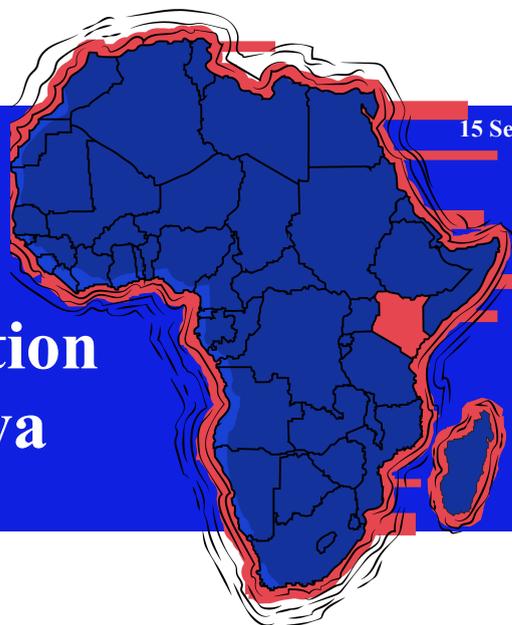*Pulse Report*

Biweekly overview of information manipulation & interference in Kenya

*This **PULSE Report** is a biweekly analysis of coordinated online hate speech, cyberbullying and trolling, information manipulation, and other online harms, as well as the abuse of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to target vulnerable communities or subvert public discourse in Kenya. It also identifies weaponised narratives and the key actors undermining information integrity. It analyses the tactics or techniques used to subvert or polarise local audiences.*

1.   Executive summary

A coordinated pro-government campaign used #ExpresswayClosed to target former deputy president Rigathi Gachagua. The campaign framed his United States trip as a failure and said his early return caused violence. The campaign used manipulated and AI-generated content, which had nearly a million views.

At the county level from late August to early September 2025, two major online narratives dominated the Kenyan online space. In Lamu County Politics, a Facebook post mocked families for including people perceived as LGBTQIA+ in weddings, framing their presence as "promoting LGBTQIA. On social media, Nakuru governor Susan Kihika faced gendered abuse after criticising former deputy president Rigathi Gachagua. In Umoja, a video showing a teenager wielding a machete drew attention to rising juvenile gangs. Police confirmed the growth of groups made up of boys aged 12 to 19 and announced arrests.

Notable narratives and incidents

A narrative is a technique for presenting or understanding a situation or series of events, promoting a particular viewpoint. Information manipulators develop 'persistent' narratives that play on emotions, fears, or pre-existing beliefs to inject an ideological spin on the facts, manipulate public perceptions, and exploit cognitive biases that shape public opinion.

   a. **Gachagua's US tour was a failure:** Using the #ExpresswayClosed hashtag, pro-government accounts targeted Gachagua upon his early return from the US on 21 August 2025, framing his trip as a failure, spreading false claims of deportation.

County radar: The notable emerging incidents or campaigns at the county level

This section provides a concise overview of notable incidents, campaigns, and insights into emerging trends and issues in the information landscape within the focus counties (Busia, Homa Bay, Lamu, Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nakuru). It aims to inform readers about the emerging conversations shaping public discourse in these countries.

a. **LGBTQ+ exclusion in Lamu weddings:** A [Facebook post](#) in the Lamu County Politics said that LGBTQ+ participation in weddings was a threat to tradition and religion.
b. **Gendered abuse targeting governor Susan Kihika:** On 15 August 2025, the Nakuru governor's [remarks](#) warning Gachagua against divisive politics went viral across Facebook, TikTok and X, but public reaction was dominated by gendered abuse, mockery, and personal attacks.
c. **Growing concern of juvenile gangs in Umoja and their impact on local security:** A [viral video](#) of machete-wielding youths in Umoja has coincided with police arrests and sparked online reactions ranging from [sympathy](#) to calls for [vigilante justice](#).

Key actors

An actor is a person, group, company, or nation-state that acts with deliberate purpose. Information manipulators are considered bad actors who purposely and repeatedly engage in manipulative or disruptive behaviour, which is usually to radicalise, polarise, or subvert the public.

Individual actors: Two X accounts, [@muneneodg](#) and [@acoco_ke](#), were the key amplifiers of the #ExpresswayClosed campaign. Both accounts usually promote pro-government narratives pushed through coordinated online campaigns.

Noteworthy tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs):

TTPs describe the behaviour and strategies threat actors use, focusing on the structured frameworks or infrastructure they use for executing cyberattacks. Using TTPs to diagnose information manipulation allows investigators to develop early warning systems. It also allows watchdogs to identify vulnerabilities in influence operations that can be used to disrupt the attack.

a. **Deceptively edit video (cheap fakes):** The hashtag #ExpresswayClosed employed the Disinformation Analysis and Risk Management (DISARM) tactics [deceptively edit video (cheap fakes)](#), using [manipulated audio](#) and [recycled clips](#) to frame Gachagua's US return as chaotic.
b. **Create a dedicated hashtag:** The DISARM framework [defines](#) this tactic as using hashtags to frame narratives and create legitimacy, as seen in the #ExpresswayClosed campaign.
c. **Develop inauthentic news articles:** The #ExpresswayClosed campaign [fabricated news articles,](#) circulating [edited](#) and [fake](#) reports.

2. Weaponised words: the narratives and incidents shaping public discourse

This section highlights amplified 'meta' narratives, citing specific examples and listing a selection of the most noteworthy incidents or narratives.
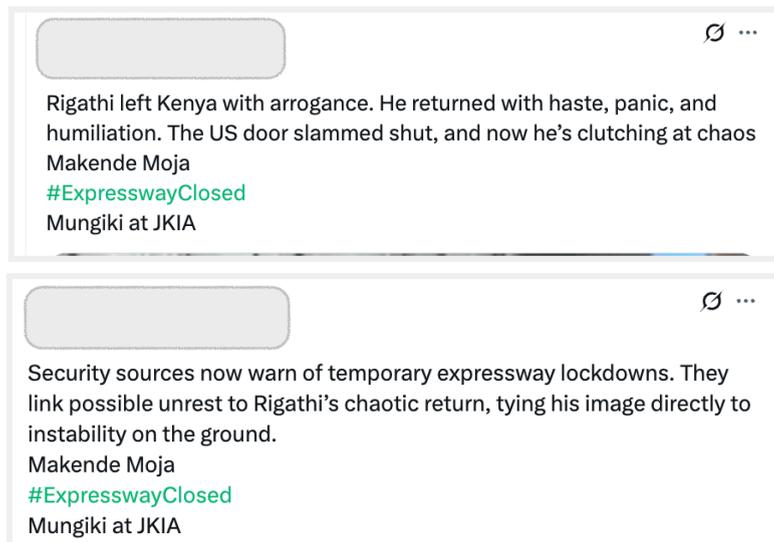
a. Gachagua's US tour was a failure

On the day Gachagua returned from the US, a coordinated campaign emerged on X. The allegation was that the Nairobi Expressway had been shut down to facilitate his arrival. Hastag [#ExpresswayClosed](#) was created on 21 August 2025 and has since generated approximately 7,570 mentions, 8,740 engagements, and 904,000 views.

Gachagua had travelled to the US on 09 July 2025 for a [planned](#) two-month diaspora outreach tour in the US. His trip included meeting Kenyans abroad, international stakeholders, mobilising support, and advancing the agenda of his Democracy for Citizens Party (DCP) ahead of the 2027 general election.

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However, he returned to Kenya on 21 August 2025, earlier than the scheduled September return. He cited the need to rejoin the DCP in preparation for the upcoming by-elections in November 2025 as the reason for cutting his trip short.

However, the #ExpresswayClosed campaign tried to discredit Gachagua's trip by claiming that the early return showed he had failed, with some even alleging he was deported. Those who used the hashtag also alleged that there were chaotic road closures and unrest attributed to the Mungiki sect, a notorious youth gang.

Rigathi left Kenya with arrogance. He returned with haste, panic, and humiliation. The US door slammed shut, and now he's clutching at chaos
Makende Moja
#ExpresswayClosed
Mungiki at JKIA

Security sources now warn of temporary expressway lockdowns. They link possible unrest to Rigathi's chaotic return, tying his image directly to instability on the ground.
Makende Moja
#ExpresswayClosed
Mungiki at JKIA

Sample posts on Gachagua's return from the U.S. (top, bottom) (source: CfA using X).

Posts using the hashtag #ExpresswayClosed included the phrases 'Mungiki at JKIA [Jomo Kenyatta International Airport]' and 'Makende Moja'. The latter term translates to 'one testicle' and is used to imply that he is 'not man enough'. These posts were accompanied by manipulated videos.

One was a fake news video titled 'Mungiki at JKIA', which stitched together six clips from recent protests in central Nairobi along Kenyatta Avenue, overlaid with an audio track of traditional Kikuyu songs. Another was an AI-edited news clip in which the reporter claimed that, although Gachagua had held a discreet meeting with former US ambassador to Kenya, Michael Ranneberger, Washington would not support his 2027 presidential ambitions. A third was an AI-edited compilation of archived Citizen TV news segments presented by Jeff Koinange, rebranded with the title: 'Nairobi Expressway Closed' and a blurb reading: 'Rigathi Return Sparks Violence.'

Amidst the coordinated campaign and confusion on 21 August 2025, MOJA Expressway, the operator of the Nairobi Expressway, said the road was fully operational and had not been closed.

[Screenshot](#) of the post debunking the expressway's closure (source: CfA using X).

Most of the accounts that participated in this campaign are pro-government accounts that CfA has flagged in previous reports. For this campaign, the top three accounts that made close to 616 posts and reposts on 21 August 2025 include:

  i.   [@tonymkenya7](#) was the most active account, posting and reposting 268 times using the hashtag within 1 hour and 58 minutes. This equates to 2 posts every minute. This account has 63,618 followers and has been flagged in a previous [Code for Africa (CfA) report](#) as a pro-government sock-puppet account.

  ii. [@muneneodg](#), posted and reposted 233 times using the hashtag over 1 hour and 48 minutes, averaging about 125 posts per hour. It has 41,668 followers and primarily reposts content that supports Ruto's government.

  iii. The third account, [@acoco_ke](#), created 115 posts, including both original and reposted content, over 1 hour and 55 minutes, averaging around 60 posts per hour. This account has about 57,552 followers. Its content focuses on pro-government narratives.

This level of activity indicates a concentrated effort to drive the hashtag's visibility, raising the possibility of automation, a common trait in coordinated manipulation campaigns.
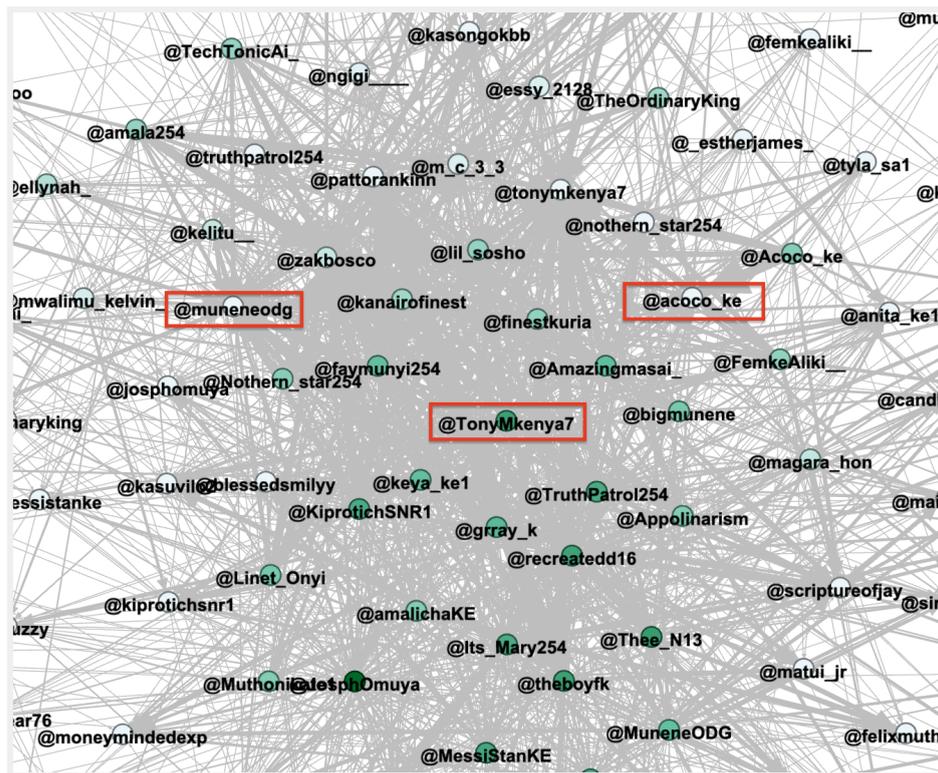
Network analysis graph of the #ExpresswayClosed amplifier accounts (Source: CfA using Gephi).

17 accounts that actively engaged with the #ExpresswayClosed campaign had also participated in previous documented hashtag campaigns, such as #RejectAnarchists on 24 July 2025, which painted youth protests as anarchic, suggesting a pro-government alignment.

3.   County radar: Notable emerging incidents or campaigns from the county level
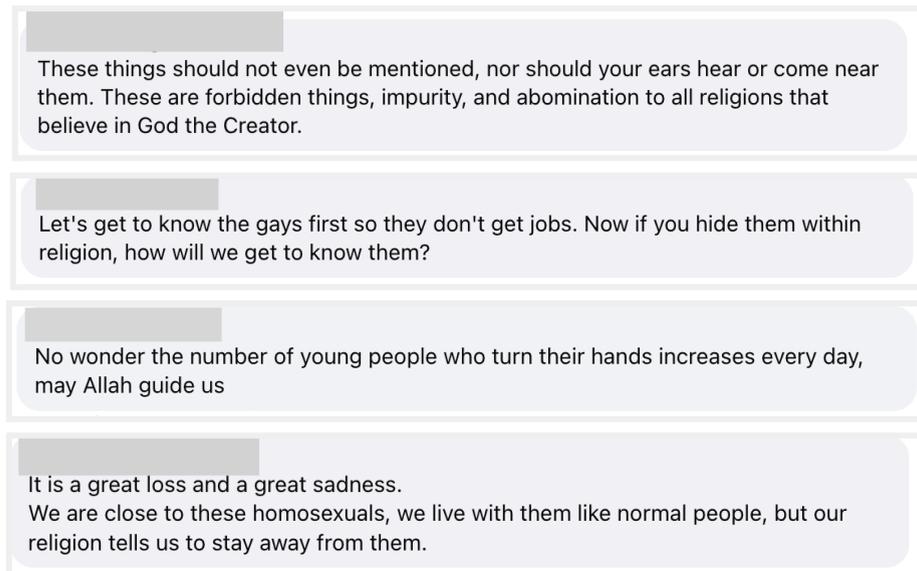
This section provides a concise overview of notable incidents, campaigns, and insights into emerging trends and issues in the information landscape within the focus counties. It aims to inform readers about the emerging conversations shaping public discourse in these counties.

a. LGBTQ+ exclusion in Lamu weddings

In the Facebook group Lamu County Politics, a post targeted people perceived as LGBTQIA+ who were involved in wedding ceremonies. The author mocked families for 'bringing a gay man to cook, sing, or do the final check-up for the wedding' and asked, 'what do you expect this marriage to produce?' This post received 26 reactions, 32 comments, and a share as the author re-shared the post in his profile. The comments on the post endorsed the message. Some users said 'Waambie kabisa' ('Tell them clearly') or 'very true…'

Users described the presence of people who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community at weddings as 'forbidden, impurity, and abomination to all religions that believe in God', a 'curse', or evidence that today's weddings are no longer authentically Islamic. Others insisted that true believers should distance themselves from LGBTQ+ individuals.

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One comment explicitly called for profiling, urging that 'gays should first be identified so they are not given work' at weddings.

> These things should not even be mentioned, nor should your ears hear or come near them. These are forbidden things, impurity, and abomination to all religions that believe in God the Creator.

> Let's get to know the gays first so they don't get jobs. Now if you hide them within religion, how will we get to know them?

> No wonder the number of young people who turn their hands increases every day, may Allah guide us

> It is a great loss and a great sadness.
> We are close to these homosexuals, we live with them like normal people, but our religion tells us to stay away from them.

Screenshots show some of the homophobic comments on a Facebook post.
(Source: CfA using Facebook)

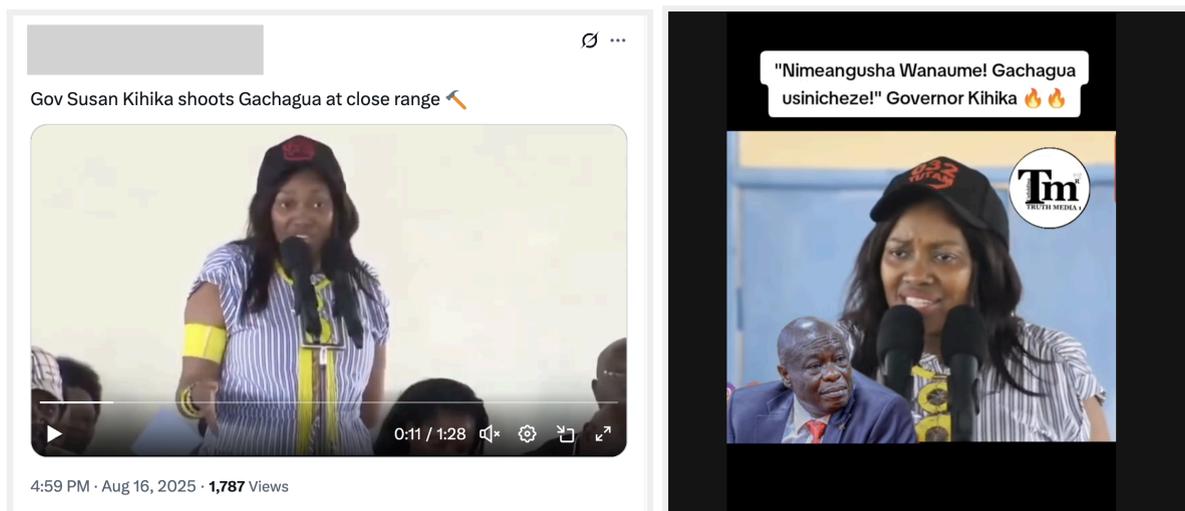### b. Gendered abuse targeting governor Susan Kihika

On 15 August 2025, Nakuru governor Susan Kihika posted on her X account that she had held a consultative meeting with local stakeholders 'to review development progress and discuss new initiatives for enhancing our community's social and economic well-being.'

However, according to several accounts on Facebook, TikTok and X, she also used this platform to speak to Gachagua, stating that Nakuru would not tolerate divisive politics and warned the former deputy president not to underestimate her. She accused him of spreading discord and tribalism, and stressed that Nakuru is not his political playground.

Between 15 and 20 August 2025, the conversation on X generated 638 mentions, attracting 160,000 views and 3,418 engagements. On Facebook, there were 300 posts with over 7.2 million views and 10,683 interactions.

On TikTok, one clip had the caption: 'Nimeangusha Wanaume! Gachagua usinicheze!' (from Swahili meaning, 'I have defeated men! Gachagua don't play with me!') and fire emojis 🔥🔥. This video has 51,300 views and 1,911 interactions.

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Screenshots show clips of Kihika's speech circulating on X and TikTok ([left](#), [right](#))
(Source: CfA using X and TikTok).

However, other [comments](#) ridiculed her: 'Lea mapacha madam, you won't be able to do it ('Give birth to twins madam, you won't be able to do it')' or hurling insults such as 'stupid mother'. She was subjected to body-shaming and ridicule, told to 'shut up, go breastfeed' or dismissed as 'useless'. Rather than engaging with her political message, audiences across platforms weaponised her gender, motherhood, and identity to delegitimise her and predict her downfall.

b. Growing concern of juvenile gangs in Umoja and their impact on local security

On 25 August 2025, an X account posted a [video](#) showing what seems to be a young man carrying and waving a machete at a group of teenagers. The X account states that 'Disturbing Clip Emerges of Alleged Umoja Gang Leader 'Carlos' Attacking Teens With Panga.' The video received an engagement of 2,650 and 341,000 views.

Prior to the release of this video, 15-year-old teenager, Joshua Kubiti was [killed](#) during a gang-related clash on 22 August. The Department of Criminal Investigations (DCI) on 27 August 2025 [shared](#) its preliminary findings on the rise of juvenile gangs in Umoja and surrounding areas. DCI said that boys aged between 12 and 19 have formed rival groups under names such as Chinje, Mbogi, Bad Bunny, and Silent. The National Police Service also [reported](#) that they had arrested 14 juveniles in Umoja Estate, with the court granting them a 14-day custodial order to allow investigations and to track down other gang members.

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Screenshot of X post showing video of Umoja gang attack (Source: CfA using X).

Between 20 August and 02 September 2025, the Umoja gangs received 375 mentions on X. The mentions generated a total engagement of 5,350 and 628,000 views. One of the quoted posts to the video empathised with the teenagers for risking their lives for 'likes, fame, and wanting to be internet sensations.' Another one, tagging the DCI, said that the gang members were 'beyond repair' and they should be executed. A different quoted post said: 'Hapa ata hakuna haja ya ku-involve polisi ... hapa ni watu wa area wajitume' (from Swahili meaning, 'There is no need to call the police. The residents should organise themselves and deal with the gangs').

Two TikTok videos mentioning the Umoja gangs reported on the arrests of gang members and the police operation being carried out in Umoja. One of the comments said: 'wazazi wasipo chunga vijana wao watalilia city mocha😁' ('parents if you aren't careful, you'll be crying for your children at City Mortuary.) Another comment warned the teenagers by saying: 'crime si poa watakulishwa copper wacheze tu' ('crime is not good, they'll shoot you dead').

4.   Actor spotlight: The people and organisations amplifying toxic content.

This section highlights the key accounts, entities, or actors involved in amplifying toxic online content in Kenya and provides an in-depth assessment of their identities and motivations.

   a.   **@muneneodg**

The X account @muneneodg, created in February 2015, has approximately 41,660 followers and 139,100 posts. It was among the primary amplifiers of the hashtag #ExpresswayClosed. The account posted 233 times using the hashtag. The account has previously promoted pro-government narratives through hashtags such as #ByeByeLandlord and #MukuruHandover, both of which promoted the government's affordable housing programme.

b. @acoco_ke

The X account @acoco_ke, created in March 2021, has approximately 57,550 followers and over 314,100 posts. It amplified the hashtag #ExpresswayClosed with 115 posts. The account has a history of promoting pro-government narratives, including hashtags such as #WhyCBE, which supported the replacement of Kenya's Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) with Competency Based Education (CBE). It has also engaged in anti-Gachagua campaigns, such as #RiggyJoinsRSF, which portrayed Gachagua as the driving force behind protests and instability in Kenya.

CfA will monitor both accounts, particularly their involvement in coordinated disinformation campaigns.

5.   Tactics and techniques: unveiling the actors' modus operandi.

This section outlines the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) used by actors in the identified narratives. It focuses on strategically disseminating content and coordinating its online presence.

### a. Deceptively edit video (cheap fakes) and develop image-based content

The DISARM framework says 'cheap fakes' are videos or images that are edited in basic ways, like cutting, slowing down, speeding up, or changing the sound, to make an event look different from what really happened. This can include filming staged events, reusing old content, or using simple editing tools to mislead viewers. On 21 August 2025, the hashtag #ExpresswayClosed was accompanied by videos using these techniques. These videos recycled old footage to reinforce the narrative of a closed expressway and alleged unrest linked to Gachagua's arrival.
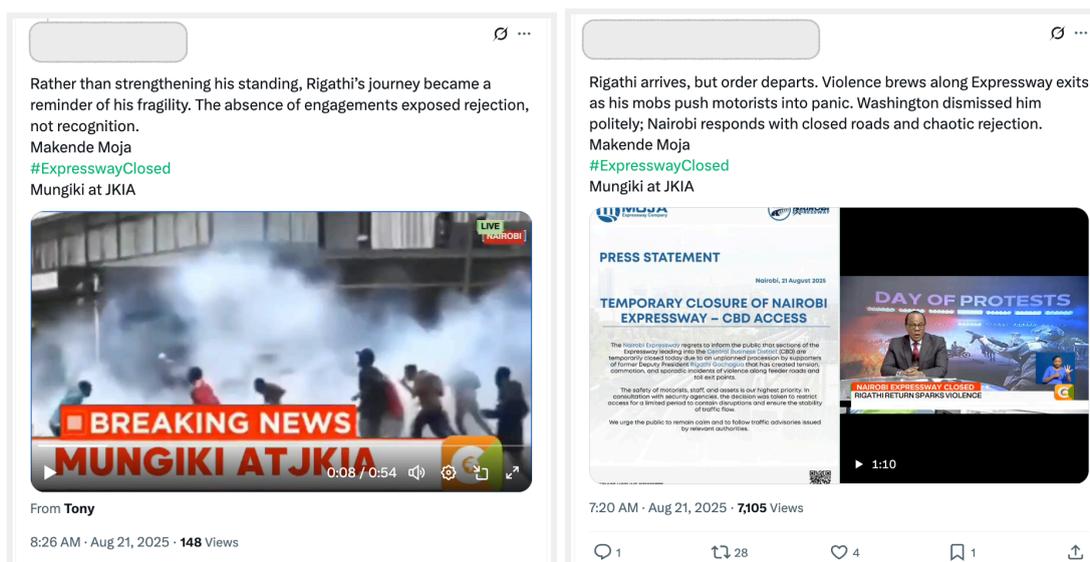
Sample posts showing cheap fakes (left, right) (source: CfA using X).

In addition, the campaign deployed the tactic 'develop image-based media' by circulating edited poster-style images that branded Gachagua's return as shameful – and even a deportation.
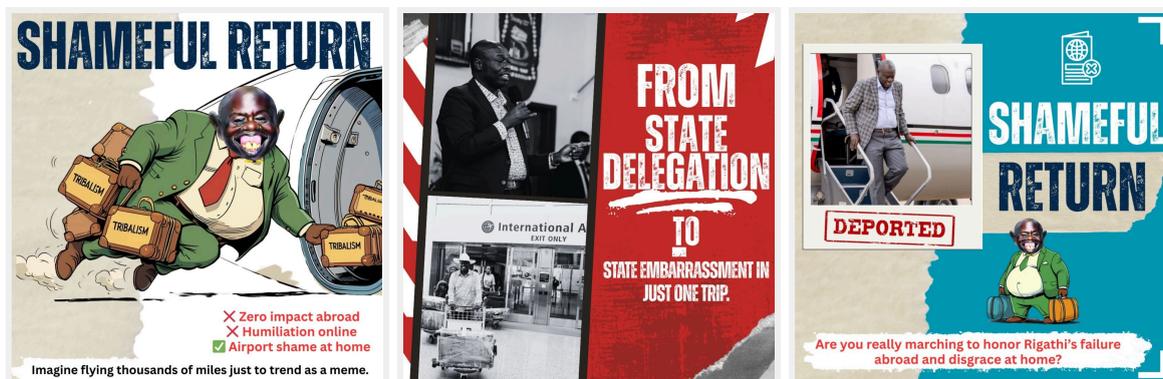
*Sample posters on Gachagua's return (left, middle, right) (source: CfA using X)*

b. Create a dedicated hashtag

The DISARM framework defines this tactic as creating and pushing hashtags to make a campaign look legitimate, helping it trend and shape public debate. This tactic was used in the #ExpresswayClosed campaign to amplify the message that Gachagua's trip had been disastrous and had caused unrest.

c. Develop inauthentic news articles

The DISARM framework identifies this tactic as one where influence operations develop false or misleading news articles to advance their campaign goals or narratives. In the case of #ExpresswayClosed, an edited version of a Star News article circulated on 21 August 2025, falsely headlined: 'Former DP Rigathi reportedly told he's not America's project for 2027.' The original article, published on 14 August 2025, had in fact read: 'Why Gachagua has been forced to cut short his US trip.'
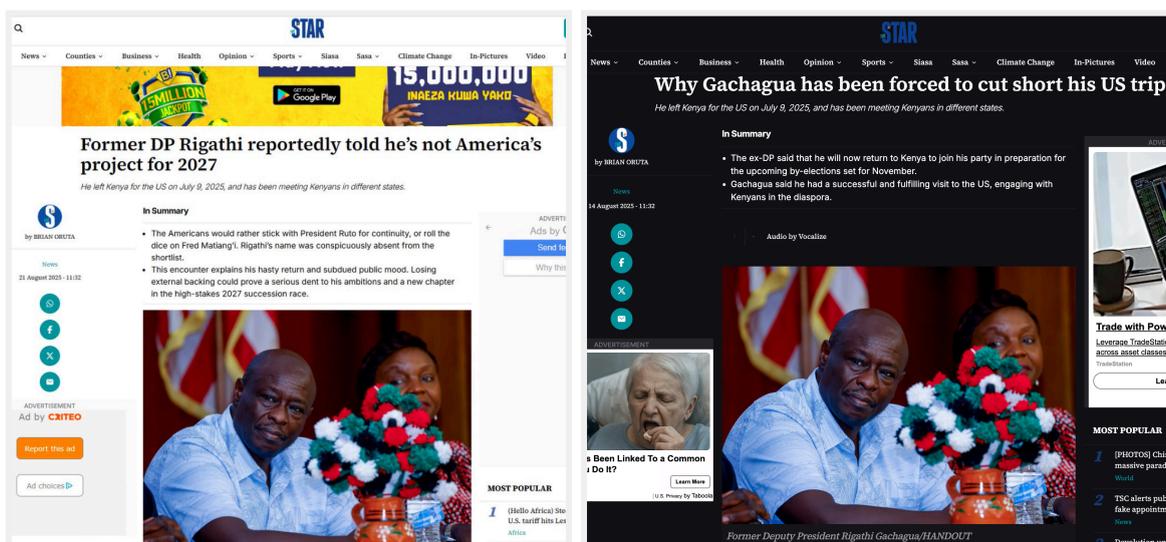
Screenshots of the fake and original Star News article on Gachagua's return (left, right) (source: CfA using X and The Star).

Another fabricated [article](#) was designed to mimic the style of the publication, the Strategic Intelligence Service, which carried the headline: 'Rigathi's Early Return Signals Washington Snub.' There is no such article from the Strategic Intelligence Service.

[Screenshot](#) of the fake SIS news article on Gachagua's return (source: CfA using X)

6.   Conclusion:

The findings in this report highlight how coordinated influence operations are evolving in both scale and sophistication, blending tactics that weaponise identity, exploit political fault lines, and leverage emerging technologies such as AI-edited media. These operations not only shape online discourse but also risk deepening societal divisions, normalising exclusion, and eroding trust in democratic institutions. Sustained monitoring and cross-sector collaboration remain essential to anticipate new trends, expose disinformation tactics early, and safeguard civic space from manipulation.

*This report was written by Code for Africa (CfA) iLAB investigative data analysts **Nirali Patel, Dorcas Solonka, Moffin Njoroge, Agape Karashi,** and **Ivy Masese.** The report was reviewed by iLAB investigations manager **Jacktone Momanyi,** and edited by iLAB copy editor **Gloria Aradi**. The research was overseen by CfA iLAB editor **Athandiwe Saba** and commissioned by CfA editor-in-chief **Justin Arenstein**.*

Do you know of incidents of suspected information manipulation, coordinated influence operations or other forms of disinformation or weaponised toxic content that you think we should investigate? Share your leads with us, securely, on ilab@codeforafrica.org.

*Get more information at: **disinfo.africa***