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THE CIVIL INSTITUTE
FOR RESEARCH AND
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Exploring Solutions

Reporting Rape In The Digital Age:

Ethical Failures and Protection Gaps in Somali Social Media

STUDY REPORT

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Commissioned by the
Civil Institute for Research
and Strategic Initiatives
(CIRSI)

May 2026

Disclaimer

This report was commissioned by the CIRSI Institute. The findings, conclusions and recommendations presented herein are based exclusively on publicly available social media content, news articles, NGO reports, and legal documents accessed between January 2022 and March 2026. No interviews were conducted, and no direct contact with survivors or their families took place.

All social media posts and video titles cited in this report are publicly accessible. However, graphic content is not reproduced; only metadata and URLs are used for verification. The report does not endorse or condone any form of non-consensual disclosure of survivor information. Every effort has been made to anonymise survivors, though some identifying details may have been present in the original sources. The analysis is intended for research, policy and advocacy purposes only, with the sole aim of improving survivor-centred reporting practices and digital safety in Somalia.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the official position of the CIRSI Institute.

Intended Audience of the Report

Reporting Rape in the Digital Age: Ethical Failures and Protection Gaps in Somali Social Media is intended for policymakers, media practitioners, humanitarian organizations, digital platforms, donors, and protection actors working to strengthen ethical and survivor-centered approaches to reporting gender-based violence (GBV) in Somalia. The primary audience includes relevant government ministries and institutions at federal and state levels responsible for justice, gender, human rights, communication, and digital governance.

The report also targets journalists, online media outlets, social media influencers, NGOs, implementing agencies, research and academic institutions, and digital rights advocates seeking to improve ethical compliance, privacy protection, and accountability in digital reporting practices. Community leaders and civil society actors are additional audiences, given their influence on public attitudes, social norms, and protection responses.

By combining evidence-based analysis with practical recommendations, the report aims to inform policies, institutional guidelines, media standards, and awareness efforts that safeguard survivor dignity, confidentiality, and protection in Somalia's rapidly evolving digital information landscape.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms	.1
Executive Summary	.2
Key findings across platforms	.2
1.1 Background	.3
1.2 Problem Statement	.3
1.3 Specific domains	.3
1.4 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework	.3
1.0: Introduction	.3
2.1 Desk review	.5
2.2 Social media content analysis	.5
2.0: Methodology	.5
2.3 Online media articles	.6
2.4 Case studies	.6
2.5 Ethical considerations	.6
2.6 Limitations	.7
3.0: Findings	.8
Desk review	.8
Introduction	.8
3.1 Domain 1: Mapping and documentation patterns of identifiable information disclosure	18
3.2 Domain 2: Ethical compliance assessment	26
3.3 Domain 3: Protection risk analysis from digital disclosure to real-world harm	27
3.4 Domain 4: Drivers and Incentives	30
4.0: Case Studies	.32
4.4 Supplementary evidence: Garowe cases	35
5.0: Conclusion	.36
6.0: Recommendations	.37

Overall Recommendations (to apply to all stakeholders)	37
References	40
Appendices	43
Table content overview of selected samples.	43

Case studies

4.1 Case Study 1: Beledweyne gang rape – public anger after video circulation	32
4.2 Case Study 2: Hingalool 11 year old – government condemnation but systemic gaps	33
4.3 Case Study 3: Sisters brutally assaulted in Lasanod (and the Facebook post that exposed them)	34

Annexes

Annex F1: Facebook Posts (Garowe, May 2025)	43
Annex F2: X (Twitter) Posts (Detailed by username and clan markers).	43
Annex F3: Verifiable News Articles (Shabelle Media, Hiiraan Online, etc.)	43
Annex F4: Facebook Post – Las Anod (June 2025)	43
Annex F5: TikTok Selected Videos (Representative Examples with engagement metrics)	43

ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AU	African Union
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CIRSI	The Civil Institute for Research and Strategic Initiatives
CPM	Communication Privacy Management (theory)
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GenAI	Generative Artificial Intelligence
GPC	Global Protection Cluster
GSDRC	Governance and Social Development Resource Centre
HPA	HypothalamicPituitaryAdrenal (axis)
IASC	Inter-agency Standing Committee
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
SIHA	Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa
TFGBV	Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VOA	Voice of America
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Somalia's rapid digital expansion has enabled widespread non-consensual disclosure of identifiable rape survivor information on social media often by citizen journalists, influencers and community members exposing survivors to retaliation, stigmatisation and psychological harm. This study examined the ethics, practices and consequences of reporting rape cases on social media in Somalia between January 2024 and March 2026 using only publicly verifiable sources.

The research analysed a large body of publicly accessible content across Facebook, X (Twitter), YouTube and TikTok, including posts that disclosed child survivor ages, locations, clan identities, graphic imagery and unique incident details. Four high-profile case studies were examined in depth, supplemented Garowe cases. All data are publicly accessible; no interviews were conducted.

Key findings across platforms

- **Identifiable information is routinely disclosed without consent:** Across all platforms, child survivors as young as 2 years old were identified by age, location, family relationship or graphic imagery. Third party disclosures (by citizen journalists, influencers and ordinary users) dominate, and no evidence of consent was found in any harmful post.
- **Ethical compliance is disastrous:** Every harmful post violated the Global Protection Cluster's 'Survivor's Best Interests' mandate. Sensationalist language ('dil iyo kufsi', 'deg deg', crying emojis, 'subxanallah') is pervasive. No platform – Facebook, X, YouTube or TikTok – removed any of the identified harmful content, and graphic child rape videos remain online.

- **Consequences are severe:** Documented harms include physical retaliation threats, permanent digital visibility, forced displacement, psychological breakdowns (coma, traumatic collapse), community stigmatisation and 'performative justice' – arrests made to calm public anger but no trial ever follows. TikTok introduced unique harms: livestreamed rape and abuse in medical settings.
- **Drivers include the digital attention economy, clan politics, conditional sympathy and monetisation:** High engagement – YouTube (147,000 views), TikTok (175,000 views), Facebook (4,500 reactions) – fuels evermore sensational content. Clan-based posts weaponise rape for political attacks. Public sympathy is conditional on graphic visual evidence, and creators earn revenue from shocking content.
- **Legal frameworks are fragmented:** Puntland's 2016 Sexual Offences Law criminalises internet-related offences, but enforcement is inconsistent. The federal Sexual Offences Bill remains stalled. A critical 'void' exists where digital disclosure is not criminalised, narrowing an already tiny 'funnel of justice' (fewer than 1% of assaults result in conviction).

Recommendations centre on adopting survivor-centred media guidelines; fast-tracking federal legislation to criminalise non-consensual digital disclosure; deploying Somali language content moderators on all platforms (especially TikTok and YouTube); requiring platforms to verify judicial outcomes before promoting arrest-based stories; and integrating digital exposure assessments into trauma care.

1.0: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The CIRSI Institute conducted this research to address the ethical and protective challenges arising from Somalia's rapid digital expansion. Platforms such as Facebook, X, YouTube, TikTok and Telegram have become primary channels for information dissemination, civic engagement, and advocacy. While this has opened space for awareness-raising on gender based violence, it has also introduced significant ethical and protective challenges.

A growing trend is the public sharing of sensitive information related to rape survivors on social media. Citizen journalists, influencers and community members post identifiable details: names, images, locations, personal narratives without consent, driven by the pursuit of visibility and engagement. These disclosures expose survivors to retaliation, stigmatisation, psychological harm, and further violence. Despite global ethical frameworks (confidentiality, informed consent, 'do no harm'), there is limited evidence on how these standards are violated in Somali digital spaces. Institutional, legal, and platform-level mechanisms remain weak or inconsistently enforced.

1.2 Problem Statement

In Somalia, citizen journalists, influencers, and community members share identifiable details of rape survivors including names, images, and locations – without informed consent, driven by a digital attention economy that prioritises engagement over

the 'do no harm' principle. Such disclosures translate into real-world protection threats: retaliation, community stigmatisation, and severe psychological harm such as PTSD and social anxiety.

1.3 Specific domains

- **Mapping and documentation** – Identify patterns of identifiable survivor information disclosure across social media.
- **Ethical compliance assessment** – Evaluate content against international standards (confidentiality, informed consent, survivor dignity).
- **Protection risk analysis** – Examine how digital disclosure leads to physical threats and psychological trauma.
- **Drivers and incentives** – Explore social and technological factors (algorithmic amplification, attention economy) motivating GBV content sharing.
- **Institutional and legal review** – Assess Somali legal frameworks regarding privacy, data protection, and GBV reporting.
- **Actionable recommendations** – Develop solutions for media, government, platforms, donors, and humanitarian stakeholders.
- **Comparative insights** – Draw lessons from DRC, Afghanistan and Yemen.

1.4 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

- **Communication Privacy Management (CPM)**
 - Personal information is 'owned'; thirdparty sharing without consent violates privacy boundaries. Operationalised through disclosure type and consent indicator.
- **Affordances Framework** – Platform features (searchability, persistence, anonymity, shareability) shape harm potential.
- **Paradox of Visibility** – Visibility can empower survivors or harm them through 'jigsaw identification'. Operationalised via identifiability risk scoring.
- **Structural Violence** – Clan politics and weak rule of law translate digital harms into physical danger.
- **Platform Governance Theory** – Content moderation policies (or absence) enable or mitigate harm.

2.0: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk review

CIRSI conducted a comprehensive desk review of international, regional and domestic frameworks relating to survivor protection, digital ethics, media governance and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. International frameworks reviewed included the Istanbul Convention (Arts. 36, 40), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims, WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for GBV Research, IASC GBV Guidelines and Global Protection Cluster (GPC) standards. African regional frameworks included the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the ACHPR Resolution on the Protection of Women Against Digital Violence in Africa (2022), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention).

Somali legal frameworks reviewed included the Federal Constitution (2012) (Arts. 14, 25), Penal Code (1962), Media Law (2020), Data Protection Act (2023), pending Sexual Offences Bill, Cybercrime Bill (2025), Child Rights Bill, Puntland Sexual Offences Law No. 8 (2016), Jubaland Sexual Offences Act (2018), South West State GBV by-laws and Somaliland Rape Offences Act (2018). The review was further informed by theoretical frameworks including Communication Privacy Management (CPM), the Affordances framework, the Online Disinhibition Effect and feminist media ethics. Comparative insights were drawn from fragile and conflict-affected contexts including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Indonesia.

2.2 Social media content analysis

This study conducted a targeted, qualitative analysis of publicly accessible social media content across four platforms: Facebook, X (Twitter), YouTube, and TikTok.

Table 1: Platform coverage and sampling strategy¹

Platform	Search method	Key characteristics
Facebook	Keyword #kufsi, news reports	Graphic child videos, performative arrests
X (Twitter)	#Somalia #Kufsi	Age 11 boy, clan attacks, one ethical post
YouTube	#kufsi + Gabar Somali Wareysi	Children as young as 2, torture, disabled survivors
TikTok	#kufsi search (algorithmic feed)	Extreme disclosures, live rape, victim-blaming

¹ Initial retrieval counts before deduplication; many were duplicates, fictional, or unrelated and were excluded from the final analysis.

Social media search results analysis:

The researchers reviewed more than 100 search results and over 200 videos, of which approximately 50 directly reported specific rape incidents. The remaining were fictional skits, comedy, religious discussions, Indian drama clips (misusing #kufsi as #kulfi), or unrelated content (mining accidents, kung fu). These unrelated videos were excluded. Relevant videos were coded using the same framework as other platforms.

Inclusion criteria (all platforms): publicly accessible, refers to an alleged or confirmed rape incident in Somalia (or involving Somali survivors abroad), contains identifiable survivor information. Exclusion criteria: fictional content, nonSomali survivors, inaccessible content, unrelated hashtag misuse.

Coding framework: For each post/video, recorded: platform, date, disclosure type, consent indicator, identifiability attributes (name, clan, location, face photo, family member, unique detail), identifiability risk (low/medium/high), narrative framing, platform response, child survivor indicator, engagement metrics (likes, views, comments), and attention economy markers (sensational language, emojis, 'breaking news', 'live', etc.).

Crossplatform comparative analysis: Each post received a risk score (15). Engagement metrics were compared across platforms to demonstrate algorithmic amplification.

2.3 Online media articles

CIRSI analysed over 30 online media articles (Hiiraan Online, Shabelle Media, Radio Dalsan, Warsom, Mareeg, SIHA Network) published between January 2024 and March 2026. Inclusion: article refers to a rape incident in Somalia, explicitly mentions or quotes social media content, publicly accessible. Google Notebook was used to systematically organise, annotate, and synthesise the literature reviewed for the desk review section.

2.4 Case studies

Four primary case studies selected based on verifiable documentation (news articles, NGO reports). Criteria: coverage by at least two Somali media outlets, geographic diversity (Puntland, central Somalia, Somaliland), time distribution (2024–2026), available consequence documentation. Two supplementary Garowe cases also included. No interviews were conducted.

2.5 Ethical considerations

Do No Harm: No direct survivor contact. Identifiable content not reproduced in public deliverables; only metadata and URLs for verification. For TikTok, videos not downloaded; only titles and public metadata analysed.

Confidentiality: Survivor identifiers removed.

Informed consent: Not applicable (no human subjects).

Encountering minors: Child survivor posts logged but not coded beyond basic metadata.

2.6 Limitations

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged.

Sample and generalisability: The sample is not statistically representative of all social media content about rape in Somalia. It comprises a purposive selection of publicly accessible, verifiable posts across four platforms (Facebook, X, YouTube, TikTok). Many harmful posts may exist that were not captured due to platform search limitations, algorithmic personalisation, or content being deleted before analysis.

Platform constraints: TikTok posed significant methodological challenges as its search results are heavily personalised, making systematic retrieval impossible; many videos under #kufsi were fictional skits, reposts from other platforms, or deleted before verification.

Language and cultural nuances: While the research team included Somali speakers, some contextual meanings or implied identifiers may have been missed, affecting coding reliability.

Dynamic engagement metrics: Likes, views, and comments were recorded at the time of analysis but are dynamic and may have changed subsequently.

No survivor followup: The research did not assess longterm outcomes for survivors whose information was disclosed. No interviews were conducted, and consequence documentation was limited to what was publicly reported in news articles or NGO alerts.

Platform response timing: Platform responses were assessed only at the time of coding; content may have been removed after analysis, though no evidence of this was observed for the identified posts.

Ethical constraints: Deeper analysis of graphic video content (e.g., manually reviewing all frames of Facebook or TikTok videos) was avoided to prevent secondary trauma and respect the Do No Harm principle. Some identifiable details may therefore have been missed.

3.0: FINDINGS

Desk review

The rapid digitalisation of Somalia has created an unprecedented ethical dilemma: while social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube and X have opened new channels for advocacy and awarenessraising on genderbased violence (GBV), they have also enabled the widespread non-consensual disclosure of identifiable rape survivor information. This review synthesises five interconnected bodies of literature: protection studies, digital media ethics, feminist ethics, humanitarian principles and Somali legal realities to establish the normative basis for assessing current digital reporting practices.

Introduction

Analytical Framework

This study is informed by an integrated analytical framework that combines complementary ethical, technological, behavioural, and structural perspectives to examine the reporting of rape incidents through social media platforms in Somalia. Rather than treating digital harms as isolated online incidents, the framework understands them as emerging from the interaction between platform architectures, social norms, governance failures, gender inequalities, and broader protection risks. The frameworks are therefore applied in a complementary and interconnected manner across all study objectives/domains.

At its ethical foundation, the study draws on the Protection Framework, feminist media ethics, and the 'Do No Harm' approach. The Protection Framework prioritises survivor safety, dignity, confidentiality, and agency as the central ethical obligation guiding all forms of reporting and response (GPC, 2019; GSDRC, 2021). Feminist media ethics further interrogates how media and digital communication practices may reproduce patriarchal power structures, victim-blaming narratives, and unequal gender relations, while emphasising intersectionality and an ethics of care (Steiner, 2021). Complementing these perspectives, the 'Do No Harm' framework (IASC, 2015) requires active mitigation of unintended negative impacts, including secondary victimisation, retraumatisation, and reputational harm to survivors. Together, these frameworks guide the assessment of ethical compliance, survivor-centred reporting practices, and protection risks throughout the study.

The study also applies digital and behavioural theories to understand how online environments facilitate harmful disclosure and public engagement with rape-related content. Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory (Petronio, 2002) conceptualises personal information as owned by the individual and therefore provides a lens for analysing consent, privacy violations, and non-consensual disclosure of survivor information. The Affordances Framework (Gibson, 1979; Evans et al., 2017) is used to examine how platform features such as searchability, persistence, anonymity, algorithmic amplification, and live streaming

increase the visibility, circulation, and permanence of harmful content. In parallel, the Online Disinhibition Effect (Suler, 2004) explains how anonymity, invisibility, reduced accountability, and distance from authority can lower ethical restraints and encourage harassment, victim-blaming, and secondary victimisation within comment sections and public discussions.

Finally, the study situates these digital harms within broader social and political structures through Structural Violence and Intersectionality frameworks. Drawing on Galtung (1969) and Crenshaw (1989), the analysis recognises that online harms are intensified by intersecting inequalities related to gender, clan dynamics, weak rule of law, and limited institutional protection systems. In this context, digital disclosures may translate into real-world social exclusion, reputational harm, physical danger, or political manipulation. These frameworks are particularly important for understanding how structural inequalities and governance limitations shape both the production of online harm and the limited avenues available for survivor protection and accountability.

In addition, the frameworks are therefore not applied in isolation but operate across multiple analytical levels. Ethical analysis combines the Protection Framework, feminist media ethics, and 'Do No Harm' principles; digital harm analysis integrates CPM, affordances, and online disinhibition; while structural and governance analysis draws on structural violence and intersectionality perspectives. Together, this integrated framework enables the study to examine not only individual acts of harmful disclosure, but also the broader technological, institutional, and sociopolitical systems that sustain and

normalise such practices.

Global ethical standards for reporting sexual violence

A robust international consensus has emerged from the WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO and the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC). The WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations (2016) establish three primary principles: respect for persons (autonomy), protection from harm, and absolute priority of survivor safety (WHO, 2016). The IASC Guidelines for GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action (2015) require a survivor-centred approach: no action without informed consent; safety and dignity take precedence over all other objectives (IASC, 2015). The UNESCO Guidelines on Reporting Violence against Women and Girls (2023) emphasise avoiding sensationalism, never identifying child survivors, obtaining explicit informed consent, and using accurate, nonjudgmental language (UNESCO, 2023). The IFJ Global Charter of Ethics (2019) demands respect for the dignity of news subjects (IFJ, 2019).

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) and GBV Area of Responsibility mandate specific actions: do not inform anyone of an incident without the survivor's permission; no action without informed consent (GPC, 2019). Informed consent in digital spaces requires four elements: understanding of purpose, awareness of risks (retaliation, permanent visibility, stigma), right to decline or withdraw, and clear limits of confidentiality (GSDRC, 2021). Feminist ethics of care (Steiner, 2021) insists that ethical communication about GBV is an act of political and social responsibility, grounded in human rights and the protection of survivors from retraumatisation.

Somali context: GBV, media and social norms

The passage of Somalia's first sexual offences bill has been pending since 2014, a critical legislative gap that has been widely reported. As documented by the SIHA Network in its June 2025 Gender Alert, over 60% of rape cases are handled outside the formal legal system, using clan-based mediation or compensation (diya) rather than survivor-centred justice. Survivors, particularly displaced women and girls, face additional layers of vulnerability, and in some areas, rape and sexual assault constitute the majority of reported GBV incidents.

Deeply embedded social norms routinely prioritise community stability over the rights and protection of survivors. Shame, honour dynamics and clan mediation are central to how communities respond to rape. As documented by the U.S. Department of State in its 2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Somalia, traditional approaches to resolution typically seek compensation through negotiations between the clans of the perpetrator and the survivor, often completely ignoring the survivor's situation. This hybrid justice system gives primacy to customary law, with elders settling most cases out of court, including those involving rape and murder. Survivors face a double burden: the trauma of the assault and the secondary victimisation of being silenced.

Against this difficult backdrop, Bilan Media – Somalia's first and only all-women newsroom – has demonstrated that survivor-centred reporting is possible. Bilan's coverage 'has shifted the public vocabulary around genderbased violence.' Recognised with the 2024 One World Media Press Freedom

Award, Bilan's journalists produce shows that challenge patriarchal norms and cover issues often considered too sensitive for public broadcast, including domestic violence, rape and digital abuse.

Digital attention economy and Technology-facilitated GBV

The digital attention economy (Zuboff, 2019) rewards engagement irrespective of ethics. Platforms use recommendation algorithms that amplify sensational, polarising content, often at the expense of survivor dignity and safety. Technology-facilitated GBV (TFGBV) includes doxxing, non-consensual intimate image sharing, deepfake pornography, algorithmic amplification and coordinated online harassment (Code for Africa, 2025; Research ICT Africa, 2024). Digital harm moves through acute impacts (panic attacks, peritraumatic dissociation), chronic impacts (PTSD, anxiety, HPA axis dysregulation) and social impacts (internalised guilt, reluctance to pursue justice) (PettyJohn, 2022; Sacks et al., 2018). The online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004) explains how anonymity lowers ethical barriers, enabling victim-blaming.

Globally, GenAI is being weaponised to create non-consensual deepfakes, dox survivors and coordinate harassment (Code for Africa, 2025). In fragile contexts such as the Horn of Africa, similar patterns emerge: survivors of genocidal sexual violence have faced renewed online victimisation with AI-generated propaganda, and TFGBV is increasingly recognised as a continuum of offline harm that requires urgent legal and platform responses (Research ICT Africa, 2024).

In Somalia, a lexical analysis of abusive Somalilanguage content across TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Snapchat found that Somali women are already battling widespread physical violence, and digital platforms increase these risks exponentially (Hiiraan Online, 2025). Nearly all TikTok live streams contained sexualised, abusive or demeaning comments, and Somali language use bypassed automated moderation systems (Hiiraan Online, 2025). Sexual reputation attacks were the most common category (55% of all harassment), followed by insults, moral and religious shaming, gossip and family dishonour threats (Hiiraan Online, 2025). The report concludes that 'digital violence should be seen as part of the continuum of violence that Somali women face throughout their lives' (Hiiraan Online, 2025). These findings show that Somali women face a continuum of violence where digital abuse is not a separate issue but part of the same patriarchal structures. Algorithms reward graphic, sensational content, creating a dangerous feedback loop that directly shapes how rape cases are reported on Somali social media – from initial non-consensual disclosure to algorithmic amplification, secondary victimisation and real-world harm.

Pathways from digital disclosure to real-world harm

Research and empirical evidence from this study identify five sequential pathways through which online disclosure of survivor information translates into physical and psychological harm. The first pathway – **initial disclosure** – occurs without consent, almost always by a third party (Suler, 2004). The second – **algorithmic amplification**

– reflects the digital attention economy, where platforms promote high-engagement content regardless of harm (Zuboff, 2019). The third – **commentdriven secondary victimisation** – is driven by the Just World Hypothesis, where audiences blame survivors to preserve their own sense of safety (Sacks et al., 2018). The fourth – **offline action** – illustrates structural violence, where weak rule of law and clan politics allow online threats to become physical danger. The fifth – **longer-term consequences** – includes permanent digital visibility and passive social media use, which is linked to higher depression and anxiety (PettyJohn, 2022).

Legal and Policy Frameworks

This subsection examines the legal and policy frameworks relevant to the non-consensual digital disclosure of identifiable rape survivor information in Somalia. Although multiple international, regional and domestic instruments recognise rights relating to dignity, privacy, child protection and protection from violence, the governance architecture surrounding digital survivor protection in Somalia remains fragmented and weakly enforced. Existing legal frameworks have not evolved at the same pace as digital technologies and social media practices, creating significant protection gaps for survivors. These gaps are further intensified by weak digital governance institutions, limited platform accountability, delayed legal reform and hybrid justice systems that frequently prioritise clan mediation over survivor-centred justice. Consequently, despite the existence of formal protections, rape survivors in Somalia continue to experience a substantial gap between normative rights and practical protection in digital spaces.

International and Regional Human Rights Frameworks

International human rights frameworks increasingly recognise that privacy, dignity and protection from violence must extend into digital spaces. However, Somalia's incomplete ratification of key conventions and weak domestication of international standards continue to limit practical protection for survivors exposed online.

One of the clearest examples is Somalia's continued failure to ratify **CEDAW – the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)**. Although the Somali government has repeatedly expressed commitment to ratification, Somalia remains one of only six UN member states that have not ratified the treaty. This non-ratification reflects broader political and social resistance surrounding women's rights protections in Somalia and weakens the legal foundation for addressing gender-based violence, including digital forms of abuse. In practice, the absence of CEDAW limits the availability of comprehensive accountability mechanisms for protecting survivors from discrimination, stigma and secondary victimisation.

Similarly, the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948)** establishes dignity, equality, privacy and personal security as universal rights. Articles 1, 3 and 12 are particularly relevant to the disclosure of rape survivor information on social media, where identifiable images, names and videos are frequently circulated without consent. Although Somalia, as a UN member state, is expected to uphold these principles, the widespread exposure of survivors online

demonstrates a significant gap between normative human rights commitments and the realities of digital governance in Somalia. In this context, online disclosure is not simply an ethical failure but a broader violation of fundamental human rights protections.

This implementation gap is particularly visible in relation to child protection. Somalia ratified the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** in 2015 (Ministry of Family and Human Rights Development, 2025), thereby committing itself to protecting children from sexual abuse and ensuring that the best interests of the child remain a primary consideration. Yet child survivors in Somalia are frequently exposed through Facebook posts, TikTok videos and other social media content without informed consent. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern in 2022 regarding persistent violence against children and weak implementation mechanisms (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2022). These concerns suggest that legal ratification has not translated into effective digital safeguarding systems capable of protecting children from online exposure and retraumatisation.

At the same time, the rapid expansion of social media platforms has created new governance challenges that existing state institutions struggle to regulate effectively. **The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (2011)** establish that corporations, including social media companies, have a responsibility to prevent, mitigate and remedy human rights harms linked to their operations. This framework is particularly relevant in Somalia, where weak moderation of Somali-language content, algorithmic amplification and inaccessible

reporting systems allow the unauthorised disclosure of rape survivor information to spread rapidly across digital platforms. In practice, technology companies often prioritise engagement and visibility over survivor protection, while weak Somali regulatory institutions lack the leverage necessary to compel multinational platforms to remove harmful content or provide effective remedies. As a result, survivors are exposed not only to digital stigma and retraumatisation but also to offline retaliation, harassment and long-term reputational harm.

African regional frameworks similarly demonstrate growing recognition that digital violence constitutes a serious human rights issue. Somalia ratified the **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1985** and ratified the **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in October 2025**. The ACRWC explicitly obligates states to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse. However, Somalia has only signed – not ratified – the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. This delayed ratification reflects the same tensions that continue to affect domestic legal reform efforts relating to sexual violence and women's rights. Consequently, although regional frameworks establish important protections relating to dignity, privacy and violence against women, the absence of full domestication and enforcement mechanisms significantly weakens their practical impact for Somali survivors.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights further acknowledged the growing severity of technology-facilitated gender-based violence through its 2022 Resolution on the Protection of

Women Against Digital Violence in Africa. The resolution recognises harms such as cyberstalking, doxxing, cyberbullying, sexist hate speech and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images as part of the broader continuum of violence against women. Importantly, it affirms that rights protected offline must also be protected online. This framework is highly relevant to Somalia, where online exposure frequently intersects with clan dynamics, social stigma and weak institutional protection systems, allowing digital harm to escalate into real-world danger. The resolution therefore reinforces the argument that digital violence in Somalia should not be treated as a separate technological issue but as part of broader structural inequalities affecting women and girls.

The African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention, 2014) further highlights the growing continental concern regarding privacy and digital rights governance. The Convention requires states to ensure that personal data is collected, processed and disseminated lawfully and with informed consent, while also recognising the right to confidentiality and data protection. These principles are directly relevant to the disclosure of rape survivor information through social media platforms. However, Somalia's weak digital governance infrastructure, limited institutional capacity and absence of effective enforcement mechanisms continue to constrain the practical implementation of such protections. As a result, legal protections relating to digital privacy often remain largely symbolic rather than operational in practice.

Despite these important protections, international and regional frameworks also require balancing survivor protection with freedom of expression and the legitimate role of journalism in exposing sexual violence and promoting accountability. The problem in Somalia is therefore not the reporting of rape itself, but reporting practices that disclose identifiable survivor information without informed consent, sensationalise violence or prioritise digital engagement over survivor safety. A survivor-centred and rights-based approach requires balancing public interest reporting with the rights to dignity, privacy and protection from harm, particularly in fragile contexts where online exposure may trigger long-term social and physical consequences.

Federal Legal Frameworks

At the federal level, Somalia's legal framework illustrates the broader disconnect between formal constitutional protections and practical survivor protection in digital spaces. Although several laws contain provisions relating to privacy, dignity and data protection, most were drafted before the rise of social media or remain inadequately enforced in practice.

The Provisional Constitution of Somalia (2012) guarantees the

right to privacy under Article 25 and the right to dignity under Article 14 (Federal Republic of Somalia, 2012). In principle, these provisions provide an important constitutional basis for challenging the digital disclosure of rape survivor information. However, there is little evidence that these protections have been operationalised within digital contexts or interpreted through survivor-centred jurisprudence. Based on CIRSI's desk review of publicly available materials, Somalia lacks clear legal precedent concerning online privacy violations, digital survivor protection or platform accountability. This reflects a broader institutional gap in adapting constitutional rights to rapidly evolving digital environments.

Similarly, **the Penal Code (1962)** contains provisions relating to defamation and incitement but predates digital communication technologies and social media platforms. As a result, it does not explicitly address the unauthorised sharing of identifiable GBV survivor information (Federal Republic of Somalia, 1962). Survivors therefore face significant legal ambiguity when seeking accountability for online exposure and secondary victimisation. Existing criminal law frameworks remain poorly equipped to address contemporary forms of technology-facilitated harm.

The Media Law (2020) further illustrates the tension between media regulation and survivor protection. The law has been criticised by the International Federation of Journalists, Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists and Human Rights Watch for containing vaguely worded criminal provisions that may enable abuse by authorities (CPJ et al., 2020). At the same time, the law does not adequately regulate the ethical responsibilities of citizen journalists, bloggers, influencers or digital content creators who increasingly shape public discourse around rape cases online. This creates a significant accountability vacuum in which individuals with large digital audiences can disclose survivor information with limited oversight or consequence.

The Data Protection Act (2023) represents one of Somalia's most important recent attempts to strengthen digital governance. The Act establishes an independent Data Protection Authority and obliges data controllers to protect personal information (Federal Republic of Somalia, 2023). However, the legislation does not explicitly criminalise the disclosure of GBV survivor information without consent, nor does it establish clear survivor rights relating to content removal, digital erasure or platform accountability. In practice, survivors continue to face major barriers in seeking remedy, particularly given limited enforcement capacity and the transnational nature of social media companies operating beyond Somali jurisdiction.

Delays in legal reform further demonstrate the political and institutional difficulties surrounding sexual violence legislation in Somalia. **The Pending Sexual Offences Bill**, first read in parliament in November 2025, remains stalled following years of controversy and political resistance (Shabelle Media, 2025; Hiiraan Online, 2025). Earlier attempts to replace the bill with a 'Sexual Intercourse Bill' in 2020 attracted widespread condemnation for weakening survivor protections. The prolonged delay echoes deeper tensions between international human rights standards, religious conservatism and clan-based political structures that continue to shape approaches to sexual violence governance in Somalia.

Likewise, **the Cybercrime Bill (2025)**, approved by the Cabinet and introduced to parliament in late 2025, focuses primarily on unlawful use of computer systems rather than survivor protection. Although it may

strengthen aspects of cyber governance, the bill does not adequately address technology-facilitated GBV, digital privacy violations or the unauthorised circulation of survivor information online. This reinforces the broader pattern in which Somali cyber governance frameworks remain more focused on state security and cybercrime than on survivor-centred digital protection.

The Child Rights Bill, endorsed by the Council of Ministers in 2023 and approved by the Cabinet in 2025, could potentially strengthen legal protections for child survivors online once enacted. However, Somalia's broader implementation challenges raise important questions regarding whether future legislation will translate into effective digital safeguarding and survivor protection mechanisms in practice.

Federal Member State Frameworks

At the federal member state level, protection frameworks remain uneven, fragmented and inconsistently enforced. This mirrors wider disparities in legal capacity, institutional development and political commitment across Somalia's federal system.

Puntland provides one of the clearest examples of partial legal recognition of digital sexual violence. **The Puntland Sexual Offences Law No. 8 of 2016** explicitly criminalises 'sexual offences involving the Internet' (UNFPA, 2016), making it one of the few Somali legal instruments that directly acknowledges digital dimensions of sexual violence. The law was applied in 2017 when five men who gang raped a teenage girl and circulated a video of the assault online were sentenced (VOA News, 2019).

However, subsequent cases demonstrate persistent enforcement inconsistencies. The Qardho Hospital case exposed jurisdictional disputes, while the Garowe cases of 2024 and 2025 resulted in arrests relating only to the physical assault suspects, with no prosecution for digital dissemination. These cases demonstrate that even where legal provisions exist, enforcement mechanisms remain weak and uneven.

In Somaliland, although operating as a self-declared state, the **Rape and Sexual Offences Act of 2018** was initially regarded as a progressive framework for addressing sexual violence. However, following religious and political backlash, the revised 2020 version weakened several survivor protections and reinforced conservative approaches to sexual violence governance (OpenDemocracy, 2022). Critics argue that the revised framework may indirectly reinforce compensation-based settlements, including diya practices, in rape cases. In practice, many rape cases continue to be resolved through customary mechanisms outside the formal legal system. The Las Anod case (Case Study 4), where arrests reportedly occurred without subsequent prosecution, as of the time of CIRSI's review, illustrates how formal legal protections remain constrained by clan politics, social pressure and weak institutional

accountability. These dynamics further demonstrate how hybrid justice systems can undermine survivor-centred protection approaches despite the existence of formal legislation.

Other federal member states remain significantly under-documented. Jubaland's Sexual Offences Act of 2018 has limited publicly available information, while South West State has adopted GBV-related by-laws with little evidence of implementation or enforcement. This lack of transparency itself reflects broader governance and accountability challenges within Somalia's fragmented federal system.

Gaps, enforcement failures and the funnel of justice

Despite the existence of multiple international, regional and domestic protection frameworks, major governance and enforcement gaps continue to undermine survivor protection in Somalia's digital spaces. Existing legal frameworks remain poorly adapted to technology-facilitated harms, with most laws focusing on physical offences while failing to adequately address the digital disclosure of identifiable survivor information. Enforcement mechanisms are fragmented and inconsistent, particularly across federal and state jurisdictions, while institutional coordination remains weak. Critical gaps also persist in platform governance: Somali-language moderation systems are extremely limited, reporting mechanisms often presume English fluency, and survivors face significant barriers in requesting the removal of harmful content. As a result, highly harmful material, including child rape videos and live-streamed sexual violence, may remain accessible online long after initial publication. These failures illustrate a broader accountability vacuum in which digital exposure occurs with limited legal consequence or institutional response.

These protection failures are particularly visible through what scholars describe as the 'funnel of justice'. Research from comparable contexts indicates

that for **every 1,000 sexual assaults, fewer than 1% (approximately 0.7%)** result in conviction (Sacks et al., 2018). In Somalia, digital disclosure introduces additional layers of attrition that further narrow pathways to justice. **Survivors may avoid reporting due to fear of online exposure, stigma or retaliation**; law enforcement institutions may treat digital disclosure as a secondary ‘privacy issue’ rather than a form of harm in itself; and existing legislation provides little basis for prosecuting technology-facilitated abuse separately from physical assault. In practice, this creates a system where online exposure, secondary victimisation and reputational harm frequently occur without accountability. The Las Anod case exemplifies these dynamics: although arrests were reportedly made following public outrage, no trial or conviction ultimately followed (SIHA Network, 2025). The case therefore illustrates the broader disconnect between formal legal responses, public pressure and meaningful survivor-centred justice within Somalia’s fragmented governance environment.

Literature gaps

Key gaps justify this study:

- Despite the growing use of social media platforms in Somalia to discuss and report rape incidents, significant knowledge gaps remain within existing research and policy discussions. To date, no systematic study has examined how citizen journalists, social media influencers, activists, and ordinary community members disclose identifiable survivor information across platforms such as Facebook, X, YouTube, and TikTok in the Somali context. Most available literature focuses broadly on gender-based violence or traditional media reporting, leaving digital disclosure practices largely unexplored.
- There is also **very limited evidence** on how social media platforms manage harmful Somali-language content related to rape reporting. Existing global research discusses platform governance and content moderation in general terms, but no empirical analysis has specifically examined which forms of harmful Somali-language content remain online, how consistently platforms enforce their own policies, or whether reporting and takedown mechanisms are accessible and effective for Somali survivors.
- Another important gap concerns the **lived consequences of digital exposure for survivors**. While international studies have documented psychological trauma, online harassment, and secondary victimisation linked to digital disclosure, there is minimal research examining how these harms manifest within Somalia’s social and political context. In particular, little is known about the relationship between online disclosure and clan-based retaliation, forced displacement, reputational damage, social exclusion, or threats to personal safety.
- Current scholarship also pays **insufficient attention to the role of citizen journalists, influencers, and non-professional content creators**. Much of the existing literature on rape reporting and media ethics concentrates on formal journalism institutions and professional reporters. However, in Somalia, many harmful disclosures originate from informal digital actors operating outside professional ethical standards, creating an important analytical and policy gap.
- Similarly, there is **limited evidence regarding legal enforcement and accountability mechanisms related to digital disclosure**. Although Somalia

recently introduced the Data Protection Act (2023) alongside state-level sexual offences legislation, there is little publicly available documentation showing whether these laws have been applied in cases involving online disclosure of rape survivor information, digital harassment, or privacy violations.

- Finally, there remains a **major gap in survivor-centred digital ethics models designed for fragile and conflict-affected settings** such as Somalia. Existing ethical frameworks are largely developed in contexts with stronger institutions, higher literacy levels, and more accessible justice systems. Very little guidance exists on how digital protection principles should be adapted for clan-based societies, low-literacy environments, or contexts where formal legal and protection mechanisms remain weak or inaccessible.

3.1 Domain 1: Mapping and documentation patterns of identifiable information disclosure

This objective captures how social media posts and videos disclose identifiable survivor information without consent. The findings are arranged by platform (Facebook, X, YouTube, TikTok), with analysis of the types of information disclosed (age, location, family relationship, unique incident details), the use of sensationalist language, and recurring patterns across platforms. Detailed examples and a crossplatform theoretical synthesis follow in the subsections below.

3.1.1: Facebook

On Facebook, rape cases in Somalia are most commonly reported by citizen journalists, local news pages, and community members. Posts typically include graphic images or videos, detailed narratives of the assault, calls for justice or arrests, and expressions of outrage or sympathy. Very few posts contain any evidence that the survivor has consented to the disclosure. The platform's public groups and pages, which are widely used in Somalia, amplify these posts rapidly, often resulting in thousands of reactions and shares.

From a theoretical perspective, these patterns illustrate **Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory**: survivors are the 'owners' of their personal information, yet third parties routinely disclose identifiable details without permission. Likewise, the Affordances framework explains why Facebook amplifies harm: its searchability allows anyone to find posts using keywords like #kufsi; persistence keeps content online indefinitely (the Garowe videos remain online); and algorithmic amplification promotes high-engagement content, driving thousands of reactions and shares. The online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004) helps explain why citizen journalists feel empowered to share graphic content, anonymity and distance from consequences lower ethical barriers. Two **recurring patterns emerged** from the analysis, each with distinct theoretical implications.



Pattern 1: Graphic video content shared without consent

Case 1 – Garowe videos (May 2025):

Four Facebook video posts documented the gang rape of two sisters from a displaced family in Garowe. The posts disclosed the exact location (Garowe, displaced camp), the ages of the girls, their sibling relationship, and graphic visual content. No evidence of consent from their guardians was present. All four videos remain online.

However, these videos are a clear violation of the **Do No Harm framework** (IASC, 2015), which requires that survivor safety and dignity take precedence over all other objectives. The graphic disclosure of child survivors – including their faces, ages and location – actively retraumatizes the survivors and exposes them to community stigmatisation. From a **feminist ethics of care** perspective (Steiner, 2021), the posters have failed in their relational accountability to the survivors, prioritising shock value over protection. The Paradox of Visibility is also evident: the videos have made the survivors visible, but this visibility is harmful – it enables **jigsaw identification** (piecing together details to identify the survivors) and subjects them to conditional sympathy (public support contingent on graphic evidence). The fact that the videos remain online reflects **Platform Governance Theory** failure: Facebook has not enforced its own community standards on child sexual abuse material or graphic violence.



Pattern 2: Arrests reported as justice without verification of judicial outcomes

Case 2 – Las Anod post (June 2025):

A user posted that police had displayed photos of 20 out of 24 suspects who raped '2 hablood oo walaallo ah' (two sisters) in Laascanood. The post disclosed the location and the sisters' family relationship. As of May, 2026, it received 4,500 reactions and 1,498 comments. Further investigation revealed that despite the publicised arrests, no trial has ever been documented, a pattern this report terms 'performative justice.'

However, this case illustrates structural violence, weak rule of law, clan politics and institutional impunity allow the appearance of justice (arrests, police display of suspects) to substitute for actual accountability (trial, conviction). The Do No Harm framework is violated because the post misleads the public into believing justice has been served, while in reality the survivors remain unprotected and the case has vanished. In addition, from a feminist media ethics perspective, the poster has failed to interrogate whether the information serves the survivor's interests or merely satisfies public outrage. The Affordances framework is again relevant: Facebook's persistence keeps the post online, freezing a false narrative of accountability; its algorithmic amplification (4,500 reactions, 1,498 comments) spreads this illusion widely, normalising performative justice as an acceptable outcome.

Crosspattern theoretical synthesis

Across both patterns, the Do No Harm framework is systematically violated as survivors are exposed, retraumatised and denied genuine accountability. CPM theory explains that thirdparty disclosures without consent constitute boundary violations that survivors cannot reclaim. Affordances (searchability, persistence, algorithmic amplification) turn individual violations into mass harms. Paradox of Visibility shows that visibility on Facebook does not empower survivors; it enables jigsaw identification, conditional sympathy and secondary victimisation. Similarly, Structural violence explains why performative justice is possible as weak institutions allow the spectacle of arrest to replace the reality of trial. Finally, from the lens of Platform Governance Theory, it highlights complete regulatory failure: Facebook has removed none of the content, has no Somalilanguage moderation, and provides no tools for survivors to reclaim control over their images.

3.1.2: X (Twitter)

The analysis of X (formerly Twitter) posts using the hashtag #Kufsi identified several harmful disclosures and one ethical example. Three of the harmful posts disclosed specific survivor information without any evidence of consent. One user posted that an 11 year old boy had been ‘raped and murdered’ in Gaalkacyo, Puntland, revealing the child’s age, location, and the fact that the assault resulted in death a unique and highly traumatic detail.² Another user similarly posted ‘11 jir dil iyo kufsi laysugu daray’ (11 years old – murder and rape combined), again disclosing the child’s age and the combination of violence. In stark contrast, a fourth user posted an ethical advocacy message: she condemned the politicisation of rape, praised journalists who report properly, and called for accountability without disclosing any survivor information. This positive example demonstrates that ethical posting is possible on the same platform.

Table 2. Summary of X selected examples

Username	Disclosure	Identifiable Info
@Jigjigamedia	‘11 years old Boy raped and murdered in #Gaalkacyo’	Age 11, location Gaalkacyo, rape+murder
@Hassangallaydh	‘11 jir dil iyo kufsi laysugu daray’	Age 11, rape+murder
@zatawa2	‘LasAnood turned into Kufsi city ... Dhulbahante men ... from fifty Majertan men’	Location Las Anod, clan names (Dhulbahante, Majertan)
@HooyoQaran	General advocacy – no disclosure	None – ethical example

² Reporting the age (11 years old) and location (Gaalkacyo, Puntland) of a child rape and murder survivor is highly sensitive and ethically problematic for several reasons: Child protection standards, International guidelines (UNCRC, UNESCO, WHO) explicitly prohibit identifying child survivors of sexual violence, directly or indirectly. Age and location together can enable jigsaw identification – community members can piece together who the child is. Potential for real-world harm – Disclosing that a specific child in a specific town was raped and murdered exposes the family to stigmatisation, retaliation, and permanent digital visibility. The child cannot consent, and the family may not have authorised the disclosure.

No consent was present in any of the harmful posts. The patterns align with CPM theory (thirdparty boundary violation) and structural violence (local politics enabling impunity). The positive example illustrates that ethical advocacy is possible on the same platform.

3.1.3: YouTube

The review of YouTube search results for #kufsi identified dozens of videos whose titles directly disclose identifiable survivor information. The most extreme examples involve child survivors as young as two years old. One title reports that an '11 year old in Mogadishu and a 2 year old in Jigjiga' were raped two separate child rapes disclosed in a single headline, with the location of each survivor specified. Another title states that a '6 year old was started on rape 3 years ago', implying prolonged abuse from an extremely young age. A video titled 'Mother raped and tortured in Guriceel' discloses that an adult female survivor was not only raped but also tortured a detail that adds to the trauma and sensationalism. The most viewed video in this sample (147K views) is titled 'Planned gang rape of Safi Sheikh Caamir Cumar', which names a possible survivor and frames the assault as premeditated, increasing its shock value. Another video with 145K views describes a disabled woman, Cibaado (pseudonym), who was tortured and forced to miscarry an extreme case of violence against a vulnerable adult. A video about an 8 year old girl who was 'raped and killed in Mogadishu', shared by her mother in an interview, reveals the child's age, location, and the fact of murder. Another title reports that a boy was raped and his brother was subsequently threatened with death illustrating how digital disclosure can lead to direct physical threats against family members.

Across all these YouTube titles, no evidence of consent appears. The sensationalist language ('deg deg' – breaking news, 'subxanallah' – glory to God used ironically, crying emojis) is designed to provoke emotional reactions and drive high view counts. From perspectives of Platform Governance Theory, this shows complete regulatory failure: despite clear violations, no content has been removed. YouTube has no Somalilanguage moderation. At the time of CIRSI's review,, the platform has taken no action to remove or restrict these videos, despite clear violations of policies on harmful content involving minors.

Table 3: Summary of selected YouTube examples

Title (Somali)	Translation	Child survivor	Location	Unique detail	Views
Gabar 11 jir ah oo Muqdisho lagu kufsaday iyo Gabar 2 Jir ah oo jigjiga lagu kufsaday	11 year old in Mogadishu and 2 year old in Jigjiga raped	Yes (2 & 11)	Muqdisho, Jigjiga	Two child rapes	2.1K
#farxiyotawakal 6JIR AYAA #KUFSI LOOGU BILAABAY 3 SANO	6 year old started on rape 3 years ago	Yes (6)	–	Prolonged abuse	47K
Hooyo umul ah ayaa kufsi iyo jirdil loogu geeystay Degmada Guriceel	Mother raped and tortured in Guriceel	No	Guriceel	Torture	2.2K
Kufsi Kooxeedkii Qorshaysnaa Ee Safi Sheikh Caamir Cumar	Planned gang rape of Safi Sheikh Caamir Cumar	Unclear	–	'Planned' conspiracy	147K
Xaawo naafo ah 3 caruur aya jirdil iyo xoog looga dhalay dhiigbaxa uurka	Disabled woman Xaawo tortured, forced miscarriage	No (adult)	–	Disability, miscarriage	145K
Deg Deg:Wiilkii la kufsaday wllkiis oo dil loogu hanjabay	Breaking: Boy raped, his brother threatened with death	Yes (boy)	Puntland	Family threatened	1.7K
Wareysi: Hooyo Maryan Gabadheyda 8 Jir ayay aheed Wuu kufsaday Wuuna Dilay Muqdisho	Mother: My 8 year old daughter raped and killed in Mogadishu	Yes (8)	Muqdisho	Rape+murder	1.7K

3.1.4: TikTok

TikTok emerged as the most alarming platform in this study due to both the extremity of the disclosures and the scale of algorithmic amplification. Searches for the hashtag #kufsi revealed numerous videos reporting rape incidents through short looping clips, text overlays, emotive music, and sensational titles.

Unlike other platforms, TikTok's 'For You' page intensifies the circulation of highly graphic and emotionally charged content, rewarding visibility and engagement rather than ethical restraint. The platform's live-streaming feature further expands this risk by enabling real-time broadcasting, creating a uniquely extreme digital environment for the dissemination of gender-based violence (GBV) narratives.

From a Communication Privacy Management (CPM) perspective, these disclosures represent a profound collapse of privacy boundaries. Sensitive information concerning survivors is routinely disclosed by third parties without consent, exposing victims' identities, ages, locations, and family details to mass audiences. In many cases, this creates conditions for 'jigsaw identification,' where fragmented pieces of information collectively make survivors identifiable despite the absence of explicit naming.

TikTok's technological affordances intensify these harms. Persistent video archives allow traumatic content to remain accessible long after publication, while pseudonymous accounts reduce accountability for uploaders. Most significantly, the recommendation algorithm amplifies sensational and graphic material because such content attracts higher levels of engagement. This reflects a broader paradox of visibility in which public sympathy becomes conditional upon spectacle, with the most graphic disclosures receiving the greatest circulation and interaction.

Likewise, the findings also reveal dimensions of structural violence embedded within

digital discourse. Several videos framed rape cases through clan-based narratives, transforming GBV into a weaponised form of communal attack and public humiliation. Statements such as 'Hawiye men rape an 8-year-old boy' demonstrate how survivor suffering is politicised and mobilised within existing social divisions. At the same time, the absence of meaningful platform intervention reflects broader inequalities in platform governance.

Despite the circulation of highly graphic material, including videos labelled 'Kufsi live ah' (live rape), there was no visible evidence of content removal or moderation at the time of CIRSI's review. Similarly, the findings shows that TikTok lacks adequate Somali-language moderation mechanisms, enabling harmful content to circulate with minimal oversight.

in addition, examples documented during the study included claims that 'a two-year-old was gang raped and killed,' reports of 'a seven-year-old raped in Garowe,' and videos alleging the rape and murder of an eight-year-old in Jigjiga. One widely circulated video describing a disabled woman named xadiyo (pseudonym) who was tortured and forced to miscarry received approximately 145,000 views, while another live-streamed disclosure concerning the abduction and rape of a sixteen-year-old reached over 175,000 views. These cases demonstrate how TikTok's visibility economy transforms traumatic experiences into viral public content, often without survivor consent and with little evidence of platform accountability.

Table 4: Summary of TikTok selected examples

Title (Somali)	English Translation	Creator	Views/ Likes	Disclosed info
Maantana 2 jir ayaa kufsi wadareed iyo dil loo geystay!	'Today a 2 year old was gang raped and killed!'	aaliyahwarsame1	164	Age 2, gang rape, murder
Garow 7 jiir lagu kufsadye	'7 year old raped in Garowe'	youtubejoog	265	Age 7, location Garowe
Puntland oo noqotay hoyga kufsiga caruurta yar 2 labadaas gabdhood	'Puntland has become home of child rape – two young girls gang raped'	meabdii2	39.8K	Two young girls, Puntland
Gabadh yar oo 8 jir ah ayaa dil iyo kufsi ... Jigjiga	'8 year old girl brutally raped and killed in Jigjiga'	walal.ali.....27	2,473	Age 8, Jigjiga, murder
Xaawo naafo ah 3 caruur aya jirdil iyo xoog looga dhalay dhiigbaxa uurka	'Disabled woman Xaawo tortured, forced miscarriage'	Kobac TV (repost)	145K	Disability, torture, miscarriage
Kufsi Kooxeedkii Qorshaysnaa Ee Safi Sheikh Caamir Cumar	'Planned gang rape of Safi Sheikh Caamir Cumar'	Fatxiya Cabsiye Channel	147K	Named victim?, conspiracy
#live ... Shirqool afduub kufsi ... Khatra 16 sano jir	'16 year old Khatra abducted and raped'	wariyemohamedbaaruud	175.4K	Age 16, named Khatra
Kufsi live ah	'Rape live'	12390s0	65	Suggests livestreamed rape
Kufsi Nin Dhakhtar Ahi U Geysanayo Gabadha Bukaana Ah	'A doctor raping a female patient'	taliska..nisa	2,035	Medical setting abuse
Hawiye men grape an 8 year old boy	(English) 'Hawiye men rape an 8 year old boy'	taliyebimaal	72	Clan named, male child
Gabar kale oo la kufsaday ceeb iyo Fadeexo soomaali ku habsatay	'Another girl raped – shame and scandal on Somalis'	Maxamed Ayaanle (repost)	1.5K	Victim-blaming

3.1.5 Crossplatform analysis using Theoretical Frameworks

The patterns documented across Facebook, X, YouTube, and TikTok reveal that the harms experienced by survivors are not isolated incidents of unethical behaviour, but rather emerge from the interaction between platform architecture, sociopolitical impunity, and governance failures. The study's theoretical frameworks collectively demonstrate how digital environments facilitate the circulation, amplification, and normalisation of non-consensual rape reporting in Somalia. In addition, from the perspective of CPM theory and the Paradox of Visibility, survivors consistently lost control over personal and identifiable information once third parties disclosed rape incidents online without consent. Across all platforms, identifiable details such as names, locations, family affiliations, images, or contextual clues enabled jigsaw identification, whereby audiences could piece together fragmented information to identify survivors. Visibility was rarely empowering; instead, public sympathy often became conditional upon the circulation of graphic details, emotional testimonies, or visual evidence. This transformed survivor suffering into a form of digital spectacle, where visibility increased exposure and vulnerability rather than protection or justice.

Similarly, the Affordances Framework further explains how platform design intensified these harms. Searchability enabled rape-related content to be easily located and redistributed, while persistence allowed harmful posts, videos, and screenshots to remain accessible indefinitely. Algorithmic amplification through TikTok's 'For You' page, Facebook's news feed, YouTube recommendations, and reposting functions on X expanded the

reach of harmful content far beyond the original audience. In addition, anonymity and weak identity verification reduced accountability for perpetrators and content sharers. TikTok livestreaming represented a particularly harmful affordance, enabling real-time broadcasting and discussion of sexual violence cases before verification, survivor protection, or institutional response mechanisms could occur.

Furthermore, these digital harms are also embedded within broader structures of social and political violence. Structural Violence theory highlights how weak rule of law, limited survivor protection systems, clan-based political dynamics, and widespread impunity create an environment in which non-consensual disclosure can occur without meaningful consequences. In several cases, rape allegations became politicised through clan narratives, local political rivalries, or online mobilisation campaigns that weaponised gender-based violence for reputational or political purposes. Institutional silence and delayed responses, including in incidents such as Garowe (February 2024) and Las Anod, further reinforced survivor vulnerability by signalling limited accountability and inadequate protection mechanisms.

Finally, Platform Governance Theory demonstrates that platform responses to harmful rape-related disclosures remain deeply inadequate in Somali-speaking contexts. Despite apparent violations of platform community standards related to harassment, graphic violence, child sexual abuse material, and privacy violations, harmful content frequently remained online.

The findings translate significant governance gaps, including the absence of Somali-

language moderation systems, limited contextual understanding of local harms, weak transparency regarding reporting outcomes, and the lack of survivor-centred redaction or emergency takedown mechanisms. These governance limitations illustrate how global platform moderation systems often inadequately protect users in conflict-affected and underrepresented linguistic contexts such as Somalia.

3.2 Domain 2: Ethical compliance assessment

This objective evaluates social media content against the international ethical standards reviewed in the desk review (Section 2), including the WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations, the IASC Guidelines, the UNESCO reporting guidelines, the IFJ Global Charter of Ethics, and the Global Protection Cluster standards. The assessment is organised around four core principles: consent, informed consent, the ‘Survivor’s Best Interests’ mandate, and the handling of sensationalism alongside platform response.

Consent is entirely absent from all harmful posts.

The WHO ethical framework requires that survivors (or their guardians) give explicit, voluntary consent before any identifiable information is disclosed.

Across Facebook, X, YouTube, and TikTok, no post or video showed any evidence of survivor or guardian permission. Child survivors – aged 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 16 – cannot legally consent under any framework, yet their details were routinely disclosed. The contrast with the global standard could not be starker.

Informed consent is not met anywhere.

The Global Protection Cluster specifies four elements that a survivor must understand before

consent is considered truly informed: the objective of the content, the risks involved (retaliation, loss of community standing, permanence of the digital record), the right to decline or withdraw at any point, and the limits of confidentiality once information enters the public domain. Not a single Facebook post, X post, YouTube title, or TikTok video provided evidence that the survivor or guardian had been informed of these four elements. Even the small number of Facebook posts that claimed ‘explicit’ consent contained only rudimentary statements such as ‘she agreed’ – falling far short of the informed standard.

The ‘Survivor’s Best Interests’ mandate is systematically violated across all platforms.

The IASC Guidelines require that safety and dignity take precedence over all other objectives including ‘human interest’ storytelling or organisational visibility. Applying this mandate to the Somali digital landscape reveals violations in every harmful post. On Facebook, the Garowe videos of 8 and 10 year old sisters disclosed their exact location, ages, sibling relationship, and graphic visual content; the Las Anod post disclosed that two sisters were victims and that 24 suspects had been arrested, but no trial ever followed, leaving the survivors exposed to community stigmatisation without justice. On X, the disclosure of an 11 year old boy’s rape and murder revealed his age, location, and the fact of murder; another post weaponised the case for clan politics, naming the Dhulbahante

and Majertan clans, exposing survivors to clan-based retaliation.

On YouTube, titles disclosed children as young as two years old (an 11 year old in Mogadishu and a 2 year old in Jigjiga), a six year old subjected to prolonged abuse, a disabled woman tortured and forced to miscarry (145,000 views), and a boy whose brother was threatened with death after his rape. On TikTok, a video claimed that a two year old was gang raped and killed, another stated that a seven year old was raped in Garowe, and a live video reported that a 16 year old was abducted and raped (175,000 views). The title 'Kufsi live ah' (rape live) suggests realtime broadcasting of sexual violence, and victim-blaming titles such as 'ceeb iyo Fadeexo' (shame and scandal) directly contravene the survivor-centred mandate.

Sensationalism is pervasive, and platform response is completely absent.

UNESCO guidelines explicitly warn against sensationalism, which retraumatises survivors and reinforces harmful stereotypes. Across all platforms, sensationalist language dominates: 'dil iyo kufsi' (murder and rape), 'deg deg' (breaking news), crying emojis, and 'subxanallah' (glory to God used ironically). On TikTok, the most extreme videos – the two year old, the disabled woman, the live rape – received the highest engagement (145,000–175,000 views), demonstrating how algorithms reward sensationalism. Despite clear violations of each platform's community standards: child sexual abuse material, graphic violence, harassment, no content has been removed. Facebook's Garowe videos and Las Anod post remain online; X's harmful posts remain; YouTube's two year old rape video remains; TikTok's 'Kufsi live ah' and disabled woman torture

videos remain. No platform provides Somalilanguage moderation, transparent reporting mechanisms, or survivorcontrolled redaction tools. This complete regulatory failure is the most damning finding of the ethical compliance assessment.

A positive ethical example exists, though it is rare.

On X, one user posted a general advocacy message condemning the politicisation of rape, praising journalists who report properly, and calling for accountability without disclosing any survivor information. This post aligns with the IFJ Global Charter of Ethics, which demands respect for the dignity of news subjects, and with feminist ethics of care, which prioritises relational accountability and the avoidance of harm. However, such positive examples remain exceptionally rare.

In summary, consent is entirely absent across all platforms; informed consent is nonexistent; the 'Survivor's Best Interests' mandate is systematically violated; sensationalism is the norm; and no platform has taken any action to remove harmful content. The gap between international ethical standards and Somali digital practice is wide, as per evidence.

3.3 Domain 3: Protection risk analysis from digital disclosure to real-world harm

The verified cases across Facebook, X, YouTube, and TikTok demonstrate clear, repeated pathways through which online disclosure of survivor information translates into physical and psychological harm. These pathways follow a consistent pattern, regardless of platform.

Pathway one: initial disclosure occurs without consent, almost always by a third party (a citizen journalist, influencer, or community member) who shares the survivor's name, age, location, clan, or unique incident details. This aligns with the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004), where anonymity and distance from consequences lower ethical barriers. On Facebook, this took the form of graphic videos of 8 and 10 year old sisters in Garowe and a post announcing arrests in Las Anod. On X, an 11 year old boy's rape and murder were disclosed. On YouTube and TikTok, the disclosures were even more extreme: children as young as 2 years old, a disabled woman tortured and forced to miscarry, and videos suggesting livestreamed rape.

Pathway two: algorithmic amplification then magnifies the reach of these disclosures. The digital attention economy (Zuboff, 2019) rewards platforms for **promoting high-engagement content**, regardless of its harm. TikTok's 'For You' page aggressively pushes a video naming a 16 year old survivor (175,000 views); a planned gang rape video received 147,000 views. YouTube similarly amplified sensational titles, with a disabled woman's torture video reaching 145,000 views. Facebook's algorithm promoted the Las Anod post to 4,500 reactions and 1,498 comments. **The more shocking the content, the wider its distribution.**

Pathway three: commentdriven secondary **victimisation follows as viewers respond**. Across all platforms, victim-blaming comments appear – a manifestation of the Just World Hypothesis (Sacks et al., 2018), where audiences blame survivors to preserve their own sense of safety. On the Las Anod Facebook post, users asked 'why would two girls agree to be raped?' TikTok titles themselves often contain shaming language, such as 'ceeb iyo Fadeexo' (shame and scandal). Such comments normalise hostility toward survivors and compound the original trauma.

Pathway four: offline action occurs when digital disclosure translates into physical threats or community violence. This reflects structural violence, weak rule of law and clan politics allow online harm to become offline danger. On YouTube, a video title explicitly stated that after a boy was raped, his brother was threatened with death, a direct link from online disclosure to offline danger. In the Garowe February 2024 case, a 13 year old displaced girl was gang raped by men in security forces uniforms. The assault occurred in a populated area, and community members who tried to intervene were threatened by the perpetrators. The security agencies 'have not yet commented on the matter' meaning the threats went uninvestigated, the survivors received no protection, and the perpetrators faced no immediate consequences. This example shows that **digital exposure does not remain online; it fuels real-world retaliation, and when institutions remain silent, the harm is compounded.**

Pathway five: longer-term consequences include **permanent digital visibility, psychological distress, and institutional failure**. Once a video or post is online, it remains accessible indefinitely – the 2 year old child survivor will grow up knowing that her assault was broadcast. Psychological harms documented include a coma and traumatic mental breakdown in the Mohamoud sisters case (Las Anod), consistent with findings that passive social media exposure

is linked to higher depression and anxiety (PettyJohn, 2022). **Institutional silence compounds the harm:** in Garowe February 2024, security agencies ‘have not yet commented’. In Las Anod, police arrested 24 suspects but no trial ever followed, a phenomenon the report terms ‘performative justice’, where arrests are made to calm public anger but accountability never materialises.

Unique and extreme harms appear on TikTok. One video titled ‘Kufsi live ah’ (rape live) suggests that sexual violence was broadcast in real time, a new, horrific form of violation that leaves survivors with no control whatsoever. Another video discloses a doctor raping a female patient, representing abuse of power in a medical setting. These extreme cases are not isolated; they reflect a pattern where **TikTok’s algorithm rewards the most shocking content with the widest reach.**

Passive versus active social media use is a critical distinction. **Survivors whose images or details are shared without their consent are forced into passive use**, they cannot avoid scrolling through traumatic content and victim-blaming comments. Research (PettyJohn, 2022) shows that passive use is linked to higher rates of depression and anxiety. On TikTok, the algorithm forces passive consumption even on users who did not search for the content, as the ‘For You’ page serves graphic rape videos to millions of viewers. In Somalia, the vast majority of survivor exposure is passive because consent is never obtained.

Table 5: Summary of specific harms documented by platform

Harm type	Facebook	X	YouTube	TikTok
Physical retaliation threats	No	No	Yes (brother threatened)	No
Family threatened	No	No	Yes	No
Institutional silence	Yes (Garowe Feb 2024)	No	Yes	No
Psychological distress (coma, breakdown)	Yes (Mohamoud sisters) ³	No	Yes	Yes
Permanent digital visibility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Conditional sympathy	Yes (Garowe May 2025)	No	Yes	Yes
Performative justice	Yes (Las Anod)	No	No	No
Livestreamed rape	No	No	No	Yes (Kufsi live ah)
Medical setting abuse	No	No	No	Yes (doctor raping patient)
Extreme child exploitation (age 2)	No	No	Yes	Yes

³ As documented in Case Study 3 (Las Anod), where survivors suffered coma and breakdown; the digital disclosure contributed to secondary victimisation.

3.4 Domain 4: Drivers and Incentives

Understanding why social media users share sensitive GBV content is essential for developing effective interventions. Across Facebook, X, YouTube, and TikTok, the research identified four categories of drivers: social, psychological, technological, and economic.

Social drivers are the most visible. The digital attention economy incentivises sensational content because it generates high engagement – likes, shares, comments, and views. A YouTube video titled ‘Planned gang rape of Safi Sheikh Caamir Cumar’ received 147,000 views. A TikTok video about a disabled woman tortured and forced to miscarry received 145,000 views. A Facebook post announcing arrests in Las Anod received 4,500 reactions and 1,498 comments. Creators on all platforms compete to produce ever more shocking content because the algorithms reward it.

Citizen journalism without ethics also plays a major role. Ordinary users on Facebook, X, YouTube, and TikTok act as selfappointed news reporters. They post identifiable details such as names, ages, locations, graphic imagery without any training in ethical reporting or survivor consent. They believe they are exposing injustice, but in practice they cause immense harm.

Clan politics is a particularly potent driver in Somalia. On X, a user posted that LasAnood had become a ‘#Kufsi city’ and that Dhulbahante men could not defend their honour ‘from fifty Majertan men’. This post weaponised a rape case to attack a rival clan. On TikTok, a video with the English title ‘Hawiye men rape an 8 year old boy’ explicitly named a clan, using the assault to fuel ethnic or political conflict. Such posts expose survivors to clan-based retaliation far beyond the original trauma.

Influencer culture has worsened the problem. TikTok creators with large followings post rape content for views and virtual gifts. The National Union of Somali Journalists’ November 2025 report documented that some Somali TikTok influencers have been ‘abusing and humiliating women while filming their online videos’. The NUSOJ report documented **79 confirmed cases of sexual and genderbased violence** against women journalists in Somalia between 2023 and 2025, including harassment, sexual extortion, deepfake pornography, Albased voice cloning, and death threats.

Psychological drivers are deeper and less visible but equally powerful. The Just World Hypothesis – the belief that bad things happen only to those who deserve them allows audiences to pacify their own fears by finding fault in the survivor. This leads to conditional sympathy: public support is contingent on visible, shocking evidence. In the Garowe May 2025 case, graphic images

of two young sisters (aged 8 and 10) shared on Facebook triggered an 'outpouring of sympathy and donations' (Warsom, 12 May 2025). The public did not respond to the survivors' plight alone; they responded to the graphic visual evidence. Victim-blaming titles such as 'ceeb iyo Fadeexo' (shame and scandal) reflect the Just World Hypothesis, implying that the survivor must have done something to deserve the assault.

Technological drivers are embedded in platform design. Searchability means that once posted, identifiable information becomes permanently searchable; even if the original post is deleted, screenshots and cached versions persist. Persistence means content remains online indefinitely; the 2 year old survivor will grow up knowing her assault is still visible. Anonymity as many creators use pseudonyms reduces personal accountability for sharing harmful content.

Algorithmic amplification is perhaps the most powerful driver. TikTok's 'For You' page aggressively promotes high-engagement content, pushing videos of child rape, livestreamed violence, and torture to millions of users who never searched for them. YouTube's recommendation engine similarly promotes sensational titles. The TikTok live feature enables realtime broadcasting of violence – as suggested by the video titled 'Kufsi live ah' (rape live) a capability that no other platform offers, and one that creates unprecedented harm.

Economic drivers complete the picture.

Monetisation of outrage generates ad revenue for YouTube channels and virtual gifts for TikTok creators. Videos with 147,000 views or 175,000 views generate significant income. The more shocking the content, the more views and money. Digital blackmail is another economic driver: a Hiiraan Online investigation (December 2025) reported that weaponised private images are used to extort money from survivors, with survivor frequently targeted through TikTok and Facebook.

Comparative insights from other fragile contexts reinforce these findings. In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, most women do not know how to report online GBV to platforms, mirroring Somalia's low reporting literacy. In **Afghanistan**, social media remains a primary space for women's resistance under Taliban restrictions, but reporting violence to authorities often results in 'further abuse in detention'. In **Yemen**, weak cyber laws and lack of survivor-centred frameworks aggravate technologyfacilitated GBV. The Tanah Abang case in Indonesia showed how clothingbased blame shifts responsibility from the perpetrator to the survivor, a pattern also observed in Somali commentssuch as 'Whywas she wearing that?' The Steubenville case in the United States demonstrated how media can humanise assailants while stigmatising survivors a pattern seen in some Somali reporting where the perpetrator's clan or social standing is mentioned sympathetically. TikTok adds a unique dimension: livestreamed violence, which has no parallel in these other contexts.

4.0: CASE STUDIES

The research examined four primary cases in depth, selected for their geographic diversity, public profile, and availability of consequence documentation. Two supplementary Garowe cases are also presented below. All information is drawn from publicly available news articles, NGO reports, and verified social media posts.

4.1 Case Study 1: Beledweyne gang rape - public anger after video circulation

This case took place in Beledweyne, central Somalia, in February 2026. Police arrested two final suspects in a gang rape case that ‘triggered widespread public anger after a video linked to the assault circulated on social media’ (Hiiraan Online, 2026). The disclosure type was third party, with the video shared without the survivor’s consent. The video revealed unique details, the survivor’s face, and her location. Authorities did not disclose details about the survivor ‘in order to protect her identity’ (Hiiraan Online, 2026), showing that professional media outlets can exercise restraint even when graphic content is circulating.

The institutional response saw police acknowledge the case, make arrests, and call on citizens to report abuse directly to law enforcement. However, the video circulated before arrests were made, suggesting that law enforcement was reactive rather than proactive. The lesson is that video circulation forces national attention but at the cost of survivor exposure. Professional media refrained from identifying the survivor, but the original video continued to circulate on social media platforms, causing ongoing harm. Platforms must improve detection of such content before it spreads widely.

4.2 Case Study 2: Hingalool 11 year old - government condemnation but systemic gaps

This case concerns an 11 year old girl who was raped in Hingalool, Sanaag region, Puntland, on 30 October 2025. The federal government condemned the ‘brutal rape of an 11 year old girl’ but then identified the survivor by name in an official statement (Hiiraan Online, 2025). The Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development described the attack as a ‘barbaric act’ and praised Puntland authorities for swift arrests (Hiiraan Online, 2025; Radio Dalsan, 2025). By naming the child in an official statement, the government itself contributed to identifiability. The disclosure type was third party (media reporting followed by citizen sharing), and the identifiability score was 3 out of 6 (name revealed by the Ministry, location, and age).

The institutional response included quick arrests and a pledge by the Ministry to monitor the case as ‘a test of the nation’s commitment to accountability’ (Hiiraan Online, 2025). However, rights advocates noted that ‘weak judicial enforcement, combined with stigma and insecurity, continues to hinder justice for survivors’ (Hiiraan Online, 2025). The lesson is that even wellintentioned government statements can violate confidentiality by naming survivors. Somali institutions need internal ethical guidelines for public communications about GBV cases. Child survivors require heightened protections, yet these are routinely absent.

4.3 Case Study 3: Sisters brutally assaulted in Lasanod (and the Facebook post that exposed them)

This case occurred in Lascanood (Las Anod) on 13 June 2025. Two sisters, Fa (aged 16) and Fh (aged 17), were brutally beaten and gang raped by 25 men aged 17 to 20 (SIHA Network, 2025). Both the survivors and the alleged perpetrators were minors (aged 16–20, with many under 18 at the time). Survivor X reportedly fell into a coma; while survivor Y experienced a traumatic mental health breakdown (SIHA Network, 2025). Disclosure of minors without evidence is a double violation: The disclosure type was third party, involving news media, advocacy groups, and a citizen journalist on Facebook. The survivors' names, ages, location, and visible injuries were disclosed while the case was still at the accusation stage – no trial or conviction had occurred. Simultaneously, the faces of 20 accused minors were publicly displayed **without any evidence being presented or trial completed. This constitutes a double violation of child protection standards (UNCRC, 1989; UNESCO, 2023): both the child survivors and the child accused were identified before any judicial determination. The presumption of innocence was violated for the accused, while the survivors' right to privacy and dignity was violated.**

Four days after the assault, on 17 June 2025, a Facebook user posted:

'Ciidamada Booliska Dawladda SSC-Khaatumo ayaa soo bandhigay sawirada 20 wiil oo kamid ah 24 eedaysane oo Laascanood kufsi ugu geystay 2 hablood oo walaallo ah.'
(Facebook, 2025)

Translation: **'The police forces of the SSC-Khaatumo administration have displayed the photos of 20 boys out of 24 suspects accused of committing rape in Laascanood against 2 girls who are sisters.'**

The post disclosed that the survivors were sisters and that the crime occurred in Las Anod. It received 4,500 reactions and 1,498 comments (Facebook, 2025). In addition, the publication of the accused minors' faces implied guilt before any trial, violating the presumption of innocence. Some comments demanded justice; others victimblamed ('why would two girls agree to be raped?'). The post remained online at the time of analysis. Critical finding is performative justice and systemic child protection failure: The institutional response saw police arrest 23 suspects within 48

hours and hold a media briefing (Hiiraan Online, 2025). However, no formal trial or convictions have ever been documented. The SIHA Gender Alert noted that ‘no further updates have been reported since June 2025’ and that the ‘silence is deafening’ (SIHA Network, 2025). This case follows the pattern that over 60% of rape cases in Somaliland are handled outside the formal legal system (SIHA Network, 2025). Arrests were made to calm public anger, but the judicial process stopped there.

The Facebook post thus reported an incomplete process as if it were justice, misleading the public and leaving all minors: both survivors and accused unprotected. **The survivors, both minors, had their identities broadcast worldwide while still at the accusation stage, facing lifelong digital visibility and community** stigmatisation regardless of whether any suspect is ever convicted. The accused minors had their faces published as if they were already guilty, without any evidence or trial, violating their right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Both groups have, as SIHA noted, disappeared behind locked doors, forgotten’ (SIHA Network, 2025).

4.4 Supplementary evidence: Garowe cases

During the review period, an additional case from Garowe was identified that powerfully illustrate the report’s central findings.

Two young girls, aged 8 and 10 from the same displaced family, were abducted and raped by a single perpetrator in Garowe, Puntland, in May 2025 (Warsom, 2025). News reports explicitly noted that ‘graphic images of the gang rape, shared on Facebook, have shocked Somalis, prompting an outpouring of sympathy for the survivors and donations’ (Warsom, 2025). The suspect was arrested, but the digital disclosure had already occurred (Hiiraan Online, 2025; Mareeg, 2025). Four Facebook video posts were identified during social media analysis (URLs provided in Annex F1). Both survivors were children, and their faces, ages, location (Garowe, displaced family camp), and sibling relationship were disclosed without any evidence of consent, while the case was still at the stage of the accusation.

This case is a textbook example of the report’s key findings: thirdparty disclosure of identifiable information (ages, location, family displacement, graphic images), no evidence of consent and sensational framing, compounding of trauma through permanent digital visibility, and conditional sympathy driven by graphic content. The publication of child survivors’ faces and identifying details violates international child protection standards (UNCRC, 1989; UNESCO, 2023), yet no platform removed the content.

5.0: CONCLUSION

Findings from the assessment highlight that across Facebook, X, YouTube and TikTok, the non-consensual disclosure of identifiable rape survivor information in Somalia is not an occasional lapse but a systemic pattern. Child survivors as young as two years old have their faces, ages and locations broadcast to millions; perpetrators of performative arrests are celebrated while trials never materialise; and platforms from Facebook to TikTok remove nothing, moderate nothing, and take no responsibility. No consent was found in any harmful post. No platform enforced its own community standards. No trial followed the arrests in Las Anod. The 'funnel of justice' already a trickle, with fewer than 1% of assaults leading to conviction is further narrowed by digital disclosure, which deters reporting, normalises impunity and leaves survivors permanently visible, retraumatised and forgotten.

This study's theoretical framework integrating protection principles, feminist media ethics, digital privacy and affordances, the 'do no harm' mandate, the online disinhibition effect, and structural violence has shown why these harms persist. Thirdparty disclosures create boundary turbulence that survivors cannot reclaim. Algorithmic amplification turns individual violations into mass harms. Local politics weaponises rape for retaliation. Institutional silence allows performative justice to flourish. Platforms' complete governance failure no Somalilanguage moderation, no redaction tools, no transparency makes them complicit. Positive exceptions are rare but real: the survivor-centred journalism of Bilan Media. They prove that ethical digital reporting is possible.

6.0: RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Recommendations (to apply to all stakeholders)

- **Prioritise survivor dignity over public interest** – No disclosure of identifiable survivor information without explicit, informed consent.
- **Treat digital disclosure as a standalone harm** – Nonconsensual sharing of names, images, locations or unique details must be recognised as a violation equivalent to other forms of GBV.
- **Verify judicial outcomes before celebrating arrests** – Arrests without trial are not justice; reporting them as such misleads the public and abandons survivors.
- **Demand platform accountability** – All social media companies operating in Somalia must deploy Somalilanguage content moderators and provide transparency reports.

Specific recommendations by group

For Media editors

- Adopt survivorcentred reporting guidelines as a binding code of conduct.
- Digitally redact all identifiable information from social media sources before publishing.
- Implement child survivor protocols: no names, no photos, no locations, no republishing of third party disclosures.
- Verify judicial outcomes before reporting arrests as 'justice'.

For GBV Experts and Civil Society

- Develop digital safety toolkits for survivors whose information has been disclosed online.
- Integrate social media ethics into all GBV responder training.
- Establish rapid response mechanisms for survivors requesting help after online identification.

For Government stakeholders (Ministry of Women and HRD, Ministry of Information, Parliament, Federal Member States)

- Fast track the federal Sexual Offences Bill to criminalise nonconsensual digital disclosure and technologyfacilitated GBV.
- Introduce a data protection law mandating Somalilanguage reporting pathways and platform transparency.
- Prohibit government ministries from naming survivors in official statements.

- Collect and publish data on the 'funnel of justice' (arrests, trials, convictions) disaggregated by digital disclosure.
- Establish relevant policies to curb digital disclosure of survivor information, adapting to changing technology and the evolving digital landscape.

For the Judiciary, police and law enforcement agencies

- During active judicial cases where the survivor is present, live broadcast of the proceedings should be banned to avoid retraumatising the survivors
- Never publicly display faces or names of accused minors before trial – respect the presumption of innocence.
- Establish clear protocols for digital evidence collection and secondary victimisation prevention.
- Issue public statements only after judicial outcomes, not after arrests alone.
- Collaborate with platforms to expedite removal of nonconsensual intimate images.
- Receive mandatory training on SGBV reporting ethics and survivorcentred digital practices, integrated into ongoing capacitybuilding programmes.

For Social media platforms (Meta, X, YouTube, TikTok, Telegram)

- Deploy Somalilanguage content moderators immediately – the Garowe videos, Las Anod post, and TikTok content (2 year old, live rape) remain online, which is unacceptable.
- Establish clear, expedited regional pathways for removal of nonconsensual intimate images.
- TikTok must disable live streaming for accounts that post GBV content (Kufsi live ah' indicates realtime broadcasting of sexual violence).

- Adjust algorithms to demote thirdparty disclosures of sensitive GBV content (treat like hate speech) and promote survivor-centred resources.

For international donors and humanitarian partners

- Fund digital literacy training and campaigns on GBV reporting ethics for journalists and social media users.
- Support survivorcentred media models such as Bilan Media.
- Invest in documentation of technologyfacilitated GBV (the NUSOJ report on 79 cases provides a model).
- Mainstream SGBV reporting training for journalists and police within their projects, ensuring that ethical digital disclosure practices are embedded in all GBVrelated programming.

For Protection Stakeholders and GBV Service Providers

- Adopt safe interview guidelines – refuse to facilitate survivor access for external media unless the ‘Survivor’s Best Interests’ mandate is guaranteed.
- Integrate digital exposure assessment into trauma intake (distinguish passive scrolling from active community engagement).
- Expand GBV referral pathways to include support for survivors whose identifiable information has been disclosed online.
- Support mainstreaming of SGBV reporting for the media practitioners and police on digital forms of SGBV and mitigation procedures.

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