

CNN faces wrath of Kenyans

By Carole Kimutai: [@CaroleKimutai](#)

12 Mar 2012

Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. On Saturday the scorned woman was Kenya and the culprit was the Cable News Network (CNN), the US cable news channel. On Saturday night, there was a grenade explosion at a busy bus station in Nairobi that killed six people and injured about 63 others - according to latest media reports. Following the attack in Nairobi, CNN immediately broadcast a report about the blast with a graphic headline titled "Violence in Kenya."



[click to enlarge](#)

The CNN report led to a flood of angry comments on social media site Twitter by Kenyans. Over the weekend [#SomeoneTellCNN](#) was a trending topic on Twitter as late as last night. "Our reporting on last night was accurate, the banner used in bulletin was not. I contacted CNN for future bulletins. Apologies to all," tweeted David McKenzie ([@McKenzieCNN](#)), a CNN reporter based in Kenya. In another notice on Twitter, McKenzie said CNN was pulling down the offending video. "... Again apologies for the mistake. It was changed on air, but not online. Now it is."

Kenya is still recovering from the negative media reports following the 2007/8 post election violence. The international media was accused of portraying Kenya like a country that had broken into civil war which was not the case on the ground. The impact of the reports led to cancellations of tourist bookings and postponement of investments. "2008 and 2009 were difficult for all sectors of the economy. In 2008, we had a slump in the tourism sector following the post election crisis that saw a major drop in tourist numbers. Then the global economic crisis hit us in 2009 - those two years were about staying afloat" says Julius Kipng'etich, director of Kenya Wildlife Service.

This report by CNN opened a hot debate of how the story of Africa is told by the international media. Africa has often been portrayed as a continent of hunger, war, famine, illiteracy, corruption and disease. Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her TED talk presentation titled 'The Danger of the Single Story', talks about what happens when a group of people are known by a narrative that posits them as "one thing, only one thing, over and over again."

Adichie also talks about the single story of Africa as: "a place of catastrophe; the single story of Mexicans as abject immigrants; the single story of poor people as (nothing) else but poor." View the video: [Chimamanda Adichie: The danger of a single story](#)

In this case, CNN's portrayal of Kenya being a violent country was not taken lightly. A video posted on YouTube has a telephone conversation by a Kenyan caller demanding an official apology from CNN over the offending graphic report that "was similar to the one of the post election violence." The caller accuses CNN of demeaning Africa and Africans. "These types of mistakes happen when you are dealing with African issues..."

Kenya has been a target of several terrorist attacks over the years. Currently, the Kenya Defence Forces are in Southern Somalia fighting the Al Shabaab together with Somalia's Transitional Federal Government troops. The lashing by the Kenyans on Twitter goes to show the power of social media and how the citizenry can use it to tell their narratives.

In a recent [interview with Bogonko Bosire](#), a journalist behind the media gossip website Jackal News, said foreigners will never tell the African story.

"The African story will only be told by Africans using African platforms. These platforms are perpetrating their masters bidding. The Chinese are selling China and the Arabs are selling Arabs. We have had CNN and BBC here in Africa/Kenya for the longest time, when have they ever told the African story, when have they articulated the thinking of the majority of Africans, they are focused on conflict civil strife and anything bad...there are so many positive stories here that if say CNN was genuine, they would have a programme daily on African culture, a programme daily on African business, a programme daily on politics and governance. After 20 years of reporting on Africa, CNN does not have a channel focusing on Africa but it has CNN in Arabic, such nerve...!"

For CNN, Kenyans feel scorned and insulted. Indeed, hell hath no fury like a woman scorned!

ABOUT CAROLE KIMUTAI: @CAROLEKIMUTAI

- Carole Kimutai is a writer and editor based in Nairobi, Kenya. She is currently an MA student in New Media at the University of Leicester, UK. Follow her on Twitter at @CaroleKimutai.
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