

TAKEDOWN

IMAGE BASED SEXUAL ABUSE

September 28, 2022

Dear Members of Congress,

We the undersigned survivors of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) are writing in support of the PROTECT Act, requiring age and consent verification of those depicted in sexually explicit or intimate materials online, as an imperative step forward in human rights.

What is Image-Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA):

Image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) is the creating, threatening to share, sharing, or using of recordings (still images or videos) of sexually explicit or sexualized materials without the consent of the person depicted and/or the consent of the acts depicted in the recordings. Often, IBSA includes the use of sexually explicit or sexualized materials to groom or extort a person, or to advertise commercial sexual abuse. This umbrella term encompasses several iterations of sexual exploitation, including but not limited to, recorded rape or sex trafficking, non-consensually shared/recorded sexually explicit content (sometimes called “revenge porn”), the creation of photoshopped/artificial pornography (including nonconsensual “deepfake” porn), and more.

Why the PROTECT Act Matters:

The PROTECT (Preventing Rampant Online Technological Exploitation and Criminal Trafficking) Act fills a gaping hole in existing law that allows pornography to be created, uploaded, and distributed online without the consent or age verification of the persons depicted. This has led to the victimization of countless women, men, and children who have few or no remedies under present law.

This legislation calls for platforms to require age verification for users who upload content and for each individual appearing in the video(s) and/or image(s). Platforms will also be required to have consent verification for each act depicted from each individual appearing in the images. Lastly, consent to the act does not imply or serve as evidence for consent to distribution. Therefore, platforms will also be required to have consent from each individual depicted for the distribution of each specific image.

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Without the documented consent to the acts or distribution, and verifying the age of each person depicted, sexually explicit material online constitutes nonconsensual distribution of intimate images.

In the absence of this legislation, websites that allow independent users to upload sexually explicit material have become overrun with images of recorded rape, hidden cameras, filmed sex trafficking, child sexual abuse material, and other non-consensually recorded or shared images. These websites fail to effectively and proactively remove nonconsensual content, and they make it near impossible for victims depicted in the abuse images to remove them. And at the same time, many such platforms make money from the monetization of these nonconsensual abuse images, such as through increased website traffic and advertisements.

The Harms of Image-Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA):

While the term image-based sexual abuse has arisen in recent years, it describes a phenomenon that has been long-plaguing vulnerable populations, particularly women and LGBTQ+ individuals.

Prevalence of IBSA:

- A 2017 U.S. survey conducted on Facebook found that of the 3,044 participants, 1 in 8 had been targets of the distribution, or threat of distribution, of sexually graphic images without their consent. Women were significantly more likely (about 1.7 times as likely) to have been targets of this abuse compared to men.¹
- A 2021 representative survey of 2,000 people between the ages of 18 and 80 from all European Union (EU) countries found that 30% of women across the EU fear that sexual images of themselves, real or fake, may be shared without their consent online.²

¹ Eaton, Asia; Jacobs, Holly, and Ruvalcaba, Yanet “2017 Nationwide Online Study of Non-Consensual Porn Victimization and Perpetration: A Summary Report,” *Cyber Civil Rights Initiative Inc*, 2017, <https://cybercivilrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCRI-2017-Research-Report.pdf>

² “Boundless hate on the internet – Dramatic situation across Europe,” *HateAid*, 2021, https://hateaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/HateAid-Report-2021_EN.pdf

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- LGBTQ+ people are at higher risk for IBSA than heterosexual people, with 17% of LGBTQ+ internet users reporting that they have been threatened or have had pictures posted of them.³
- A survey of young adults ages 18-25 who had experienced sextortion found that approximately 40% of participants reported that their sextortion occurred online. The report notes: “In these cases, the perpetrator frequently sought to get more sexual images of the victim or meet in person for sexual contact.... While threats for explicit imagery were the most common demands across the sample, younger participants were more likely than older participants to have experienced this.”⁴

The Cyber Civil Rights Initiative conducted an online survey regarding non-consensual distribution of sexually explicit photos in 2017. The survey found that compared to people without IBSA victimization, victims had “significantly worse mental health outcomes and higher levels of physiological problems.”⁵ A previous analysis noted that such distress can include high levels of anxiety, PTSD, depression, feelings of shame and humiliation, as well as loss of trust and sexual agency.⁶ The risk of suicide is also a very real issue for victims of this type of abuse, and there are many tragic stories of young people taking their own lives as a result. An informal survey showed that 51% of responding victims reported having contemplated suicide as a result of their IBSA experience.⁷

As survivors, we know the personal toll that IBSA has had and continues to have on our personal wellbeing. So long as the status quo remains, countless more individuals are set to become victims of IBSA in the future. That is why the PROTECT ACT must be passed. It is time to require age and consent verification for sexually explicit materials online to prevent significant trauma and abuse.

³ Lenhart, A., Ybarra, M., & Price-Feeney, M. “Nonconsensual image sharing: One in 25 Americans has been a victim of ‘revenge porn.’” *Data & Society Research Institute*, 2016 https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/Nonconsensual_Image_Sharing_2016.pdf

⁴ “Sextortion Summary findings from a 2017 Survey of 2,097 Survivors,” *Thorn*, 2017, https://www.thorn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Sextortion_Wave2Report_121919.pdf

⁵ Eaton, Asia; Jacobs, Holly, and Ruvalcaba, Yanet, *Ibid*

⁶ Bates, Samantha, “Revenge Porn and Mental Health: A Qualitative Analysis of the Mental Health Effects of Revenge Porn on Female Survivors,” *Feminist Criminology*, 2017 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557085116654565>

⁷ “Revenge Porn Statistics” *The Cyber Civil Rights Initiative*, 2014, <https://www.cybercivilrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/RPStatistics.pdf>

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Sincerely,

229 Survivors of Image-Based Sexual Abuse (165 U.S. Survivors + 64 International Survivors)

U.S. Survivors

ARIZONA

Adrienne Rouan
Phoenix

Anonymous #1
Phoenix

Monica H.
Scottsdale

Anonymous #2
Tucson

ARKANSAS

Caitlin Cooper
Benton

Danielle Green
Bentonville

Anonymous
Bentonville

Heather Dark
Fayetteville

Dayton Gocio
Fayetteville

Hilary Mitchusson
Fayetteville

Anatasia Iglesias
Little Rock

Linda Vanblaricom
Little Rock

Jessicah Venditti
Star City

CALIFORNIA
Anonymous #1
Brea

Nikki Giavasis
Calabasas

E. Zomi
Glendale

Kayla Laws Collins
Lake Balboa

Jewell Baraka
Long Beach

Abigail Mellenthin
Los Angeles

Casee Maxfield
Los Angeles

Patti N.
Los Angeles

H. Taylor
Los Angeles

Sarah Rogers
Los Angeles

Leandra Dichirico
Los Angeles

Elizabeth Vera-Marcial
Los Angeles

Dana G.
Los Angeles

Anonymous #2
Los Angeles

Emily Sears
Los Angeles

Charlotte Laws
Los Angeles

Heather Marks
Los Angeles

Matthew H.
Los Angeles

Uldouz Wallace
Los Angeles

Lila R.
Los Angeles

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Caitlin Oconnor
Los Angeles

Gabrielle Stone
Los Angeles

Arzo Yusuf
Los Angeles

Stacey Olivas
Los Angeles

Anonymous #3
Los Angeles

Kevin C.S.
Los Angeles

Amy Jackson
Los Angeles

Terry Crews
Los Angeles

Whitney Cummings
Los Angeles

Malvina Cordoba
Newark

Tina Robinson
Oakland

Fiona Bock
Oakland

Darren White
Oakland

Ami R.
Oakland

Leyoni Brooks
Ontario

Anonymous #4
Redondo Beach

Olivia Burnett
San Clemente

Kirsten
San Clemente

Alyse Krueger
San Diego

T. A. Stierz
San Diego

William McNamara
Santa Monica

Milly Cee
Stockton

Diamond Batiste
Victorville

COLORADO
Elizabeth Doyle
Centennial

Daniel Eastman
Greeley

Dr. Jill Manning
Louisville

Anonymous
Fort Collins

CONNECTICUT
Anonymous
Granby

Erykc C.
Ledyard

Michael Distefano
Manchester

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Dawn Hawkins
Washington, D.C.

FLORIDA
Yahaira Pirnie
Fort Lauderdale

Yomayra T.
Jacksonville

Kristopher Victorian
Jacksonville

Tania Ramírez
Miami

Sophia Solano
Miami

Maireny Castillo
Miami

J. Knowles
Miramar

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Jan Edwards
Orlando

Anonymous
Orlando

Fleur DeLoach
Orlando

Brandon Kozak
St. Cloud

Marysol
Tampa

William Dobrow
Venice

HAWAII
Jay Dee Penn
Hilo

IDAHO
Allyson K. Thomas
Boise

ILLINOIS
LaKeisha Caples
Chicago

Meghan Reedy
Greenville

Keagan Bouman
Greenville

Adriane Moen
Moline

EJJ
Moline

Nichole Velez
Rock Island

NaTera NaNa Pugh
Rock Island

Anonymous
Silvis

INDIANA
Joy Galliher
Indianapolis

IOWA
Amy Brown Gaghagen
Bettendorf

Hannah Ellis
Davenport

K. Ford
Davenport

Joshua Broome
Cedar Rapids

KANSAS
Joe Anderson
Kansas City

Monica W.
Kansas City

KENTUCKY
Anonymous
Lexington

Jeanette M. Westbrook
Louisville

Mack F.
Louisville

LOUISIANA
Ron Bryant Jr.
Gretna

Crystal Nyla
New Orleans

MASSACHUSETTS
Gissy D.
Boston

Cheri Crider
Boston

Amber H.
Boston

Shawnee Lazore
Boston

Katelynn Spencer
Fairhaven

Isael Lorenzo
Waltham

Mary Speta
Woburn

Nicole Bell
Worcester

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MICHIGAN

Rachael M.
Ypsilanti

MINNESOTA

Gisela Castro Medina
Minneapolis

Marisa E. Sanchez
Minneapolis

Vedinta Carter
St. Paul

MISSISSIPPI

Pat Stanford
Poplarville

MISSOURI

Hollie H.
St. Louis

NEVADA

Connie E. Pena
Las Vegas

Jennifer McCormick
Las Vegas

Jessica Kay
Las Vegas

Ray D.
Las Vegas

Arianny Lopez
Las Vegas

NEW JERSEY

Thomas Bright
Cherry Hill

Anonymous
Livingston

NEW YORK

Jordan Wright
Astoria

Janneal V.
Bronx

Eugenia J.
Highland

Nicholas
Middletown

Anonymous
New York City

E. Scott
New York City

Kim M.
New York City

Michele Frantzeskos
Staten Island

NORTH CAROLINA

Jeremias Easterling
Fayetteville

Anonymous
Wilmington

Michael Chapman
Wilson

OHIO

John Porterfield
Centerville

Taylor Venezuela
Cleveland

Andrea R.
Pepper Pike

OKLAHOMA

Shannon R.
Goldsby

OREGON

Anonymous
Lakeview

Shelby Parrot
Portland

Jay B.
Portland

W.M.S.
Portland

PENNSYLVANIA

Richard J. Vrabel
Boiling Springs

Anonymous
Philadelphia

Shaquille O.
Reading

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C. Price
Huntingdon Valley

SOUTH CAROLINA

Cristy
Greenville

SOUTH DAKOTA

Linsey Ruth
Sioux Falls

TENNESSEE

Danielle C.
Nashville

Victoria Galy
Nashville

TEXAS

Farrah Abraham
Austin

Suzy Day
Austin

Connie Lynn Jenness
Beaumont

Mr. H
Dallas

A. Delange
Denton

Reem Haddad
Houston

Cassandra Corley
Houston

Marian Haaz
Houston

Liz Tate
McKinney

UTAH

Charles David Weber
Salt Lake City

Randi A. Shover
Salt Lake City

Anonymous
Tremonton

VERMONT

Steven
Brattleboro

VIRGINIA

Jess Doherty
Grundy

Beth Crader
Sandston

WEST VIRGINIA

Dawn
Wheeling

WASHINGTON

Margaret Whalen
Everett

Colleen R.
Fircrest

WYOMING

Catie Reay
Casper

International Survivors

ARGENTINA

Maria Florencia Villegas
San Justo

AUSTRALIA

Michelle
Melbourne

Matt Cook
New South Wales

Noelle Martin
Perth

CANADA

Christina W.
Saskatchewan

Anonymous #1
Saskatchewan

Anonymous #2
Saskatchewan

Elizabeth M.
Ontario

Madison F.
Nova Scotia

Benjamin Brumm
Nova Scotia

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Benedicte Bertrand
Quebec

Amanda D.
Saskatchewan

Gabriela
Saskatchewan

James
British Columbia

Camila Parks
British Columbia

Anonymous #3
Ontario

ECUADOR
Isabella Nuques
Guayas

EGYPT
Anonymous
Luxor

GERMANY
Anonymous
Württemberg

INDIA
Rini
Tamil nadu

Anonymous
Maharashtra

Prashant Rajauriya
Madhya pradesh

A. Moinuddin
Telangana

IRELAND
John Boggans
Dublin

Sarah G.
Dublin

Megan Duhig
Munster

L. McCarthy
Cork

A. O' Sullivan
Cavan

Shannon
Wicklow

Cat A.
Cork

ITALY
Mădălina
Rome

KOSOVO
Arta Kabashi
Prishtina

MEXICO
Marisma Sierra
Estado de México

Silvana OT.
Estado de México

Menchaca
Coahuila

Olimpia Coral
Estado de México

Nelia Curmina M.
Campeche

Oropa
Estado de México

Isabel C.
Estado de México

Guerrero
Durango

Claudia Partida
Sonora

Arely H.M
Estado de México

Greysi Morales Zurita
Campeche

Flor R.
Estado de México

Poly E. Camargo
Sonora

Marcela Torres
Chihuahua

Valeria Palma
Estado de México

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García
Oaxaca

Nidia Rosales Avalos
Estado de México

Mayra BR
Texcoco

Alejandra Anderson
Durango

Aleida Candiani
Tamaulipas

NETHERLANDS
Anonymous
Zuid-Holland

NORTHERN IRELAND
Katrece
Londonderry

PORTUGAL
Deborah
Lisbon

Inês B. Marinho
Lisbon

Não Partilhes
Lisbon

Mónica Souto
Porto

SOUTH AFRICA
Grizelda Grootboom
Western Cape

SPAIN
R Compton-Davies
Madrid

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
I. Taylor
Port of Spain

UNITED KINGDOM
Emily Preston
Avon

Jess Davies
South Glamorgan

Anonymous
Herefordshire