

PRESS RELEASE

SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL VIOLENCE SEEK URGENT ACTION TO 'REDESIGN' THE INTERNET TO PROTECT CHILDREN

Survivors join bereaved parents and high-level political figures, to put pressure on political leaders, funders and tech companies to end childhood sexual abuse online.

The move comes 100 days before the historic inaugural Global Ministerial on Ending Violence Against Children - the first time that global leaders will be asked to pledge action to end the scourge of childhood sexual violence.

July 17, 2024 [LONDON]: Today, survivors of childhood sexual violence will address the escalating threat to children's lives posed by online abuse, and [call for action](#) to 'redesign' the internet and protect children ahead of the first ever global Ministerial on the issue in November 2024. This is a pivotal moment to redefine the digital world for children, ensuring that technology is used for their benefit and never for their harm.

Survivors, bereaved parents, political figures and tech experts will join global organizations the Brave Movement, Safe Online and WeProtect Global Alliance at a high-level event in London to launch a new campaign, aiming to raise awareness of the "hidden pandemic"¹ of childhood sexual abuse and exploitation, and ensure the issue is placed high on the global political agenda.

The event launches a global call to action ahead of the upcoming Global Ministerial Conference to End Violence against Children, asking government, the tech industry, funders and other stakeholders to take bold, urgent steps and commit to end the sexual exploitation and abuse of children online. Campaigners and survivors also launch a [new petition](#) to support the global call to action and ensure commitments are survivor centered.

It will also see the first screening of a new survivor centered film - *Beyond The Screen: Hidden Voices of Online Abuse* - which highlights the prevalence of online sexual violence around the world, featuring the stories of survivors from the UK, India, Africa and the USA.

Online child sexual abuse rarely stays 'online'. Behind every image online there is often a real child, and those groomed and abused via online platforms often report escalation to physical sexual abuse. New technologies are emerging quickly and offenders are quick to exploit gaps in a joined up response to target children. Online threats can also move into the

¹ <https://intothelight.childlight.org/executive-summary.html>

physical world with bullying in schools, peer-to-peer abuse, mental and physical health problems. But this is also an issue which can be prevented. The campaign will work with tech companies, funders and governments to ensure they design a world where every child is safe from sexual violence online.

Survivor Saanika Kodial said: “I was subject to online sexual abuse when I was 14, via an anonymous Instagram account falsely describing sexual activity with me in a very graphic way. The police couldn’t do anything and never found the perpetrator. It’s so easy to hide behind a screen but tech companies have the power to trace these predators, and governments can help them to be accountable. I want to do everything I can to use my story to ensure those with the power to face up to these issues, the pain they cause, and protect children all over the world.”

Sexual violence against children – in both the interconnected physical and digital spheres of their lives – is on the rise all over the world. Creating a safer digital world for children which is free from sexual violence and exploitation needs a global, coordinated response across all sectors.

- More than 300 million children across the world are victims of online sexual exploitation and abuse each year².
- Every second, at least 2 images or videos of child sexual abuse are shared online. In fact, up to one in six people, before the age of 18, experience child sexual abuse online³.
- Online child sexual exploitation and abuse involves using digital technologies to exploit children sexually through creating and sharing abusive content, grooming, live streaming, and sextortion. Offenders use social media, messaging apps, and gaming platforms to target children, leading to severe psychological, physical and often lifelong impacts.
- Efforts to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse include international law enforcement collaboration, technological tools to detect and remove harmful content, educational initiatives on online safety, and support services to aid victim recovery.

ENDS

² <https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/may/27/more-than-300m-children-victims-of-online-sexual-abuse-every-year>

³ <https://intothelight.childlight.org/executive-summary.html>

Notes to editors

Available for media:

- Beyond the Screen film: [here](#)
- Survivor images: [here](#)
- If you'd like to attend the high level event and screening on 17 July contact for more details: julia@bbpartners.co.uk
- Sign the petition: [here](#)

Additional quotes for media:

Marija Manojlovic, Executive Director, Safe Online: "Safe Online is proud to join hands with survivors of childhood sexual violence and global child protection organisations to urge governments and tech leaders to take urgent steps to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse. The upcoming Global Ministerial on Ending Violence Against Children is an unprecedented opportunity and we call on global leaders to launch a unified response to tackle this escalating crisis head-on."

Baroness Joanna Shields OBE, WeProtect Global Alliance founder and board member, said: "The scale of online sexual abuse faced by children has been evident for many years, yet those with the power to stop it have largely turned a blind eye. With over 300 million children suffering annually from online sexual exploitation, the time for half-measures is over: we need a fundamental reimaging of how we approach online safety. Tech platform companies have a clear duty of care, possessing all of the tools required to implement robust safeguards, and they must act. Similarly, governments must take decisive legislative and enforcement action to protect our children. Every child deserves to explore the digital world without fear of harm, and our campaign, uniting governments, decision-makers, bereaved parents, and survivors, marks a crucial turning point in this fight."

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About:

The Brave Movement is a survivor-centered advocacy movement working to end childhood sexual violence. An integral part of our mission involves supporting survivor leaders advocating to end child sexual exploitation and abuse online and holding tech companies and governments accountable, through a global campaign for a sexual violence-free internet. Our campaign – centered in the experience and knowledge of survivors of childhood sexual violence – is fighting to ensure that the digital world is redesigned and made safe for children. Working with tech companies and governments, and collaborating with partners and allies, we will improve practices and ensure they design a world where every child is safe from sexual violence online.

[WeProtect Global Alliance](#) is a global movement bringing together more than 310 government, private sector and civil society organisations working together to transform the global response to child sexual exploitation and abuse online. The Alliance is the largest and most diverse global movement dedicated to ending child sexual exploitation and abuse online. It supports and generates political commitment and practical approaches to make the digital world safe and positive for children, preventing sexual abuse and long-term harm.

[Safe Online](#) is the only global investment vehicle dedicated to keeping children safe in the digital world - working to strengthen systems and catalyze innovative solutions to make the internet a safe place for children to explore, learn and develop. Since 2017, Safe Online has invested nearly US\$100 million in 106 projects with impact in more than 100 countries.

Show support for the survivors and allies:

Follow and share support using the hashtags –

- #BeyondTheScreen
- #ViolenceisPreventable
- #EndChildhoodSexualViolence
- #SafeOnline
- #BeBrave

bravemovement.org