

Arrests mount as Africa battles a destructive wave of COVID-19 disinformation | The Globe and Mail

By Geoffrey York

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As a surge of social-media disinformation begins to jeopardize health efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, some African countries are reacting with a new tactic: criminal charges and threats of imprisonment for the spreaders of falsehoods.

The flood of conspiracy theories – largely on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp – is hampering a crucial campaign to expand testing for the coronavirus in South Africa, where many people are now refusing to have it done.

It has also sparked opposition to Chinese medical aid in Nigeria, led to the destruction of a virus screening centre in Ivory Coast and triggered hostility to international groups that are developing vaccines.

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