



First Quarterly Report

January- March, 2024

7amleh –The Arab Center for Social Media Advancement

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Introduction

Following the continuation of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, Palestinian digital rights violations surged during the first quarter of 2024. While Israeli assaults on Palestinians and infrastructure continue, various actors continue their attacks on digital freedom and privacy, most notably the Israeli authorities and social media companies.

The Israeli authorities continued to target the infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, including the Internet and communications infrastructure. These attacks have significantly impaired Palestinians' ability to access the internet, utilize communication services, and both access and share information. Furthermore, it restricts their capacity to express opinions in the digital realm and document atrocities from the field.

On the other hand, various social media platforms, albeit unevenly, as shown below, continue to restrict the ability of Palestinians and Palestinian rights advocates worldwide to digitally post, express, and advocate for their rights in the digital sphere. This is done primarily through disproportionate and overmoderation of Arabic content. At the same time, platforms such as X, Telegram, and Facebook have failed to implement effective policies to protect Palestinians and Palestinian rights advocates from smear campaigns, incitement, and hate speech aimed at intimidating and silencing every Palestinian rights defender.

The Violations

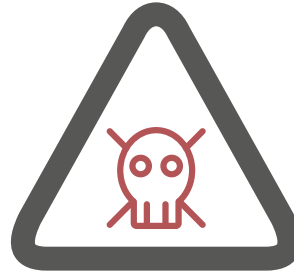
Social media companies continued to suppress Palestinian narratives and content throughout the first quarter of the year. 7amleh documented a total of 961 digital violations during this period.

Distribution of violations by type:



268

Account restriction/
suspension



693

Harmful content

It appears that the restriction of Palestinian and pro-Palestinian content and accounts remains at a high frequency. Figures indicate that the spread of harmful content in Hebrew in its various forms is still widespread and has not been addressed by social media platforms with due responsibility and willingness.

Distribution of violations by months:

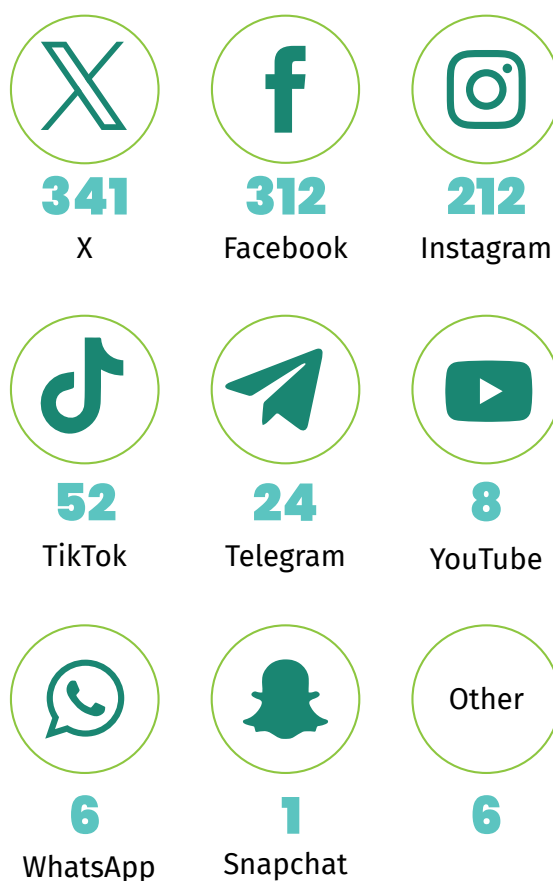


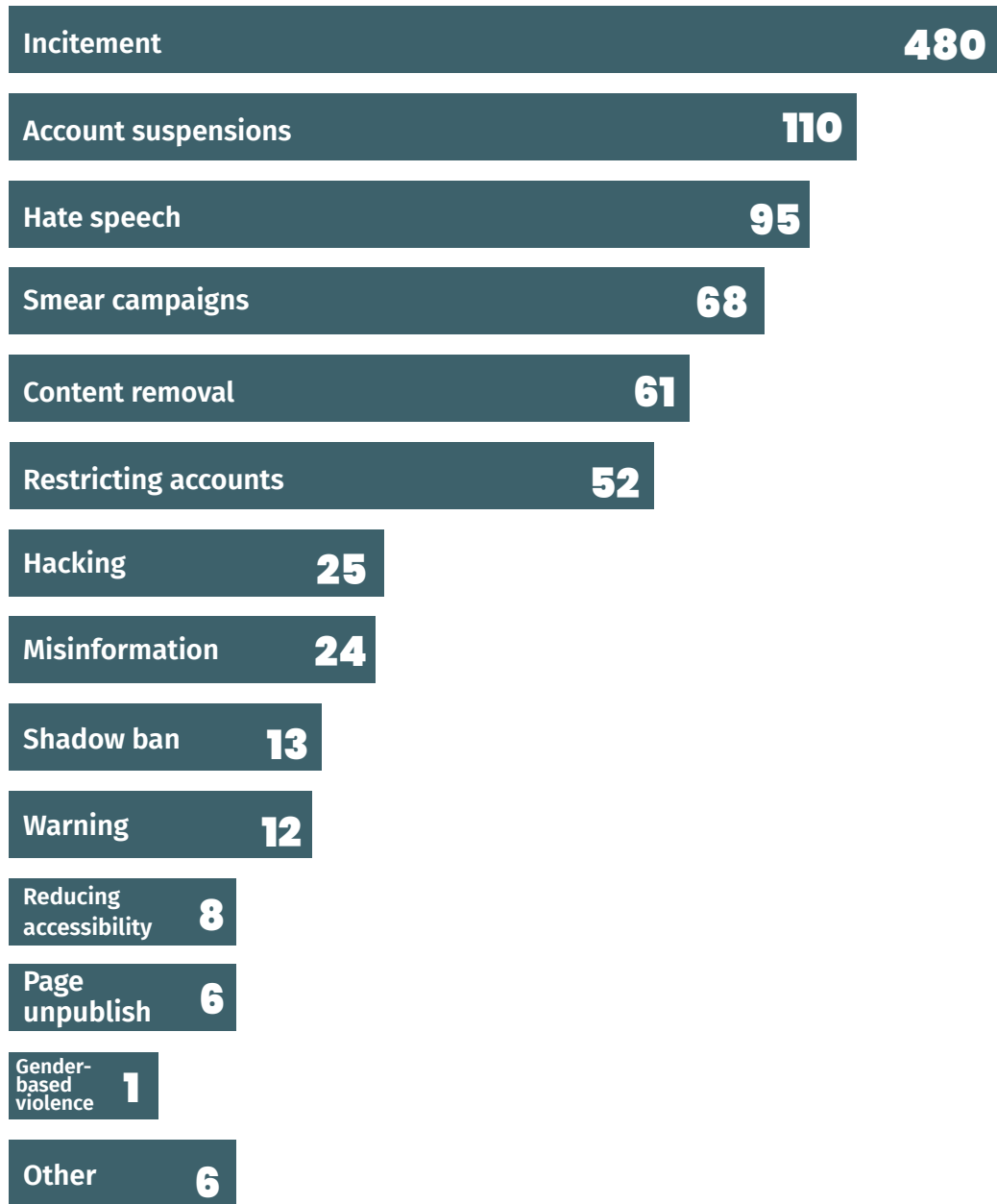
Data indicate that the frequency of digital violations remained consistent and did not decrease throughout the first quarter of the year, showing no signs of decrease. This indicates that social media platforms are maintaining the same approach and policies, albeit unevenly, against Palestinian digital content.

Distribution of violations by platforms:

As seen above, Meta platforms account for 55.1% of all digital violations against Palestinians and Palestinian rights advocates. Meta's violations encompass suspension/removal and restriction of content as well as the spread of violent speech in Hebrew. On the other hand, the majority of violations on X platform pertain to the dissemination of violent speech and hate speech against Palestinians without apparent intervention from the platform to protect its users.

Distribution of actions by type of violation:





The forms of digital violations against Palestinian and pro-Palestinian content are diverse, with prominent examples including incitement to violence, suspension of accounts, hate speech, restriction, and content removal. However, regardless of their specific form, these violations collectively serve to intimidate and silence Palestinian and pro-Palestinian voices in the digital sphere.

Distribution of violations by category of affected entity:



Person



47

Media outlet



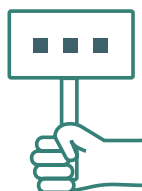
33

Non-governmental organization



18

Business



7

Social/political movement



1

Official entity

2

Other

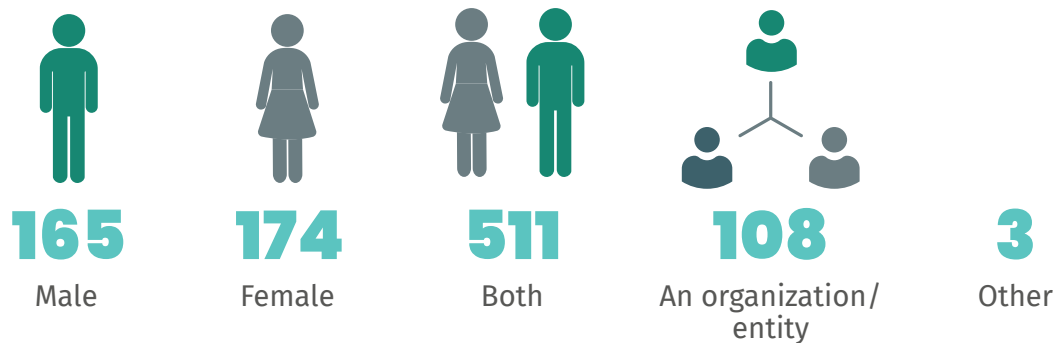
Many violations on social media platforms target individuals, especially since many violent and hate speeches are directed towards Palestinians as a whole. Nevertheless, the percentage of targeted media, non-governmental institutions, commercial businesses, and other entities is large and proportionate to their number.

Distribution of violations by category of victim¹:



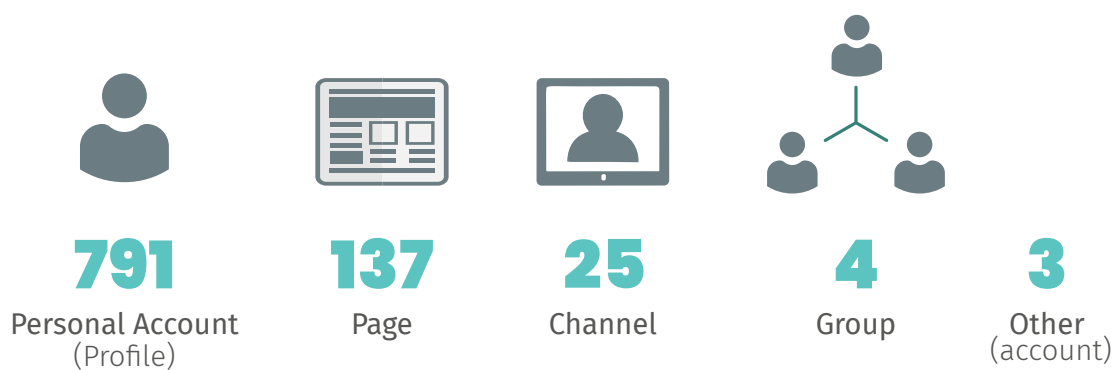
It appears that the Palestinian public and supporters of Palestine are exposed to various forms of violations. Among different groups, most violations are committed against activists and journalists.

Gender Breakdown of Victims:



1. A person may have more than one trait at the same time, for example, a political activist and a journalist, so the qualities are more than the number of people affected.

Classification of victims by type of account on social media platforms:



Distribution of companies' responses to 7amleh's escalations so far:



Social media platforms, particularly Meta, continue to respond slowly to institutional notifications regarding Palestinian digital rights and have not provided sufficient resources to process the required prompt notifications, especially in the context of the ongoing war. Nevertheless, the percentage of positive responses is much higher than the percentage of negative responses.

Conclusions

While the Palestinian people are subjected to a brutal war, human losses, and extensive destruction of infrastructure, they are deprived of their digital rights and freedoms, which are urgent in the context of crises and wars, especially for people subjected to aggression.

The propagation of violent and hate speech in Hebrew against Palestinians and their supporters remains unabated, with insufficient action taken to address it. At the same time, social media companies continue to impose excessive punitive measures during the enforcement of content moderation policies against Palestinian content, as shown by the above indicators. This dual approach to moderating content related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict leads to the silencing of the Palestinian narrative, intimidating anti-occupation voices, and restricting digital freedoms as an extension of freedoms, while simultaneously allowing the spread of discourses against Palestinian rights, especially those that are violent in form and content.

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