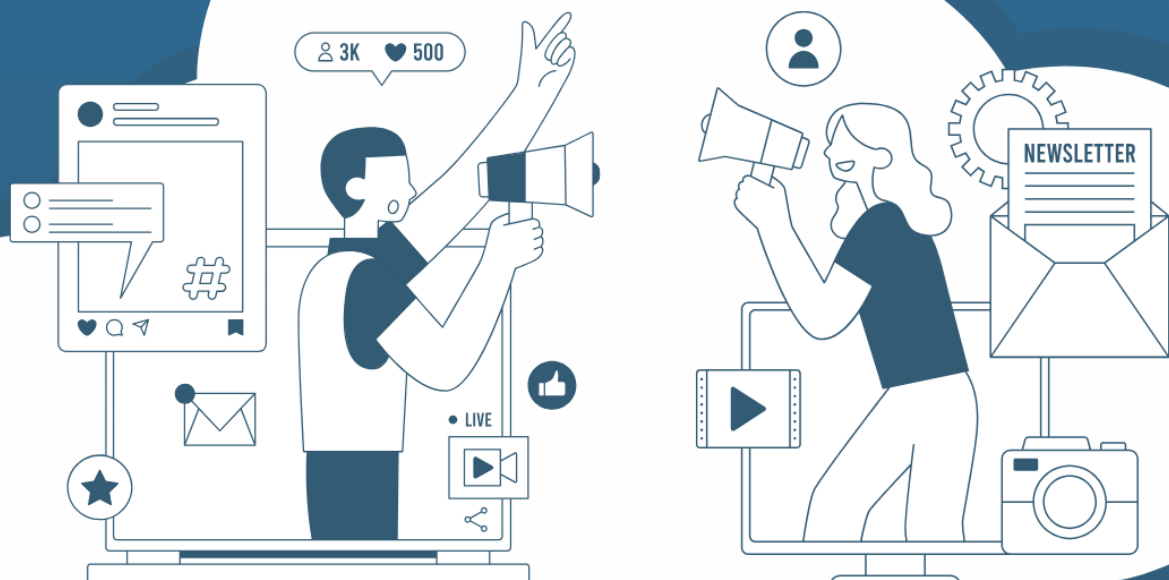




WOMEN POLITICIANS IN THE DIGITAL SPACE: AN ANALYSIS OF ONLINE DISCOURSE IN KOSOVO



WOMEN POLITICIANS IN THE DIGITAL SPACE: AN ANALYSIS OF ONLINE DISCOURSE IN KOSOVO

(January – April 2026)

Prishtinë/Priština, 2026

Prepared by: Democracy for Development Institute (D4D)

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Introduction

Women's participation in politics and public life is a cornerstone of democracy and of equal representation in decision-making processes. Although Kosovo has made progress in recent years in increasing women's representation in public institutions and political parties, women continue to face numerous challenges that limit their full and meaningful participation in political life.

The sprawl of online media and social networking platforms has created new opportunities for communication, public engagement, and access to information. At the same time, these platforms have also become spaces where personal attacks, hate speech, gender-based stereotypes, and other forms of degrading communication directed at women in public office frequently emerge. In many cases, women politicians are subjected to criticism that goes beyond scrutiny of their political positions or performance, instead focusing on their gender, physical appearance, or personal lives.

This report presents the findings of a monitoring exercise examining online discussions and media coverage of women politicians in Kosovo during the period January–April 2026. The analysis explores the extent of women politicians' public visibility, the nature of the discussions surrounding them, and the prevalence of hate speech and other forms of degrading communication across the digital space.

By analyzing media content, social media posts, and public comments, the report seeks to identify the main trends in public discourse surrounding women in politics, highlight the most common forms of online abuse, and contribute to the broader public debate on creating a safer, more inclusive, and more equitable environment for women's participation in political and public life.

The findings show that, although women politicians are active participants in public debate and receive substantial media attention, they continue to be the target of a significant volume of abusive comments and verbal attacks in digital spaces. These findings underscore the need for stronger engagement by public institutions, the media, political parties, digital platforms, and civil society to promote a culture of communication that respects the dignity of women and supports their equal participation in public and political life.

Methodology

This report presents the findings of a monitoring exercise examining the visibility, public perception, and treatment of women politicians in the digital space during the period January–December 2026. The monitoring was conducted using **PIKASA**, a media intelligence and data analytics platform that enables the collection, classification, and analysis of content from online media outlets and social media platforms.

The monitoring focused on the public profiles of women politicians in Kosovo, including those holding executive, legislative, and party leadership positions. The analysis tracked online media mentions, social media posts, public comments, and user engagement for each monitored individual.

Data was collected on a daily basis throughout the monitoring period and analyzed against the following key indicators:

- *Number of media mentions and news reports;*
- *Number of social media posts and discussions;*
- *Level of public engagement (comments, reactions, and shares);*
- *Presence of hate speech, gender-based attacks, and other degrading content;*
- *Main topics and events that generated public attention;*
- *Monthly trends and periods of heightened public discussion.*

PIKASA employs text analysis algorithms to identify content that may be offensive, sexist, or gender based. However, recognizing the limitations of automated analysis, the findings were supplemented by a manual review of the most relevant cases to improve the accuracy of content classification.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, the report includes a qualitative component that examines selected cases of media coverage and online discussions that generated significant public attention. This combined approach made it possible to identify recurring communication patterns, dominant narratives, and the most common forms of online attacks targeting women in politics.

The monthly analysis is based on a comparison between the volume of media coverage and the level of public engagement on social media, allowing for the identification of the events that attracted the greatest public attention during the reporting period. Taken together, these methods provide a comprehensive picture of how women politicians in Kosovo are represented, discussed, and treated across the country's media and digital ecosystem.

Monthly Trends in Media Coverage and Reactions in the Digital Space

Overall Analysis of Coverage of Women Politicians (January–April 2026)

During the January–April 2026 monitoring period, a total of 135,528 social media comments relating to the women politicians included in the analysis were identified. Of these, 13,123 comments were classified as hate speech or abusive content, accounting for 10% of all comments. This means that one in every ten comments directed at women politicians contained degrading, offensive, or stigmatizing language.

Figure 1: Exposure of women politicians to social media comments and hate speech (January–April 2026)



The analysis shows that the women politicians with the highest public visibility were also the most exposed to negative online commentary. Albulena Haxhiu was the most frequently discussed political figure online, generating 20,679 comments and 448 posts, reflecting her central role in the political developments that unfolded during the monitoring period. Although the proportion of comments classified as hate speech

directed at her (9%) was slightly below the overall average, the absolute number of abusive comments remained substantial, reaching 1,823 comments.

Ganimete Musliu stands out as a particularly concerning case, recording 2,048 hate speech comments, the highest number among all the women politicians monitored. With 14% of comments classified as abusive, she ranks among the most heavily targeted figures relative to the overall volume of public discussion.

Similarly high levels of hate speech were recorded against Vlora Çitaku and Fatmire Mulhaxha-Kollçaku, with 15% of all comments about each of them classified as problematic, the highest proportion observed among the monitored political figures. In practical terms, this means that approximately one in every seven comments about these women contained abusive or degrading language.

By contrast, politicians such as Mimoza Kusari-Lila, Arbërie Nagavci, and Arijeta Fejza recorded comparatively lower shares of hate speech (7–8%). Nevertheless, even in these cases, the number of abusive comments remained significant.

The findings also point to a clear relationship between public visibility and the intensity of online reactions. The women politicians who generated the highest volume of social media posts and media coverage also attracted the largest number of comments, including abusive ones. However, the prevalence of hate speech is not determined solely by the level of public exposure. Some politicians who received fewer overall comments experienced a higher proportion of abusive or harmful content.

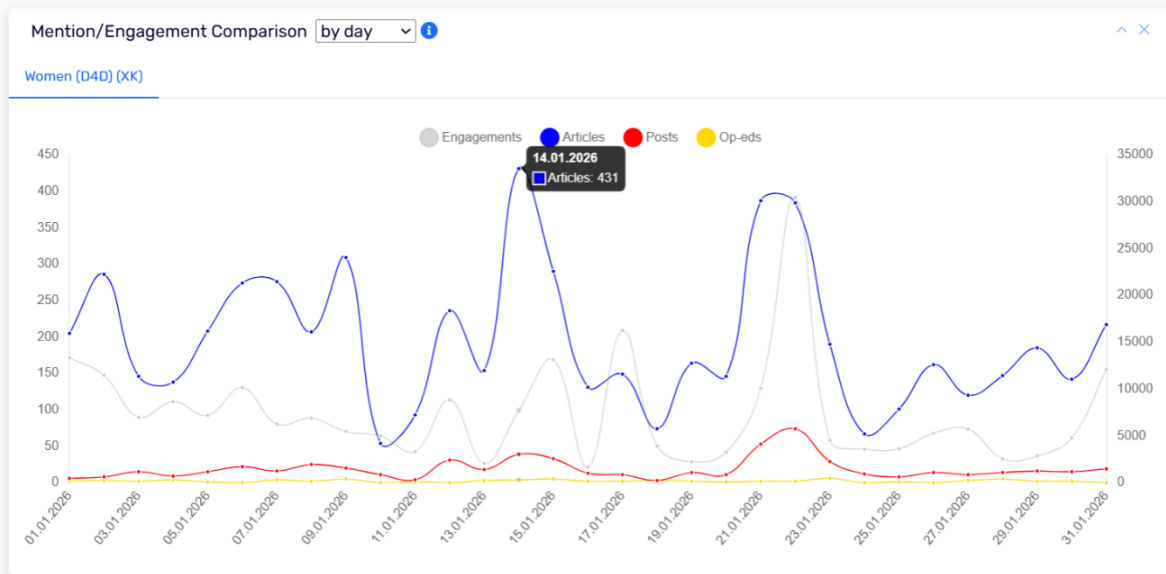
Overall, the monitoring findings show that women politicians in Kosovo continue to face a significant level of hate speech and verbal abuse in the digital space. Public discourse is marked by a high degree of political polarization, the personalization of political debate, and the frequent use of degrading language, creating a communication environment that can discourage and undermine women's participation and representation in political and public life.

January

January represents the baseline level of media coverage and public discussion surrounding women in politics and public life in Kosovo. During the first week of the month, media coverage remained relatively steady, with between 100 and 300 articles published each day. This period was defined by routine reporting on the activities and public statements of political figures, with no single event dominating the media agenda.

Women Politicians in the Digital Space: An Analysis of Online Discourse in Kosovo

Figure 2. Daily trends in news articles, social media posts, and public engagement in January 2026



A noticeable increase in media coverage was recorded in the middle of the month. On January 14, reporting reached its highest level for the month, with 431 articles published in a single day. This surge was driven primarily by discussions surrounding the upcoming election of the President of the Republic of Kosovo, scheduled for March, with a substantial share of both media coverage and public commentary focused on President Vjosa Osmani. At the same time, considerable media attention was generated by the resignation of Hykmete Bajrami, a member of the Assembly of Kosovo, from her position as Vice President of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK).

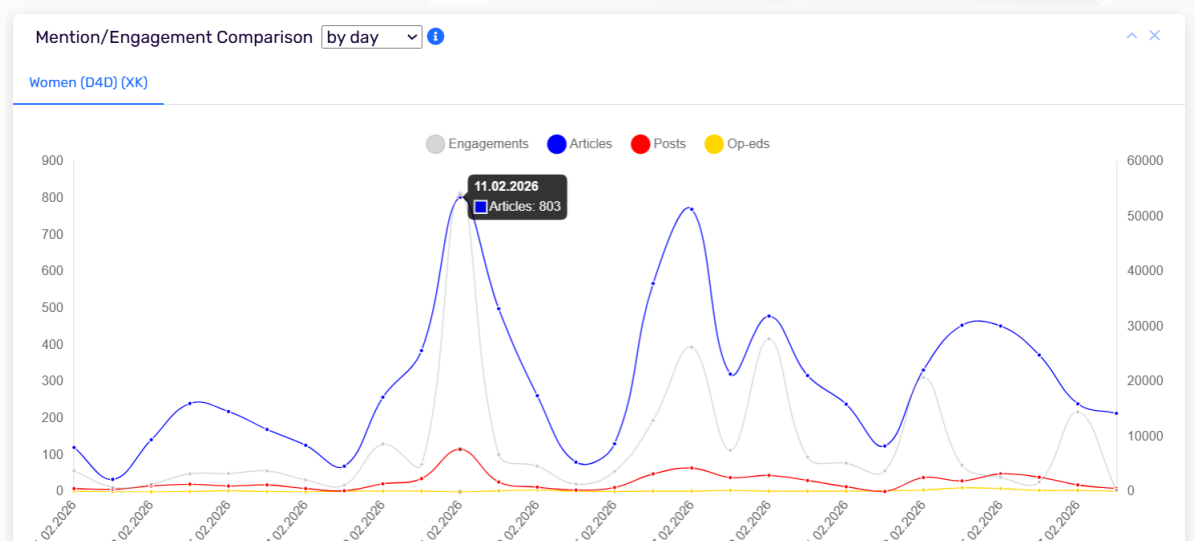
An interesting development emerged around January 22, when engagement on social media surpassed the volume of traditional media reporting. This suggests that online discussions were evolving independently of the conventional news cycle, reflecting stronger public engagement in political debates across digital platforms.

Overall, the January data indicate that public attention was driven primarily by breaking political developments and immediate reactions on social media, while analytical reporting and opinion pieces remained relatively limited throughout the month.

February

Compared to January, February saw a significant increase in both media activity and public engagement. The first week of the month remained relatively quiet, while the second week was marked by a substantial rise in media coverage and online discussions.

Figure 3. Daily trends in news articles, social media posts, and public engagement in February 2026



The month's peak was recorded on February 11, when 803 articles were published. Unlike other periods, public engagement on this occasion closely mirrored the volume of media coverage, indicating strong public interest in the issues being reported. Public discussion was dominated by developments related to the establishment of Kosovo's new institutions and the election of the Speaker of the Assembly, with Albulena Haxhiu emerging as one of the most frequently mentioned political figures.

A second spike in activity occurred on February 17, during the commemoration of Kosovo's Independence Day. Although the volume of media coverage remained high, engagement on social media was noticeably lower than on February 11. This suggests that political developments related to government formation and the establishment of state institutions generated greater public interest than ceremonial and commemorative events.

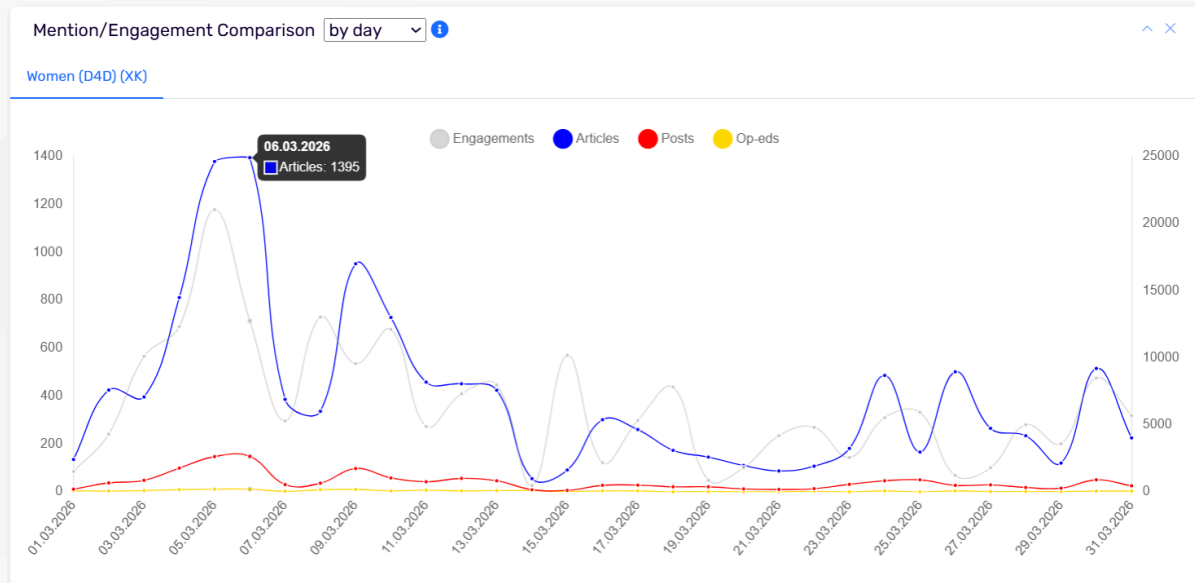
As in the previous month, online discussions were largely driven by immediate reactions to current political developments, while analytical reporting and opinion pieces continued to have a relatively limited presence in public discourse.

March

March recorded the highest levels of both media coverage and public engagement across the entire monitoring period. The increase in public attention to issues concerning women in politics coincided with the time of year when international discussions on women's rights and women's representation in public life traditionally intensify.

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Figure 4. Daily trends in news articles, social media posts, and public engagement in March 2026



A sharp increase in media coverage was recorded during the first days of the month. The monthly peak occurred on March 5 and 6, when 1,395 articles were published within a 24-hour period. During the same period, social media generated more than 20,000 interactions, representing the highest level of public engagement recorded throughout the monitoring period.

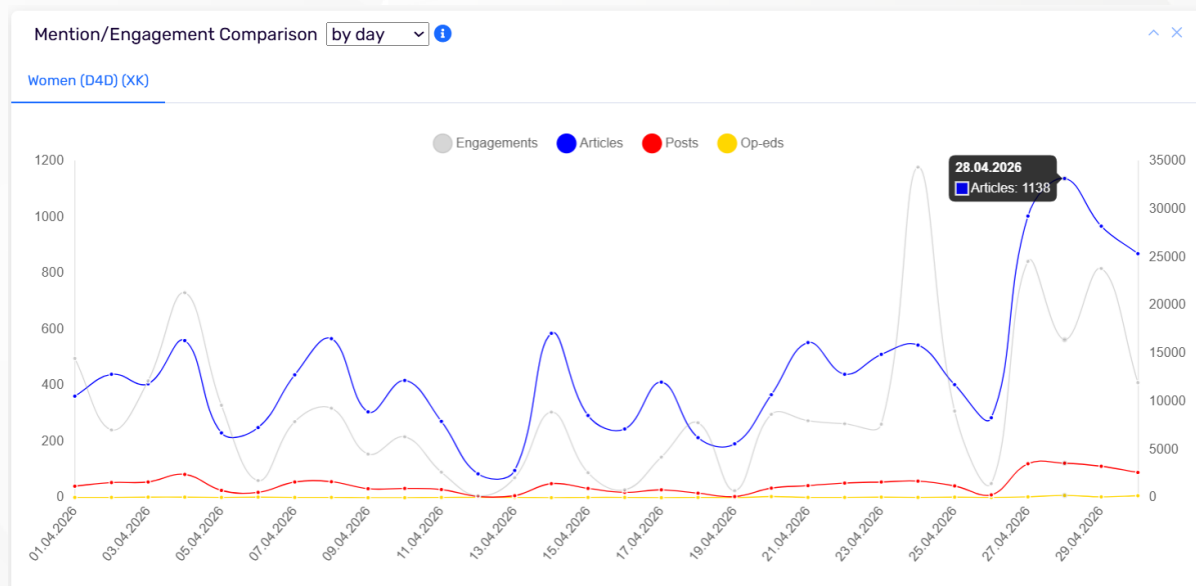
The discussion was dominated by developments related to the election of the President of the Republic of Kosovo and political debate over the possibility of Vjosa Osmani seeking a second term. Media coverage consisted primarily of statements by political parties, reactions from institutional stakeholders, and parliamentary developments related to the presidential election process.

The findings indicate that issues concerning the country's highest public offices and women's representation in state institutions continue to generate substantial media attention and public interest.

April

April was distinguished by a more pronounced divergence between the pace of media coverage and the level of public engagement on social media. Throughout the first three weeks of the month, the number of daily media mentions and news reports fluctuated between 200 and 600 publications, with no single issue dominating the news agenda.

Figure 5. Daily trends in news articles, social media posts, and public engagement in April 2026



A notable shift occurred in the final week of the month. Around April 24, social media engagement reached its highest level of the month, even though traditional media coverage remained relatively limited. This spike was driven primarily by pundits and public speculation surrounding the election of the President of the Republic of Kosovo. These discussions initially gained momentum on social media before being reflected in mainstream media reporting.

The peak in media coverage occurred on April 28, when 1,138 articles were published in a single day. Media attention focused primarily on individuals mentioned as potential presidential candidates, particularly Feride Rushiti and Vjosa Osmani. A substantial share of the coverage consisted of statements and reactions from political figures, which were widely republished by online news outlets.

Overall, April illustrates the increasingly influential role of social media in shaping public debate. In several instances, online discussions preceded and helped set the agenda for subsequent media coverage.

Analysis of the Most Frequently Used Words in Public Comments

An analysis of the word cloud generated from public comments on social media reveals a high prevalence of abusive, degrading, and stigmatizing language directed at women in politics. The most frequently occurring terms include words such as **“haj*”** [thie*], **“trad*tar”** [trai*or], **“krimin*I”** [crimin*I], **“buda*”** [mor*n], **“analfabet”** [illiterate], **“mu*”** [piece of sh*t], **“hajva*”** [id*ot], **“shki*”** [derogatory for serb], **“rren*”** [lia*], and **“lo*”** [c*w], all of which feature prominently in online discourse.

Figure 6. Term frequency chart of social media public comments



A significant share of these terms consists of accusations related to corruption and a perceived lack of political integrity, including words such as “hajj*” [thie*], “krimin*!” [crimin*!], and “trad*tar” [traï*or]. This suggests that political debate on social media often relies on labeling and discrediting political figures rather than engaging with their actions, policies, or political positions.

Another category of comments targets individuals' intelligence, competence, or personal character through insults such as “buda*” [mor*n], “analfabet” [illiterate], and “hajva*” [id*ot]. Such language contributes to an increasingly aggressive and polarized online environment, where political criticism frequently gives way to personal attacks.

The analysis also identified the frequent use of ethnically and historically charged terms, most notably “shkie,” a derogatory term for Serbs in Albanian. Its presence indicates that political discussions in Kosovo's digital space are often intertwined with identity-based and nationalist narratives. The use of such language suggests that online debates extend beyond political issues alone, frequently drawing on stereotypes and historical divisions to provoke emotional reactions and deepen polarization.

It is important to note that the high frequency of these terms does not necessarily mean they were directed exclusively at women politicians. Nevertheless, the prevalence of abusive and degrading language in public comments points to a weak culture of online debate and contributes to a communication environment that may discourage women's participation in political and public life.

Overall, public comment analysis shows that social media discussions are highly polarized, deeply personalized, and frequently abusive. These findings underscore the need to strengthen content moderation mechanisms, promote more responsible online communication, and raise public awareness of the impact that hate speech and verbal abuse have on women's democratic participation in politics.

Media Coverage of Incidents Involving Women in Politics

Shifting the Focus from the Incident to Political Confrontation

In addition to analyzing discussions on social media, the monitoring also examined how online media outlets report on incidents involving women in politics. One of the cases reviewed concerns the media coverage that followed an incident involving Vlora Çitaku, a member of the Assembly of Kosovo.

The analysis shows that while the initial reporting framed the incident as inappropriate and offensive behavior, subsequent coverage gradually shifted its focus away from the incident itself, and its implications for women in politics, toward broader partisan and political disputes. As this shift occurred, discussion moved away from issues such as sexism, standards of public discourse, and the expected conduct of elected officials.

Employing Labeling Language against Women Politicians

Several of the articles analyzed also employed labeling language when referring to other women political figures. For example, describing someone as “*a partisan of [a particular political party]*” does little to advance a substantive discussion of political or institutional issues. Instead, it emphasizes personal characterization and partisan identity.

This approach creates a stark contrast between the condemnation of offensive language in one instance and the use of other forms of derogatory discourse in subsequent reporting. As a result, attention shifts away from questions of sexism and gender-based discrimination toward political confrontation between competing political actors.

Reframing the Debate through Historical and Identity-Based Narratives

The analysis also identified instances in which the original incident was reframed through references to historical and identity-related issues that were not directly connected to the event itself. By pivoting to topics that evoke political and emotional polarization, the public debate moves away from examining problematic behavior toward women in politics and instead becomes absorbed by broader ideological and partisan narratives.

This style of reporting can diminish attention to both individual and institutional responsibility for offensive or discriminatory language by redirecting public attention to issues unrelated to the original incident.

The case noted above illustrates how some online media outlets tend to use an incident involving a woman politician as a starting point for broader political debates, rather than maintaining a consistent focus on gender-based discrimination, sexist language, or the impact such behavior has on women's participation in public life.

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Consequently, cases of misogyny or attacks on women politicians risk being weaponized in partisan rivalries, while critical issues like gender equality, respectful public discourse, and women's dignity are sidelined. These findings point to the need for more consistent reporting that remains focused on the gender dimension of such incidents, rather than allowing it to be overshadowed by the political interests of the moment.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen media accountability mechanisms** by promoting ethical reporting standards and avoiding the amplification of misogynistic narratives and gender-based attacks.
2. **Enhance the monitoring and response capacities of relevant institutions**, including regulatory bodies, fact-checking organizations, and civil society organizations, to improve the identification and response to gender-based disinformation.
3. **Expand media and digital literacy programs** to help citizens recognize manipulated content, gender-based stereotypes, and disinformation campaigns targeting women in public life.
4. **Encourage political parties and public institutions** to adopt and enforce clear codes of conduct that explicitly condemn sexist language, online harassment, and gender-based attacks by public officials and political representatives.
5. **Strengthen cooperation with social media platforms** to facilitate the faster reporting and more effective removal of content that promotes hate speech, online harassment, or gender-based disinformation.
6. **Establish and reinforce support mechanisms for women in public life**, including access to legal assistance, psychological support, and digital security training, to help mitigate the impact of online abuse.
7. **Promote positive narratives and the equal representation of women in the media and public discourse** in order to challenge harmful stereotypes and contribute to a more inclusive, democratic, and gender-equal public sphere.

