EVALUATION REPORT

Effectiveness of Reporting Mechanisms in Ensuring Redress for Victims & Survivors of Online Gender-Based Violence / Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence



Researcher: Firdaus Husni
Research Assistant: Toh Nyon Nyin

Research commissioned by
KRYSS NETWORK
Funded by the European Union

CONTENT PAGE

CONTENT PAGE 1
A. ABBREVIATIONS 2
B. INTRODUCTION 3
C. LITERATURE REVIEW 4
C.1 Setting the Parameters 4
C.2 International Human Rights Standards and Principles 4
C.2.1 Definition 7
C.2.2 Complaints Mechanisms 7
C.2.3 Checks and Balances 8
C.2.4 Digital Literacy 8
C.3 Domestic Legal Framework Relating to Online Gender-Based Violence / Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence 9
C.3.1 No Specific Law 9
C.3.2 Federal Constitution 9
C.3.3 Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 10
C.3.4 Penal Code 10
C.3.5 Online Safety Act 2025 11
C.3.6 Content Code 11
C.3.7 Anti-Sexual Harassment Act 2022 11
C.3.8 Conclusion 12
D. METHODOLOGY 13
E. DATA ANALYSIS 14
E.1 Common Forms of Online Gender-Based Violence / Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Malaysia 14
E.2 Impact of Online Gender-Based Violence / Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence on Victims and Survivors 17
E.3 Enforcement of the Law in Providing Redress for Online Gender-Based Violence / Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence 18
E.3.1 Current Complaints and Redress Mechanism 18
E.3.2 Online Safety Act 2025 and Its Potential to Address Online Gender-Based Violence / Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence 25
E.3.3 Support Services and the Role of Civil Society Actors 26
E.3.4 Conclusion 27
F. RECOMMENDATIONS 28
F.1 Country Practices 28
F.1.1 Current Practices from Other Countries/Regions 28
F.1.2 A Proposal for Reform 29
G. CONCLUSION 34
H. REFERENCES 35

ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASHA	Anti-Sexual Harassment Act 2022
AWAM	All Women's Action Society
AWL	Association of Women Lawyers
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CMA	Communications and Multimedia Act 1998
Content Forum	Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRIB Foundation	Child Rights Innovation and Betterment Foundation
CSAM	Child Sexual Abuse Material
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
JFS	Justice for Sisters
JKM	*Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat* (Department of Social Welfare)
KPWKM	*Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat* (Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development)
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and More
MCMC	Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission
OGBV	Online Gender-Based Violence
ONSA	Online Safety Act 2025
PDRM	*Polis Diraja Malaysia* (Royal Malaysia Police)
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SWWS	Sarawak Women for Women Society
TAGS	*Tribunal bagi Antigangguan Seksual* (Tribunal for Anti-Sexual Harassment)
TFGBV	Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WAO	Women's Aid Organisation
WCC	Women's Centre for Change

B. INTRODUCTION

Freedom of opinion and expression is guaranteed in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR).[1] It covers the right to freely hold opinions, and to seek and receive information and ideas through any media. The means of expression covered by "freedom of expression" include all forms of electronic and Internet-based modes of expression. The United Nations (UN) has also recognised that "the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, in particular freedom of expression".[2] Article 1 of UDHR declares that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Yet there remains a question as to how much this translates into actual practice.

In expressing oneself in digital spaces, there is a growing number of literature on the gendered challenges that women, girls and gender minorities disproportionately face in doing so. The significance of acknowledging the intersectionality between freedom of expression and gender equality, particularly in digital spaces, therefore cannot be overlooked. As information technology evolves, so do the threats that women, girls and gender minorities experience via online gender-based violence / technology-facilitated gender-based violence (OGBV/TFGBV). This makes OGBV/TFGBV a global concern that must be urgently addressed.

This research paper aims to distil the conversations on freedom of expression and gender equality within the larger ambit of digital rights, and what it means to democratise online spaces. Within the State's obligation to respect, protect and promote human rights, this research looks at how much has been done by the Malaysian government to ensure that everyone, regardless of gender, is able to meaningfully express and exchange ideas and opinions. Through an evaluation of existing government policies and laws, KRYSS Network hopes to provide both a gender and human rights lens on safety for women, girls and gender minorities online, and on the extent to which they are able to exercise their bodily autonomy in digital spaces.

The passing of the Online Safety Act (ONSA) in December 2024 makes this evaluation timely in assessing the effectiveness of the current legal framework, and to what extent existing reporting mechanisms enable redress for victims and survivors of OGBV/TFGBV. Moving forward, KRYSS Network aims to put forward feasible recommendations formulated through this paper, with a view to expanding the protection and promotion of human rights in digital spaces, and ensuring an environment enabling freedom of expression and participation, equally for all.

[1] UN General Assembly, Resolution 217A (III), Universal Declaration of Human Rights, A/RES/217(III) (December 10, 1948), https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.
[2] "UNESCO Welcomes New UNHRC Resolution Highlighting Online Freedom of Expression and Noting UNESCO Internet Universality Indicator Framework," UNESCO, April 20, 2023, https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-welcomes-new-unhrc-resolution-highlighting-online-freedom-expression-and-noting-unesco (accessed June 15, 2026).

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

C.1 Setting the Parameters

There is an ongoing conversation on the terminology best suited to capture the myriad issues pertaining to online/digital violence against women, girls and gender minorities. In a 2018 report, UN Special Rapporteur Dubravka Šimonović noted that the terminology is still developing and hence, there has yet to be a universally agreed-upon phrasing to capture all related issues.[3] In fact, the terms "ICT [information and communications technology]-facilitated violence against women" and "online violence against women" were both used in her report. Similarly, reference materials captured in the literature review and analysis employ either of the terms "online gender-based violence" and "technology-facilitated gender-based violence" to explain the different forms of online violence against women, girls and gender minorities. Additionally, the Women's Aid Organisation (WAO), a Malaysian non-governmental organisation that runs a hotline for women and children experiencing abuse, captures their data on the subject matter as "technology-based harassment".[4]

For the above reasons and for the purpose of this research, the terms "online gender-based violence" and "technology-facilitated gender-based violence" will be used interchangeably in making reference to the forms of violence against women, girls and gender minorities that occur in the digital space, and violence that utilises technology, both online and offline.

C.2 International Human Rights Standards and Principles

It is important to state at the outset that any measures to address OGBV/TFGBV must integrate international human rights standards and principles, particularly those relating to gender equality, freedom of expression, and protection against violence.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is one of the core human rights treaties that defines discrimination against women.[5] Its Article 1 illustrates that any circumstance or treatment connoting a distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of a person's sex, resulting in the inability of women to enjoy or exercise their human rights in all spheres of life, is, in essence, a discrimination against women.

---

[3] UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences on Online Violence Against Women and Girls from a Human Rights Perspective*, note by the Secretariat, A/HRC/38/47 (Geneva: United Nations, 2018), https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1641160?ln=en&v=pdf.

[4] WAO (@womensaidorg), "In December 2025, we received 143 calls to our hotline and 560 messages on our TINA (SMS/Whatsapp). The primary concerns were domestic violence (DVA), general enquiries and relationship disputes! WAO is here for you in times of crisis by providing support and advice ❤️ 🫂," Instagram photo, January 6, 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DTKWzNEERll/?igsh=MWkyYWltZ2N6ZW9ucA== (accessed June 19, 2026).

[5] UN General Assembly, Resolution 34/180, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, A/RES/34/180 (December 18, 1979) https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women.

Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) obliges States parties to ensure effective protection against discrimination, including discrimination on grounds such as sex, through laws and policies.[6] At the same time, the existence of an anti-discriminatory law alone cannot and does not guarantee protection or continued enjoyment of human rights unless accompanied by an effective complaints and redress mechanism. The 2020 UN Women Asia-Pacific report provides a contextual observation on online violence faced by women in Asia and notes that ***laws alone often fail to address online violence***.[7] Policies therefore must be regionally-informed to ensure that integration of global best practices appropriately address local concerns. The UN Secretary-General recommends that the framework to respond to the issues must, among others, be contextually and culturally specific to reflect the different manifestations of harms in different regions and countries.[8] As violence is often framed by the specific digital, political, economic, religious and sociocultural landscape of a country, the prevention and redress efforts must be tailored to the local nuances of the specific country context, backed by country-specific data.[9] For example, policy design must account for cultural nuances, and any digital tools developed must be relevant to local technological capacities.[10]

Furthermore, Article 24 of ICCPR imposes a responsibility on States parties to protect children. The protection of minors must be without any discrimination, including of one's sex or gender. In this respect, the gendered challenges that girls and gender minorities disproportionately face in exercising their rights, including expressing themselves, must be recognised before effective protection can be afforded.

Article 19 of UDHR and Article 19 of ICCPR guarantees everyone the right to freedom of expression. Every individual therefore is entitled to "seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds" through any media. This means that regardless of whether the information or ideas are expressed in print or online, one shall have the right to express oneself just the same.

Freedom of expression is not absolute, as the exercise under Article 19(3) of ICCPR can be restricted by law, provided that such restrictions are deemed necessary to protect the rights or reputation of others, national security, public order, public health or morals. Furthermore, Article 20 of ICCPR restricts any expression instigating war or advocating national, racial or religious hatred resulting in discrimination, hostility or violence. In discussing OGBV/TFGBV, it must be noted that different human rights issues often intersect, in that some forms of gender-based violence may also involve discrimination on the basis of one's nationality, race or religion. In essence, freedom of expression can be restricted, but only on permissible grounds. It is crucial that these permissible grounds be established and a clear nexus drawn, lest a restriction creates an environment that makes a meaningful enjoyment of the right to expression impossible.

OGBV/TFGBV often raises concerns of privacy for the women, girls and gender minorities affected. This violates an individual's right to privacy, guaranteed under Article 12 of UDHR and Article 17 of ICCPR. This guarantee ensures that everyone, including women, girls and gender minorities, does not face arbitrary and unlawful interference with their privacy, family, home or correspondence. Article 17(2) of ICCPR further imposes an obligation on States parties to protect its citizens against such interference.

---

[6] UN General Assembly, Resolution 2200A (XXI), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, A/RES/2200(XXI) (December 16, 1966), https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights.
[7] UN Women Asia and the Pacific, *Online Violence Against Women in Asia: A Multicountry Study* (Bangkok: United Nations Women, 2020), https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/12/online-violence-against-women-in-asia (accessed April 7, 2026).
[8] UN General Assembly, *Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls: Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls,* report of the Secretary-General, A/79/500 (New York: United Nations, 2024), https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4064890?ln=en&v=pdf. See paragraph 66.
[9] The University of Melbourne and UNFPA Asia and the Pacific, *Understanding Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Asia: A Qualitative Study* (Bangkok: United Nations Population Fund, 2024), https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/publications/understanding-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-asia-qualitative-study (accessed April 7, 2026).
[10] UNFPA and Australia's eSafety Commissioner, *A Framework for TFGBV Programming* (New York: United Nations Population Fund, 2024), https://www.unfpa.org/publications/framework-tfgbv-programming (accessed April 7, 2026).

To-date, Malaysia has signed three out of the nine core human rights treaties. In addition to CEDAW, Malaysia is also a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Prioritising the best interests of the child means that States parties must ensure that children are able to enjoy their right to freedom of expression, which covers the digital environment.[11] The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's "General Comment No. 25 on Children's Rights Relating to the Digital Environment" highlights that States parties must take proactive legislative and administrative measures to protect children from violence, including gender-based violence, in the digital environment.[12] Article 6 of CRPD, in particular, recognises that women and girls with disabilities face multiple discrimination, and further obligates States parties to take measures to protect persons with disabilities from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including that which is gender-based.[13] The provision of protection services must be age-, gender- and disability-sensitive.

Having set out the above, human rights cannot be considered in isolation from one another. The infringement of one right due to acts of OGBV/TFGBV will invariably affect the exercise of other rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. In the same vein, a full appreciation of the impact of OGBV/TFGBV on women, girls and gender minorities requires an intersectional approach, as the discrimination manifested is often a result of intersecting and compounding factors such as age, ethnicity, religion, disability, immigration status and socioeconomic status. Intersecting identities result in some women, girls and gender minorities facing more severe forms of OGBV/TFGBV. Women in public roles—such as journalists, politicians, activists and rights defenders—face widespread online abuse, including threats, harassment and coordinated attacks, with studies showing high rates of gendered violence aimed at silencing advocacy.[14] This understanding helps paint a clearer picture in ascertaining and measuring the extent of harms caused by OGBV/TFGBV, which is necessary in order to ensure effective redress for survivors of OGBV/TFGBV.

In principle, effective redress for survivors of OGBV/TFGBV must be survivor-centred, feminist-informed, and grounded in international human rights principles.[15] Several core principles should guide the design and implementation of mechanisms for grievance and redress. Firstly, intersectionality is essential; mechanisms must recognise the plurality of lived experiences shaped by gender, disability, age, sexuality, socioeconomic status and other intersecting factors, rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach. Secondly, a balanced, rights-based approach is required, ensuring that the protection of survivors is pursued alongside respect for privacy, freedom of expression and access to information, all of which are crucial for reporting, documentation and accountability. Thirdly, redress systems should adopt risk-based rather than harm-based approaches, grounded in an understanding of the actual impacts of violence on survivors' physical, psychological, social and economic well-being, and supported by appropriate counselling and legal services. Fourthly, confidentiality and informed consent must be strictly upheld at all stages, with survivors retaining control over decisions affecting their cases. In the fifth place, accessible reporting mechanisms are critical, and must include pathways that are inclusive of disability, linguistic diversity and varying levels of digital literacy. Finally, effective redress requires accountability, meaning that actions taken must lead to meaningful remedies and demonstrable positive outcomes for survivors, rather than merely being symbolic or procedural compliance.

---

[11] UN General Assembly, Resolution 44/25, Convention on the Rights of the Child, A/RES/44/25 (November 20, 1989), https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child. See Articles 3(1) and 13.
[12] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, "General Comment No. 25 (2021) on Children's Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment," CRC/C/GC/25 (March 2, 2021), https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-25-2021-childrens-rights-relation.
[13] UN General Assembly, Resolution 61/106, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, A/RES/61/106 (December 12, 2006), https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities. See Article 6.
[14] UN Women, Accelerating Efforts to Tackle Online and Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls (New York: United Nations Women, 2022), https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/10/accelerating-efforts-to-tackle-online-and-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls (accessed April 7, 2026). See page 5.
[15] UNFPA and the Wilson Center, Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Rights-Based Regulation (New York: United Nations Population Fund, 2022), https://www.unfpa.org/resources/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-rights-based-regulation (accessed April 7, 2026). See page 4.

C.2.1 Definition

The UN Secretary-General in 2024 noted the urgent need to eradicate all forms of violence, including online harms, against women through comprehensive laws, multistakeholder cooperation and survivor-centred responses.[16] There must therefore be comprehensive and specific recognition of OGBV/TFGBV in the legal framework. Specificity of the types of harms ensures effective measures and that protection can be delivered. It signals a recognition of the gendered impact of online violence on women, girls and gender minorities.

In a 2018 report on online violence against women, the UN Special Rapporteur drew on Article 1 of CEDAW to define online violence. In this context, online violence is described as "any act of gender-based violence against women that is committed, assisted or aggravated in part or fully by the use of ICT, such as mobile phones and smartphones, the Internet, social media platforms or email, [and that is perpetrated] against a woman because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately."[17] Recognising a lack of global consensus on the definition of TFGBV, UN Women and the World Health Organization jointly convened an expert group meeting in November 2022 to discuss a common definition, adopting the following to define technology-facilitated violence against women: "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", that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm, or other infringements of rights and freedoms.[18] This expansive definition reflects the myriad harms that arise in the online sphere and recognises the disproportionate impact they have on women, girls and gender minorities. A standardised definition would greatly facilitate the formulation of evidence-based measures. Without sufficiently precise definitions, it becomes difficult for an entire domestic legal framework—from enforcement bodies, courts and service providers, to survivors themselves—to recognise, report, prosecute and obtain remedies for such harms.

C.2.2 Complaints Mechanisms

In establishing the legal protection against OGBV/TFGBV, governments must consider Articles 2(c) and 2(e) of CEDAW. Such measures must be taken with the aim to place women on an equal basis with men through competent public institutions, in terms of access to opportunities and the ability to live to their fullest potential. States must recognise and enact rights-based measures that centre on the survivors and are aligned with international human rights law. Any law and policy enacted for this purpose must therefore be considered within the human rights framework and aim to tackle the existing structural discrimination, violence and inequalities that women, girls and gender minorities suffer from.[19] Accordingly, there must be reliable reporting and accountability systems.

States must ensure that any protection and support services developed are survivor-centred.[20] This points to the need for coordinated and integrated response mechanisms for survivors that encompass legal, psychosocial, health, digital-rights and social support services. A well-coordinated system would greatly reduce the likelihood of retraumatising survivors of OGBV/TFGBV. Participatory and feminist approaches in designing laws and policies will go a long way towards ensuring the legal framework effectively addresses the various manifestations of OGBV/TFGBV.

---

[16] UN General Assembly, *Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls: Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls.*
[17] UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences on Online Violence Against Women and Girls from a Human Rights Perspective.* See paragraph 23.
[18] UNFPA, *Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Making All Spaces Safe* (New York: United Nations Population Fund, 2021), https://www.unfpa.org/publications/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-making-all-spaces-safe (accessed April 7, 2026);
UN Women, *Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women: Towards a Common Definition,* expert group meeting report (New York: United Nations Women, 2023), https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/expert-group-meeting-report-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women (accessed April 7, 2026).
The UN Women expert group meeting report defines TFGBV in page 4, drawing on the definition by UNFPA available in page 10 of their report.
[19] UNFPA, *Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Making All Spaces Safe.* See page 43.
[20] UN Women, *Accelerating Efforts to Tackle Online and Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls.* See page 12.

Remedies must be accessible and not unnecessarily delayed. This would require genuine collaboration across government agencies, civil society organisations (CSOs), women's rights groups, digital rights advocates and technology companies to ensure active and immediate response. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also recommends setting up an independent statutory body to address TFGBV with enforcement powers, including over technology companies. Additionally, there must be adequate resources and training (including retraining) of government agencies, particularly those who would interact directly with the survivors, to ensure familiarity with issues relating to OGBV/TFGBV, and to enhance gender sensitivity.[21]

There are also complaints mechanisms operated by non-State actors, such as reporting mechanisms provided by social media platforms. For the purpose of this research, the focus will be on the State-provided complaints mechanisms.

C.2.3 Checks and Balances

Appropriate measures to address OGBV/TFGBV must ensure that freedom of expression is not curtailed under the guise of "protection" for women, girls and gender minorities. UNFPA and the Wilson Center highlighted this concern in a 2022 report, noting that any regulations established must be rights-based and aligned with international human rights standards.[22] This means that the same measures that protect the safety of women, girls and gender minorities from online abuse must also protect their freedom of expression, access to information, and their right to privacy and data protection.[23]

One way to safeguard survivors' rights is to avoid overbroad provisions that suppress dissent or penalise legitimate speech. The inclination of States to resort to overbroad provisions as a catch-all to address all forms of OGBV/TFGBV runs the risk of the law being abused.

C.2.4 Digital Literacy

UN Women stresses on the need for Member States to enhance digital literacy by embedding education on online violence into curricula, raising awareness of harmful gender norms, and equipping individuals, communities and institutions with the skills to prevent, identify and respond to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.[24] This includes improving data collection, supporting evidence-based policymaking, and ensuring access to survivor-centred services. Greater collaboration with CSOs and the technology sector is essential in order to promote accountability, enhance prevention strategies, and foster safer digital environments.

---

[21] UNFPA, *Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Making All Spaces Safe.* See page 45.
[22] UNFPA and the Wilson Center, *Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Rights-Based Regulation.* See page 9.
[23] UNFPA, *Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Making All Spaces Safe.* See page 9.
[24] UN Women, *Accelerating Efforts to Tackle Online and Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls.* See page 12.

C.3 Domestic Legal Framework Relating to Online Gender-Based Violence / Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

C.3.1 No Specific Law

There is currently no specific law that addresses OGBV/TFGBV. At the time of research, legal protection for survivors/victims attempting to get recourse could be explored from several existing laws and legal avenues. This subchapter will look at some of the existing policies relevant to the issue at hand.

The chart in figure 1 below attempts to outline the potential avenues survivors and victims may take in order to report cases of OGBV/TFGBV, and the subsequent potential actions and legal basis depending on the OGBV/TFGBV cases and legal advice. The statutory provisions mentioned are not exhaustive, but they are indicative of the broader problem of a fragmented complaints mechanism system for OGBV/TFGBV cases.

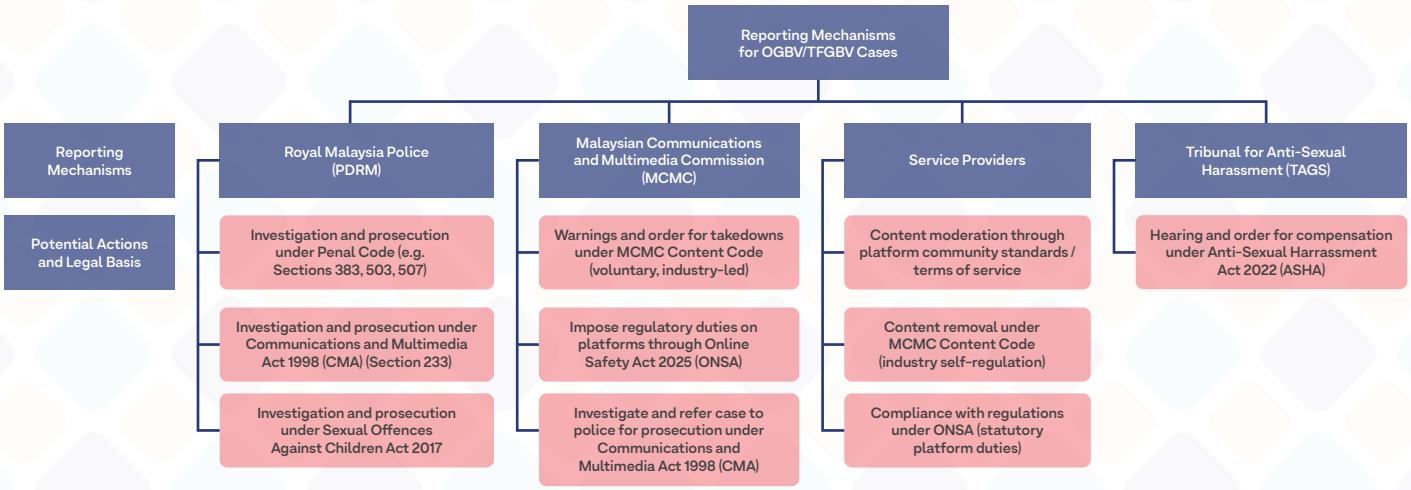


Figure 1: Potential actions and legal basis that can result from various OGBV/TFGBV reporting mechanisms.

C.3.2 Federal Constitution

The Federal Constitution of Malaysia guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression.[25] Such speech and expression can be restricted if it is for a purpose recognised under the law, such as national security, defamation, public order or morality. However, a restriction cannot be too broad and vague in its wording that it risks creating a chilling environment that discourages freedom of expression, thus violating the constitutional guarantee of speech and expression.[26]

The Constitution guarantees that all persons are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection of the law.[27] Following Malaysia's ratification of CEDAW in 1995, Article 8(2) was amended to expressly recognise that there shall be no discrimination against women on the basis of "gender".[28]

---

[25] Federal Constitution, art. 10(1)(a).
[26] *Heidy Quah Gaik Li v. Kerajaan Malaysia*, CLJ JT (11) (COA 2025).
[27] Federal Constitution, art. 8(1).
[28] SUHAKAM, Report on the Status of Women's Rights in Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur: Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, 2010), https://www.suhakam.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/SUHAKAM-Report-on-The-Status-o f-Women-s-Rights-in-Malaysia-2010.pdf (accessed April 7, 2026). See page 3.

C.3.3 Communications and Multimedia Act 1998

Section 233(1) of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA), recently amended, criminalises any communication which is "obscene, indecent, false, menacing or grossly offensive in character with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten, harass or commit an offence involving fraud or dishonesty against, any person".[29] Complaints relating to online content can be lodged with the Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia (Content Forum). CMA is, however, silent on the need for the complainant to be updated on the progress and eventual outcome of the complaint. Section 233(1) has long been regarded as problematic by CSOs due to its use of vague and ambiguous terminologies such as "offensive" and "annoy", which have opened the door to abuse and selective persecution. These provisions have been used to target human rights defenders, artists and filmmakers, LGBTQ+ communities, and other minorities seeking to promote and protect human rights.[30] In a unanimous 2025 decision in the case of Heidi Quah Gaik Li vs Government of Malaysia, the Court of Appeal held that the terms "offensive" and "annoy" are unconstitutional, as they violate Article 10 of the Federal Constitution, which guarantees the right to freedom of speech and expression, and Article 8, which guarantees equality before the law.[31] This was, however, overturned on appeal, with the Federal Court in February 2026 declaring that the words "offensive" and "annoy" remain constitutional.[32]

C.3.4 Penal Code

The list of provisions that may be utilised under the Penal Code is not exhaustive, but is indicative of how some provisions, through their broad construction, may be used to tackle certain forms of OGBV/TFGBV crimes. Section 383, which addresses extortion, can be used for cases of sextortion.[33] Section 503 has been used to prosecute an individual for criminal intimidation when he pleaded guilty to sending a threatening message to a woman relating to rape and murder along with images of her children.[34] Section 507 addresses criminal intimidation by anonymous communication. This can be useful in situations where perpetrators of OGBV/TFGBV hide behind anonymity by creating fake online profiles to carry out the criminal act. Section 507A was added into the Penal Code in March 2023 to criminalise stalking. It makes no distinction between in-person and online stalking.[35] This was lauded especially by women's rights groups, as the law was lacking in addressing instances of stalking. The provision does not specifically mention OGBV/TFGBV, although it is understood to cover both physical and online stalking.[36]

In July 2025, the Malaysian government passed a series of amendments to the Penal Code, Sections 507B to 507G, intended to address various forms of bullying-related acts. The explanatory statement of the bill mentions that the law covers acts committed "in any manner or by any means including online".[37] "Harm" under Section 507G is defined to include physical, psychological, reputational or property harm. This is a positive development as it recognises the impact of abuse beyond physical abuse, especially in cases of online abuse. Section 507E in particular criminalises doxxing, which refers to the act(s) of intentional online exposure of an individual's identity, private information or personal details without their consent, with the intent of undermining the target's privacy, security, safety and/or reputation, and therefore causing harm.[38] Section 507E, however, does not take into account gender-specific instances.

---

[29] Communications and Multimedia Act, 1998, sec. 233(1); Communications and Multimedia (Amendment) Act, 2025, sec. 91.
[30] CIJ, *A Report on the State of Freedom of Expression in Malaysia 2025* (Kuala Lumpur: Centre for Independent Journalism, 2025), https://cijmalaysia.net/a-report-on-the-state-of-freedom-of-expression-foe-in-malaysia-2025/ (accessed April 7, 2026). See page 6.
[31] "Malaysia: Review the Communications and Multimedia Act Now," *ARTICLE 19*, August 19, 2025, https://www.article19.org/resources/malaysia-review-the-communications-and-multimedia-act-now/ (accessed April 7, 2026).
[32] "Federal Court Rules Words 'Offensive' and 'Annoy' Under Section 233 of Communication and Multimedia Act Constitutional," *BERNAMA*, February 6, 2026, https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php/crime_courts/news.php?id=2520759 (accessed April 7, 2026).
[33] IAWJ, *Stopping the Abuse of Power Through Sexual Exploitation: Naming, Shaming, and Ending Sextortion* (Washington, DC: International Association of Women Judges, 2012), https://www.unodc.org/res/ji/import/guide/naming_shaming_ending_sextortion/naming_shaming_ending_sextortion.pdf (accessed June 16, 2026). See page 9 for a further elaboration on "sextortion", a term referring to explicit or implicit requests of a sexual nature with the intention to extort. It therefore involves both sexual and corruption components.
[34] "Man Gets Five Months Prison, RM2,000 Fine for Threatening Harith Iskander's Family," *BERNAMA*, January 31, 2025, https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2388178 (accessed April 7, 2026).
[35] Penal Code, sec. 507A.
[36] "Act 574: Repeated Online Stalking a Crime—Mas Ermieyati," *Sinar Daily*, August 16, 2022, https://www.sinardaily.my/article/178383/focus/national/act-574-repeated-online-stalking-a-crime%E2%80%94mas-ermieyati (accessed April 7, 2026).
[37] Penal Code (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024, https://www.cljlaw.com/files/bills/pdf/2024/MY_FS_BIL_2024_57.pdf (accessed June 28, 2026).
[38] "Doxing," eSafety, May 28, 2025, https://www.esafety.gov.au/industry/tech-trends-and-challenges/doxing (accessed June 16, 2026). See further elaboration on doxxing.

C.3.5 Online Safety Act 2025

At the time of research, Law Minister Azalina Othman Said hailed ONSA as much needed to enable a safer digital environment. In essence, the law puts the responsibility on digital platforms to protect users from online harms.[39] This can encourage application service providers, content application service providers and network service providers to seriously consider safety design to regulate harmful content. While gender is not specifically mentioned, the First Schedule defines "harmful content" that must be regulated, including—but not limited to—child sexual abuse material (CSAM), obscene or indecent content, and material that may cause harassment, distress, fear or alarm.[40] The law further categorises what is meant by "harmful content" and "priority harmful content", subjecting the latter to stricter regulation. This covers CSAM and content relating to financial fraud. Save for CSAM, nowhere else in the Act does it capture the diverse and specific forms of OGBV/TFGBV.

C.3.6 Content Code

The Content Code was developed by the Content Forum.[41] It is a set of industry guidelines intended to be self-regulatory where it pertains to content disseminated in the country. As such, the jurisdiction of the Content Forum is limited to industry players who are members of the Content Forum. The Content Forum monitors the adherence to the Content Code, including handling complaints relating to online content. Specific timeframes are prescribed for the handling of a complaint from the review stage to the conclusion where parties involved are to be informed of the outcome of the investigation "immediately".[42] The Content Code at Para 4.2 specifically makes reference to OGBV as constituting "offensive violence".

C.3.7 Anti-Sexual Harassment Act 2022

The Anti-Sexual Harassment Act 2022 (ASHA) establishes a legal framework to address sexual harassment across all settings. This was intended to be a faster, cost-saving alternative to going to court to seek redress.[43] It includes a broad definition of sexual harassment, and so does not have any particular focus on OGBV/TFGBV. The law has set up a dedicated Tribunal for Anti-Sexual Harassment (Tribunal bagi Antigangguan Seksual, TAGS) to handle complaints. It is commendable that the law specifically prescribed for each complaint to be resolved within 60 days from the date of its first hearing.[44] However, the law does not have extraterritorial jurisdiction, limiting its application to offences committed within the country. At the 88th CEDAW Session in May 2024, CSOs raised concerns on the need to address the likelihood of reprisals against those seeking redress under this law. [45]

---

[39] Iylia Marsya Iskandar and Qistina Sallehuddin, "Azalina: Online Safety Act to Take Effect Jan 1, 2026," *New Straits Times*, November 13, 2025, https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/11/1314384/azalina-online-safety-act-take-effect-jan-1-2026 (accessed June 17, 2026).
[40] "Online Safety Bill 2024 Passed by Malaysian Parliament," Skrine, December 17, 2024, https://www.skrine.com/insights/alerts/december-2024/online-safety-bill-2024-passed-by-malaysian-parlia (accessed June 21, 2026).
[41] "Brief Overview of the Content Forum," Content Forum, accessed April 7, 2026, https://contentforum.my/about-us/#history-and-mission.
[42] Content Forum, *The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Content Code*, 3rd ed. (Cyberjaya: Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia, 2022), https://contentforum.my/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Content-Code-2022.pdf (accessed June 21, 2026). See Para 4.3, 4.6(a) and 5.2(a).
[43] Liam Lisu, "22 'Wins' Recorded at Anti-Sexual Harassment Tribunal," *Free Malaysia Today*, September 30, 2025, https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/09/30/22-wins-recorded-at-anti-sexual-harassment-tribunal (accessed April 7, 2026).
[44] Anti-Sexual Harassment Act, 2022, sec. 19(1).
[45] CSO CEDAW Coalition, *Joint NGO Report, for the Malaysian Government's Review by the CEDAW Committee, at the 88th CEDAW Session in May 2024* (Petaling Jaya: Women's Aid Organisation, 2024), https://familyfrontiers.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/88th-CEDAW-Session_Malaysia-Joint-NGO-Report_April-2024-1.pdf (accessed April 7, 2026).

C.3.8 Conclusion

The laws do provide for a complaints mechanism via the police, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), the Content Forum and TAGS. Some provide specific time frames within which to resolve a complaint. Nonetheless, many laws as presented above are often generic and gender-blind. Some provisions such as Sections 383, 503 and 507 of the Penal Code do not make a distinction between physical and online violence, nor do they recognise the gendered impact on women, girls and gender minorities. Reforms have been underway in recent years to change the status quo. Still, many fall short of recognising the specific gendered violence that women, girls and gender minorities face when expressing themselves online.

For example, the government's attempt to define the scope of ONSA, while commendable, still does not explicitly spell out or capture the different manifestations of OGBV/TFGBV—such as doxxing, sextortion, slut-shaming, catfishing, impersonation, non-consensual dissemination of intimate images, cyberstalking and AI-generated (i.e., created using artificial intelligence technology) sexual deepfakes. The UN Special Rapporteur cautions that the absence of a specific legal recognition of online harms would place the victims in a position of having to seek remedy through related crimes already recognised in the system, or to go through the civil law route instead of the criminal justice system. In such a situation, the remedy available may not be adequate and may even result in continued impunity without accountability.[46]

When the different forms of OGBV/TFGBV are not specifically addressed, the nuances and distinct harms caused are obscured, undermining effective remedies and accountability. As emphasised in the UNFPA framework, OGBV/TFGBV encompasses a spectrum of harms, each of which require precise legal and policy recognition to ensure proportionate and survivor-centred responses.[47] Failure to differentiate these harms risks creating definitional gaps where victims are left without adequate recourse. At the same time, overly broad categorisation of the types of online harms could potentially lead to selective application, overreach and censorship. When restrictions are not clearly defined and the terminologies used could be interpreted expansively, it could lead to the removal of lawful expression or the suppression of dissent and critical voices, in the name of regulating harmful content.

The effectiveness and accessibility of these mechanisms in practice will be analysed further in the subsequent chapter.

---

[46] UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences on Online Violence Against Women and Girls from a Human Rights Perspective.* See paragraph 81.
[47] UNFPA, *Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Making All Spaces Safe.* See page 31.

D. METHODOLOGY

This report begins with a literature review on the international human rights standards and principles concerning the right to freedom of expression online. Primarily through desk research, the review delves into international human rights standards and principles in addressing OGBV/TFGBV, followed by an examination of the relevant domestic laws in Malaysia. This chapter concludes with an analysis of the laws in Malaysia against the international human rights standards set out earlier.

The data from this research came from interview transcripts of 20 research participants. They are survivors or victims of OGBV/TFGBV, and/or are individuals or representatives of organisations that have provided support or assistance to survivors and victims of OGBV/TFGBV in varying capacities. Individuals representing relevant bodies, such as the Content Forum and the Bar Council Cyber and Privacy Laws Committee, also provided input. The interviews were conducted throughout the months of October to early December 2025.

The analysis from the data provided valuable first-hand accounts of individuals facing specific gendered challenges when expressing themselves online, and their attempts to navigate the system to address these challenges. As the circumstances and experiences of women, girls and gender minorities relating to violence are often minimised, it is crucial that the survivors' lived experiences, agency and safety are spotlighted and given due weight through a feminist lens. Although this approach may appear as survivor-centred bias, it is intentional, ethically necessary and methodologically sound. This is to recognise that violence is not merely another event to be counted, but a social harm shaped by power relations and long-term impacts that cannot be adequately captured through a singular research design. A qualitative analysis enables a nuanced understanding of how violence is experienced, interpreted and resisted, generating insights essential for survivor-centred recommendations for reform. Further applying a feminist theory, the analysis will incorporate an intersectional lens to reflect the fact that the experiences of women, girls and gender minorities are shaped by overlapping factors such as gender identity/expression, ethnicity, class, disability, age and migration status. It is these groups that are most affected by violence as a result of their intersecting forms of vulnerability.

The report concludes with a list of recommendations for law and policy reform, including proposals by the research participants, in order to pave the way for a safer and more enabling online and digital space for all.

E. DATA ANALYSIS

The following data analysis is based on the experiences of survivors of OGBV/TFGBV as well as observations shared by representatives from relevant organisations working on the subject matter.

E.1 Common Forms of Online Gender-Based Violence / Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Malaysia

OGBV/TFGBV in Malaysia manifests in various forms, reflecting both gendered power imbalances and the troubling reach of digital platforms. A research participant representing the Women's Centre for Change (WCC) observed a highly gendered trend where online violence victims were overwhelmingly female, while the perpetrators often were male and usually known to the victim. However, in cases concerning transgender women and female-presenting individuals self-identifying as non-binary, a research participant representing Justice for Sisters (JFS) noted that perpetrators were mostly unknown to the victims/survivors, although this is not always the case.

The WCC research participant further observed that cyberstalking can transcend to physical stalking, which is especially common in domestic violence cases where the partners or husbands have been known to track the victims' whereabouts through messaging applications and GPS tracking devices. Meanwhile, a research participant from WAO observed that prevalent forms of OGBV observed in Malaysia also include non-consensual dissemination of intimate images, doxxing and impersonation. The dissemination of intimate images without consent often leads to sextortion, where the individual is blackmailed into providing sexual images, favours or money through threats of exposure. Particularly in cases involving transgender women and female-presenting individuals self-identifying as non-binary, the JFS research participant noted that such threats include the threat of being outed.[48]

Research participants from WCC and the Association of Women Lawyers (AWL) both raised shared concerns on online violence relating to CSAM. This includes online grooming, where offenders build trust with a child online with the intention to then exploit them sexually.[49] A research participant from the Child Rights Innovation and Betterment Foundation (CRIB Foundation) highlights cases of online sexual exploitation where, in addition to grooming, cases of sextortion involving children are also prevalent. Predators would create Telegram groups with a requirement for new joiners to first upload CSAM on the group before they are allowed access. This ensures that they would not act as whistleblowers, for fear of incriminating themselves.

[48] "Outed," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed June 16, 2026, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/outed; Sunny Kumar, "What Is Outing and Why Is It Harmful?" LGBTQ and ALL, January 7, 2022, https://www.lgbtqandall.com/what-is-outing-and-why-is-it-harmful/ (accessed June 16, 2026). To be "outed" or the act of "outing" means to make known that someone is not heterosexual or cisgender, or is in other ways an LGBTQ+ person, without their consent.

[49] "Online Grooming: What It Is, How It Happens, and How to Defend Children," Thorn, November 4, 2024, https://www.thorn.org/blog/online-grooming-what-it-is-how-it-happens-and-how-to-defend-children/ (accessed June 21, 2026). See further elaboration on online grooming.

Research participants observed that the abuses often overlap as some perpetrators would employ several forms of online violence to amplify harm. For example, the WCC research participant cited cases in which impersonation is employed as a tactic to gain trust, which would later turn into blackmailing to coerce the victims into sharing intimate photos. The case involving research participant Acacia Mardiana Daud, for example, relates to several forms of OGBV/TFGBV in Malaysia, namely cyberstalking, online sexual harassment and cyberflashing.[50] For six years, Acacia faced persistent and intrusive monitoring of her digital activities as well as unwanted sexual comments. On several occasions, she also received unsolicited sexual images, a form of OGBV/TFGBV also termed as "cyberflashing".[51] Acacia's troubles mirror the experience of another survivor, research participant Amanda Chan, who endured persistent stalking on her social media and workplace accounts despite her pleas for the harassment to stop. In Amanda's case, the perpetrator engaged in unwanted sexual comments, repeatedly asked for more of her photos for sexual pleasure, and asked her to participate in sexual activities.

Cyber harassment, including cyberbullying and microaggressions, covers both sexual and non-sexual harassment.[52] In cases of OGBV/TFGBV, cyber harassment occurs when victims are repeatedly targeted with hateful gender-based messages or behaviour. Research participants shared that this often intersects with other forms of discrimination such as xenophobia, homophobia, racism, ageism and bodyshaming. A research participant from Family Frontiers noted that some of the women they work with on their campaign for equal citizenship face online harassment reflecting a victim-blaming mindset. For example, some of the affected mothers working on the campaign were shamed and humiliated for choosing to marry a non-Malaysian. Such intersectional violence further compounds harm against women, particularly those from marginalised groups. Some research participants reported receiving threats of violence (e.g., rape threats and/or death threats), or messages telling them to end their lives. In some instances, the threats even extended to family members, leaving victims in fear for their own safety as well as that of those close to them.

Survivors also recounted harrowing experiences of being doxxed, where their photos, phone number, work address and/or home address were circulated without their consent, with the apparent intention for others to harass them. This places victims at the risk of offline harm. One research participant shared that, in separate instances, she had received defamatory comments and was alerted to attempts to hack into her social media account. In a case related by a research participant representing the Sarawak Women for Women Society (SWWS), a perpetrator uploaded the victim's intimate images onto an online platform, changing the victim's name, age and geographical location, with the intention to make profit by selling the images. Lawyer Jason Wee, who acted for Acacia, related a similar case where fake profiles were created and photos were edited with the intention to humiliate the victims.

Lastly, women who are more visible in public and political spaces often face increased likelihood of being targeted. In many instances, the violence appears as a result of organised or coordinated attacks, compounding the gravity of the harms caused to the victims. This was reflected in the experiences shared by politician Amira Aisya, activists Shamini Darshni and Michelle Yesudas, and another research participant who declined to be named. Shamini experienced online abuses as a result of a public statement made in her then capacity as the spokesperson for Amnesty International Malaysia, while Michelle faced online abuses in several instances where her social media posts related to race and religion, as well as during the time when she spoke up in defence of the Rohingya community, a vulnerable group in Malaysia. Michelle also had her photos doctored with defamatory statements attributed to her, which were then circulated in digital spaces.

---

[50] Zaf Seraj, "In Malaysia's Landmark Stalking Case, Victim Tells Court About Severe Trauma After Years of Harassment," *The Malay Mail*, January 17, 2024, https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2024/01/17/in-malaysias-landmark-stalking-case-victim-tells-court-about-severe-trauma-after-years-of-harassment/112858 (accessed April 7, 2026).

[51] "What Is Cyber Flashing?" Rape Crisis England & Wales, accessed June 21, 2026, https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/types-of-sexual-violence/what-is-cyber-flashing/. See further elaboration on cyberflashing.

[52] "Microaggression," Merriam-Webster, accessed June 16, 2026, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/microaggression. "Microaggression" refers to a subtle, often unintentional comment or action that expresses a prejudiced attitude or bias towards a marginalised group (such as a racial minority, women or gender minorities).

The many forms of OGBV/TFGBV highlight the specific gendered challenges that women, girls and gender minorities face when expressing themselves online. The different manifestations of online violence require different approaches as the causes, actions and impacts differ, and also vary in degrees of severity. This must first be recognised in order to truly ensure the safety and dignity of women, girls and gender minorities, along with their ability to meaningfully participate in online spaces.

The common forms of online violence or technology-facilitated violence targeting individuals based on their gender can be summarised as below:

- Online harassment, including cyberbullying and microaggressions
- Cyberstalking
- Identity theft
- Impersonation
- Dissemination of doctored images
- Online threats of violence, including both sexual and non-sexual violence
- Blackmail and sextortion
- Doxxing
- Gender-based hate speech
- Disinformation resulting in defamation
- Hacking
- Non-consensual dissemination of intimate images
- Unsolicited intimate images (including cyberflashing) or online sexual solicitation
- Online grooming
- Other abuses involving CSAM

E.2 Impact of Online Gender-Based Violence / Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence on Victims and Survivors

OGBV/TFGBV significantly hinder the ability of women, girls and gender minorities to freely express themselves in digital spaces. Often, the harm inflicted leaves deep emotional scars, affecting them socially and professionally, as reflected in the experiences of multiple victims and survivors interviewed for this research. Many demonstrated added caution with every post or interaction, reflecting a tendency to self-censor to avoid being targeted again when expressing themselves in the digital space.

Politician Amira shared that online harassment took such a toll on her emotional well-being that she even considered leaving politics. She became afraid to express herself, although later the experience ultimately strengthened her resolve to speak out. Acknowledging a continuing struggle to maintain an online presence as a politician alongside the need to better protect her mental health, she now relies on her political team to read and filter abusive comments online. A content creator shared how her mental health suffered due to online abuse, leading her to deactivate her social media accounts. She had initially wanted to set up a LinkedIn account for professional reasons, but second-guessed her decision and ultimately decided against it for fear that she would be targeted and doxxed. She would now carefully curate her content, relying on her partner to help review all planned content before every posting, to reduce the chances of her harassers weaponising her posts for further attacks.

Other survivors without a similar support system, however, reflected a tendency to either limit or stop expressing themselves online entirely. Research participant Acacia shared that the online abuse she experienced "severely restricted [her] freedom of expression online" and fundamentally altered her perception of online safety. She became very cautious, realising that even a harmless sky photo could enable a stalker to locate her whereabouts. This echoed the concerns of another research participant, who has had to limit her movement in going about her work and daily activities, in order to minimise potential encounters and ensure her personal safety.

For activist Shamini, while she was grateful for the show of solidarity by fellow human rights defenders, the incident that incited the online abuse she experienced has made her more reserved in how frequently she posts. She has shifted to using Facebook mainly for professional updates, and prefers Instagram, set to a private profile with access limited to only friends, as she finds such a setting to be more manageable. Another survivor described becoming highly selective about what she comments on, and very cautious about who she wants to engage with online. Her previous experiences, where well-meaning comments were twisted into hateful narratives, pushed her to restrict online interaction. Similarly, another research participant began setting all her major social media accounts private, disallowing the reposting function, to eliminate the chances of her posts being taken out of context or used against her.

Another research participant shared that the harassment severely restricts her creativity. She now avoids certain topics entirely, and constantly asks herself whether or not a post would be "safe" to publish. Among other precautions, she ensures that posts featuring political topics are only accessible to close friends. Meanwhile, research participant Amanda was forced to disclose to her colleagues about the harassment when her harasser began stalking her work accounts and leaving unwanted comments about her images. Ultimately, the harassment pushed her to avoid having an online presence altogether. Although realising that withdrawing from online spaces would also mean losing social connection with friends, especially as she is residing abroad, she has resigned herself to the fact and accepted it as a necessary trade-off for her emotional well-being and sense of safety.

In conclusion, experiencing OGBV/TFGBV profoundly reshapes how survivors view and express themselves in digital spaces. The impact, as shared by the research participants, results in fear and self-doubt, self-censorship, and a lingering feeling of never knowing who to trust or whether one would be harassed online again. In many cases, the harms go beyond digital spaces and negatively affect survivors' interactions with others offline, their professional life, and their freedom of movement in going about their day-to-day activities. It is therefore apparent that online harms can be debilitating, greatly reducing a woman's ability to freely exchange opinions with others online and offline.

E.3 Enforcement of the Law in Providing Redress for Online Gender-Based Violence / Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

E.3.1 Current Complaints and Redress Mechanism

This subchapter aims to assess the effectiveness of Malaysia's complaints mechanism, particularly CMA, in addressing OGBV/TFGBV. Other complaints mechanisms, such as the police and TAGS, will also be discussed in this part of the analysis, as some components are intertwined and several of the survivors interviewed for this research had in fact attempted to seek recourse through several available avenues. The evaluations shared by the research participants can generally be analysed from the perspectives of domestic laws or legislation, coordination between the relevant enforcement authorities, responsiveness, the level of understanding of online violence and gender sensitivity, and the level of trust and confidence in the authorities to effectively address OGBV/TFGBV cases.

Applicable Domestic Laws/Legislation Relating to Online Violence

Research participant Mediha Mahmood, CEO of the Content Forum, explained that the Content Forum operates as a self-regulatory industry forum. Its mandate therefore is limited to its members, although the Content Forum also directs complainants to the right channel to pursue a complaint that does not fall under its jusridiction. The Content Forum's Content Code was amended in 2022 to address OGBV/TFGBV. Mediha shared that a further amendment is underway which will enhance protection by taking into account gendered harms, the intersectionality of issues relating to OGBV/TFGBV, and online child safety.

When research participant Acacia first reported her stalking case to the police, the police treated it as a cover report on the basis that stalking was not a crime and, therefore, there was nothing the police could do. This was before Section 507A criminalising stalking was incorporated into the Penal Code. After Acacia decided to go public through a series of posts on X, and Section 507A was enacted, she made a police report which led to her case being the first to be tried under the new law.

At the same time, across CSOs, it is observable that significant legislative gaps continue to impede redress for OGBV/TFGBV in Malaysia. CMA's legal provisions also present substantive challenges. The research participant from WAO highlighted that usage of vague, subjective terms such as "annoy", "abuse" or "offensive" in Section 233 makes it difficult to apply the law consistently. The decision of the Court of Appeal to strike down parts of this section further supports the long-standing concerns of CSOs around overly broad definitions.[53] This decision was, however, overturned by the Federal Court in February 2026, which declared that the words "offensive" and "annoy" are not unconstitutional.[54] Research participant Sarah Yong, who heads the Bar Council's Technology, Cyber and Privacy Laws Committee, noted that enforcement tends to be selective as CMA is readily used against controversial content relating to race, religion and royalty, yet appears to be less consistently applied against perpetrators of gender-based harassment.[55]

---

[53] Heidy, CLJ JT (11).
[54] "Federal Court Rules Words 'Offensive' and 'Annoy' Under Section 233 of Communication and Multimedia Act Constitutional."
[55] Asia Centre, *Internet Freedoms in Malaysia: Regulating Online Discourse on Race, Religion, and Royalty* (Bangkok: Asia Centre, 2023), https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-In-Malaysia-Regulating-Online-Discourse-on-Race-Religion-and-Royalty-.pdf (accessed April 7, 2026); CIJ, *A Report on the State of Freedom of Expression in Malaysia 2024* (Kuala Lumpur: Centre for Independent Journalism, 2024), https://cijmalaysia.net/a-report-on-the-state-of-freedom-of-expression-in-malaysia-2024/ (accessed April 7, 2026). Page 12 onwards of Asia Centre's baseline study examines the ways in which Malaysian laws can be used to restrict Internet freedoms. CIJ's report documents cases in which Malaysian laws were strategically used to target politicians, influencers and activists online, and also to shut down discourse on race, religion and royalty.

Some research participants noted that the amendments made to the Penal Code in 2025 brought clarity to the crime of cyberbullying, when this was not previously recognised. On the other hand, the AWL research participant emphasised that the laws are still unclear on how abuses relating to images generated using artificial intelligence (AI) are addressed. The laws therefore need to catch up as the use (and abuse) of AI is becoming more commonplace in Malaysia.

The WAO research participant highlighted that the Domestic Violence Act focuses on offline abuse and does not explicitly address cyberstalking, online harassment or technology-facilitated control by intimate partners. They also noted that ASHA is primarily workplace-focused. The lack of clarity in defining online harassment can leave victims of other forms of harassment without proper recourse. Research participant Amanda shared that as the application of ASHA is limited to Malaysia, and the perpetrator of her harassment is based outside the country, she does not feel that the outcome of her case would be satisfactory.

There appears to be a tendency to defer to parents in all cases involving children, disregarding the possibility that this may deter reporting due to various reasons. The research participant from CRIB Foundation shared that while there are laws that can be applied to address OGBV/TFGBV, the rigid application of the law defeats its purpose. The requirement that a police report must first be made would prove to be a major hindrance in situations where the child victim is fearful that doing so would mean having to disclose the incident to, and face a reprimand from, their parents. By refusing to act without a formal, non-anonymous report that necessitates parental notification, law enforcement effectively shifts the burden of initiating the justice process back onto the child and their family. The CRIB Foundation research participant also noted that school counsellors (who are often teachers untrained in dealing with issues relating to OGBV/TFGBV) frequently default to notifying parents and inflicting punishment on the child rather than providing empathetic, survivor-centred support, thus allowing perpetrators to evade responsibility. Additionally, the police's refusal to investigate based on anonymous tips, even when the possession of CSAM is involved, points to an unwillingness to recognise the complexity and power imbalances inherent in online violence cases. The CRIB Foundation research participant characterised this approach as "prosecution-oriented" rather than "victim-centred", and argued that relevant offences should be reframed as strict liability offences, requiring police to investigate the possession of harmful material without forcing child victims to endure the retraumatising process of filing a formal report and confronting parental disclosure.

Lawyer Jason noted that current laws are overall still too general in their wording and application, lacking specific offences that can properly reflect the different manifestations of OGBV/TFGBV. He argued that the prescribed punishments of three years and/or a fine of unspecified amount under Section 507A of the Penal Code are not commensurate with the gravity of the crime, particularly in the situation where a perpetrator has caused prolonged trauma to the victim due to years of being subjected to stalking.

Lastly, and as noted by the AWL research participant, the general approach of the laws and their enforcement appears to place a huge emphasis on monitoring and moderating content, rather than adopting a preventive approach. In other words, the domestic legislative measures are mostly reactive rather than ensuring "safety by design" across different digital platforms. This observation highlights the need for the government to shift its approach in order to effectively tackle online violence cases. The conversation on what "safety by design" entails is currently ongoing. In the International Telecommunication Union's Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of the Child, "safety by design" within the context of children's rights is understood as an approach that embeds safety, dignity and well-being into the entire life cycle of AI systems, from design and development to implementation and governance.[56] Rather than relying on reactive measures, risks—including exposure to harm, exploitation or rights violations—are anticipated and mitigated before they occur. This includes investing in risk mitigation at the front end, and integrating privacy, non-discrimination and the best interests of the child as primary considerations, alongside accountability and transparency mechanisms.[57] The responsibility falls on the States parties and technology companies to proactively ensure that AI systems respect, protect and fulfil children's rights by default.[58]

---

[56] ITU, *Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of the Child* (Geneva: International Telecommunication Union, 2025), https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-str-cyb_joint-2025/ (accessed April 7, 2026).
[57] eSafety, "Safety by Design," January 8, 2026, https://www.esafety.gov.au/industry/safety-by-design (accessed April 7, 2026).
[58] ITU, *Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of the Child*. See section 4.

Coordination Among Enforcement Authorities

Poor interagency coordination was one of the most persistent structural gaps cited by most of the research participants. Many described being sent back and forth between the police and the MCMC, giving survivors the impression that frontline officers do not know who holds jurisdiction over online violence cases. The WCC research participant related situations where victims were directed by the MCMC to file a police report and, upon presenting themselves at the police station, were then told that their case should have been handled by the MCMC.

Similarly, another research participant—a school counsellor—related an experience in assisting a student in pursuing a complaint relating to the dissemination of CSAM via WhatsApp. After lodging a report with the police, the case was then referred to the MCMC. After close to three months, the student was informed that the case had been handed back to the police. To-date, the case has yet to be concluded.

A research participant representing the All Women's Action Society (AWAM) pointed to the lack of clarity and overlapping responsibilities, particularly between the Royal Malaysia Police (Polis Diraja Malaysia, PDRM) and the MCMC, in handling online violence cases. As reflected in the experiences related above, this has inevitably caused delays in resolving the cases. The delay in getting justice due to the lack of coordination and clear jurisdiction aggravates the situation, as the online content in question continues to circulate, sometimes across other platforms, causing further harm while the complainants are sent back and forth trying to figure out which enforcement body to go to.

Accordingly, many research participants stressed that there is an absence of a central interagency reporting and response platform, which would spare survivors from getting confused about where to seek help to get their cases resolved. The WCC research participant noted that a standard operating procedure (SOP) to address overlapping jurisdictions in cases relating to digital platforms appears to be missing. More complex cases (e.g., involving CSAM) require wider interagency coordination and cooperation, which is another gap in the system. Without a clear process through which to seek recourse, victims/survivors of OGBV/TFGBV are then left disempowered and defeated without ever reaching the conclusion of their pursuit of justice. As related by the school counsellor interviewed, after about a year of attempting to get their case resolved, their student ultimately decided to abandon the process, feeling that "no one cares anymore".

Responsiveness of Enforcement Authorities

The AWAM research participant shared that the MCMC has assisted in ensuring the takedown of harmful content on social media platforms. On the other hand, the SWWS research participant noted that lodging a report with the MCMC is ineffective as the report often "does not go anywhere". Describing the MCMC as a "toothless tiger", the CRIB Foundation research participant related a case involving cyberbullying on the TikTok platform. The case was brought to the attention of the MCMC but there was no follow-up, giving the impression that the complaint was not acted upon. This observation reflects a common thread by many research participants on what they viewed as the main challenge in getting a case resolved. It is unclear whether the lack of response is due to a gap in the law or the extent of power held by the MCMC, or any other reason. In any event, no clear reason had been communicated to the research participants.

The responses also highlighted chronic failures in investigation quality, as well as patterns of selective enforcement by the authorities. Survivors related their experience of being kept in the dark after filing their report, not knowing the progress of their case or whether it will be resolved. Bar Council committee head Sarah observed that the police would often refuse to accept reports relating to OGBV/TFGBV cases, preferring to push the responsibility to the MCMC. She also related a case where, despite multiple complaints lodged with the MCMC on its portal, there was no response by the MCMC, mirroring the experience of the research participant from CRIB Foundation. The MCMC has made known its inability to compel platforms to take down content, due to the fact that enforcement of the Content Code is based on a self-regulatory model where jurisdiction is limited to the Content Forum's members. Currently, TikTok is the only social media platform that has voluntarily subscribed to the Content Code. The Content Forum has no control or resolution powers over any other social media platforms that are not members, as these entities can simply choose to ignore intervention requests. Furthermore, the current regulatory landscape is hampered by the fact that most major platforms remain unlicensed, which means that the authorities' ability to enforce governance standards will remain restricted until ONSA and its subsidiary licensing requirements are fully implemented.

The research participants also highlighted that there are times where the police appear to be more proactive only after persistent follow-ups are made or if a case is considered high-profile, suggesting uneven enforcement practices. Investigations rely heavily on the responsible Investigating Officer, hence—as reported by survivors—unexplained delays, limited communication and stalled investigations are common, raising serious concerns about transparency, accountability and equal access to justice within existing response mechanisms.

Another research participant (the earlier-mentioned school counsellor assisting a student in pursuing a complaint with the police and the MCMC) described the police responses as largely non-responsive upon lodging a complaint. When asked about the progress of the case, the response given by the police was to "just wait" with no clear timelines given. When the case was referred to the MCMC, it appeared that the police were no longer responsible in seeing the case to conclusion. With the MCMC, a notification was given after a few working days confirming that a complaint had been made. However, it was only after about two months that the MCMC called for a meeting for statements to be taken. The slow response time grossly overlooks the fact that with more delays, victims of online violence often suffer more harm as the exposure of the content in question multiplies rapidly, especially with the ease of content sharing across digital platforms.

In another case, the CRIB Foundation research participant shared that a complaint escalated through the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children suffered a similar fate to the above, with no resolution while the perpetrator remains free.

It is clear from the above that the slow institutional response and lack of urgency in handling cases on harmful online content leave victims and survivors feeling frustrated, making them lose faith in the system. Even when the MCMC assists with takedowns, the process is slow and inconsistent, leaving harmful materials online for prolonged periods.

Level of Understanding of Online Violence and Gender Sensitivity

The lack of urgency by enforcement authorities points to other critical gaps across agencies and other frontliners—namely, the low level of understanding of the different forms of online violence, and the dearth of gender sensitivity in handling OGBV/TFGBV cases. CSO representatives observe that institutional capacity and competence remain major barriers. Many note that MCMC and police personnel often lack specialised understanding of online harm and its different manifestations, leading to dismissive attitudes or minimisation of the severity of the abuse.

One research participant shared that when she reported the doxxing she had endured to the police, the officer seemed unwilling to accept her report, asking whether she really wanted to proceed with lodging it. Another respondent, activist Shamini, shared that when she reported the online harassment she had faced to the police, she too was met with a dismissive response, with the police giving the impression that action is not likely to be taken. On the other hand, politician Amira recounted that her experience during the filing process was positive, although she wondered whether the treatment she received was due to her status as an elected representative. Even so, during her interview for this research, she stated that she had received no updates on the outcome of her case so far.

Research participant Amanda shared that upon reporting her stalker to the police, she was asked by the officer to change the setting of her Instagram account from "private" to "public" for the purposes of the investigation. Within 48 hours, the perpetrator thanked her for allowing full access to her account, while the police informed her that no useful information had been obtained from her account. The incident left her feeling exposed and unable to protect herself from the perpetrator. This lapse in judgement by the police officer is a glaring example of how a lack of understanding of the crime of cyberstalking led to the victim feeling even more vulnerable than she had been before filing a police report.

The police also informed Amanda that the matter would be escalated to the MCMC. However, when she later asked for an update, the officer was evasive, claiming that it was not even a case—yet in another instance, the officer said that Interpol needed to be involved as the perpetrator is not in the country. Amanda later decided to file a complaint with TAGS. When told that she had to serve the paperwork to the perpetrator, she explained that she had no knowledge of the whereabouts of the perpetrator except for his email address. The response given was that service to his physical address is the only accepted manner of service. This led her to resort to hiring a private investigator to find out the perpetrator's address and satisfy the requirement of service. As of the date of writing this report, Amanda's case has yet to be called for hearing before TAGS.

The research participant from JFS shared that enforcement personnel often appear to struggle with understanding digital harms, leading to responses disproportionate to the offence reported. Research participants from AWAM and AWL noted that enforcement agencies often display a victim-blaming mindset, with instances of officers questioning why survivors "sent pictures" or asking them if they were married. The research participant from Family Frontiers observed that the male-dominated environment in enforcement institutions may have contributed to the frequent dismissal of online harassment cases, with officers giving the impression that since it happened online, it must not have been real. Even when the interaction is with a female officer, some survivors have reported that gender does not guarantee empathy or a more professional reporting process. Shamini recounted being directed to a female officer who was not empathetic and who dismissively questioned the need for a police report. Amira further observed that although she was treated well, likely due to her status as an elected representative, she was aware of many instances where D11 officers (from a division often staffed to handle gender-based crimes) have shrugged off reports and told victims to "just forget it". These systemic failures suggest that, although many victims/survivors would prefer to make their report to a female officer, the gender of the officer alone is not the determining factor in getting a report of OGBV/TFGBV treated with sensitivity. Rather, specific training and established protocols are required to ensure all survivors are treated with respect, regardless of who takes their statement.

The school counsellor research participant observed that the whole interview process with enforcement authorities can be intimidating and confusing for her students who are victims/survivors, and also for their parents. Her requests to be present during the interview process with the students she assists are often denied, thus limiting her ability to provide adequate support. She noted that, in such an environment and with the student still dealing with the emotional trauma from the online violence experienced, students would struggle to provide adequate responses to questions by the police. Similarly, when Amanda requested for a companion to be allowed during her hearing with TAGS because she dreaded the possibility of having to face the perpetrator in person, her request was also denied. These experiences reflect the lack of gender sensitivity in understanding the severity of online harms that is needed to better protect survivors.

At the same time, the research participant from CRIB Foundation noted that other frontliners, such as school counsellors, are generally ill-equipped to handle OGBV/TFGBV cases with sensitivity. For example, there have been cases where punishment was inflicted upon the underage survivor, with their entire school and parents made aware of the case. Meanwhile, the adult perpetrator remained free without facing any consequences. The CRIB Foundation research participant observed that without proper training, decisions may then be made based on the religious or moral beliefs of the individuals in authority. This corresponds with a first-hand experience shared by the research participant who is a school counsellor. She highlighted a lack of guidance by the Ministry of Education on how schools should handle online violence cases involving students. As the violence in question occurs in online spaces, the traditional yardstick of whether or not a case has taken place on schoolgrounds bears little relevance.

On the other hand, Content Forum CEO Mediha shared that the Content Forum carries out general advocacy and digital literacy modules in its training to members, with issues relating to OGBV incorporated into the module. The Content Forum carries out periodic and customised training, consultation processes on different issues, and behind-the-scenes interventions for issues that arise relating to its members.

When attempts to seek recourse are met with dismissive attitudes instead of recognising the seriousness of the violence, survivors are left feeling disempowered and defeated by the system. Without proper training to enhance gender sensitivity and the understanding of digital harms, the legal protection written in the laws would be merely illusory with no genuine recourse for victims and survivors.

Level of Trust and Confidence

As a result of the factors described above, there is a general distrust and lack of confidence in the system's ability to effectively address OGBV/TFGBV cases. A legal framework that is largely slow, fragmented and unfriendly to survivors does not inspire public trust in the system and instead discourages reporting.

The research participant representing Family Frontiers noted that this distrust is due to survivors' lack of confidence that their case will be taken seriously. This concern, coupled with problematic laws, led to activist Michelle choosing to bypass official mechanisms altogether and rely instead on platform-level reporting, although this comes with its own set of challenges. The research participant representing AWL raised a concern on the lack of independence of the MCMC as a regulatory body, as its decisions have been shown to be influenced by government directives. This further undermines public trust and confidence in the MCMC's ability to effectively address OGBV/TFGBV while protecting genuine exercises in freedom of expression.

The distrust is heightened when victims or survivors are from marginalised groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community where cases can intersect with the individual's sexual orientation and gender identity. In a baseline study commissioned by the International Commission of Jurists, there appears to be a lack of knowledge on what can be done when members of the LGBTQ+ community experience OGBV/TFGBV.[59] In a survey conducted by JFS on the impact of COVID-19 and anti-LGBTQ+ narratives on LGBTQ+ persons in Malaysia, the responses demonstrate a trust deficit when it comes to reporting cases to government agencies. This lack of trust is attributable to the ongoing criminalisation of LGBTQ+ persons, and anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments from both State and non-State actors. This discriminatory environment leads to the fear of being outed and of the impact of being outed, as well as the fear of being subjected to discrimination and sensationalisation in the media. In fact, over 70% of the JFS survey respondents did not think that their cases would be taken seriously by government agencies.[60] This reflects a general unwillingness by marginalised communities to engage with the system to seek justice, as their victimisation can be compounded by their already-vulnerable status and the threat of prejudice and stigma.

Issues Relating to Accessibility

The survivors interviewed for this research also reported receiving little to no explanation about what to expect when filing a report or complaint regarding the OGBV/TFGBV faced. When research participant Amanda wanted to pursue a complaint with TAGS via their website, she discovered that the links provided were broken. As a result, she had to go to the office in Putrajaya to file her complaint in person. As she is based outside Malaysia, she also had to fly back for a pre-hearing meeting with TAGS only to be later informed that the meeting could have been done online. In essence, the lack of diverse reporting channels, along with the failure of frontliners to provide sufficient and clear information on the relevant processes, could prevent more from coming forward to make a report or complaint.

Aside from the issues covered by the respondents, other issues relating to accessibility that could likewise hinder the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms include: unavailability of procedures in different languages and formats (be it in person or online, in writing or otherwise), unavailability of child-friendly procedures, failure to accommodate persons with disabilities in the design of the reporting mechanism, and failure to guarantee confidentiality, anonymity and protection from retaliation. This requires further discussion which is outside the ambit of this research.

Conclusion

Overall, the effectiveness of existing complaints mechanisms in providing recourse for survivors/victims of OGBV/TFGBV remains severely limited, as reflected consistently across survivor testimonies and CSO representative experiences. Although the legal framework may be described as "adequate on paper", both survivors and CSO representatives report that the system fails at several levels, namely enforcement, responsiveness, coordination and sensitivity. Some complaints mechanisms also place heavy burdens on complainants. Lack of gender sensitivity is apparent in many of the interactions shared by the research participants, leading to survivors feeling retraumatised by the very process that was supposed to protect them.

If survivors must first learn how to navigate the often confusing system with little to no support while also navigating the trauma from experiencing OGBV/TFGBV, the existing complaints mechanisms serve little purpose in providing redress for victims and survivors. It is therefore not surprising that many give up on seeing their complaint or report through to its conclusion, while some choose to abandon the formal option altogether.

---

[59] ICJ, *Silenced but Not Silent: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons' Freedom of Expression and Information Online in Southeast Asia* (Geneva: International Commission of Jurists, 2023), https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ICJ-Silenced-But-Not-Silent-Report.pdf (accessed April 7, 2026). See chapter 5.

[60] JFS et al., *Survey Findings: Impact of COVID-19 & Anti-LGBT Narratives on LGBTQ+ Persons in Malaysia* (Malaysia: Justice for Sisters, 2021), https://justiceforsisters.org/resources/survey-findings-impact-of-covid-19-anti-lgbt-narratives-on-lgbtq-persons-in-malaysia/ (accessed April 7, 2026). See page 30.

E.3.2 Online Safety Act 2025 and Its Potential to Address Online Gender-Based Violence / Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

This subchapter looks at how the respondents view the feasibility of ONSA in addressing OGBV/TFGBV. Enacted in May 2025, ONSA has yet to be enforced at the time of this research. Nevertheless, the new law has been touted as much needed to tackle online harms and ensure safer online spaces.[61] As at November 2025, the Malaysian government was in the midst of enacting ten subsidiary legislative instruments with the intention to fully bring ONSA into effect.[62]

Many research participants took the view that the effectiveness of ONSA would depend largely on how its definitions of harm would apply to real cases and whether its dual complaints mechanism is accessible, gender-sensitive and supported by capable institutions. The research participant from AWAM highlighted that the establishment of the Online Safety Committee is a good step, although they had reservations on who will be selected to the Committee. While ONSA's recognition of "harmful content" and "priority harmful content" is a positive foundation, research participants from CSOs pointed to significant limitations that may hinder its effectiveness, particularly for women, girls and gender minorities.

One such key weakness noted by the AWAM research participant is the exclusion of private messaging under Section 2. This limits ONSA's application, as much of OGBV/TFGBV such as blackmail, threats, grooming and non-consensual dissemination of intimate images occurs within encrypted channels on platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram. Excluding these spaces from ONSA's scope leaves major forms of harm unaddressed. Even within ONSA's current scope, representatives from groups such as AWL and JFS have raised concerns over the definition of harmful content, describing it as broad and vague. Phrases like "indecent", "grossly improper" or "against culture" may result in overpolicing, politicised enforcement, or even weaponisation of morality against vulnerable communities, including LGBTQ+ persons. Overall, the research participant from Family Frontiers shared the view that the ambiguous wording raises concerns that the law can be selectively applied to some cases but not others. This can also lead to the law unreasonably restricting genuine exercises in freedom of expression in online and digital spaces, a concern that was shared by the SWWS research participant. Separately, the AWL research participant noted that another concern is the exclusion of non-consensual dissemination of intimate images from what is regarded in ONSA as "priority harmful content".

Research participants from AWL and AWAM raised concerns over the centralisation of regulatory power in the MCMC, noting long-standing issues of limited independence and capacity, and slow response times. Accordingly, the AWAM research participant stressed that the increased power of the MCMC under ONSA must come with the necessary gender sensitivity training. To this, research participants from CRIB Foundation and Family Frontiers added that the effectiveness of the law depends much on frontliner attitudes, particularly as a victim-blaming mindset remains a structural barrier. On training, lawyer Jason drew parallels between ONSA, as a new law, and his experience as a lawyer handling a case under the new Section 507A of the Penal Code. As it was the first case to be tried under a new law, the limited knowledge of the police and the prosecution office, as well as the lack of SOPs for how the law is to be applied, proved a challenge. Therefore, care must be taken to provide adequate training to the relevant authorities to address similar potential challenges for ONSA.

Regarding the complaints mechanism under ONSA, many CSO representatives remain cautious. Several research participants emphasised concerns around accessibility, especially if redress processes are centralised in major cities, mirroring challenges seen under other tribunal-based systems like TAGS. The WCC research participant and another respondent noted a lack of a clear victim support framework within ONSA. While ONSA's extraterritorial reach is promising, the AWAM research participant questioned if this means the police will be involved in the enforcement process and whether there will be clarity in terms of which enforcement agency has jurisdiction.

---

[61] "Azalina: Online Safety Act Coming Into Force Soon, Targets Digital Harm to Children," *The Malay Mail*, June 16, 2025, https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/06/16/azalina-online-safety-act-coming-into-force-soon-targets-digital-harm-to-children/180552 (accessed April 7, 2026).
[62] Hidayath Hisham, "Govt Reviewing 10 Subsidiary Instruments Under Online Safety Act for Full Implementation," *The Malaysian Reserve*, November 3, 2025, https://themalaysianreserve.com/2025/11/03/govt-reviewing-10-subsidiary-instruments-under-online-safety-act-for-full-implementation/ (accessed April 7, 2026).

Across organisations, there is broad agreement that ONSA was rushed, with consultations described as limited or tokenistic. Ultimately, ONSA's impact will depend on factors such as comprehensive training, clear SOPs, independent oversight, and meaningful collaboration with CSOs. As of December 2025, the Minister of Communications has indicated that the subsidiary legislation will include measures such as restricting social media use for individuals under age 16, ensuring that content shown to users under the age of 18 is age-appropriate, requiring platforms to provide parental control settings, introducing new licensing requirements for certain messaging and social media service providers, and mandating the submission of online safety plans.[63] On 1 January 2026, ONSA came into force with four sets of subsidiary legislation.[64] However, significant gaps remain.[65] There have yet to be clearly-defined safeguards and SOPs, explicit recognition of gender-based violence, disability accessibility, survivor-centred redress mechanisms, and requirements for data disaggregation. It is also unclear whether adequate consultations have been conducted with CSOs or affected communities in the development of these subsidiary laws. Without addressing these gaps, ONSA is unlikely to significantly improve protection against OGBV/TFGBV.

E.3.3 Support Services and the Role of Civil Society Actors

There is a general consensus among the research participants that when victims/survivors report a case of OGBV/TFGBV, State support services are minimal at best. The AWAM research participant shared that some survivors are unable to get support through the National Legal Aid Foundation scheme for a variety of reasons, including the unresponsiveness of the Foundation when survivors attempt to make contact, and the inability of the Foundation to provide useful or relevant legal information. In addition, the Foundation's stringent eligibility requirements mean that many survivors do not meet the prescribed criteria and are consequently denied legal representation. Additionally, the Department of Social Welfare (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, JKM) is limited in its capacity to provide safe shelters for victims/survivors who require them, including domestic violence survivors who experience online stalking or digital tracking by an intimate partner, as OGBV/TFGBV can often be an extension of offline abuse. Similarly, victims and survivors may also require access to shelters in cases where violence originating in digital spaces escalates into physical harm, such as with online stalking or online dating interactions that culminate in hate crimes during in-person encounters.

For these reasons, CSOs, including women's rights groups and digital rights groups, are stepping in to fill the gaps, providing the necessary support where State mechanisms fail. In Penang, WCC works closely with the State government through an annual State grant as well as collaborations with relevant agencies. Meanwhile, AWAM offers direct services such as counselling, providing legal information and providing referrals, which are crucial for survivors who often struggle to navigate State systems like *Talian Kasih*.[66] The research participant from AWAM also highlighted the importance of advocacy and community outreach, noting how targeted engagement via Tamil-language media led to increased calls from Indian Malaysian communities.

Research participants from WAO and WCC similarly stressed that CSOs often serve as the first point of contact, receiving disclosures through hotlines, WhatsApp and social media, and providing psychosocial support that gives survivors the confidence to navigate the criminal justice process. WAO tracks the different issues highlighted through the calls received, including technology-based harassment, and regularly publishes the number of calls received on their social media platforms.

---

[63] "MCMC Moves to Bar Under-16s from Social Media Under New Online Safety Act Subsidiary Laws," *The Malay Mail*, December 4, 2025, https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/12/04/mcmc-moves-to-bar-under-16s-from-social-media-under-new-online-safety-act-subsidiary-laws/200748 (accessed April 7, 2026).

[64] "Regulatory & Legal," MCMC, accessed April 7, 2026, https://mcmc.gov.my/en/onsa/information-hub/regulatory-legal.

[65] Iskandar and Sallehuddin, "Azalina: Online Safety Act to Take Effect Jan 1, 2026."

[66] "Talian Kasih," KPWKM, accessed June 18, 2026, https://www.kpwkm.gov.my/portal-main/article?id=talian-kasih.
See further information on *Talian Kasih*, a 24/7 national public emergency helpline and careline in Malaysia that was established by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (*Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat*, KPWKM) and is operated by JKM. It serves as a single point of contact for vulnerable individuals facing abuse, family crises and emotional distress.

Several research participants underscored the critical role of CSOs in policy advocacy. One research participant noted that CSOs must continually critique State policies and propose better alternatives, while Bar Council committee head Sarah highlighted that the Bar Council often advocates for CSO participation in law-making processes as these are the groups who have worked directly with victims and survivors on the ground. Groups like SWWS and JFS also conduct public education, trauma support and documentation, helping survivors understand redress pathways and navigate retraumatisation. One research participant noted that CSOs provide a safe space for survivors especially when they are terrified and fear being judged.

Despite their crucial contributions to support victims and survivors, multiple research participants highlighted that CSOs face severe resource limitations including unsustainable funding, uneven service availability outside urban centres, and low public awareness of their existence and operation. In reality, CSOs cannot replace the State, which has the necessary resources and nationwide reach. Research participants from AWL and CRIB Foundation cautioned that providing victim support should rest fundamentally with the State, and that the role of CSOs in this respect should be complementary, not a replacement for State action. This points to a critical need for a more permanent solution requiring long-term structural change and a shift in government priorities, rather than the continued reliance on CSOs to fill these gaps.

E.3.4 Conclusion

While Malaysia's legal framework to address OGBV/TFGBV may appear adequate on paper, it remains largely ineffective in practice. Survivor experiences and CSO findings point to a fragmented complaints system, weak interagency coordination, inconsistent enforcement, and a lack of gender sensitivity among frontline authorities. These gaps place a disproportionate burden on survivors to navigate complex processes, often resulting in delays, retraumatisation or abandonment of their pursuit of justice.

ONSA reflects the growing recognition of online harms, but its effectiveness will depend on how it is implemented. Current concerns, including vague definitions and centralised regulatory powers, in addition to the absence of clear safeguards, survivor-centred redress mechanisms and protections for marginalised groups, risk reproducing existing systemic failures. Without meaningful consultation, robust subsidiary legislation and clear SOPs, ONSA is unlikely to significantly improve outcomes for victims/survivors.

CSOs continue to play a critical role in supporting victims/survivors and advocating for reform, but they cannot substitute for State responsibility. Addressing OGBV/TFGBV requires a shift towards a coordinated, survivor-centred approach grounded in accountability, accessibility and prevention. Without such reforms, the gap between law and lived reality will persist, leaving survivors without effective protection or redress.

F. RECOMMENDATIONS

F.1 Country Practices

Research participants highlighted some best practices, including for complaints mechanisms, from other countries/regions that Malaysia should consider adopting into the domestic framework. One research participant suggested looking at how the European Union addresses OGBV/TFGBV cases. For example, the European Parliament's Directive on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in 2024 introduces named offences such as cyberflashing and cyber incitement, which reflect the lived experiences of survivors more closely.[67]

At the same time, several research participants also highlighted problematic practices that Malaysia should steer away from or consider with caution.

The country practices shared in both aspects are summarised in the following tables within this chapter.

F.1.1 Current Practices from Other Countries/Regions

Country/Region	Practice Highlighted
United Kingdom	• Age-Appropriate Design Code focusing on preventive design-based safety. • Internet Watch Foundation reporting portal and Report Remove tool for CSAM. • Trauma-informed policing and survivor support mechanisms.
Australia	• Independent e-Safety Commission with regulatory authority and reporting mechanism, enabling rapid platform compliance.
Philippines	• Safe Spaces Act recognising OGBV and establishing a Joint Congressional Oversight Committee to monitor implementation and review the implementing rules and regulations. A bill to amend the Act to mandate platform accountability is currently pending.
Singapore	• Protection from Harassment Act and Online Safety Code with dedicated courts and transparency rules.
Indonesia	• SafeNet collaboration model and national digital literacy initiatives.
European Union	• European Parliament's Directive on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in 2024. • Stronger child protection, OGBV recognition and regulatory standards.

[67] *Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence*, 2024 OJ (L1385).

Country/Region	Practice Highlighted
Australia; Brazil	• Age-based social media restrictions.
China	• Age- and time-based social media restrictions.

The above-mentioned practices require further examination on whether they can effectively provide redress for victims/survivors of OGBV/TFGBV cases without unreasonably restricting freedom of expression in online and digital spaces. Without the necessary safeguards, the measures could risk abuse, leading to selective prosecution and censorship of legitimate exercises in freedom of expression. Several countries, including Malaysia, are limiting or considering limiting the age of users on social media.[68] In this respect, it is paramount that this be implemented with the necessary safeguards in place, without which such a move may violate the right of children to freedom of expression, including the right to information.[69] When access to the Internet is limited, a child's ability to access information—including crucial information relating to their safety and security—could be restricted.

F.1.2 A Proposal for Reform

Research participants shared several recommendations to enhance the existing complaints mechanisms and support for victims/survivors of OGBV/TFGBV. Among others, Content Forum CEO Mediha shared the hope that there can be a one-stop centre for victims/survivors of all forms of OGBV/TFGBV to lodge a report or complaint. The centralised platform would have all relevant resources available for victims/survivors to seek further information and support. This recommendation was most endorsed by other research participants as one that would particularly address the lack of coordination among enforcement authorities that leaves victims/survivors feeling defeated by the system.

Both the literature review and interviews reveal uneven specificity in Malaysian laws in addressing online and gendered harms related to OGBV/TFGBV. Statutes such as the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 provide relatively clear and comprehensive definitions, particularly in relation to CSAM, grooming and sexual communication, reflecting a more targeted approach to technology-facilitated harms. Similarly, provisions on stalking under the Penal Code (Section 507A) offer a more explicit recognition of persistent, technology-enabled abuse. However, most other harms, including cyberbullying, cyberflashing, doxxing and non-consensual intimate image dissemination, are addressed through broad, non-specific provisions under the Penal Code, CMA and ONSA. These laws do not take into account the gendered harms that disproportionately affect women, girls and gender minorities online. Without precise definitions recognising OGBV/TFGBV, the resulting gaps could contribute to inconsistent protection for victims/survivors.

[68] "Factbox—from Australia to Europe, Countries Move to Curb Children's Social Media Access," *Global Banking & Finance Review*, February 27, 2026, https://www.globalbankingandfinance.com/factbox-from-australia-europe-countries-move-curb-childrens/ (accessed April 7, 2026).
[69] UN General Assembly, Resolution 44/25, Convention on the Rights of the Child. See Article 13.

Another recommendation shared by research participants was for the creation of strict liability offences for CSAM cases. This requires further study into its feasibility. Presently, possession of CSAM does not constitute a crime in Malaysia. Proof of a "guilty mind" or intention must still be shown. In contrast, countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia incorporate elements of strict/absolute liability (or partial strict liability) in some offences involving CSAM, thereby limiting reliance on mistake-based defences.[70] Singapore and the United States similarly adopt a stringent approach, requiring knowledge but applying harsh enforcement standards.[71] For example, Singapore Penal Code Section 377BK requires proof that the defendant "knows or has reason to believe that the material is child abuse material". At the same time, Section 377BN does not permit a defence of a mistaken but honest and reasonable belief that the CSAM would not be regarded as offensive.[72] This illustrates that, while Singapore does not apply strict liability offences for CSAM cases, it nevertheless adopts a stringent approach. These approaches contribute towards enhancing child protection, as perpetrators are less able to plead mistake as a defence. Given the fast-evolving nature of online and digital harms, which are often easily amplified and accelerated, Malaysia should consider reforms in this area, including partial strict liability elements following the example of the United Kingdom and Australia, to strengthen protection against OGBV/TFGBV involving children while preserving due process safeguards.

Based on the interviews, it can be observed that Malaysia is still predominantly a reactive system. Generally, police cannot act before a crime is committed, except in a few narrow situations. While recent amendments to the law, such as Section 98A of the Criminal Procedure Code, provided for the application of a protection order against a person being investigated or charged for stalking, the present system generally requires some form of harm to occur before a victim or survivor can access the system. It is timely for the system to move beyond a reactive approach towards a more preventive and proactive one. Some country practices to consider include the Protection from Harassment Act 2014 in Singapore and the application of Apprehended Violence Order in Australia.[73] At the same time, this requires a mindset shift on the part of frontliners, particularly the police, to implement a more survivor-centred approach in addressing OGBV/TFGBV through the adoption of risk-based principles instead of harm-based.

The recommendations shared by the research participants are summarised in the table below. All suggestions include the relevant category, systemic failures identified, proposed recommendation, target authority, intended outcome and proposed strategy (i.e., short term, medium term or long term, where applicable). Short-term recommendations are measures and/or policy changes that can be implemented immediately with the right political will. Medium-term recommendations involve legislative reforms or amendments warranting some form of parliamentary process. Long-term recommendations entail broader legal review and structural reform, as well as further study to inform more comprehensive reforms.

---

[70] **Sexual Offences Act, 2003, sec. 5–8 (UK),** https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents (accessed June 19, 2026);
Criminal Code Act, 1995, sec. 272.12 (Australia), https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04868/2018-12-29/text/2 (accessed June 19, 2026).
[71] **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, Singapore: *Legal Questionnaire* (Singapore: Global Platform for Child Exploitation Policy, 2024),**
https://globalchildexploitationpolicy.org/content/dam/gpp/legal-research/Singapore%20-%20Legal%20Research.pdf (accessed April 7, 2026);
"Citizen's Guide to US Federal Child Exploitation and Obscenity Laws," US Department of Justice, August 11, 2023,
https://www.justice.gov/criminal/criminal-ceos/citizens-guide-us-federal-child-exploitation-and-obscenity-laws (accessed April 7, 2026).
[72] **Penal Code, 1871, sec. 377BK, 377BN, (Singapore),** https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/PC1871?WholeDoc=1#pr377BN- (accessed June 28, 2026).
[73] **"Enhancements to the Protection from Harassment Act ('POHA')," Ministry of Law (Singapore), April 2, 2019,**
https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/news/press-releases/enhancements-to-the-protection-from-harassment-act-poha/ (accessed April 7, 2026);
"Apprehended Violence Orders (AVO)," New South Wales Police Force, accessed April 7, 2026,
https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/crime/domestic_and_family_violence/apprehended_violence_orders_avo.

Issue Category	Current Systemic Failures	Proposed Recommendation	Target Authority or Framework	Intended Outcome	Strategy
Legislation	Lack of specific OGBV laws; fragmented, gender -blind legal framework characterised by broad and vague terminologies.	Adopt a rights-based framework that recognises the specific online and gendered harms, without the risk of arbitrary interpretation.	Lawmakers	There is legal clarity and preventive standards for gender-based online and digital harms.	Medium Term
Legislation	Laws and policies relating to OGBV/ TFGBV are reactive.	Prioritise a "safety by design" approach by incentivising technology companies.	Lawmakers Ministry of Communications	Online harms are prevented before they occur.	Short Term
Legislation	Punishment is not proportionate to the gravity of harm caused.	Review punishment to be proportionate to the offence, and ensure redress and reparation for harm.	Lawmakers	Beyond retribution, measures adopted effectively tackle the root causes of gender inequality.	Medium Term
Legislation	Weak child protection for CSAM cases.	Incorporate strict liability elements in CSAM cases.	Lawmakers	Enhanced child protection from online and digital harms.	Medium Term
Legislation & Enforcement	Requirement for survivors to suffer harm or severe harm before accessing the complaints mechanism.	Reform legal processes and policing approaches to prioritise proactive risk-based measures based on the risk of potential harm occurring, rather than harm-based measures that require actual harm to occur before action can be taken.	Lawmakers PDRM	More proactive and preventive measures, rather than reactive.	Medium Term

Issue Category	Current Systemic Failures	Proposed Recommendation	Target Authority or Framework	Intended Outcome	Strategy
Enforcement & Coordination	Survivors are bounced between agencies due to a lack of SOPs on deciding/ assigning jurisdiction.	Establish a centralised, accessible government platform and hotline for all complaints and resources relating to OGBV/TFGBV.	PDRM MCMC	Streamlined reporting processes and improved coordination between agencies; survivors no longer have to navigate multiple agencies, reducing the procedural burden.	Medium Term
Enforcement	Non-responsive, slow or limited communication, leading to inconsistent follow-ups and unexplained delays.	Mandate timely follow-ups with clear time frames for the processes.	PDRM MCMC	A more transparent and accountable investigation process that is survivor -centred.	Short Term
Institutional Capacity	Dismissive attitude towards online/digital harms and victim-blaming mindsets among frontline officers.	Increase resources for specialised units and institutionalise gender sensitivity training.	PDRM	A more empathetic response to online and digital harms suffered by survivors/victims of OGBV/TFGBV.	Short Term
Institutional Capacity	Technical illiteracy, including relating to the protection of victims/survivors' online safety and security during the investigation process.	Increase resources for specialised units and provide continuous training on digital harms.	PDRM	A more technically competent response to online and digital harms suffered; victims/survivors' online and digital safety and security are not compromised by the investigation.	Short Term
Access for Minor Survivors	Mandatory parental involvement for children.	Create a standardised and safer national reporting pathway for students; implement third-party reporting options and mandatory in-school OGBV/TFGBV prevention programmes.	Ministry of Education PDRM	Safe and accessible reporting channels for minors, without fear of reprisal.	Medium Term

Issue Category	Current Systemic Failures	Proposed Recommendation	Target Authority or Framework	Intended Outcome	Strategy
Access for Marginalised Groups	Fear of criminalisation or outing for LGBTQ+ persons during reporting.	Implement third-party reporting options.	PDRM	Safe and accessible reporting channels for vulnerable populations, without fear of reprisal.	Medium Term
Procedural & Technical Barriers	Mandatory in-person filing requirements; rigid process -serving requirements for anonymous perpetrators.	Reform rules to remove strict physical process-serving requirements and mandatory in-person filing.	TAGS	Reduction of procedural burden for survivors.	Short Term
Support Services	Overreliance on CSOs for assistance; lack of State-run shelters for OGBV/TFGBV victims; unresponsive State legal aid.	Expand access to free legal aid and mental health support; enhance government-operated shelter facilities.	Government support agencies particularly under the purview of: KPWKM JKM Ministry of Health	Comprehensive State -funded safety nets and legal resources which are survivor-centred.	Short Term

G. CONCLUSION

If the Malaysian government is truly committed to respecting, protecting and fulfilling the promise of "equal rights for men and women" in both physical and digital environments, the status quo must urgently evolve so that the constitutional guarantee of equality is realised in practice, not merely on paper. Structural barriers identified in this report, including fragmented complaints mechanisms, inconsistent enforcement and limited survivor support, must be dismantled. In their place, Malaysia must build a system that is truly accessible, survivor-centred, and capable of addressing the specific harms and gendered impacts of digital and online abuse. It is high time for Malaysia to move beyond a reactive, complaints-driven model towards a preventive framework grounded in education, early intervention and platform accountability.

As a State party to CEDAW, CRC and CRPD, Malaysia must demonstrate a commitment to its international obligations to ensure safer and more enabling online and digital spaces for all women, girls and gender minorities. Safeguards must be embedded in every measure adopted, to ensure that freedom of expression and privacy are protected. Incremental reforms are not sufficient to keep up with the fast-evolving technology that is used in perpetuating OGBV/TFGBV. The government must act decisively to enact comprehensive legislation on OGBV/TFGBV, prioritise preventive measures over reactive ones, and mandate transparency and accountability from technology companies operating within its jurisdiction. Without bold and sustained action, online harms against women, girls and gender minorities will continue to reproduce and intensify unabated. Malaysia must lead with urgency and political will to ensure all women, girls and gender minorities can freely express themselves, and fully and safely participate in public and political life.

H. REFERENCES

ARTICLE 19. "Malaysia: Review the Communications and Multimedia Act Now," August 19, 2025. https://www.article19.org/resources/malaysia-review-the-communications-and-multimedia-act-now/ (accessed April 7, 2026).

Anti-Sexual Harassment Act, 2022. https://learningpartnership.org/resource/act-840-anti-sexual-harassment-act-malaysia-document-english (accessed June 21, 2026).

Asia Centre. *Internet Freedoms in Malaysia: Regulating Online Discourse on Race, Religion, and Royalty.* Bangkok: Asia Centre, 2023. https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-In-Malaysia-Regulating-Online-Discourse-on-Race-Religion-and-Royalty-.pdf (accessed April 7, 2026).

BERNAMA. "Federal Court Rules Words 'Offensive' and 'Annoy' Under Section 233 of Communication and Multimedia Act Constitutional," February 6, 2026. https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php/crime_courts/news.php?id=2520759 (accessed April 7, 2026).

BERNAMA. "Man Gets Five Months Prison, RM2,000 Fine for Threatening Harith Iskander's Family," January 31, 2025. https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2388178 (accessed April 7, 2026).

Cambridge Dictionary. "Outed," accessed June 16, 2026. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/outed.

CIJ. *A Report on the State of Freedom of Expression in Malaysia 2024.* Kuala Lumpur: Centre for Independent Journalism, 2024. https://cijmalaysia.net/a-report-on-the-state-of-freedom-of-expression-in-malaysia-2024/ (accessed April 7, 2026).

CIJ. *A Report on the State of Freedom of Expression in Malaysia 2025.* Kuala Lumpur: Centre for Independent Journalism, 2025. https://cijmalaysia.net/a-report-on-the-state-of-freedom-of-expression-foe-in-malaysia-2025/ (accessed April 7, 2026).

Communications and Multimedia Act, 1998. https://www.mcmc.gov.my/skmmgovmy/media/General/pdf/Act588bi_3.pdf (accessed Jun 21, 2026).

Communications and Multimedia (Amendment) Act, 2025. https://www.mcmc.gov.my/skmmgovmy/media/General/pdf2/A1743-BI-COMMUNICATIONS-AND-MULTIMEDIA-AMENDMENT-ACT-2025-1.pdf (accessed June 21, 2026).

Content Forum. "Brief Overview of the Content Forum," accessed April 7, 2026. https://contentforum.my/about-us/#history-and-mission.

Content Forum. *The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Content Code.* 3rd ed. Cyberjaya: Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia, 2022. https://contentforum.my/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Content-Code-2022.pdf (accessed June 21, 2026)

Criminal Code Act, 1995 (Australia).
https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04868/2018-12-29/text/2 (accessed June 19, 2026).

CSO CEDAW Coalition. *Joint NGO Report, for the Malaysian Government's Review by the CEDAW Committee, at the 88th CEDAW Session in May 2024.* Petaling Jaya: Women's Aid Organisation, 2024. https://familyfrontiers.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/88th-CEDAW-Session_Malaysia-Joint-NGO-Report_April-2024-1.pdf (accessed April 7, 2026).

Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. 2024 (OJ L1385).
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202401385
(accessed July 1, 2026).

eSafety. "Doxing," May 28, 2025.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/industry/tech-trends-and-challenges/doxing
(accessed June 16, 2026).

eSafety. "Safety by Design," January 8, 2026.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/industry/safety-by-design (accessed April 7, 2026).

Federal Constitution. In *Federal Constitution: Reprint as at 20 November 2025*. Malaysia Federal Legislation. Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia. https://lom.agc.gov.my/federal-constitution.php (accessed June 16, 2026).

Global Banking & Finance Review. "Factbox—from Australia to Europe, Countries Move to Curb Children's Social Media Access," February 27, 2026. https://www.globalbankingandfinance.com/factbox-from-australia-europe-countries-move-curb-childrens/ (accessed April 7, 2026).

Heidy Quah Gaik Li v. Kerajaan Malaysia. No. B-01(A)-514-10-2023. CLJ JT (11). Court of Appeal, August 26, 2025. https://www.cljlaw.com/ejt/jt_headnote.asp?web=1&jt=2025_11&id=147.

Hisham, Hidayath. "Govt Reviewing 10 Subsidiary Instruments Under Online Safety Act for Full Implementation." *The Malaysian Reserve,* November 3, 2025. https://themalaysianreserve.com/2025/11/03/govt-reviewing-10-subsidiary-instruments-under-online-safety-act-for-full-implementation/ (accessed April 7, 2026).

IAWJ. *Stopping the Abuse of Power Through Sexual Exploitation: Naming, Shaming, and Ending Sextortion.* Washington, DC: International Association of Women Judges, 2012. https://www.unodc.org/res/ji/import/guide/naming_shaming_ending_sextortion/naming_shaming_ending_sextortion.pdf (accessed June 16, 2026).

ICJ. *Silenced but Not Silent: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons' Freedom of Expression and Information Online in Southeast Asia.* Geneva: International Commission of Jurists, 2023.
https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ICJ-Silenced-But-Not-Silent-Report.pdf
(accessed April 7, 2026).

ITU. *Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of the Child.* Geneva: International Telecommunication Union, 2025. https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-str-cyb_joint-2025/ (accessed April 7, 2026).

JFS, Diversity Malaysia, People Like Us Hang Out!, and Queer Lapis. *Survey Findings: Impact of COVID-19 & Anti-LGBT Narratives on LGBTQ+ Persons in Malaysia.* Malaysia: Justice for Sisters, 2021.
https://justiceforsisters.org/resources/survey-findings-impact-of-covid-19-anti-lgbt-narratives-on-lgbtq-persons-in-malaysia/ (accessed April 7, 2026).

Iskandar, Iylia Marsya, and Qistina Sallehuddin. "Azalina: Online Safety Act to Take Effect Jan 1, 2026." *New Straits Times,* November 13, 2025. https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/11/1314384/azalina-online-safety-act-take-effect-jan-1-2026 (accessed June 17, 2026).

KPWKM. "Talian Kasih," accessed June 18, 2026. https://www.kpwkm.gov.my/portal-main/article?id=talian-kasih.

Kumar, Sunny. "What Is Outing and Why Is It Harmful?" LGBTQ and ALL, January 7, 2022. https://www.lgbtqandall.com/what-is-outing-and-why-is-it-harmful/ (accessed June 16, 2026).

Lisu, Liam. "22 'Wins' Recorded at Anti-Sexual Harassment Tribunal." *Free Malaysia Today,* September 30, 2025. https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/09/30/22-wins-recorded-at-anti-sexual-harassment-tribunal (accessed April 7, 2026).

MCMC. "Regulatory & Legal," accessed April 7, 2026. https://mcmc.gov.my/en/onsa/information-hub/regulatory-legal.

Merriam-Webster. "Microaggression," accessed June 16, 2026. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/microaggression.

Ministry of Law (Singapore). "Enhancements to the Protection from Harassment Act ('POHA')," April 2, 2019. https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/news/press-releases/enhancements-to-the-protection-from-harassment-act-poha/ (accessed April 7, 2026).

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. *Singapore: Legal Questionnaire.* Singapore: Global Platform for Child Exploitation Policy, 2024. https://globalchildexploitationpolicy.org/content/dam/gpp/legal-research/Singapore%20-%20Legal%20Research.pdf (accessed April 7, 2026).

New South Wales Police Force. "Apprehended Violence Orders (AVO)," accessed April 7, 2026. https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/crime/domestic_and_family_violence/apprehended_violence_orders_avo.

Penal Code, 1871 (Singapore). https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/PC1871?WholeDoc=1#pr377BN- (accessed June 28, 2026).

Penal Code (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024. https://www.cljlaw.com/files/bills/pdf/2024/MY_FS_BIL_2024_57.pdf (accessed June 28, 2026).

Penal Code. In *Penal Code: As at 31 May 2023*. Online version of updated text of reprint. https://www.sprm.gov.my/admin/files/sprm/assets/pdf/penguatkuasaan/Akta_574_(31.5.2023)_BI.pdf (accessed June 21, 2026).

Rape Crisis England & Wales. "What Is Cyber Flashing?" accessed June 21, 2026. https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/types-of-sexual-violence/what-is-cyber-flashing/.

Seraj, Zaf. "In Malaysia's Landmark Stalking Case, Victim Tells Court About Severe Trauma After Years of Harassment." *The Malay Mail,* January 17, 2024. https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2024/01/17/in-malaysias-landmark-stalking-case-victim-tells-court-about-severe-trauma-after-years-of-harassment/112858 (accessed April 7, 2026).

Sexual Offences Act, 2003 (UK). https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents (accessed June 19, 2026).

Sinar Daily. "Act 574: Repeated Online Stalking a Crime—Mas Ermieyati," August 16, 2022. https://www.sinardaily.my/article/178383/focus/national/act-574-repeated-online-stalking-a-crime%E2%80%94mas-ermieyati (accessed April 7, 2026).

Skrine. "Online Safety Bill 2024 Passed by Malaysian Parliament," December 17, 2024. https://www.skrine.com/insights/alerts/december-2024/online-safety-bill-2024-passed-by-malaysian-parlia (accessed June 21, 2026).

SUHAKAM. *Report on the Status of Women's Rights in Malaysia.* Kuala Lumpur: Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, 2010. https://www.suhakam.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/SUHAKAM-Report-on-The-Status-of-Women-s-Rights-in-Malaysia-2010.pdf (accessed April 7, 2026).

The Malay Mail. "Azalina: Online Safety Act Coming Into Force Soon, Targets Digital Harm to Children," June 16, 2025. https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/06/16/azalina-online-safety-act-coming-into-force-soon-targets-digital-harm-to-children/180552 (accessed April 7, 2026).

The Malay Mail. "MCMC Moves to Bar Under-16s from Social Media Under New Online Safety Act Subsidiary Laws," December 4, 2025. https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/12/04/mcmc-moves-to-bar-under-16s-from-social-media-under-new-online-safety-act-subsidiary-laws/200748 (accessed April 7, 2026).

The University of Melbourne and UNFPA Asia and the Pacific. *Understanding Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Asia: A Qualitative Study.* Bangkok: United Nations Population Fund, 2024. https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/publications/understanding-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-asia-qualitative-study (accessed April 7, 2026).

Thorn. "Online Grooming: What It Is, How It Happens, and How to Defend Children," November 4, 2024. https://www.thorn.org/blog/online-grooming-what-it-is-how-it-happens-and-how-to-defend-children/ (accessed June 21, 2026).

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. "General Comment No. 25 (2021) on Children's Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment." CRC/C/GC/25, March 2, 2021. https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-25-2021-childrens-rights-relation.

UNESCO. "UNESCO Welcomes New UNHRC Resolution Highlighting Online Freedom of Expression and Noting UNESCO Internet Universality Indicator Framework," April 20, 2023. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-welcomes-new-unhrc-resolution-highlighting-online-freedom-expression-and-noting-unesco (accessed June 15, 2026).

UNFPA and Australia's eSafety Commissioner. *A Framework for TFGBV Programming.* New York: United Nations Population Fund, 2024. https://www.unfpa.org/publications/framework-tfgbv-programming (accessed April 7, 2026).

UNFPA and the Wilson Center. *Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Rights-Based Regulation.* New York: United Nations Population Fund, 2022. https://www.unfpa.org/resources/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-rights-based-regulation (accessed April 7, 2026).

UNFPA. *Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Making All Spaces Safe.* New York: United Nations Population Fund, 2021. https://www.unfpa.org/publications/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-making-all-spaces-safe (accessed April 7, 2026).

UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences on Online Violence Against Women and Girls from a Human Rights Perspective.* Note by the Secretariat. A/HRC/38/47. Geneva: United Nations, 2018. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1641160?ln=en&v=pdf.

UN General Assembly. *Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls: Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls.* Report of the Secretary-General. A/79/500. New York: United Nations, 2024. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4064890?ln=en&v=pdf.

UN General Assembly. Resolution 217A (III), Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A/RES/217(III), December 10, 1948. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

UN General Assembly. Resolution 2200A (XXI), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. A/RES/2200(XXI), December 16, 1966. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights.

UN General Assembly. Resolution 34/180, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.* A/RES/34/180, December 18, 1979. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women.

UN General Assembly. Resolution 44/25, Convention on the Rights of the Child. A/RES/44/25, November 20, 1989. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child.

UN General Assembly. Resolution 61/106, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A/RES/61/106, December 12, 2006. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities.

UN Women. *Accelerating Efforts to Tackle Online and Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls.* New York: United Nations Women, 2022. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/10/accelerating-efforts-to-tackle-online-and-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls (accessed April 7, 2026).

UN Women Asia and the Pacific. *Online Violence Against Women in Asia: A Multicountry Study.* Bangkok: United Nations Women, 2020. https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/12/online-violence-against-women-in-asia (accessed April 7, 2026).

UN Women. *Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women: Towards a Common Definition.* Expert group meeting report. New York: United Nations Women, 2023. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/expert-group-meeting-report-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women (accessed April 7, 2026).

US Department of Justice. "Citizen's Guide to US Federal Child Exploitation and Obscenity Laws," August 11, 2023. https://www.justice.gov/criminal/criminal-ceos/citizens-guide-us-federal-child-exploitation-and-obscenity-laws (accessed April 7, 2026).

WAO (@womensaidorg). "In December 2025, we received 143 calls to our hotline and 560 messages on our TINA (SMS/Whatsapp). The primary concerns were domestic violence (DVA), general enquiries and relationship disputes! WAO is here for you in times of crisis by providing support and advice ❤️ 🍾." Instagram photo, January 6, 2026. https://www.instagram.com/p/DTKWzNEERll/?igsh=MWkyYWltZ2N6ZW9ucA== (accessed June 19, 2026).



Research commissioned by

KYOS NETWORK

Funded by the European Union