



Call for Papers
International Conference

Digital Human Rights and Gender: Issues, Tensions and Critical Perspectives
October 22 – 24, 2026, Tunis

Context, Key Issues and Problem Statement:

We are witnessing a central paradox. Digital transformation, often presented as a universal driver of progress, access to knowledge and individual empowerment, is reshaping human rights in profound ways. It generates new spaces of exclusion, violence and domination that existing legal frameworks are still struggling to address adequately. This paradox is not accidental. It is structural. Far from being neutral, digital environments reflect, amplify and sometimes institutionalize pre-existing social inequalities, mainly those linked to gender, with a level of efficiency and invisibility that earlier forms of domination did not achieve. Current human rights legislation is often deemed insufficient to address the large-scale and complex harms of digital surveillance (Murray & Fussey, 2019).

International scientific production attests to it with an increasing clarity. A systematic review of literature ¹ reveals a rapidly expanding field, with an annual growth rate of 22.86 %, but a field that is also marked by significant gaps: a strong concentration in Global North countries, a persistent lag between technological evolutions and legal frameworks, and an under-representation of decolonial and feminist approaches.

Sanders and Scanlon (2021) demonstrate how the digital divide represents, in itself, a violation of human rights that perpetuates structural disparities, which are primarily affecting the most vulnerable populations. Contemporary digital technologies introduce new threats that require regulatory frameworks in order to prevent algorithmic discrimination and to safeguard the right to a fair trial (Benedek, 2023; Khatniuk et al., 2023).

¹ 2 341 publications, 1994-2024, base Scopus.

Studies like those of Nemitz (2018) show how some advanced digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence, may pose direct threats to constitutional democracy and fundamental freedoms due to their pervasive nature. They emphasize the need to subject these technologies to fundamental rights imperatives, lest they undermine the very liberties they claim to serve.

Thus, online gender-based violence, digital exclusion, algorithmic bias and transformations driven by emerging technologies emerge as structural issues within a rapidly mutating field that gender studies are positioned to deepen, decenter and render more socially relevant.

A central debate runs through the literature: Are digital rights merely an extension of existing human rights within the digital sphere, or do they represent a fourth generation of rights that require unprecedented legal and analytical frameworks? The tension between “similarity” (Kothari, 2019) and “non-coherence” (Susi, 2019) opens a major theoretical avenue, which is particularly relevant when the gender dimension is taken into consideration.

In this context, the conference questions the ambivalence of digital spaces. For women, the digital realm can represent an alternative space of expression, resistance and visibility for voices that have been silenced for a long time, as well as an architecture of online misogyny as a space of surveillance and violence, with a large-scale reproduction of inequalities.

Three major tensions structure this field and will guide conference sessions:

Universality versus Contextualization: Should digital human rights be conceptualized as universal or situated, particularly when examined through the lens of gender and postcolonial contexts?

Protection versus Autonomy: How can platform regulations and governance be designed to effectively protect women without restricting freedom of expression or reinforcing forms of control over the concerned groups?

Innovation versus Justice: How can emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, become tools of gender justice rather than instruments of an invisible and systemic algorithmic discrimination?

This conference aims to bring together scholars from diverse disciplines (Information and Communication Sciences, Sociology, Law, Political Science, Gender Studies, Critical Computer Science, etc.) in order to produce knowledge as well as rigorous, situated and socially engaged analyses about the intersection between human, digital and gender rights. It also aims to better understand these transformations and to contribute to reflections on the conditions for a more just and inclusive digital environment.

Thematic Axes

The conference is structured around five complementary thematic axes that are directly derived from the gaps and lines of inquiry identified through a systemic review of the international literature. Proposals may align with one or more of these axes, adopting either a mono- or multidisciplinary approach.

AXIS 1: Intersectional and Decolonial Digital Rights

Most current research on digital human rights is produced in and for countries of the Global North. It fails to reflect the realities of postcolonial contexts, the experiences of economically marginalized women, or community-based knowledge of resistance. In countries of the Global South, some studies try to explore this issue, underlying the diversity of actors that are engaged in debates about women's rights beyond the feminist sphere (Desrués et al., 2022). Other spaces, mainly centers that combine research and training and civil society organizations, have begun to engage women in the digital sphere, particularly in digital social networks (Ben Chikha, 2023). Initial observations indicate that a discourse characterized as "hostile to women" (Cawtar, 2015, p.15) is emerging in online content. The boundaries between feminist activism and scientific research are sometimes blurred, as illustrated by the study on digital violence and the political targeting of women in the public sphere (Association Intersection for Rights and Freedom, 2026), or the more general analytical study that addresses online violence against women in Tunisia (Youssef & Garbouj, 2021). Other less visible studies are conducted within the academic framework of a master's level research that focuses on gender related issues (Yaacoubi, 2020).

This thematic axis calls for decentering research, mobilizing Southern epistemologies and articulating variables -gender, age, class, origin and disability- in the analysis of digital access and use.

Indicative Topics for Submission:

- Decolonial methodologies as applied to digital human rights
- Digital disparities in Global South and Maghreb contexts
- Interplay of age, class, origin and gender in digital access and exclusion

- Local knowledge, community-based resistance practices and digital rights
- Digital divide as a violation of human rights in low- and middle-income countries
- North-South comparative approaches to gender-sensitive digital rights policies

AXIS 2: Artificial Intelligence, Algorithmic Bias and Gender Justice

AI can detect online violence, automate protective measures and democratize access to information; however, it may simultaneously perpetuate gender biases and generate invisible forms of systemic discrimination. Research in this field should develop auditing tools, ethical frameworks and participatory models that are co-constructed with the affected communities.

Indicative Topics for Submission:

- Auditing AI systems to identify and address gender bias
- Impact of facial recognition and identification systems on women and marginalized genders
- Co-construction of participatory AI models with feminist communities
- Algorithmic discrimination in terms of access to public digital services (digital welfare state)
- Psychological impact of deepfakes and AI-generated misinformation on women
- Ethical assessment frameworks of gender-sensitive AI systems (AI Act, national regulations)
- Hybrid AI models and community-based moderation for the protection of digital rights

AXIS 3: Platform Governance, Gender-Based Online Violence and Democratic Responsibility

Large digital platforms systematically fail to protect marginalized genders. Self-regulation has proven insufficient. Digital misogyny has become a structural human rights crisis, forming a continuum of violence (cyber-harassment, unauthorized disclosure of personal data, and hate speech) aimed at silencing women and undermining their civic participation in digital spaces. The shift of power from States to technology giants has led to a form of “digital constitutionalism” in which online platform governance is being reconfigured (Suzor, 2020). This axis examines alternative governance models, available legal instruments, and the mechanisms of democratic accountability of platforms.

Indicative Topics for Submission:

- Feminist analysis of content moderation policies on major digital platforms
- Criminalization of specific forms of gender-based digital violence
- Application of CEDAW and international instruments to digital violations
- Alternative models of participatory and community-based platform governance
- Comparative effectiveness of legal interventions versus self-regulation for women's protection
- Digital constitutionalism and the protection of marginalized genders' rights
- The right to be forgotten and protection of women's dignity in digital spaces
- Digital obstetric violence, reproductive health and online spaces of resistance
- National and international legal frameworks for the protection of women's digital rights

AXIS 4: Digital Literacy, Intersectional Inclusion and Rights of Access

Disparities in digital skills represent a major barrier to the exercise of rights in digital spaces, particularly for older women, women in situations of economic precarity, women in rural areas, and women with disabilities. The digital divide is a human rights issue. This axis explores the conditions for a genuinely inclusive digital literacy and the policies that may promote it across diverse contexts.

Indicative Topics for Submission:

- Longitudinal studies on the impact of digital literacy interventions on women's rights
- Inclusive curricula that integrate gender perspectives, intersectionality and digital rights perspectives
- The role of family and community support in women's technological adoption
- The double vulnerability of women with disabilities in digital spaces
- Gender-sensitive public policies for digital inclusion in Global South countries
- Internet access as a fundamental human right: the state of legislation and practices

AXIS 5: Digital Authoritarianism and Paradigmatic Reversal in the Arab World

Digital technologies, social media in particular, have been celebrated as instruments of emancipation, collective mobilization, democratization of the public sphere, and the expansion of public debate. However, in contemporary Arab societies, this evolution has undergone a

profound and dystopian reversal. This paradigmatic shift refers to the degradation of the public sphere through digitalization itself (Hammami, 2025, p. 271).

The digital public sphere, far from fulfilling its emancipatory promise, has become a source of social fragmentation, symbolic and physical violence, political brutalization, ideological polarization, progressive elites delegitimization, and targeted violence against specific social groups, particularly women. This paradigmatic shift results from deliberate strategies of state and para-state actors, as well as ideological groups that use digital platforms for purposes of control, repression and the reproduction of relations of domination.

This axis calls for the analysis of these dynamics in their Maghrebi and Arab specificities, while taking into consideration the interaction between authoritarianism on the one hand and the authoritarian management of the digital sphere through legal and political mechanisms that are designed to exclude and render invisible, especially women activists and citizens.

Indicative Topics for Submission:

- Gendered paradigmatic reversal – making women activists invisible, authoritarian restructuring of online gender norms
- Targeted disinformation – the “weaponization” of patriarchal norms and sexual morality against women in the public sphere
- Instrumentalised gender-based violence – deepfakes, slut-shaming, expulsion of women activists, journalists and researchers
- Gender-based brutalization and disqualification – specific mechanisms that target women politicians and intellectuals
- Surveillance of women’s bodies – the digital criminalization of women who transgress dominant gender norms
- Feminist resistance and transnational coalitions – practices of mutual protection in the face of digital authoritarianism

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Submission Deadlines :

TIMELINE

Abstract submission deadline: 30 May 2026

Notification of acceptance: 15 June 2026

Full paper submission deadline: 15 October 2026

Conference dates : 22 - 24 October 2026

Conference email address :

mct@ipsi.uma.tn

Format of Proposals

Paper abstracts must be submitted in Arabic, French or English and should include the following:

- Title of the paper
- Abstract (400 to 500 words) specifying the research problem, theoretical framework, methodology, and main findings or arguments
- Thematic axis (1 or 2 axes out of 5)
- 5 keywords
- Author(s) biographical note (150 words maximum)
- Institutional affiliation, discipline(s) and contact details

Conference Languages :

Presentations may be delivered in Arabic, French or English. Abstracts that are submitted in Arabic must also include a translation in French or English.

Submission Email :

Proposals must be submitted exclusively by email to the following address :

mct@ipsi.uma.tn

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