

Lack of cyber laws increasing hate speech-Researcher

By Candiga Jacky

An Independent researcher and social media analyst James Bidal said, lack of legal framework to govern the use of social media in South Sudan has increased the spread of hate speech in the country per the research conducted especially during the 13 December fighting in the country.

"There are no regulatory bodies in South Sudan that could issue warning against these tweets since South Sudan is a country with no Internet governance policy," he pointed that this allows users to post and tweet hate speech facilitating the circulation of aggressive, humiliating and angry words targeting various citizens; within the framework of the political context, which has taken an ethnic direction.

He said the research carried was basically focusing on Twit-

ter out of which over 9,000 handles were analyzed to find out the magnitudes at which people are tweeting.

Bidal said people in diaspora are the greatest asset towards mobilization of hate speech because they are online but those in the country are offline.

The use of social media in the country now has made it easier for the mobilization of militia in the country because there is no governance policy that can monitor the flow of message," the researcher said.

He added that the hate speech targets people along ethnic/tribal has been commonly used and taken for granted both in traditional media and on Facebook walls since December 2013.

Bidal said, this research will help the legislators if they come across it to put it in action to draft legal framework to govern the use of so-

cial media in the country.

The researcher advised the users to use the language of peace to multiply and spread the positive practices on the Internet that can free individuals, democratize societies and boost the culture of living together in South Sudan and the entire world.

He added that the findings of the research will be used to sensitize the community members on the nature and forms of hate speech that exist in South Sudan and will be used to develop a strategic response mechanism to hate speech by identifying provisions in South Sudan legal frameworks and draw comparison to International Instruments towards understanding of hate speech.

"This research will trace where hate speech is present in South Sudan and explores any shortfalls and finally make recommendations to development of hate speech laws in

South Sudan," Bidal said.

The analyst further said, the research will review relevant literature based on established and international best practices for the development of a concise and response to hate speech on the legal, policy and advocacy front.

Bidal recommends that there is need to establish a platform for local communities against hate speech by airing peace building programming on local radio outlets to increase their knowledge and change their attitudes regarding conflict, such programming he says could shift their behaviors at the local level.

He added that the social media survey and the outreach program is conducted by CEPO with support from #Defyhatenow and pointed that #Defyhatenow is an initiative that focused on social media hate speech and online incitement to violence and its consequences offline.



Independent researcher and social media analyst James Bidal