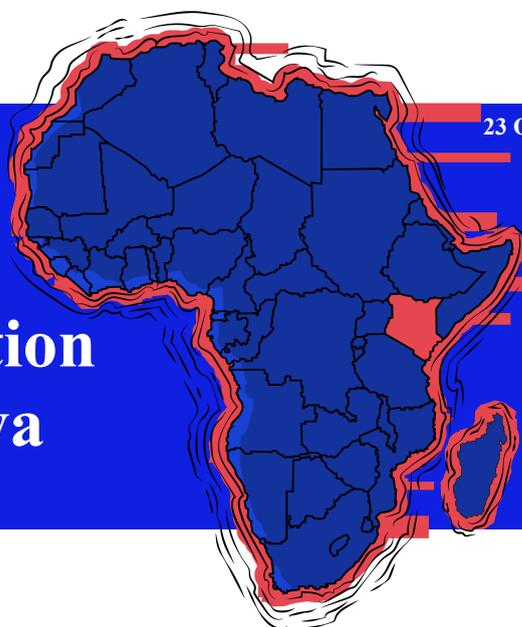*Pulse Report*

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 manufactured online conflict has been brewing around the political future of Kenya's Mt. Kenya region. This has been amplified by a coordinated social media campaign using the hashtag #GEMACivilWar. At the heart of this narrative is a fabricated feud between former President Uhuru Kenyatta and ousted Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, portrayed as battling for control over the GEMA bloc — the Gikuyu, Embu, Meru, and Akamba communities.

The campaign deliberately framed the dispute as a tribal power struggle, stoking historical tensions between Kiambu and Nyeri counties. It began with a fake Standard newspaper headline posted by a known disinformation account.

During the same period, narratives alleging that president William Ruto was facilitating the mass registration and importation of Somalis to boost his voter base for the 2027 elections have reared their head again. These narratives frame the Somali community as instruments of electoral manipulation.

Online reactions to Mwanahamisi Hamadi's 2027 campaign for the Likoni Member of Parliament (MP) seat exposed deep-rooted gender bias that continues to plague women's political participation in Kenya's coastal regions. While some voices expressed support, other comments were overtly sexist.

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. **Former politicians are fueling division among the GEMA communities:** A coordinated campaign under the hashtag #GEMACivilWar pushed a narrative framing Mt. Kenya politics as a bitter supremacy battle between Kenyatta and Gachagua, using false media content, including a fabricated Standard newspaper cover.
   b. **Somalis are being registered to boost Ruto's votes in 2027:** Posts on X alleged that Ruto was facilitating the mass registration of Somalis to boost his voter base for the 2027 elections, framing the community as tools for electoral manipulation.

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. **Sexism shadows women's leadership:** Online reactions to Hamadi's campaign showed entrenched sexism that women politicians still face, with many critics dismissing her candidacy not on merit but on the basis of gender.

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: The X accounts @finestkuria and @undergroundke have all consistently amplified pro-government or misleading narratives. @finestkuria initiated the #GEMACivilWar and @undergroundke spread false claims alleging that Ruto was registering illegal Somali nationals to vote for him.

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. **Create a dedicated hashtag:** The Disinformation Analysis and Risk Management (DISARM) tactic of creating campaign-specific hashtags like #GEMACivilWar, which framed Kikuyu divisions.
    b. **Prepare assets impersonating legitimate entities:** This tactic of mimicking trusted sources was evident in the #GEMACivilWar campaign, where actors replicated *The Standard* newspaper's style, with the patient zero account posting a falsified front page dated 01 October 2025 to boost the campaign's credibility.

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. **Former politicians are fueling division among the GEMA communities**

Between 24 September 2025 and 08 October 2025, a coordinated campaign using the hashtag #GEMACivilWar circulated on X, pushing claims that targeted the Mt. Kenya region, alleging that there is a supremacy battle for who will lead the GEMA communities. The posts framed the conflict as a rivalry between former president Kenyatta and impeached deputy president Gachagua over control of the Mt. Kenya political bloc. The hashtag peaked between 01 and 03 October 2025, generating 5,751 mentions, 50,200 engagements, and 108,000 views. It often appeared alongside

divisive phrases such as 'Rent A Kikuyu' and 'Nyeri vs Kiambu', amplifying ethnic and regional tensions. Analysis shows that 95% of the mentions carried negative sentiment, suggesting a deliberate attempt to inflame hostility and portray political fragmentation within the Kikuyu elite.

The Mountain has fallen into disgrace. Uhuru Spoilt Brat and Rigathi are obsessed with recognition, not leadership. Rent A Kikuyu thrives in betrayal, and the people's future is buried under ego. #GEMACivilWar Nyeri vs Kiambu.

10:44 AM · Oct 1, 2025 · **10** Views

The Mountain is at war with itself again. Uhuru Spoilt Brat seeks revenge, Rigathi craves respect. None offer unity. Rent A Kikuyu thrives on betrayal and division. #GEMACivilWar Nyeri vs Kiambu.

10:51 AM · Oct 1, 2025 · **3** Views

Screenshots of X posts using the hashtag #GEMACivilWar (top, bottom) (Source: CfA using X)

The patient zero post was published on 01 October 2025 by the account @finestkuria, claiming that the fight for Mt. Kenya is not about dignity or future leadership for the residents but a selfish power play by powerful politicians such as Kenyatta and Gachagua in the region. The post also alleges there is a power struggle between Kiambu, where Kenyatta originates and Nyeri, home to Gachagua. Though it received just one engagement and 29 views, the account published 25 (1,2,3) similar posts that same day, helping seed the hashtag before it was amplified by influencer accounts. The top five influencers using the hashtag made more than 110 posts each, and in total, they posted more than 780 posts.

One of the main influencer accounts, @its_mary254, has been influential in other hashtags targeting the GEMA communities and their leaders, including #KikuyuPrivilege. When the hashtag was used in a campaign in February, it was tied to claims that the Kikuyu community was unfairly benefiting from government-led economic and infrastructure projects. The narrative fuelled resentment over perceived inequality in resource distribution and reignited long-standing debates about regional privilege and development fairness. This was reported in the February report.

The latest campaign pushed by @its_mary254 was triggered by a fabricated Standard newspaper front page dated 01 October 2025, bearing the headline 'Gema Civil War.'

The fight for Mt. Kenya is not about dignity or future leadership. It is about selfish egos. Uhuru Spoilt Brat and Rigathi lead the noise, while Rent A Kikuyu schemes rule. #GEMACivilWar Nyeri vs Kiambu.

Screenshot of X post using the hashtag #GEMACivilWar with an altered newspaper headline. (Source: CfA using X)

Patient zero's post was debunked by PesaCheck on 02 October 2025.
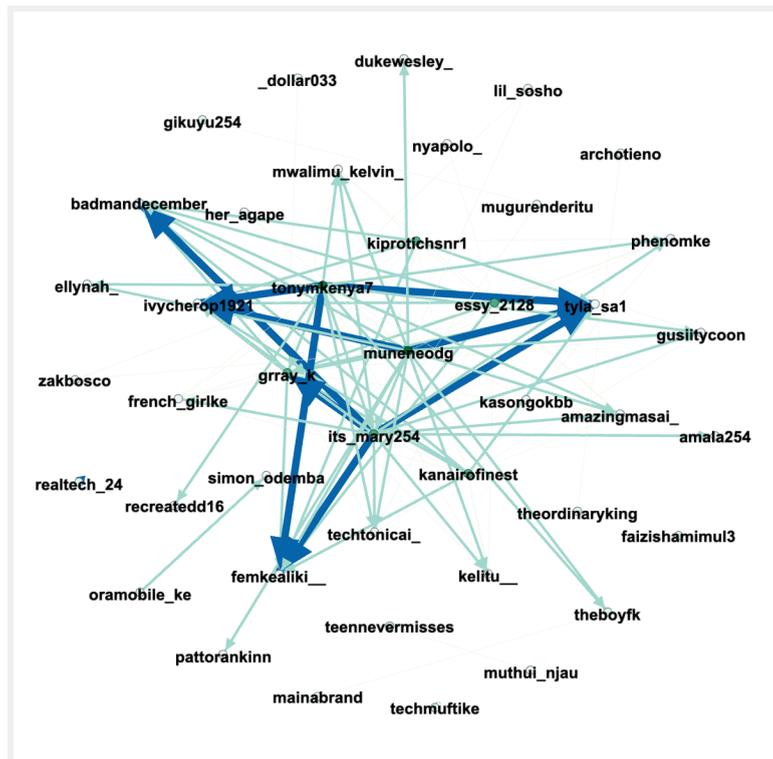
Screenshot of a network graph of the top influencers that propagated #GEMACivilWar on X (Source: CfA using Gephi)

Most of the top influencers driving the #GEMACivilWar campaign were already on existing watchlists, having previously participated in coordinated pro-government narratives and other politically motivated hashtag operations. These accounts will continue to be monitored and investigated.
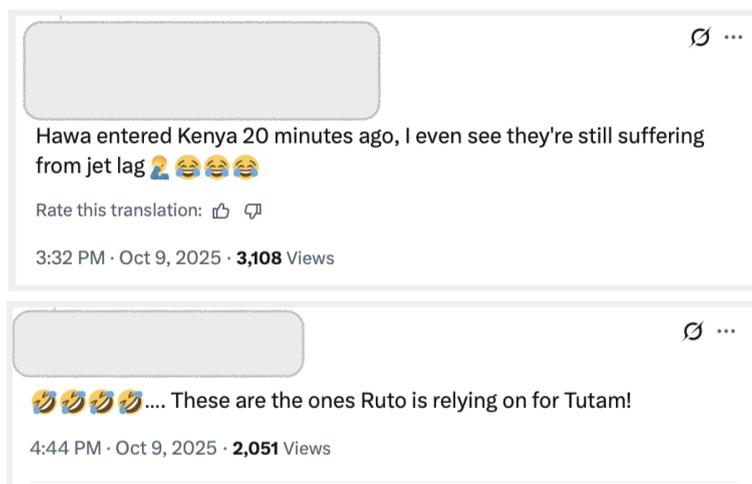
b. Somalis are being registered to boost Ruto's votes in 2027

Between 24 September and 09 October 2025, a [narrative](#) emerged accusing Ruto of planning to rig the 2027 general elections by flooding the voter roll with Somali nationals. The core allegation was that Ruto had ordered the registration of three million Somalis. This, it is alleged, is an electoral strategy designed to exploit polygamy, with the claim that Somali men's multiple wives would exponentially increase the number of loyal voters.

Another strand of the narrative [alleged](#) that Somalis were being 'imported' into Kenya and subsequently registered as voters to support Ruto in 2027. One post [claimed](#) that Somali refugees who had been awaiting UNHCR relocation to the United States became stranded after President Trump's refugee admission policy [realignment](#) on 20 January 2025, and suggested that they now posed "a national problem unless they are a 'vote machine' for 2027.

The narrative was further fuelled by a [video](#) clip featuring two Somali individuals who could not answer basic civic questions, such as naming the governor of Nairobi. This was seized upon as [evidence](#) that 'unqualified foreigners' were being handed IDs purely to manufacture electoral numbers. The comments beneath the video [included](#) that the state was intentionally altering Kenya's electoral demographics in favour of a particular ethnic and religious bloc.

The conversations had five mentions on X, accumulating 106,725 views and 1,694 interactions.

Hawa entered Kenya 20 minutes ago, I even see they're still suffering from jet lag 🧏‍♀️😂😂😂

Rate this translation: 👍 👎

3:32 PM · Oct 9, 2025 · **3,108** Views

🤣🤣🤣🤣.... These are the ones Ruto is relying on for Tutam!

4:44 PM · Oct 9, 2025 · **2,051** Views

Sample comments on Somali voters to boost Ruto's votes in 2027 ([top](#), [bottom](#)) (Source: CfA using X)

CfA will keep monitoring these conversations.

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. Sexism shadows women's leadership in Mombasa

Between 01 September and 08 October 2025, online discussions about the 2027 Likoni parliamentary race revealed instances of gender-based discrimination targeting women leaders. Posts referencing Citizen TV anchor Mwanahamisi Hamadi, also known as Mwanamke Bomba, and current Likoni MP Mishi Mboko attracted comments questioning the suitability of women for political leadership.

On 01 September 2025, a [Facebook post](#) called for men to step into leadership roles in Likoni, stating that the constituency was not for women alone. Although presented as a general appeal for balance, the post implied that women were unsuitable for political leadership. The post received 107 views and eight interactions.

A [post](#) shared on 02 September 2025 in the [@Mombasa Youth Senate](#) Facebook group supported Hamadi's political ambitions, calling her a lioness and comparing her to Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu. While the post endorsed her candidacy, comments under it and related TikTok videos showed divided opinions. Across both platforms, the posts drew more than 9,000 views and 237 interactions. About 10% of comments featured gendered insults or dismissive language toward women leaders. One user wrote in Swahili, 'why wamama' (why women), while another stated, 'sai kiongozi Likoni ni mwanaume, mpende msipende, kaonyeni vyombo kinamama,' which translates to, 'whether you like it or not, this time round the leader in Likoni will be a man. Women should go wash dishes.'
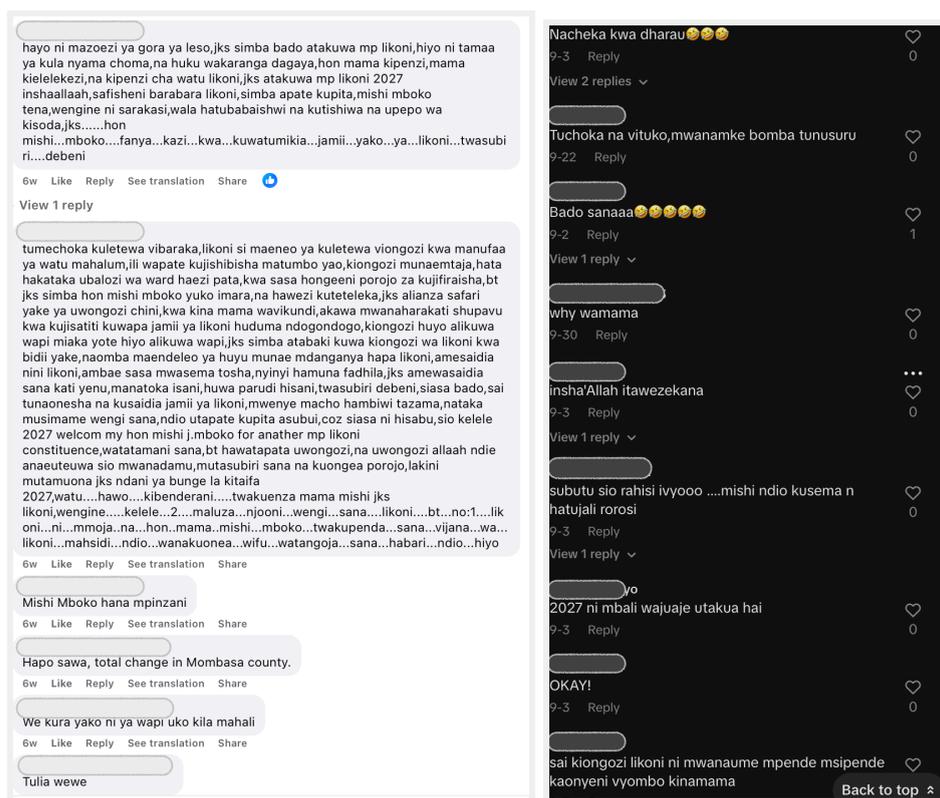
Sample comments on Mwanamke Bomba vs Mishi for Likoni MP ([left](#), [right](#)) (Source: CfA using Facebook and TikTok)

CfA and Siasa Place will continue to monitor such conversations.

Cite this case study as *'Biweekly overview of information manipulation & interference in Kenya, Code for Africa (CfA), 23 October 2025, www.disinfo.africa*

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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.   @finestkuria

The X account @finestkuria created in June 2021 and has 10,300 followers and 133,600 posts started the hashtag #GEMACivilWar, alleging that divisions in the Mt. Kenya region are a result of power plays between Uhuru Kenyatta and Rigathi Gachagua. The account made 26 X posts using the hashtag on 01 October 2025. The account has been involved in campaigns amplifying pro-government narratives such as #NoiseVsProgress, #KenyaIn2055 and #GidiGidiRudiRudi. The hashtag #NoiseVsProgress was a pro-government hashtag amplifying president Ruto's development projects with a major focus on the affordable housing scheme. The hashtag #KenyaIn2055, also a pro-government hashtag, portrays Ruto's affordable housing scheme as a key pillar in ensuring Kenya catches up economically to countries such as Singapore by the year 2055. The third hashtag #GidiGidiRudiRudi emerged immediately after president Ruto hosted the Kenya African National Union (KANU) leaders, led by their party leader and Baringo senator Gideon Moi. The hashtag pushed the narrative that Ruto was planning to reshuffle the cabinet to include KANU leaders at the expense of Kikuyu cabinet secretaries who were allegedly not doing enough to promote Ruto.

b.   @undergroundke

On 29 September 2025, the account @undergroundke published seven posts containing misleading claims tied to Kenya's voter registration drive. The posts coincided with the launch of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission's (IEBC) continuous voter registration exercise, which will run until 60 days before the 2027 elections.

While framed as civic engagement messages encouraging voter registration, the posts spread disinformation by alleging that Ruto was registering illegal Somali nationals to vote for him. The account also refers to Ruto as the 'ICC criminal' and 'the abductor in a theft.'

Between 29 September and 08 October 2025, the posts collectively received 807 views and no interactions.
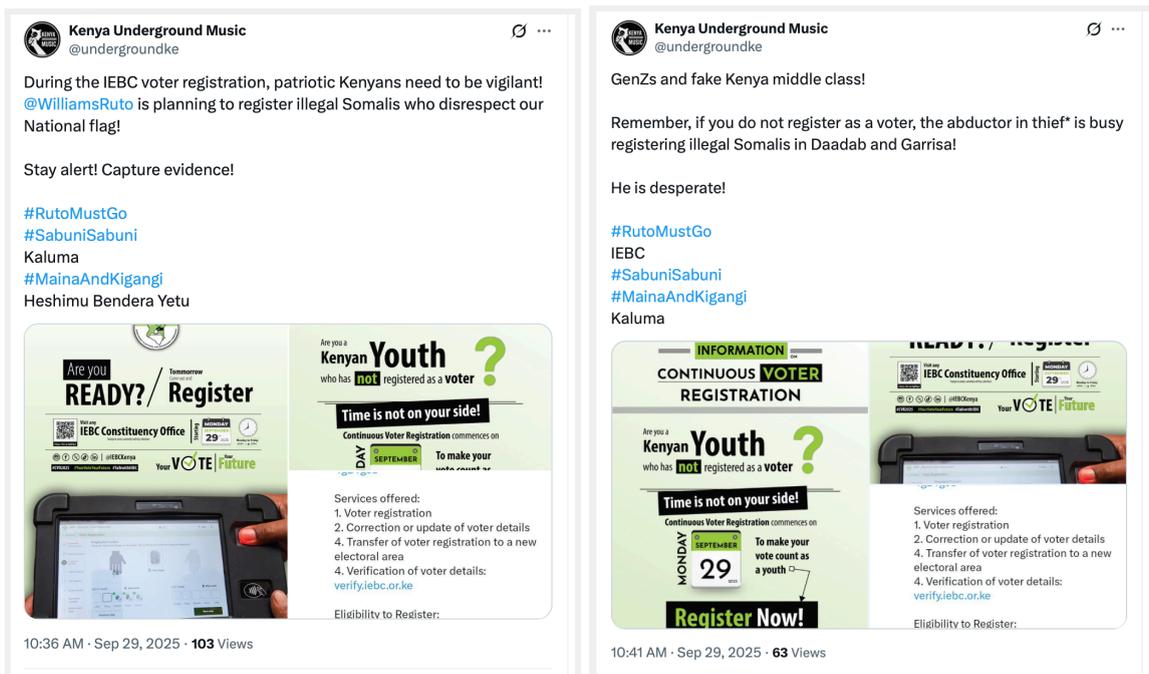
Notably, the account's bio includes a [link](#) to a website hosting AI-generated songs that convey anti-government sentiments. The website claims to amplify marginalised voices, highlight social injustices, and empower individuals to advocate for their rights and freedoms. One of the [featured](#) songs, titled 'Zakayo Resign', with 'Zakayo' being a popular nickname referring to President Ruto, contains lyrics that read: *'Zakayo uko wapi sasa, Kusema ukweli tunataka haki, Giza linaingia kila saa, Uongozi wako umeshindwa kabisa.'* This translates to:*'Zakayo (Ruto), where are you now? To be honest, we want justice, Darkness falls every hour, Your leadership has completely failed.'* The song's thumbnail features an image of President Ruto accompanied by the text: 'Not my president, you can't kill us and lead us, Ruto must go'. Together, these visuals and lyrics reflect strong dissatisfaction with the current leadership and reinforce the account's broader anti-government narrative, aligning with its pattern of politically charged and dissenting content.

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. Create a dedicated hashtag

The DISARM framework [defines this tactic](#) as creating campaign-specific hashtags, such as the #GEMACivilWar campaign. The campaign used phrases such as 'Rent A Kikuyu' and 'Nyeri vs Kiambu' alongside the hashtag to imply there is a rift between the Kikuyu community in Nyeri and Kiambu.

b. Prepare assets impersonating legitimate entities

The DISARM framework identifies this [tactic](#) as the strategic creation or repurposing of content that mimics trusted sources to enhance credibility. This tactic was used during the #GEMACivilWar campaign, where actors mimicked the visual and editorial style of The Standard newspaper. The

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patient zero account created an X post with a [falsified cover page](#) of the Standard's 01 October 2025 issue.

6.   Conclusion

The #GEMACivilWar, and Somali voter-registration narratives all highlight how social media is being used, at a moment when election conversations are ramping up in the run-up to the 2027 polls, to amplify divisive and misleading narratives, exploit hashtags and manipulated visuals, deepen regional, political and ethnic fractures, and erode trust in credible media, underscoring the urgent need for strong digital literacy and fact-checking efforts to protect public discourse.

*This report was written by Code for Africa (CfA) iLAB investigative data analysts **Nirali Patel, 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.

*This report contributes to a growing knowledge base that documents African-focused information manipulation, influence operations, and weaponised disinformation. The knowledge base is curated by the **African Digital Democracy Observatory** (ADDO). The research in this specific report was produced by analysts attached to ADDO member Code for Africa (CfA), including CfA's **CivicSignal** media monitoring lab, its **iLAB** forensic investigation unit, and its **PesaCheck** fact-checking team.*

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