



Quarterly Report



April-June 2022



Introduction

During the second quarter of 2022 (April to June 2022), the status of human rights in the digital space was no different than the overall human rights status in the Palestinian context; the reporting period witnessed growing challenges and complications that scaled up to violations in the Palestinian digital space.

Digital space communication companies and social media platforms maintained their practices of constraining and banning Palestinian content, while, on the other hand, allowing the Israeli authorities to develop technologies and propose draft laws that promote its authority to further control and track content in digital space. In addition, the Palestinian authorities still detain and summon social media activists, violating their right to free opinion and expression. On the other hand, the Palestinian authorities fail to legally and systematically address important issues such as privacy and access to information.

Unfortunately, the hateful and inciting speech continues to be widely spread in the Palestinian digital space, which is full of misleading news and fake accounts. Yet, social media companies still systematically restrain Palestinian content on a large scale, especially political content. Additionally, incidents of gender-based digital violence have been significantly rising over the same reporting period.

The reporting period has widespread of incitement and defamation incidents against the Palestinian LGBTQIA+ community who have been exposed to aggressive attacks, leaving adverse psychological impacts in addition to panic and fear of being exposed to the possible physical attacks.

According to 7amleh-The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media, the reporting period witnessed an increased number of automated fake accounts (Bots) on Twitter. It was observed that before those accounts were deleted due to the efforts made by 7amleh's contact with relevant companies, dozens of those accounts had abruptly followed the accounts of Palestinian human rights organizations and activists supporting the Palestinian cause. Similarly, many fake

pages impersonating electoral lists in a number of cities emerged during the Palestinian local council elections. Those incidents were observed and documented by 7amleh, which, after communicating with relevant social media companies, was able to get those pages deleted.

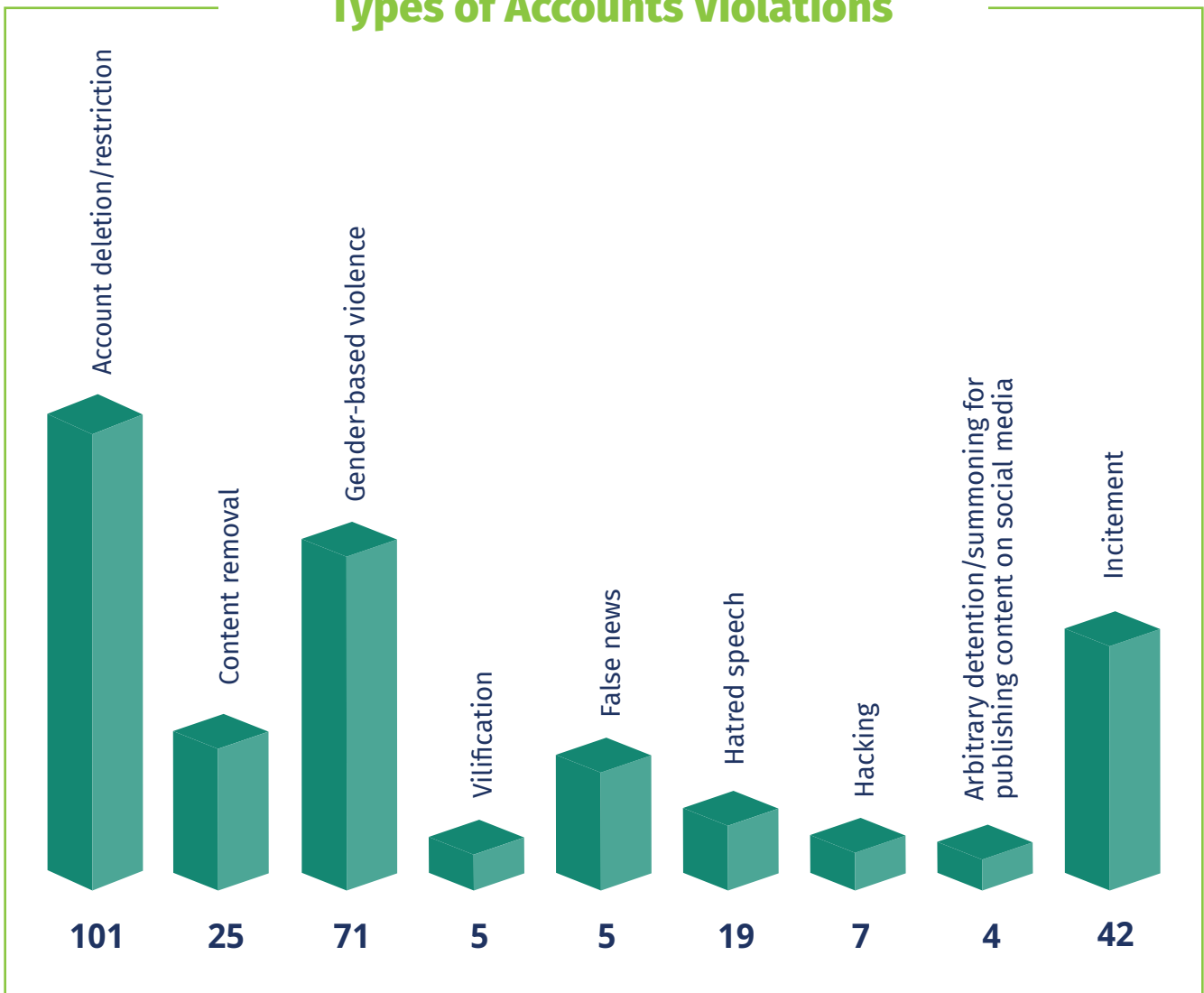
This report presents an analysis of the main digital violations, based on the documentation of 7amleh. Moreover, it provides an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the perpetrators and the victims, according to the type of violation and its distribution on social media networks. It is worth noting that the violations of digital rights encompass unlimited technical and systemic complications.

Violations

Over the second quarter of 2022, social media companies continued fighting the Palestinian narrative and content, and on the other hand, the defamatory, inflammatory, and misleading content continued to be widely spread. 7amleh documented a total of 279 violations of all types, presented hereunder in the following tables:

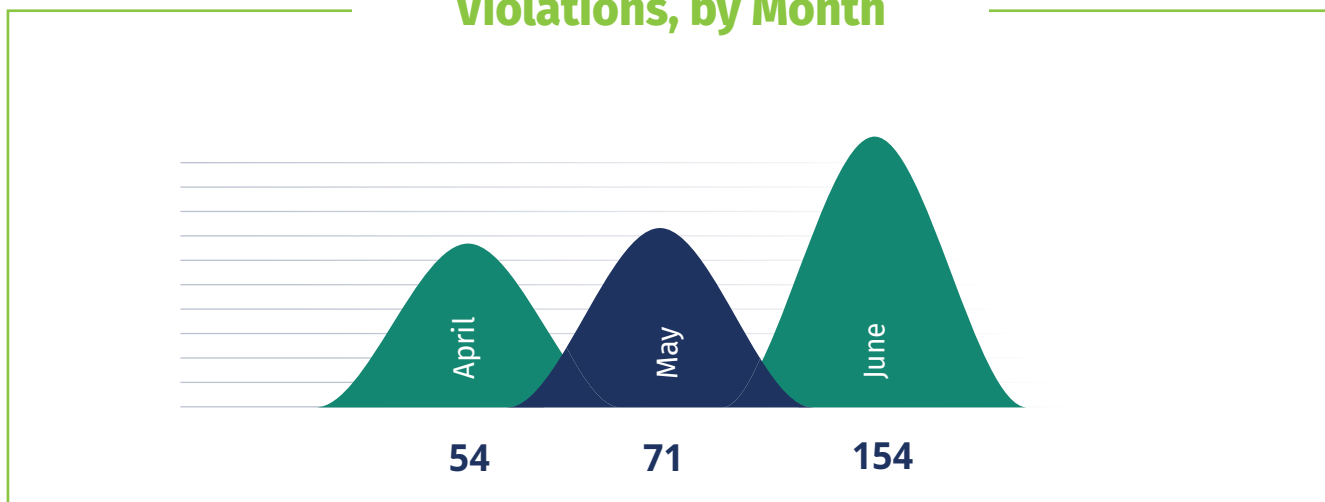
7amleh documented several forms of violations of Palestinians' digital space by Palestinian and Israeli authorities and companies; mainly:

Types of Accounts Violations



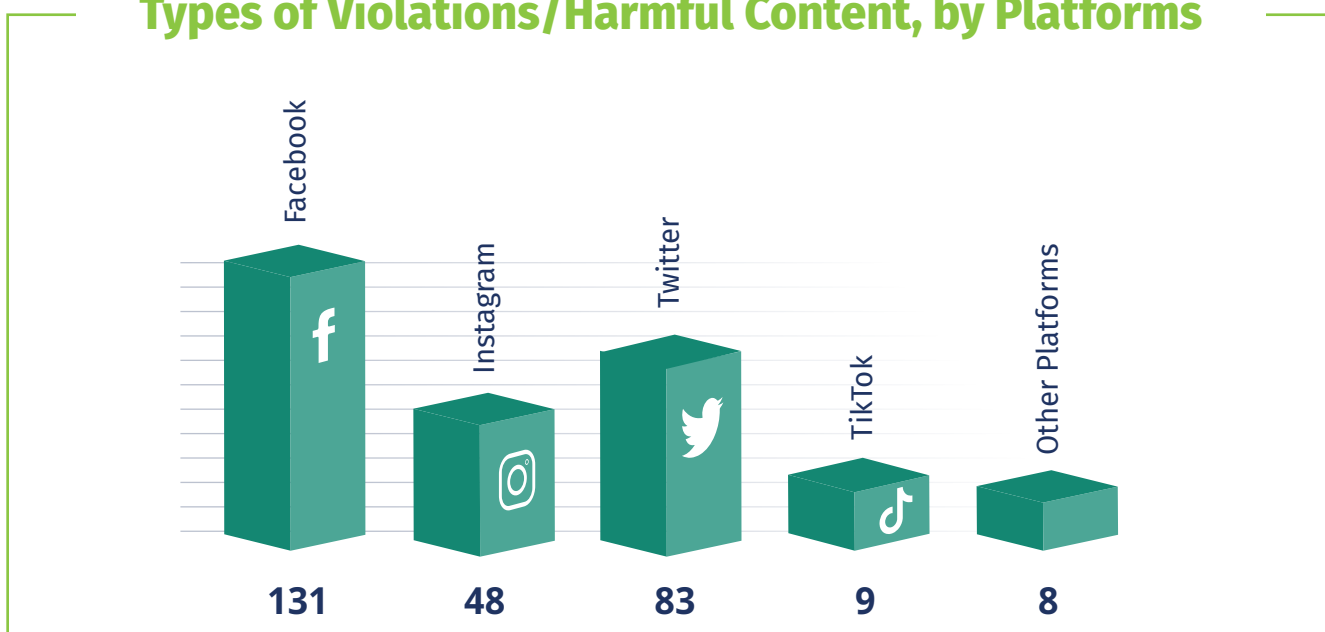
The number of digital space violations varies from one month to another in direct relation with political and social developments on the ground. The following table illustrates those violations chronologically for the second quarter:

Violations, by Month



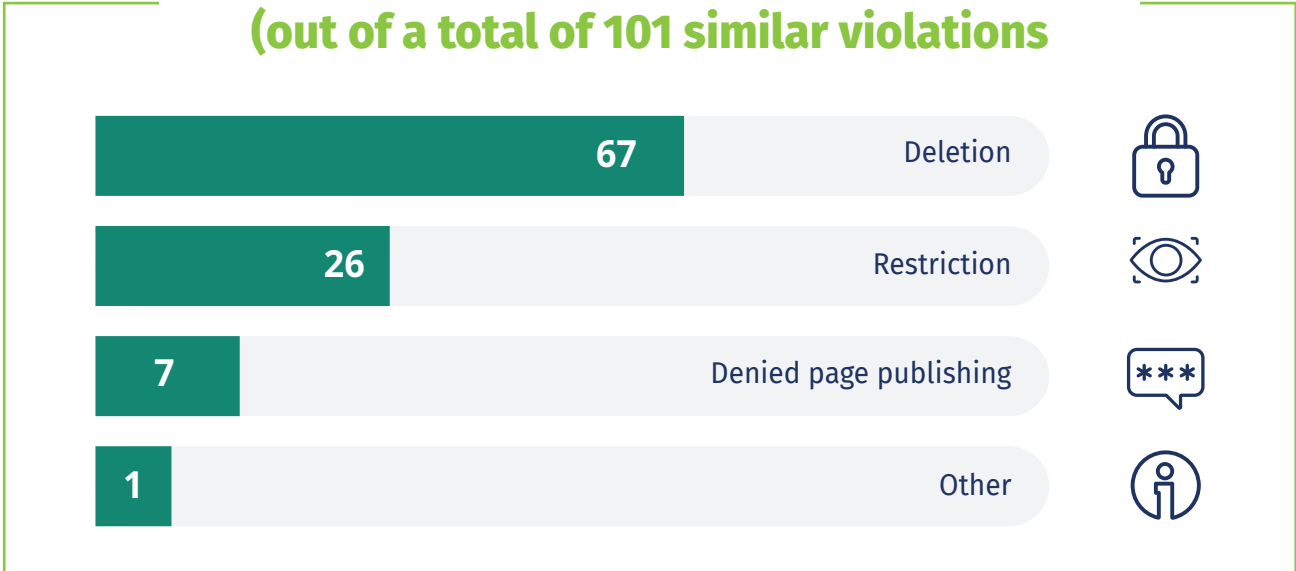
The following table illustrates violations committed by companies as well as violent content incidents, mainly on the most used platform, Facebook, within the Palestinian context:

Types of Violations/Harmful Content, by Platforms



The Table below presents types of banning accounts; noting that deletion and bans were the most prominent practices by companies:

Measures by type of Ban (out of a total of 101 similar violations)

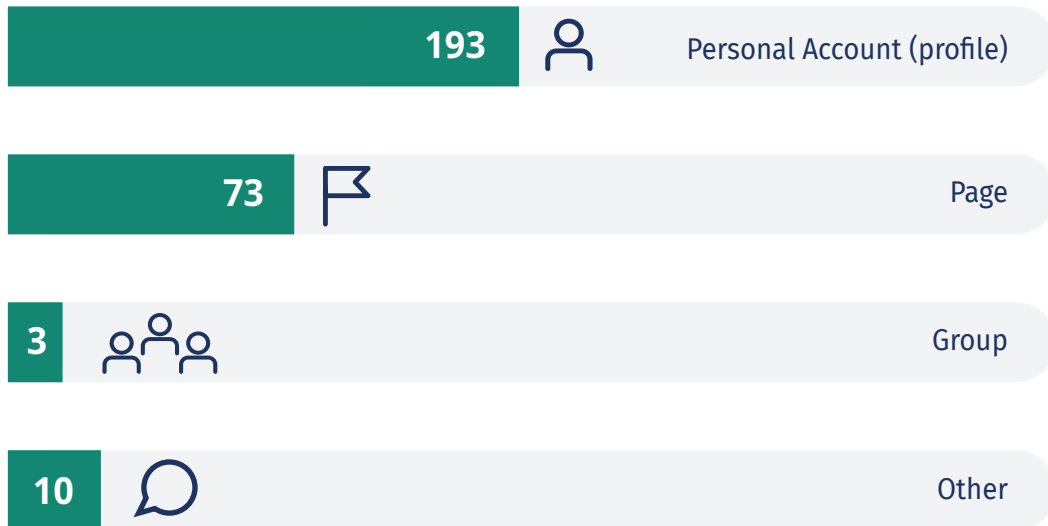


Violations and attacks were not only restricted to individuals, but also included Palestinian media pages and others supporting the Palestinian cause, as well as non-governmental organizations, and in some instances, private companies.

Violations, by the Victim



Victims, by Type of Accounts on Social Media Networks



7amleh, in coordination with social media networks, monitors eligible content; which meets all the requirements of accuracy and sufficient information. Companies vary in their responses and promptness depending on the company, the case, their priorities, and the nature of the case pertinent to the seriousness of the inflicted harm. The responses received by 7amleh from those companies up to this date, amount to (250), as follows:

Responses of Companies to 7amleh's Reports



Conclusion

Violations in Palestinian digital space may be divided into two main categories: violations on political grounds, and violations on socio-cultural grounds. While restrictions on and monitoring of political content are strictly implemented, socially violent content is increasing, though, taking the form of temporary and serious attacks that may escalate to inflicting physical harm to the victim.

Politically, social media companies are significantly active in banning and restricting Palestinian content, which would seriously threaten the freedom of opinion and expression on social media platforms. Socially, those companies and formal authorities seem helpless in combating racist and violent content, or, otherwise, do not acquire sufficient will to fight this type of threatening content.

It is concluded that Facebook and Instagram, being the most used and widespread platforms in the Palestinian context, are accountable for the majority of violations against Palestinians, and the most for applying bans and restrictions to Palestinian content, especially the political. Yet, the most violent, defamatory, and inciting content is found on those two platforms. Recently, given the Palestinian immigration to the TikTok platform, wide-scale and growingly violent content was observed on this platform.

Finally, it is worth noting that the violations documented by 7amleh do not claim inclusiveness; definitely, there are other forms of unlimited digital space violations. However, those figures present indicators for the overall reality of Palestinian digital space, and the types of violations and practices that violate others' rights.



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