she knew.

Plainclothes, armed men are the first to approach the door when Survivor B opens it. Myanmar Witness assesses they belong to the military or police because the gun worn by the man in plainclothes on the left in figure 45 is BA-93 submachine gun, a weapon known to be used by

Myanmar's military and police forces. They approach Survivor B ahead of the people who appear to be police officers. The plainclothes officers try to grab Survivor B's phone and Survivor B herself during the video; they do not enter her home in this video.



*Figure 45: Plainclothes men donning weapons accompanied by Lon Htein police men all with facemasks approach the home of Survivor B. This livestream is no longer available on her Facebook account but has been re-uploaded.*

In the video, almost immediately after Survivor B opens the door, the police officers say “catch her” and “tie her”. Her phone is grabbed and she is subsequently arrested.

Survivor B does not appear to have been detained for long as she resumed posting live streams shortly after her reported arrest date. In a live broadcast on her account the next day - at around 2200 local time - Survivor B is live on Facebook again. While she says little in the livestream, she appears distressed, with tears forming in her eyes.

In her livestream she is mainly heard thanking everyone who worried for her, checked on her and prayed for her. She also thanks “the organisation” who “peacefully interrogated and asked [her] questions.” But a lot of this is said with the air that she is being watched and she can’t say anything sensitive. She did say though that, “All I want to say is that if we still have bad karma left, we want to be rid of it all already.” Native Burmese speakers on the Myanmar Witness team note this is a common saying in Burmese like having a debt from past lives that you have to fully repay. She also mentions, seemingly unprompted, that she is sad that she is getting attacked based on her personal life or beliefs.