



## **#DEFYHATENOW & #211Check**

### Statement on misinformation related to COVID-19 in South Sudan

April 7th 2020

**On the 5th of April 2020**, South Sudan officially confirmed its first case of COVID-19 during a press conference held by the High-Level Task Force on COVID-19. The hours following the announcement witnessed several instances of misinformation, hate speech, and doxxing of individuals. #Defyhatenow and #211CHECK have been monitoring and reporting these incidents on social media. This statement is our informed response to this matter.

#### **On personal privacy and confidentiality**

We *note* with great concern the consistent and, at times, careless attempts by some social media users to share personal information related to the COVID-19 cases in South Sudan. Following general medical patients' confidentiality practices and the need to protect personal privacy, especially during such difficult times; These attempts have led many to share baseless information and personal details obtained without the consent of individuals or the organizations involved. We have noted several cases of doxing in the past few days, a practice most Social Media companies have strict rules against. **Doxing**, or **doxxing** (from "dox", abbreviation of *documents*), is the internet-based practice of researching and publicly broadcasting private or identifying information (especially personally-identifying information) about an individual or an organization.

We *advise* the public to refrain from speculative and conspiratorial sharing of information online and offline. Such practices lead to personal harm and incitement to violence.

#### **On hate speech, xenophobia, and anti-UN sentiments.**

It has also come to our attention the surge in the amount of online hate and a few instances of incitement to violence against the UN and foreigners in South Sudan. Some of these attacks were specifically directed at UNMISS, with some online users accusing the organization of being behind a plan to "*bring COVID-19 to South Sudan to infect South Sudanese*". These accusations are nonfactual; such statements have the potential to incite violence against the UN and its personnel in South Sudan.

We *urge* South Sudanese to avoid hate and direct incitement to violence. Let us follow the government's directives on keeping safe and avoid false information.

## **On information and awareness**

To avoid misinformation at this time, we urge citizens to stay informed and follow the guidance provided by the South Sudan Ministry of Health, The World Health Organization, and the High-Level Task Force on COVID-19, as well as the various awareness and information campaigns by the media and civil society.

*We encourage* the authorities to open more information channels to answer questions and receive feedback from the public on matters related to COVID-19 in South Sudan. The absence of open and responsive communication channels often leads to people opting to vent their frustration through other less healthy avenues; in this case, online hate, conspiracy, and misinformation.

## **About COVID-19**

“COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. ‘CO’ stands for corona, ‘VI’ for virus, and ‘D’ for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as ‘2019 novel coronavirus’ or ‘2019-nCoV.’ The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.” (Source : WHO link [here](#))

## **About 211CHECK**

211CHECK is a fact-checking and information verification platform ([www.211check.org](http://www.211check.org) ) and a community (#211CHECK & #COVID19SS) that consists of people from various disciplines working on providing accurate information on COVID-19 preventive measures in South Sudan . 211CHECK works on countering misinformation and disinformation in South Sudan; their recent

**#COVID19SS** campaign focuses on providing awareness on the COVID-19 virus in South Sudan and preventing the spread of misinformation related to COVID-19. While 211Check is a consortium of volunteers and actors from different sectors in society, it is being led by Defy Hate Now.

[www.211check.org](http://www.211check.org)

## **About Defy Hate Now:**

#Defyhatenow is an organization aimed at mobilizing civic action against hate speech and directed social media incitement to violence in South Sudan. #defyhatenow was initiated in response to the way social media was being used to fan the conflict that erupted in South Sudan in December 2013, and again in July 2016. #defyhatenow is also one of the leading entities that work on providing data-driven solutions to the problem of hate speech, fake news, and misinformation in South Sudan. Our work focuses on creating a framework for increasing trust between stakeholders in South Sudan through mobilizing civic action against all forms of hate speech and incitement to violence in South Sudan.

<https://defyhatenow.org/>

To report any hate speech or misinformation you see online, reach out to us via Twitter at @211check or email us at [info@211check.org](mailto:info@211check.org)

**#DEFYHATENOW**  
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