



# SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS

This report is part of a broader initiative to analyze online discourse and specifically monitor harmful content e.g., hate speech in Kenya on various topics in order to help mitigate the threat of polarizing content in fueling offline and online violence.

Insights gathered from the monitoring efforts are shared with civil society actors to inform their efforts geared towards peacebuilding, upholding human rights, cohesion and inclusivity in digital spaces.

Kenya

# Exploring online polarizing content in Kenya- 2023

## 1. Online discourse on LGBTQ+ rights in Kenya

Kenya's laws forbidding consensual same-sex relations have been used to justify discrimination and violence of the LGBTQ+ community online and offline. In 2019, Kenya's high court upheld two colonial-era laws criminalizing homosexuality on grounds that activists who petitioned the court "failed to prove that the provisions are discriminatory." In the following years after this ruling, harmful content targeting the LGBTQ+ community has continued to rise especially online albeit sporadically. This problematic content has been seen to correlate with various events linked to the topic e.g. documented public cases of discrimination, violence or hate crime towards a member of the LGBTQ+ community, a policy or bill touching this matter, speech by a political leader, a visit by a foreign government dignitary etc. For instance, in April 2022, the death of Sheila Lumumba, a 25-year-old Kenyan non-binary<sup>1</sup> lesbian triggered polarizing conversations online, on LGBTQ rights in Kenya, where some social media users were justifying violence against members of the LGBTQ community.

This pattern was also repeated in January 2023 after fashion model and LGBTQ activist Edwin Chiloba<sup>2</sup> was found dead in Kapsaret. It was also seen in February 2023 after the Supreme Court of Kenya ruled that gays and lesbians have the right of association, a spike of hateful content was witnessed on social media condemning the ruling and calling for the harming of LGBTQ community.

We began monitoring the online discourse on the topic, specifically on Facebook to try and understand the sub-themes surrounding the harmful narratives on social media with the aim of addressing online harm and hate speech. This report therefore provides a topline analysis of some of the events that have taken place from January – May 2023 and the resulting narratives that emerge in relation to these events.

In 2023 online conversations on the topic of LGBTQ+ began peaking in January 6 after Chiloba's death and continued in response to events that unfolded later.

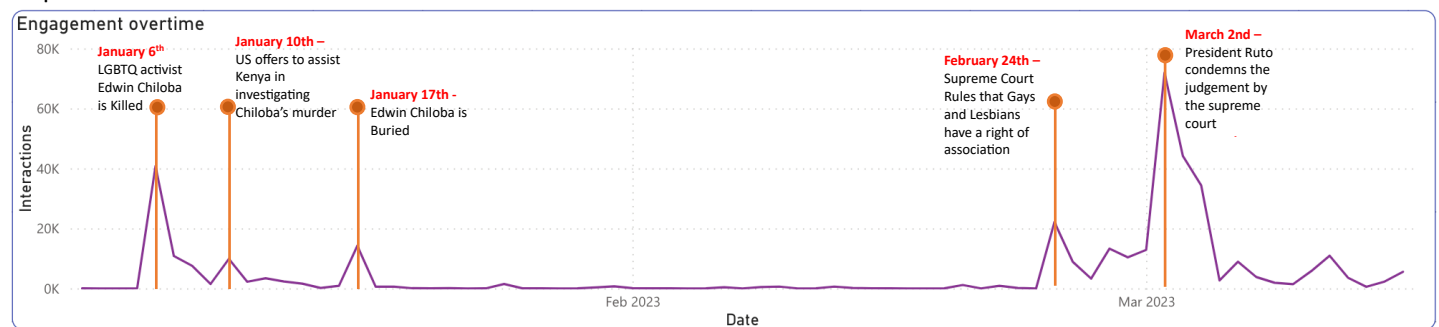


Fig 1: Line graph depicting engagement of Facebook posts discussing LGBTQ+ content in Kenya between January 1, - March 17<sup>th</sup> 2023 – See the same graph on a logarithmic scale below

It is important to note that, while the line graph above represents two major periods that have triggered anti-LGBTQ conversations in Kenya, when the data is viewed on a logarithmic scale (See graph below), it shows that the conversations have been ongoing - although at lower volumes- between these two key periods and are today an ongoing issue that sporadically flares up and has the potential to trigger violence as we will see in the actual content.

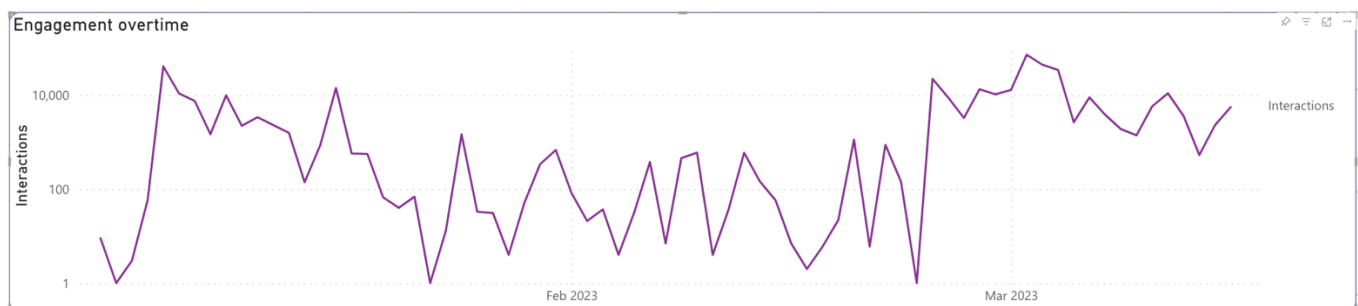


Fig 2: Line graph on a logarithmic scale depicting engagement of Facebook posts discussing LGBTQ+ content in Kenya between January 1, - March 17<sup>th</sup> 2023.

<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch(2022) Inadequate Kenyan Police Response to Brutal Killing of Non– Binary Lesbian - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/29/inadequate-kenyan-police-response-brutal-killing-non-binary-lesbian>

<sup>2</sup> The Standard (2023)Police probing death of model and LGBTQ activist Edwin Chiloba -- <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/counties/article/2001464595/police-probing-death-of-model-and-lgbtq-activist-edwin-chiloba>

#### a. January 06<sup>th</sup> - LGBTQ activist Edwin Chiloba is Killed

##### Narratives/Trends/Findings

- Social media users troll Edwin Chiloba using terms such as Ass-Kofu after the suspected killer was said to be the son of a preacher. Ass-Kofu is a play on the term *Askofu* -which means preacher in Swahili- but in this context the term is spelled using Ass and Kofu as a troll to point out that Edwin was gay. Other trolling terms that emerged include Kipkosgay and kipsigay. In this instance the word gay is used together with names common in the Kalenjin community E.g., Kipkosgei is a Kalenjin name but in order to troll the deceased the name is changed to KipkosGay.
- Religion is immediately thrown into the conversation with users claiming that he was satanic, part of the illuminati cult and a representation of Sodom and Gomorrah. The need for prayers for the country also emerge and Kenyans are asked to repent, because these are signs of the end of days.
- Same sex relationship conversations tend to focus on describing the genitalia and the act of sex. Terms such as: sewer line, sewage line, sim2, exhaust hole, exhaust pipe, kashimo ka matako (*the anus*) among others are used to provide commentary on the topic and depict disgust and troll the community.
- Insults towards the deceased also begin to emerge with some users stating that he was useless and does not deserve a burial and should be cremated.
- Terms used to define LGBTQ emerge as a way to code switch. e.g. instead of writing LGBTQ, the acronym is replaced by Eljibitikiu, gay men are referred to “watu wa Sim2” (*the sim 2 people*), gay couples are referred to “group ya sisi kwa sisi” (*the group of us for us*). This type of code switching is seen in situations where social media users are concerned that if they use the correct terms together with insulting and hateful content, they might be blocked by technology companies from using their social media platforms.
- Harmful content discussing violence also begins to emerge- Some users begin calling members of the LGBTQ community dogs and begin to declare that if they ever became gay, people should harm them by e.g. gorging their eyes out as punishment as others pile on to state that they would not only gorge their eyes out but chop off their tongues.

Example(s) of harmful content on Facebook: -

*-People like this deserve what they got, In fact One wickedness down, I will never kill anyone but this people Huwa tu wananikasirisha, Kama Ni Fornication Io Hata Mungu anajua ni Weaknesses ya our Sexuality but To Him This thing is Detestable to God design despite Him God when He created Humans it never passed his Mind that we humans we will be like that, I declare n I swear in the Name Of Jesus Christ,My son or Daughter Chose this I disown him or her,This is not right,Even Then Fallen Angels Never Slept With Men But Women,What kind of wickedness is this.*

**Translation:** (Swahili section)-.... this people really anger me, if its fornication even God knows that it is a weakness of our sexuality.....

*-may they kill one another so fast to end LGBT on the face of the earth that we can have a world full of streight people.*

#### b. January 10<sup>th</sup> – US offers to assist Kenya in investigating Chiloba’s murder<sup>3</sup>

##### Narratives/Trends/Findings

- Facebook users push back on the remarks by US State Department spokesperson Ned Price on assisting Kenya in investigating the murder. The key point raised in their sentiment is; why this is concerning to the US yet in the past there has been other important Kenyans that passed away but the US did not offer support in investigating their murders e.g., Msando, Yebai and Kenei. The US government is labeled a dictator government for meddling in Kenya’s’ affairs while others accuse it of pushing the LGBTQ agenda down Kenyans’ throats. This is also linked to aid and funding, from western countries to Kenya. Facebook users argue that if Kenya receives aid from western countries, then it should be ready to deal with weird communities such as LGBTQ.
- A sub narrative within the one on the US planning to spread the gay agenda to Kenya, is also present- Here, Facebook users argue that the Kenyan government has colluded with the US government to spread this agenda specifically through the current president as a way for the President to repay his debt to the US government for ensuring he secured a victory in the 2022 general elections. E.g.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.k24tv.co.ke/news/us-help-investigate-chiloba-murder-91885/>

*-Nabii is US govt puppet..they helped him steal elections..so he must do what they want or aonyeshwe kanyoni wang'ethe*

**Translation:** *The prophet<sup>4</sup> is US govt puppet..they helped him steal elections..so he must do what they want or he will suffer the consequences.*

- Terms such as Sim2 continue to be used, while variations of LGBTQ i.e. from “Eljibitikiu” to “Helbgitiqwu” to “erogitikyu”<sup>5</sup> and others are also seen. As mentioned earlier some of these tactics are used to avoid being found guilty of spreading hate or harmful content against LGBTQ. One user actually notes that they prefer sharing their point of view in the inbox (private) to avoid going to Zuckerberg’s jail<sup>6</sup>

*-Let me tell you what I believe about this LGBT thing kwa inbox because I don't want to go to zukabaga's jail.*

- Insults such as Sisi Kwa sisi<sup>7</sup> devils are also present at this point. The community is also dehumanized and likened to dogs.
- Calls for violence against the community are also present- e.g.

*-Kama kuna mwingine amebaki auawe ata yeye waishe wote.*

**Translation:** *If there is another one left, they should be killed so that they are all eradicated*

*-They should be killed totally be Kwan walizaliwa na Baba au wamama only.*

**Translation:** *They should be killed totally, were they born by father or mothers only<sup>8</sup>*

*-Wakufe wote*

**Translation:** *They should all die*

*-úció ní únguí menagwo gay nícithíre ciothe* 

**Translation:** *That is dog-like behaviour that they have, gay should all be finished (emoji of throwing trash)*

**-NONSENSE LGBTQ SHOULD BE MURDERED**

Calls for arresting all of them and locking them in a separate jail are also echoed-

*-Aya mekwenda manyitwo othe mohwo maisha na mohwo njera yao kando*

**Translation:** *These ones need to be all arrested and jailed for life and be jailed in their separate jail*

### c. January 17<sup>th</sup> - Edwin Chiloba is Buried.

#### **Narratives/Trends/Findings**

- Content fatigue: Facebook users complain that the topic of LGBTQ has gone on for too long in Kenya and that the news need to cover other regions and other topics in Kenya and that they are tired of this story.

*-Citizen Tv editor must be a member of this elijibitikiyu. You've preached and really cried on this matter posting it 99 times a day.*

This sentiment has been seen in contexts e.g. Ethiopia where the main stream media outlets cover a story related to a topic that is not welcomed by some communities. The concern and fear in the community is usually that the topic is now becoming main stream and might become normalized. E.g.

*-This news have become outdated. It seems you lack what to post*

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<sup>4</sup> Nabii or Prophet is a coded word to refer to the current Kenyan president due to his religious beliefs.

<sup>5</sup> See above on code switching

<sup>6</sup> Facebook Jail- [https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/guide-facebook-jail-everything-you-need-know-viena-abdon/?trk=public\\_profile\\_article\\_view](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/guide-facebook-jail-everything-you-need-know-viena-abdon/?trk=public_profile_article_view)

<sup>7</sup> Sisi kwa sisi translates to “us to us” which is a coded phrase used to describe same sex relationships.

<sup>8</sup> This sentiment is seen throughout the data. Specifically, social media users argue that even people in same sex relationships were born from heterosexual relationships and should therefore not proclaim to be gay or lesbian or queer because they would not exist if it were not for heterosexual relationships

- Trolling of the deceased is also seen to continue with terms such as Assman, CauseGAY<sup>9</sup>, silASS

#### d. February 24<sup>th</sup> – Supreme Court Rules that Gays and Lesbians have a right of association<sup>10</sup>

##### Narratives/Trends/Findings

- This ruling was met with strong pushback not only on Facebook but on other social media platforms as well. Arguments centered around Kenyan laws that criminalize same-sex conduct under articles 162 and 165 of the penal code. There was confusion on how the ruling was made in a country where the penal code was being enforced. Others blamed the current judiciary's leadership for taking the country to hell while reminiscing the times when it was led by Justice David Maraga citing that he would have never allowed this to happen.

*- Koome I think she is one also useless court I hate it. <sup>11</sup>*

There was also outright rejection of the ruling, with Facebook users saying, this will never happen in Kenya.

- Content targeting the LGBTQ community focusing on their segregation was also present-

*-Inafaa wawekwe kwa jela moja halafu waambiwe wazae baada ya miezi tisa. Wakikosa kuzaa wanyongwe.*

**Translation:** *They should be put in one jail and then told to give birth after nine months. If they don't give birth they should be hanged.*

*-Those supporting this and are members of LGBTQ in our country need to be Identified and taken to isolated area. wakulane huko ili wasiambukize wengine huo ujinga.*

**Translation:** *Those supporting this are members of LGBTQ in our country need to be identified and taken to isolated area and have sex there so that they don't infect others with their stupidity.*

Warnings are also issued against the LGBTQ community, to not visit certain regions in Kenya-

*-wasijaripu kwa pokot watakuwa maiti maramoja jamii ya pokot haikupali kirryoon.*

**Translate:** *Let them not try in Pokot, they will be dead bodies immediately, the Pokot family does not allow this.*

Other warnings were indirect with overtones of harm and violence towards the community

*-Mtoto wangu akijaribu hiyo ujinga hiyo ni direct entry kwa kaburi.*

**Translation:** *If my child tries that stupidity, it will be a direct entry to the grave.*

*This specific post (which is also a threat) - More metallic sandukuz loading. Hawa watatii – Translation: More metallic boxes loading, these ones will obey* - is a reference to the late Edwin Chiloba and the state his body was found when he was murdered<sup>12</sup>.

- Terms and code words used to refer to lesbians are also seen e.g., Lele, while a significant volume of the conversations focus on the sexual act where terms such as matako (buttocks) or vidole (fingers) are used to troll the community and express disgust.
- Religious references are used to judge and rebuke Kenyans stating that Kenya will perish for passing this ruling. The country is likened to Sodom and Gomorrah and that these are the same events that preceded the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Others state that this is satanism, the work of the devil and /or the actual devil incarnate.

<sup>9</sup> Terms such as causegay and silass are used to tarnish the legitimate names of people that the social media users think are gay. E.g. Kosgei which is a name in Kalenjin is changed to causegay while Silas is changed to SilAss

<sup>10</sup> The Standard (2023) Supreme Court Rules that Gays and Lesbians have a right of association. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/national/article/2001467772/supreme-court-gays-and-lesbians-have-a-right-of-association>

<sup>11</sup> Lady Justice Karambu Koome is a Kenyan advocate and a Human Rights Defender, currently serving as the Chief Justice of Kenya since 21st May 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Citizen Digital (2023). LGBTQ+ Activist Edwin Chiloba Killed, Body Stuffed In Metallic Box In Uasin Gishu Available at: <https://www.citizen.digital/news/lgbtq-activist-edwin-chiloba-killed-body-stuffed-in-metallic-box-in-uasin-gishu-n312166>

- Ruto is also blamed for this ruling. Facebook users cited that his search for foreign aid and funds landed the country in this situation. That he is ruining the country and he just got into office. Jill Biden is also linked to this ruling with others noting that she came into the country to ensure that the ruling happens before Kenya gets funding.

*- jst because first lady of USA is in kenya ruto is killing generations.*

*- huyu bibi ya Biden ameleta hii ujinga*

**Translation:** *This Biden's wife has brought this stupidity.*

- The church is also blamed for sleeping and allowing the LGBTQ problem to get to a point where it is now being normalized by the courts. The church is then urged to ensure that this does not happen and is urged to protect its flock.

#### **e. March 2 – President Ruto condemns the judgement by the supreme court concerning LGBTQ rights.**

##### **Narratives/Trends/Findings**

- The president's remarks were met with mixed reactions. Some Facebook users welcomed the statement citing that they are glad that he intervened. Others castigated him for taking too much time to respond to a very serious matter after the ruling was made. Some argued that the delay was because the first Lady of the US was in Kenya during the ruling and Ruto was afraid to talk and then lose the aid money from the US government.
- In relation to the aid funding narrative, others did not believe the statements by the president, citing that he had already secured funds and was just trying to hoodwink Kenyans to think that he was anti-gay. He was blamed for being behind the judgement and pretending to be angered when in fact he was paying back the favor from the US government for rigging him into power – A narrative seen previously on January 10th. Others that were disappointed with his stance, noted that they expected a draconian Museveni-like approach on this matter but instead got a mild response that was all talk and no action from president Ruto. The Election ruling was also thrown into the conversation. Some Facebook users questioned why Ruto had respected and urged the country to respect the decision of the court when it upheld his election win but now, he was turning around and disrespecting the court on the LGBTQ matter- This narrative was however not used to support the court ruling and condemn Ruto's response, it was used to argue that he was pretending and was actually behind the ruling.
- The judiciary leadership i.e Justice Koome was attacked, labeled as a devil worshipper and a satanist for influencing and making this decision in Kenya. Ruto was asked to fire the judges and have them go home as punishment for the ruling.
- Harmful content towards the LGBTQ community was once again seen. Content included blaming them for the lack of rains in Kenya and the looming drought, while other content called for the outright harming of the community.

*-Those people should NOT stay in the society and MUST be KILLED.*

*-Unnatural filthiness to be punished with life imprisonment. No such Acts be allowed in Kenya*

*-Not in Kenya!!! Mob justice ndo itaamua kwa hao washenzi.*

**Translation:** *Not in Kenya!!! Mob justice is what will decide for those idiots*

## **2. Polarizing political Commentary**

Some politicians have been vocal about this topic and their commentary on it has been polarizing on social media.

This section captures some of the remarks by specific politicians that were made directly on social media or were made offline but were captured by media outlets, bloggers and other news media and broadcasted via social media. The list political actors covered here is not fully representative of every political leader that responded to the ruling or Chiloba's death, here we have included those that have commented on the topic at least more than once and have used inflammatory language in their reaction.

This section also includes some comments from Facebook users who reacted to the commentary from politicians. Comments from the public have been curated to those that have misinformation /disinformation or hatespeech, to show how support for anti-LGBTQ sentiment carries harmful content.





**Oscar Sudi - January 9** -Commenting on the death of Edwin Chiloba

"Hiyo maneno ya mvulana kupendana na mvulana mwingine ni ushetani wa hali ya juu...hao wenye wanafanya hivyo wazazi wao wangepanya hivyo hawangezaliwa. Ukitaka kufanya gayism kwenda kwa msituni na ikiwezekana mshindwe kabisa."~ Oscar Sudi.

**Video Link-**  
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2956440917985939>

**MDH Comment(s) Example**  
*- Eldoret belongs to Jesus Christ! Mashoga na wasagaji mhame huko ama mfunzwe adabu kama Chiromba!!!!*  
**Translation:** Eldoret belongs to Jesus Christ! Gays should leave or be taught manners like Chiloba



**Mohammed Ali – January 10**

**Post link -**  
<https://www.facebook.com/438216603021915/posts/2739380056238880>

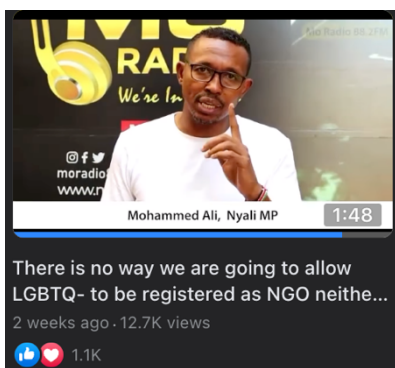
**Example of MDH Comment(s) Example(s)**  
*- If they take their uncouth behaviour as a human right then they better look somewhere else outside Kenya. we will not allow them. and if anyone is found advocating as a right then he/she must face the wrath of the community. #hata kuongelea hii tabia inaogopesha.*  
**Translation:** (Swahili section) #Even talking about this behavior is scary  
*-They should not just be arrested but hanged as well, our morals both cultural and spiritual should be preserved at any cost. Wenye kurusha mawe warushu.*  
**Translation:** (Swahili section) Those who want to throw stones let them throw



**Hon George Kaluma – January 12**

**Post link -**  
<https://twitter.com/gpdkaluma/status/1613421628553060352?s=20>

**Example of MDH Comment(s) Example(s)**  
While the comments for this post were not gathered because this was a tweet and not a Facebook post, it is important to note that this post had over 500 retweets and 3000 likes at the time this monitoring was conducted



**Mohammed Ali – February 26**

**Post link-**  
<https://www.facebook.com/Official.JichoPevu/videos/752642809624087>

**Example of MDH Comment(s) Example(s)**  
*- Wafungwe kwa ndenge wapalekwe juu wakifika juu wafunguliwe.*  
**Translation:** They should be tied into a plane and be taken up and when they get up they should be released



**Mohammed Ali - February 28**

**Post link-**  
<https://www.facebook.com/Official.JichoPevu/videos/739866517735888>

**Example of MDH Comment(s) Example(s)**  
*-hao washoga wafukuswe kenya ndio wanasababisha mvua kutonyesha*  
**Translation:** Those gays should be evicted from Kenya, they are the cause of failing rains



**Peter Kaluma – February 24**

**Post link-**  
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=224892296662987>

**Example of MDH Comment(s) Example(s)**  
*-And we're going to support him kwanza adhabu ya kifo iwekwe. We don't want degenerate morons in our midst let alone our God fearing country*  
**Translation:** (Swahili section) in fact the death penalty should be put...  
*- Hawa watu watupwe msituni. That behavior is a blasphemy. Ni kumkosea Mungu sana wanadamu tunapokumbatia tabia za aina hii. Kweli shetani yuko kazini*  
**Translation:** (Swahili section). These people should be thrown in the forest..... It's really wronging God when humans adopt behaviors like these...The devil is truly at work



**Peter Kaluma – March 1**

**Post link-** <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3408717306110759>

**Example of MDH Comment(s) Example(s)**

-we're not only going to pray but also punish the perpetrators physically.

- hao maumbwa tupewe ruhusa tupige, wataacha hio ujinga ASAP

**Translation:** Those dogs, we should be given permission to beat them, they will stop that stupidity ASAP



**Mike Sonko – March 5**

**Post link-** <https://www.facebook.com/100063841212017/posts/616902540447781>

The actual video is on YouTube- See link below

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPYvmVHpDVM>

(Focus on LGBTQ is from 6:06 – 8:08 min, where Mike Sonko promises to pay anyone who will whip members of the LGBTQ community and record the whipping and send the video to him.

*Vijana Kenya mzima niliwapea kazi ya kudeal na mashoga mkiwapata wakifanya hyo maneno yao. Nangojea video za nyahunyo.*

**Translate:** All youth across Kenya, I gave you the work of dealing with gays If you find them doing those things. I am waiting for the whipping videos.

**Example of MDH Comment(s) Example(s)**

- Yes...ii ndio best law for them....juu ni ujinga na uchafu basi tunadeal nao kiujinga....infact Mungu anasema tuwauwe.

**Translation:** Yes, this is the best law for them, because it is stupidity and filthy then we shall deal with them in a stupid way, infact God says we kill them



**Mike Sonko – March 13**

**Post link-** <https://www.facebook.com/884190765368787/posts/1634199863701203>

**Example of MDH Comment(s) Example(s)**

- Watwangwe kabisa

**Translation:** they should be really beaten

- Wapigwe kapsaaa 🤔

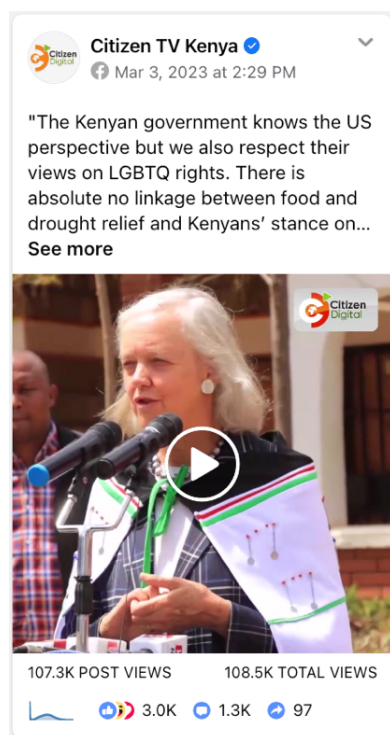
**Translation:** they should be really beaten

Overall sentiment from users on Facebook was support for the politicians' anti-LGBTQ+ commentary after Chiloba's death in January and their stand against the court ruling in February. Those challenging content advocating for the violation of human rights were trolled, bullied and even labeled as gay. This trend was also common across other posts that were not made by politicians. Comment sections become spaces for support of an ideology and any dissenting voices are attacked as outcasts.



This behavior is an archetype of polarization on social media, - there is easy confirmation of biased expectations which are also easily rewarded, through laughing and heart emojis, likes and shares on comments that vilify outgroups<sup>13</sup>. These comment sections often serve as echo chambers where only those that agree with the hateful sentiment in the post get to comment while those that dissent self-censor themselves for fear of being attacked online

### 3. Foreign government commentary



#### Meg Whitman – March 3

Reference to post link

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=559773929456239>

#### Examples of MDH

-The matter of the fact is that they don't really care about our views towards the lgbtq community. To them the alphabet society is safeguarded as a human right. When mental illness is normalized, we are screwed as a society. That is what it is. These people are mentally ill and they have treatments for that.

-it's simple let two groups (L & G) be put in two rooms of prison. Wakizaa mtoto they will have bailed their freedom out. If not they rot in jail.



#### Russian Embassy – March 14

Reference to post link

<https://twitter.com/russembkenya/status/163571855911450625?s=20>

#### Examples of MDH

-majority of us don't want your stupid and unnatural acts.

-Kaluma should be more careful now, otherwise he might be planned anytime because what the West hate is to be opposed in matters of that iniquitous act of LGBTQ which they know we all hate!! Anyway, God will protect u in ur fight against it!

The post was shared on twitter but was also referenced on Facebook where it received reactions and comments).

While other foreign government have responded to the matter in Kenya, the US and Russian government were among the first to directly respond to the president's remarks or to reactions by a Kenyan Member of Parliament. Commentary from both governments generated misinformation, disinformation and harmful/hateful (MDH) content against members of the LGBTQ+. For instance, Facebook users' comments and reactions to Meg Whitman attacked the U.S. government for meddling in Kenyan affairs while others attacked her with gender and racial based insults. Others trolled her with disinformation, saying

<sup>13</sup> Harel, T. O., Jameson, J. K., & Maoz, I. (2020). The Normalization of Hatred: Identity, Affective Polarization, and Dehumanization on Facebook in the Context of Intractable Political Conflict.

that her second name which includes the word “man” was an indicator that she was transgender, that she was not a woman. Other commentators pushed the narrative that drought relief from the US to Kenya was pegged on the court ruling. Religious comments focusing on branding the LGBTQ community as satanists and devil worshipers overlapped with content that claimed it was stupidity, madness and a sickness. Content focusing on sexual acts was again used as a way to portray disgust and push back against the court ruling and what social media users were citing as “acts from the west”.

Reactions to the Russian Embassy tweet were conversely supportive of the Kremlin and were pro Putin. However, it is important to note that many people in the comment section assumed that the tweet by the Russian Embassy condemned LGBTQ rights and their existence, when it actually talked on the dissemination of LGBTQ materials. While the LGBTQ community face a myriad of challenges in Russia, the country in fact liberalized some of its anti-LGBT laws after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Most notably was the decriminalization of homosexual relationships in 1993<sup>14</sup> and allowing transgender Russians to change their legal gender on identity documents from 1997<sup>15</sup>. Comments however did not make reference to this and instead praised Russia while condemning the west and for standing with Kenya in rejecting LGBTQ rights— e.g.

*-Putin is the way to go. The Western has lost it even their basic family units and morals is no longer something they even know what it is!! They have turned against every belief they held on. Such a sad state.*

*-Russia is right and we love them, let them dismantle usa*

Other commentators questioned the country’s history and respect of human rights and dignity while referencing the ongoing war in Ukraine. These narratives were however not being used to defend the LGBTQ community in Kenya, they were cautionary in nature suggesting that Kenya should not be caught up in the divide between US and Russia. There were concerned voices that Kenya had been caught in the middle of a battle between the two states and was likely to suffer the most if a battle between the two countries played out. They further noted that the Russian sentiments were only aimed at gaining support for Russia and its ideologies against the US and not genuinely in support of Kenya’s stance on LGBTQ issues.

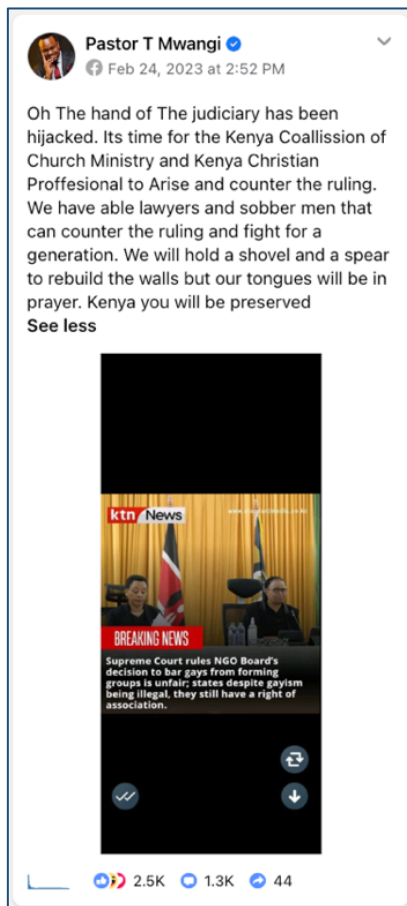
#### 4. Religious commentary

While a significantly high number of posts that condemned the ruling cited Christian and Islamic values embedded within Kenyan society, there were not many individual religious leaders that made statements on Facebook. There were however statements by religious committees as a sign of solidarity between the religious leaders and a few individuals who spoke on social media. There were also anti-LGBTQ+ protests in Mombasa by the Muslim community on 17<sup>th</sup> March, and in Nairobi by the Christian community on 25<sup>th</sup> March.

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<sup>14</sup> Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Russia: Update to RUS13194 of 16 February 1993 on the treatment of homosexuals, 29 February 2000, RUS33940.E, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ad788c.html> [accessed 31 March 2023].

<sup>15</sup> Buyantueva R. (2023). A history of LGBTQ rights in modern Russia: From progress to despair- London School of Economics Blog <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2023/02/21/a-history-of-lgbtq-rights-in-modern-russia-from-progress-to-despair/>



Pastor T - February 24

Reference to post link

<https://www.facebook.com/180085118859875/posts/2201912766677090>

Examples of MDH

Nipewe ruhusa nikuje na mshipi. Hii gayism must end

**Translation:** I should be given permission I come with a belt. This gayism must end.

Naskia uganda 🇰🇪 hawa watu huchomwa....

**Translation:** I heard in Uganda these people are usually burnt

*I want two women to be locked in a room and two men to be locked in another room, waambiwe ile siku mmoja wao atapata mimba ndio watatolewa uko, so they can tell us if wazazi wao wangekua LGBTQ wangekua hii dunia. LGBTQ is cult.*

**Translation:** I want two women to be locked in a room and two men to be locked in another room, and be told that the day they will get pregnant is when they shall be released from there, so they can tell us if their parents were LGBTQ if they would have been in this world. LGBTQ is cult



The Committee of Jamia Mosque Nairobi – February 28

Reference to post link

<https://www.facebook.com/51790559057/posts/10158607741934058>

Examples of MDH

uchafu Kwa serikali... unatobwa matako mabibi wakiwa wengi hivo madness... they should be jailed and excommunicated from our society

**Translation:** government's filth..you are penetrated in the anus while wives are so many that's madness..they should be jailed and excommunicated from our society

I condemn too ata wanafaa kupewa death sentence ama wafungwe jera mpaka ile siku watazaa

**Translation:** I condemn too in fact they should be given a death sentence or jailed until the day they give birth.

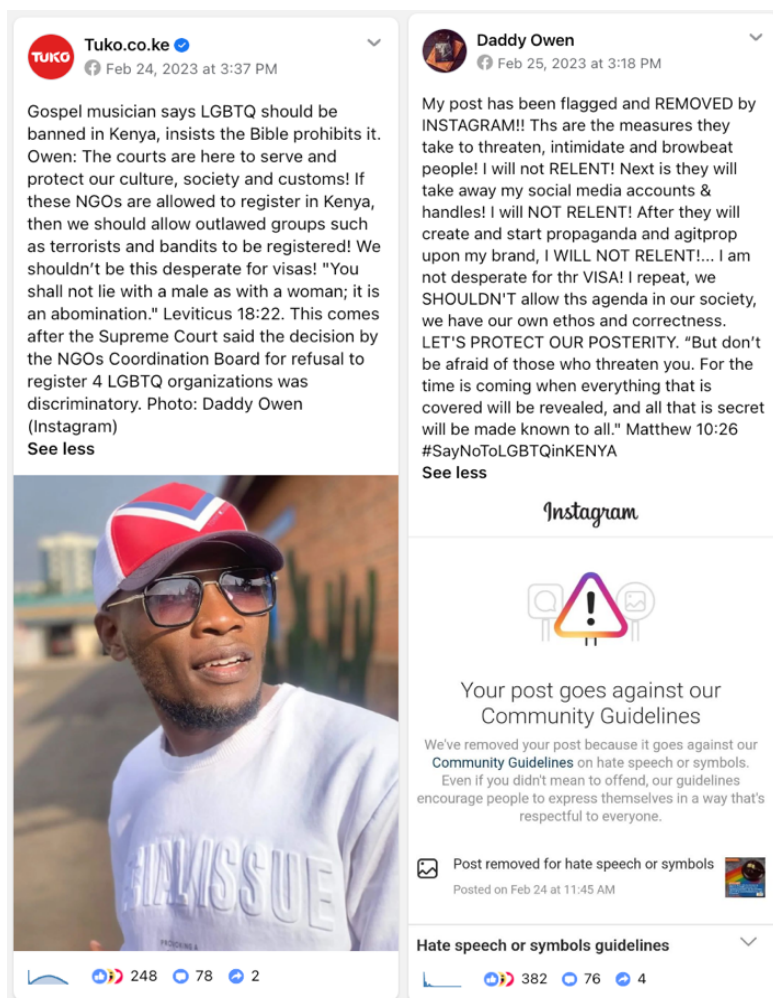
Responses from Facebook users were mainly supportive of religious leaders in their condemnation. There were calls for repentance and for the religious leaders to advise the government on how this move by the courts will be harmful to the population. There was also sentiment that lashed at the Christian religious leaders who were said to be visiting state house to take selfies, photographs with the president and first lady and filling their pockets with public funds instead of advising the president on matters such as these. Social media users labeled them as hypocrites, greedy and a failure to the church and the public.

The amount of hateful content in the comment sections of the religious posts was less compared to the posts by politicians and government officials. Social media users that supported the ruling were labeled sinners and waiting for eternal damnation in hell.

One interesting development was that of gospel musician- Daddy Owen. He took to Instagram to condemn the ruling but Instagram flagged and removed his post. He then moved to Facebook to inform his followers that he had been gagged by Instagram. Reactions on Facebook were mixed. Some supported him and praised him for his stance, others bashed LGBTQ members with harmful content while others told him to use code-words to discuss this issue if he wanted to avoid the Instagram algorithm while others told him to mind his business and let people live their lives.

This last sentiment of “mind your business” is seen scattered within the data we scraped although in very low volumes. This is the one consistent narrative used to defend the LGBTQ community in Kenya. The phrasing is not directly praising the ruling or advocating for LGBTQ rights, it is subtly used to tell others to mind their business and let other people be. *What’s your problem if they love each other? How does that affect you? You should mind your business-* this is the general way the phrasing is done to which it is met with a lot of hate from others who argue that this is their business.

Social media platforms in the past have mentioned that they do take action on harmful content on their platform through the use of algorithms and content moderators, however this social media mapping although not exhaustive has seen harmful content in the comment sections of posts that had not been flagged by the social media companies, months after they were made. As an ongoing task we are reporting these posts for moderation and engaging with Meta to inform them of posts that narratives that advocate for harming of others on their platform.



#### Daddy Owen - February 24<sup>th</sup> /25<sup>th</sup>

##### Reference to post links

<https://www.facebook.com/tuko.co.ke/posts/2796893507154201>  
<https://www.facebook.com/100044467298404/posts/755519292606974>

##### Examples of MDH

Hao maubwa wapekekwe western countries,hapa tawe 🤔🤔

**Translation:** Those dogs should be taken to western countries, here its not possible.

Aki SI wapewe ruhusa waende USA wote please wakufie na hko

**Translation:** They should be given permission to go to USA please and die there.

## 5. The post-comment dynamic

In trying to understand where harmful content resides on social platform, this analysis found that Facebook posts were not generally harmful or inflammatory, instead it was in the comment section where misinformation, disinformation and hate speech was common. This can be attributed to a significantly large amount of content from the analysis that we categorized being news -i.e., from media institutions/ companies. See graph below

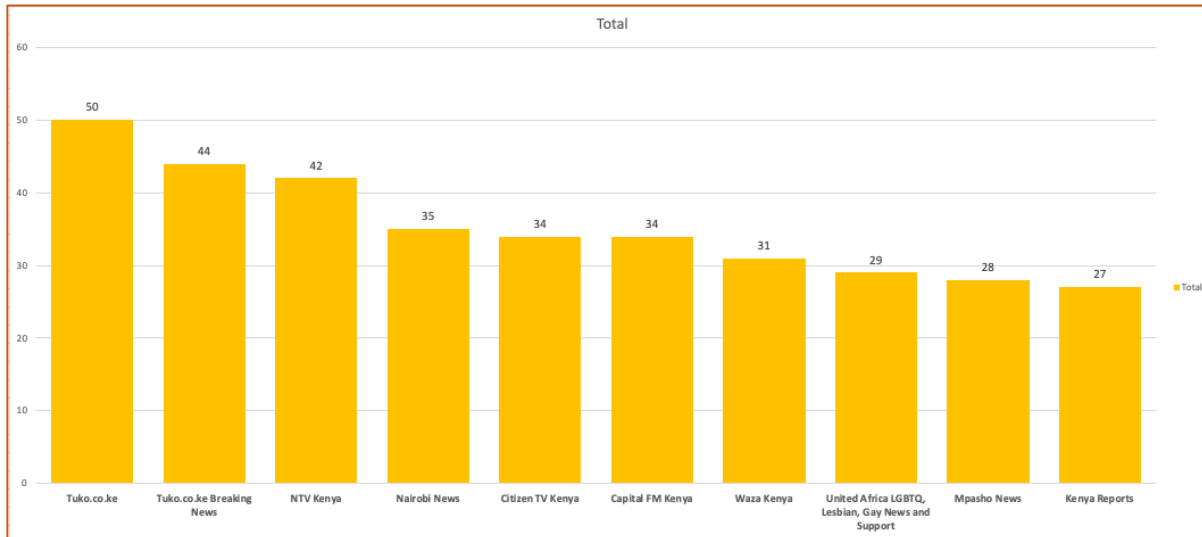


Fig 3: Top 10 accounts with most posts

News content would have to go through an editorial process to ensure that it was safe for consumption, and this process will sometimes remove the harmful content. However, a look at the comments would almost suggest that the effort to ensure information was not harmful ends at the post and does not extend to the comment threads in these social media accounts. Ignoring the comment threads especially after posting a news article on a topic that polarizes a community makes it easy for communities who consume news via social media to interact with harmful content. As people check for reactions from the public, they are easily pulled into a spiral of hateful sentiment. It is therefore important to look at the comment threads when addressing issues of hate. One key approach to digital peacebuilding<sup>16</sup> is to first understand where these harmful conversations are taking place e.g., within sub-comments and then intervening in these spaces to engage with a subset of commenters. For instance, the graph below shows the Facebook accounts that generated the most comments. Within the thousands of comments, there were conversations unfolding at the sub-comment and comment level.

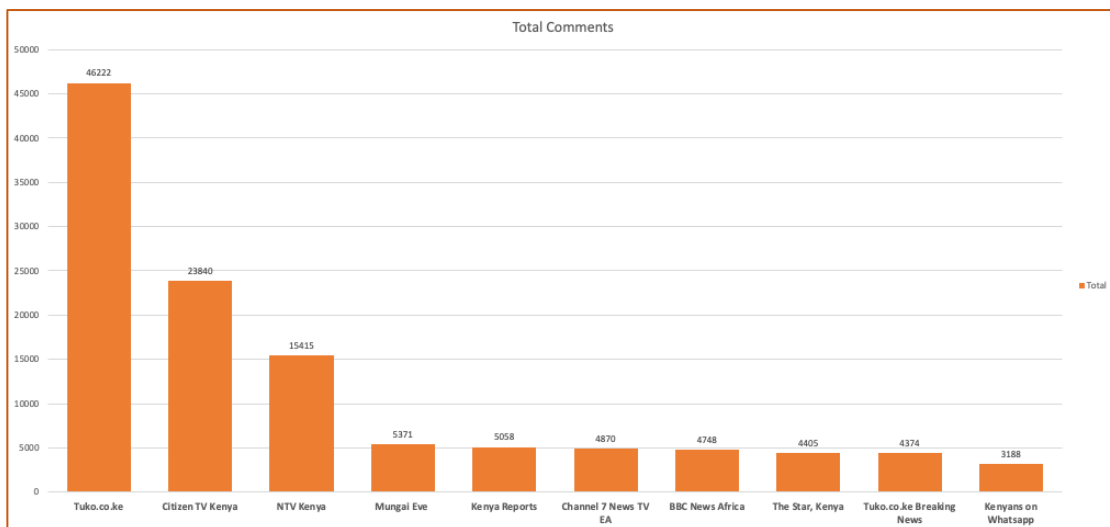


Fig 4: Top 10 accounts with most comments

<sup>16</sup> Build Up (2023) Digital Peacebuilding 101: introducing technology for peacebuilding. Available at: <https://howtobuildup.org/community-learning/courses/digital-peacebuilding-101-introducing-technology-for-peacebuilding/>

Having this information when rolling out digital peacebuilding programs, informs the peacebuilders to target spaces where debunking information or cohesive narratives are needed the most. It also helps peacebuilders understand the various themes that unfold under one topic and how best to respond to these e.g., under the topic of LGBTQ in Kenya, themes of religion, climate disasters in the form of lack of rains, family and traditional values, foreign government interference, economic state of Kenya among others. At Build Up we are continually engaging with communities to empower them with digital peacebuilding skills, tools and information and encourage them to address online harms in their own communities instead of waiting for “external saviors”.

Kenya will likely continue to see more anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment on social media platforms in future unless this is addressed. The Family Protection Bill has already been submitted to the National Assembly by Homa Bay MP George Kaluma and it seeks to ban among other things any hint of LGBTQ activities and lobbying in the country<sup>17</sup>- which is a very vague clause. Penalties under the bill range from 10 years to death. We have begun seeing harmful content on social media focusing on the death penalty part as users pledge full support of the bill. We shall continue monitoring social media platforms and collaborating with peacebuilding organizations to prevent online and offline harms while sharing other resources and reports that might be useful to other actors such as human rights defenders.

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<sup>17</sup> Citizen Digital (2023). Homa Bay MP Peter Kaluma Submits Bill To Parliament Seeking To Criminalize LGBTQ. Available at: <https://www.citizen.digital/news/homa-bay-mp-peter-kaluma-submits-bill-to-parliament-seeking-to-criminalize-lgbtq-n317636>



## Methodology

This report is part of a broader initiative to analyze online discourse and specifically monitor hate speech in Kenya in order to help mitigate the threat of hateful language in fueling violence offline. Hate speech in this context is defined using section 13 of the National Cohesion and Integration Act, where the threshold is underlined by proof that the speech or expression threatens, abuses or insults others based on their ethnicity, and must be intended to stir up ethnic hatred, OR, under section. 62, inciting ethnic hatred, hostility or violence. The report also acknowledges the role of “dangerous speech,” which is a heightened form of hate speech that can catalyze mass violence.

The report provides a general analysis of digital and social media narratives related to the LGBTQ+ discourse from January 1 2023 to March 17<sup>th</sup>. This report focuses on Facebook alone and while there are references to other platforms such as Twitter and YouTube, there was no Twitter or YouTube data gathered. Content is tracked using different newsgathering tools that are centered and deployed by an inhouse media monitoring tool called Phoenix. Facebook is monitored through the Crowdtangle platform and the Facebook API, using phoenix where it is also visualized to enable analysis.

In this analysis, keywords relevant to the LGBTQ+ and sources known to post about the topic were used to track relevant online discourse data including social media posts, comments or articles. In total 5,860 Facebook posts and 8948 comments were gathered and analyzed to identify harmful content and developing themes or trends related to the LGBTQ+ discourse. While this is by no means representative of the diverse conversations taking place on Facebook and other social media on the same topic, it helps to begin providing some basic insights on themes that are associated with anti-LGBTQ+ content. Further analysis for volume, engagements generated, networked patterns, sentiment and tone of conversation is also being conducted and will be included in future reports. Where sentiment and tone analysis are included, it is analyzed and tagged by humans.