

A zero tolerance approach to abuse

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As many will know, trolling has reached new lows this weekend.

I make no comparison between the abuse of feminist campaigners on twitter and what happens here. I am not. No one should think I am.

But like many men who consider themselves feminists (and I see no contradiction in that statement - but in saying it again make clear I do not have a woman's insight on the issues) I have wondered what can be done in some small way to evidence support for those suffering from Internet trolling - and not just in its worst forms but also what I know from many accounts to be commonplace in the way of misogynist bullying that is suffered by so many women on all forms of social media. That bullying is very real and if abusive traffic in this blog is any measure to go by then it has probably increased in the last few days.

I do, of course, delete such comments but I admit I have not enforced my comment policy as strongly as I might of late. So, many who comment here also comment, I know, favourably on other sites where abuse is normal and seemingly encouraged and where aggression is accepted as appropriate towards all who disagree with stated positions, often using language and symbolism that is profoundly offensive to feminist thinking. Those people, and those who control such sites will now have their comments routinely deleted - even if they appear seemingly innocuous when presented here. Zero tolerance of abuse is the only appropriate response to it and I wish others -like the Guardian - would adopt the same approach.

Those commenting anonymously will suffer the same fate. Those whose identity I

recognise will be published even if a real name is not used - but they may well be a selected few. Free speech is a right that has to be accounted for in normal circumstances in my opinion - and I cannot yet think of an abnormal one that has arisen on this blog.

So there may be fewer comments here. Well, so be it. It's my gesture against abuse and the best one I can think I can personally initiate right now. I believe in the importance of transparency and accountability. To comment here you'll have to accept that standard now - and not implicitly or directly endorse alternatives elsewhere.

The bonus that will arise is that those comments that remain will be all the more valuable.