

POLICY FORUM

facebook

July 13, 2021

Recommendation: Attacks on Public Figures

Organic Content Policy

Overview

Issue Statement:

Our Bullying & Harassment policy provides fewer protections for public figures compared to private individuals to allow for discussion and critical commentary of people with a large public audience, like a head of state or celebrity. Because this commentary could expose public figures to harmful content that could sexualize, degrade them, or attack their appearance, we seek to add protections for public figures without censoring political or benign commentary.

Source

Follow on to Public Figure Definition policy development and recent escalations

Working Groups: 6

External Engagements: 79

Attacks on Public Figures

Research and External Engagement

Research

Key Points:

- Under U.S. law, public figures are treated differently from private individuals when it comes to defamatory speech, even if it inflicts emotional distress, due to their role in the public discourse and importance in civic life.
- However, research suggests that public figures who are women or part of a minority group receive disproportionate online abuse and harassment.

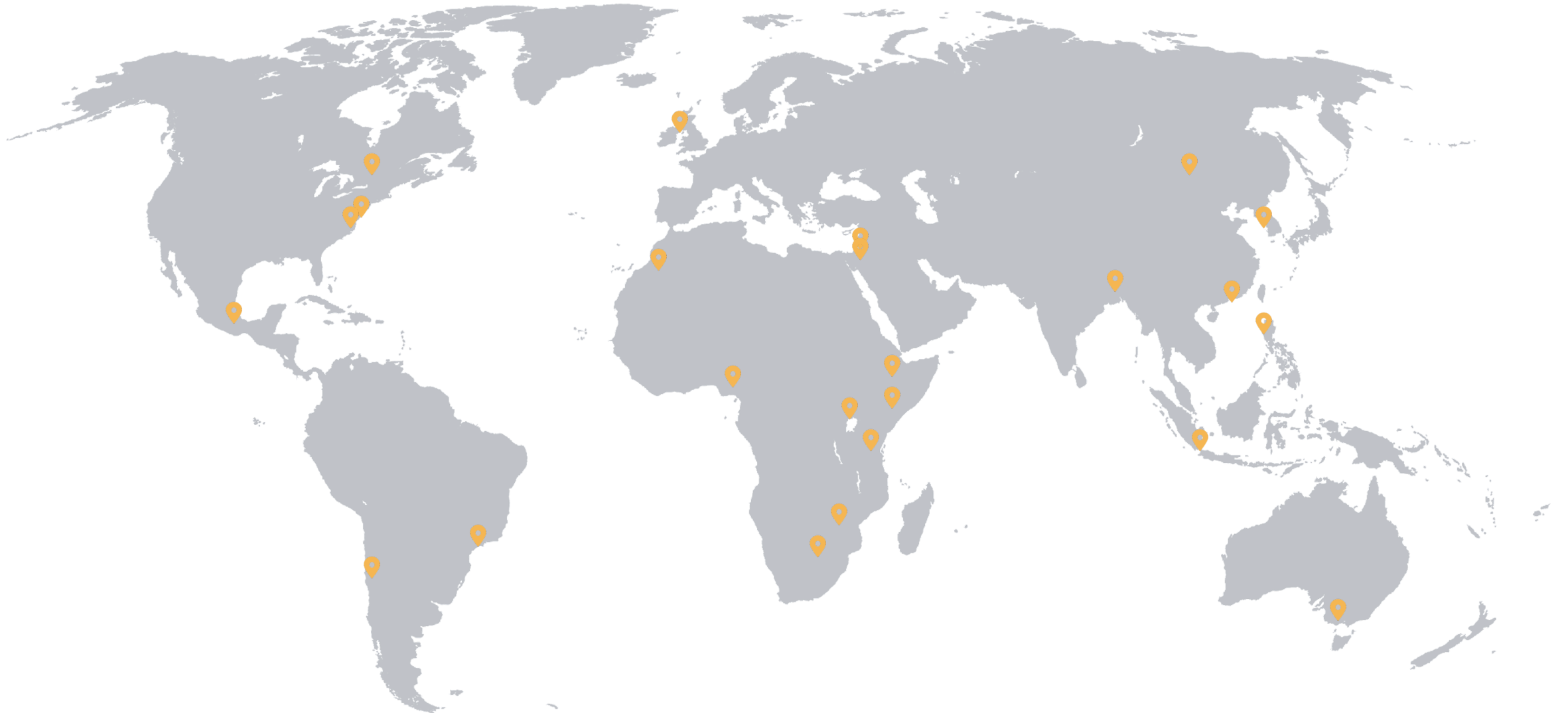
External Engagement

Key Points:

- Almost unanimous view that *volume* of such attacks is the most problematic aspect. No consensus on who should police it (Facebook and/or Public Figure).
- Broad acknowledgement that these attacks disproportionately target and intimidate women/minorities; our approach should acknowledge power dynamics.
- Stakeholders divided on where to draw the line; a minority call for allowing *all* attacks, some for removing anything unrelated to a public figure's line of work, others suggest adopting a sexual harassment approach.

Attacks on Public Figures

External Engagement



We received feedback from 79 stakeholders, including free speech advocates, human rights experts, women's safety groups, cartoonists and satirists, as well as public figures.

Attacks on Public Figures

Categories of Attacks

1. Sexual Harassment Attacks
2. Attacks on Appearance
3. Death and Degrading Attacks

Attacks on Public Figures

Category 1 - Sexual Harassment Attacks

	Option 1- Status quo	Option 2 - Intermediate Protections <i>(Option 1 plus the following)</i>	Option 3 - Maximum Protections [Recommendation] <i>(Option 2 plus the following)</i>
1.	Remove repeated, sexual harassment on private surfaces only	Remove repeated, sexual harassment on public surfaces	Remove derogatory sexualized photoshop or drawings (e.g., a politician's head photoshopped onto a body in a sexualised pose/with near nudity) in all cases
2.	Remove derogatory terms about sexual activity for everyone	Remove more severe elements of sexualized commentary e.g., explicit expressions of sexual activity or desire towards the public figure in all cases	
3.	Remove claims about sexual activity for private individuals only	Remove complex objects dedicated to sexualizing public figures	
4.	Remove sexualized commentary for private individuals only	Remove unwanted sexualized commentary for public figures on escalation	

Attacks on Public Figures

Category 2 - Attacks on Appearance

	Option 1 - Status quo	Option 2 - Intermediate Protections [Recommendation] <i>(Option 1 plus the following)</i>	Option 3 - Maximum Protections <i>(Option 2 plus the following)</i>
1.	Remove negative physical descriptions for private individuals only	Remove negative physical descriptions for public figures with purposeful exposure	Remove negative physical descriptions for public figures in all cases
2.	Remove negative comparisons to animals for private individuals only		Remove negative comparisons to animals for public figures with purposeful exposure
3.	Remove manipulated content to highlight physical characteristics for private individuals only		Remove manipulated content to highlight physical characteristics for public figures with purposeful exposure

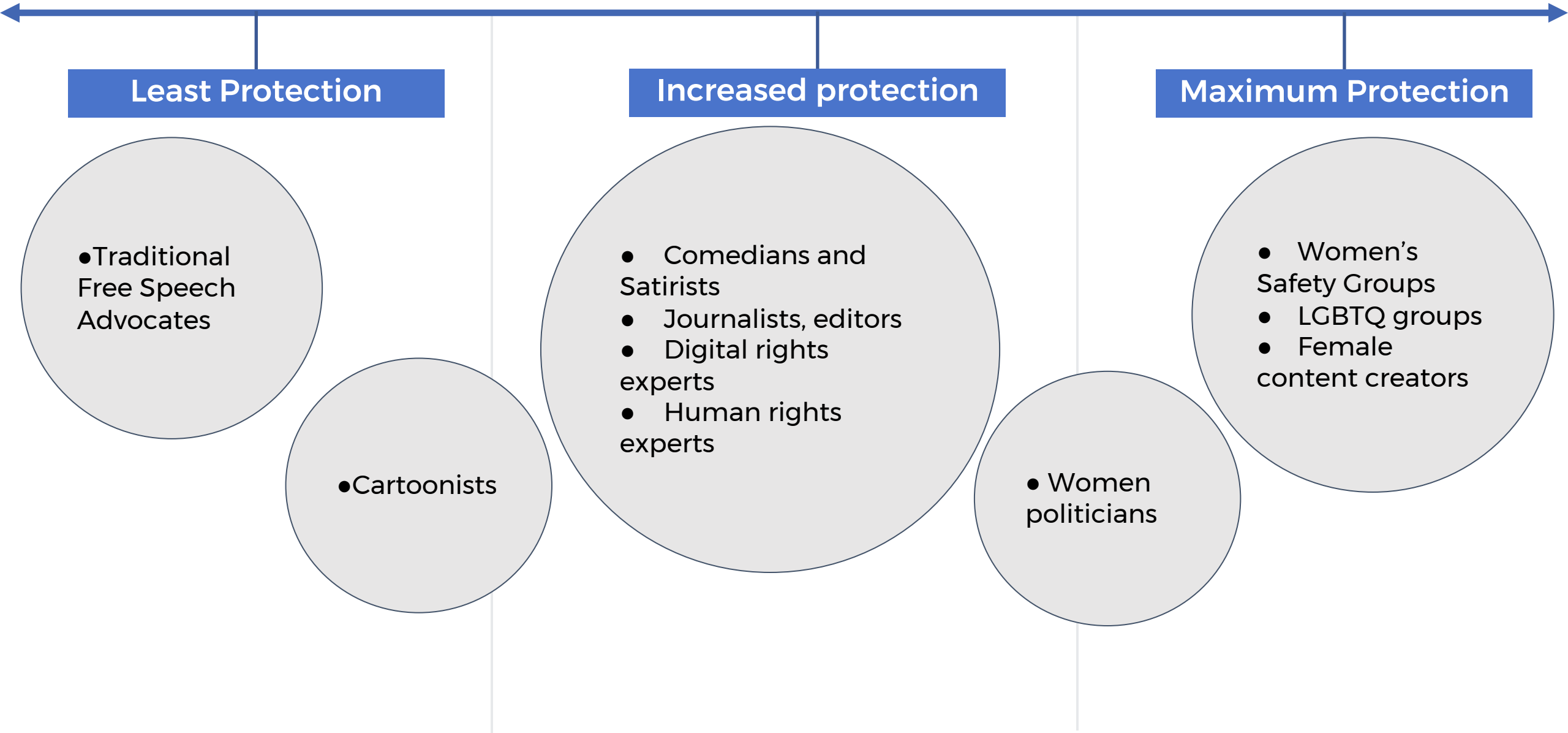
Attacks on Public Figures

Category 3 - Death and Degrading Attacks

	Option 1 - Status quo	Option 2 - Intermediate Protections [Recommendation] <i>(Option 1 plus the following)</i>	Option 3 - Maximum Protections <i>(Option 2 plus the following)</i>
1.	Remove calls for death or disease for public figures with purposeful exposure	Remove content that further degrades or expresses disgust toward individuals who are depicted in the process of, or right after, menstruating, urinating, vomiting, or defecating in all cases	Remove calls for death or disease in all cases
2.	Remove praise, celebration or mocking of death or medical condition for public figures with purposeful exposure		
3.	Remove content that further degrades or expresses disgust toward individuals who are depicted in the process of, or right after, menstruating, urinating, vomiting, or defecating for private individuals only		

Attacks on Public Figures

Experts Overview



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