

A Year in Fake News in Africa | BBC News

By BBC

November 13, 2018

The spread of fake news in Africa has been blamed for igniting ethnic violence, sowing confusion among voters and even causing currency fluctuations. As the BBC launches major new research into fake news in Africa, we break down five false stories that made a big impact on the continent in the past 12 months.

1. Nigerian presidential candidate ‘endorsed by gay rights groups’

What was the story?

When Atiku Abubakar was confirmed as a presidential candidate for the Nigerian elections in 2019, a fake Twitter account in the name of the opposition leader posted a message thanking the “Association of Nigerian Gay Men (ANGAM)” for its support.

In the post, “Mr Abubakar” writes that the first thing he would do if he were to become president would be to scrap the country’s controversial anti-gay legislation, signed into law by former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan in 2014.

Homosexual acts are punishable by up to 14 years in jail in Nigeria, while gay marriage and displays of same-sex affection are also banned.

What impact did it have?

A screengrab of the fake news story from a Nigerian blog

After originally being shared on Twitter on 14 October, the story was picked up by

two Nigerian blogs. Then 12 days later, two prominent Nigerian newspapers, [The Nation](#) and the [Vanguard](#), both published stories with a very similar theme.

They reported that an LGBT organisation called “Diverse” was also backing Mr Abubakar for president, considering him a truly “liberal candidate”.

A fake news story about a presidential candidate advocating for gay rights could be used to undermine them. Highly influential Muslim and Christian leaders in Nigeria, who were united in their support for the anti-gay legislation, could tell their followers not to vote for such a candidate.

[...]

Source: [A year in fake news in Africa - BBC News](#)