



Survivors' Statements

The following statements have been contributed by members of the survivor community who work with and are supported by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc.. They, more than anyone, understand the issues at stake and they are the ones who have had to endure the very real harms that the current legal landscape has facilitated.

Statement 1:

The ongoing distribution and viewing of images of myself being raped as a child has caused immeasurable harm to me in so many areas of my life. While the trauma of the original hands-on abuse ended and I have worked hard to heal from that, the circulation of those worst moments of my life caught on video is a separate and ongoing trauma. Every day, I know that strangers all over the world are viewing those images and videos of me being raped as a child and deriving sick pleasure from them.

Knowing that this is going on adds a constant stress and grief to my life, as I have no control over who views and uses these images of me sexually. I have a constant fear of being recognized and worry about my safety, privacy, and feel overprotective and hyper-vigilant about the safety of my children. People who have viewed these images of me being sexually abused online have stalked me. This stalking has happened both in-person and online through social media. These stalkers have contacted me directly, have contacted my friends and family, and have even created fake profiles posing as friends of my family in order to try and get information about my life now. They have started forums and created videos about my life as an adult and have shared my personal information, including a former address and pictures of me as an adult from family parties on these forums.

Knowing that there are so many disturbing people out there in the world who would want to view videos of me being raped as a child and having no control over it is extremely traumatic on its own. Adding the safety concerns of the stalking to my life has been absolutely terrifying and overwhelming. I have had to take many steps to protect myself including changing my name, moving, getting a home security system, and asking friends and family not to post any pictures of me online. It is difficult to trust people, let new people into my life, and I still struggle with trauma symptoms and especially nightmares about these online perpetrators, even after several years of therapy. I was hoping it would end as I got older, but it has not and there have been safety concerns I have had to report even earlier this year.

It is absolutely critical that internet providers and law enforcement be able to use technology that can help them detect CSAM, hold perpetrators accountable, remove the CSAM, slow distribution, and help survivors protect their privacy and safety. Privacy is important to everyone, but the safety of survivors of CSAM needs to be considered and protected. As a survivor, my privacy rights are constantly violated by those who view the CSAM of me and even more by those who have stalked me. I beg you to consider the safety and privacy of survivors of CSAM and be sure they are protected and upheld in law.



Statement 2:

I have lived decades with the knowledge that there is child sexual abuse material circulating world-wide depicting my abuse. It has wreaked havoc upon every aspect of my life, even down to the most basic traits of my personality. Its looming presence has subtly forced the creation of a prison to be built within my conscious mind. All aspects of social interaction and societal integration are impossible for me. The paranoia induced by the looming fear of the discovery, by anyone, of the CSAM depicting my shameful experiences from childhood has put a timer on my participation in any social sphere or personal relationship.

Over time the fear always creeps into my mind, corrupting all of my thoughts, and influences me to have adverse feelings about the people and situations I am involved with. It is like having a giant wall blocking the flow of traffic within my life. No matter how hard I try, I cannot seem to break free from this prison. I don't know how I have survived up to now. I have contemplated the necessity of a life lived under these circumstances many times. I have been to some extreme lows of depression, knowing the inevitability of my plight, and yet, for some reason, I am still trying to persevere.

Through all of this I have seen some glimpses of hope through those that are fighting to stop the spread of CSAM and help those of us that are living under its oppressive boot. I have even found a semblance of purpose in trying to help in spreading awareness about CSAM and how bad it has become. I have given what perspective I can as one of the few survivors that have had the strength to come forward. I have joined the fight and it has kept me going.

But like all other situations in my life, progress toward combating the spread of media (mine, and many others) depicting sexual abuse of children is being blocked. The leaders of many different countries actually have advocates for protecting pedophiles by banning any scanning and reporting of CSAM on messenger platforms... THE NUMBER ONE PLACE FOR THE SPREAD OF MILLIONS OF CASES CSAM WORLDWIDE!!!

How could anyone want to build protections for a system harboring so much CSAM? As someone who has lived years with the psychological fallout from the feelings of helplessness associated with stopping the spread of media depicting my rape, I know the consequences of allowing this to continue. It will destroy and end many lives... It will help in the perpetuation of not just the creation of CSAM, but it will help in protecting communications for those that want to traffic and prostitute children.

I don't even see how this is a question up for debate! The technology exists to battle this, why would we not take action and use it? What can possibly be gained from not using it? What will happen if we don't? I suggest asking yourself these questions. If you are honest with yourself, the answer should terrify you. The US basically ignored the issue in 2008, and now there are millions upon millions of cases (that we know of) on the social-media platforms being reported yearly. The longer we wait to implement an action-plan, the worse this problem will get, and if the US is any indicator, the increase will be exponential in scale.

Sitting back and allowing this to continue is the equivalent of condoning and approving of the spread/production of CSAM, the continuation and growth of child-sex trafficking, and the rape, slavery, and psychological destruction of children all over the world. And worst of all, allowing it to happen while having a means to stop it... This isn't just a debate of law and order, this is a test of the soul of our world, of good vs pure evil.

Statement 3:

I was informed that a law was passed in the European Union that will make it illegal for companies to continue to scan for known images of children being sexually abused on their messaging platforms. As an adult who was sexually abused as a child for years, I cannot understand why you would make the use of such technology illegal. Why is there regulation to allow scanning to identify malware and viruses, but no regulation to allow for detection of known images of children being abused?

These aren't just picture of children in swimsuits that might be mistaken as indecent. These are horrific images and videos of children being abused and raped. Without building an exception into this new law, you will be creating more safe havens for pedophiles and other perpetrators of child abuse to proliferate images of children being sexually assaulted and communicate with each other. The US CyberTipline run by NCMEC has received over 12 million reports from Jan-June 2020 this year already. A majority of these reports comes from the use of software that detects known images.

You see, the images of my abuse and the thousands of other children that have been abused — they don't disappear. They just keep getting spread more and more. And then those perpetrators go out into their own communities to find children to assault themselves. Because it is so easy for them to find the images online, and Government and Industry and regulation are so behind the times, they think that the risk is worth the penalty.

I urge you to step up to the plate and work with each other to right a wrong and to fight this global issue. It is your job to protect the citizens of your countries. In this age of technological advancement you need to ensure that you are protecting the future generation from these offenders who are targeting your children. I urge you to uphold the rights of children to live a life of happiness, without abuse, and without their abuse being spread over the internet. We have the knowledge and expertise to work together to make this happen, we cannot let our fears of privacy erosion put our children at risk.

I implore you to continue to allow companies to detect known CSAM on messaging platforms. Not for myself but for all the other children out there being affected, who are hoping and waiting for law enforcement to find one of their images so that they might be rescued one day from their situation. I was rescued due to a tip to Cybertip.ca in Canada. This eventually led to arrests of individuals of American, Canadian and Scottish citizenship. This is a global issue. Please take action now!

Statement 4:

The sharing of child sexual abuse material is wreaking havoc on survivors all around the world. We are forced to relive our abuse over and over again for a new pair of eye each and every time. We've been beaten down physically, mentally and emotionally to create this type of abuse and the distribution of it is just another kick while we are down.

The tools used to scan platforms for CSAM give us survivors such profound hope that one day we may be out of the spotlight. Without these tools we will never know closure because the abuse just never ends. Not only is the resharing of the content harmful to the victims in it, it is also frequently used to groom and normalize the abuse of the next generation of victims. I am a huge advocate for rights and privacy online, but urge you not to protect the rights and privacy of offenders over the rights and privacy of their victims. Please do not diminish what little light we have on the horizon.

Statement 5:

The impact of being a survivor of child sexual abuse that was recorded is never ending. The anxiety, the depression, the fear, it comes and goes. When it comes, it's like your entire world is collapsing around you, and half the time you don't even know why it's happening. Survivors' like me have spent most of their lives being manipulated, having their feelings and their needs ignored in lieu of their abusers' sick desires. And that continues with every share, whether that share is on a public website or in a message from one abuser to another. It's not right. Our privacy matters. Our safety matters. We matter.

Statement 6:

If only my CSAM could be "untagged" on the internet like a not so perfect picture on social media. Images of my abuse are circulating the internet. Images that were taken without my permission and posted online invading my privacy and safety.

You can unfriend people from social media, you can untag pictures you don't want other people seeing you somewhere or with someone, you can delete posts.

Why do I, a victim, not have any rights to protect myself? For 19 years I've been trying to have my photos removed from the web. Why can't my abusive material be automatically detected on messaging platforms? I'd like someone to explain or to admit accountability why they feel it's okay for me to be victimized over and over again daily because they can't, or won't, use tools that will remove the capturing of my abuse. The technology is out there, use it - or explain why you can't.

Statement 7:

We are the children who grew up thinking our images were out there forever, making us feel violated, making us feel we have no control over our privacy & dignity. We cannot let our system fail children; it is our human obligation to do our part and hold industries accountable to take down these images and videos. It shouldn't be that complicated and no one should be confused.

Statement 8:

We are hearing more and more examples of perpetrators of these crimes gaining privacy rights that will ease their ability to perpetrate, but what we are not hearing about are concrete plans regarding the protection and privacy of children whose images of sexual abuse are distributed by these criminals. The rights of children MUST be prioritized over those who are continuing to cause harm to them.

Statement 9:

I want to stress how our rights to find and remove the images of child sexual abuse should outweigh any privacy rights that are protecting pedophiles to hide the content.

Statement 10:

The continuous trading of our imagery is a constant burden on our lives. We want to remind industry that this are real children in these photos, and we want them, as well as governments, to stop protecting the rights of these predators over the rights of the innocent they are destroying.

Statement 11:

It is hard to describe what it feels like to know that at any moment, anywhere, someone will be looking at my images, of me as a child being sexually abused and getting sick gratification from it. It's like I am abused over and over and over again. How can I get over this when this crime is still happening to me?

Statement 12:

We never knew that there was any hope for getting the images of our abuse taken down from the internet. We always thought it was another thing that we could not control. Now that we know that there are actually ways to do it, we want it all shut down. We don't want any more children to have to deal with what we deal with if that can be fixed.

