

# Media Bulletin #7

February 2021



The COVID-19 pandemic cast its shadows over the media with the large amount of false and misleading news, along with new restrictions on journalists, such as lock down measures and the ban on public gatherings. Therefore, journalists face great challenges in addressing a wave of rumors, and fake and misleading news. Fake news may result in a division in community perspectives and may also impact the credibility of health institutions. Especially since at times, fake news and misinformation are based on cultural and religious references, which may have severe impacts on people's practice of the recommended COVID-19 preventive measures.

[For more on methods and tools for fact-checking news](#)

## The Importance of Factual Information

False and misleading health advice spreads widely on social media and negatively affects peoples' response to the recommend preventive measures, while posing a grave danger to people's lives and health. Therefore, journalists have an important role in confronting such news and false advice by publishing fact-based news and information based on reliable health references, such as the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health.

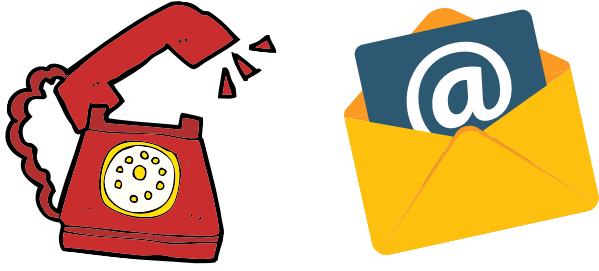
## Misleading Health Advice

News and information questioning the credibility of health institutions and calling on people to avoid seeking care in hospitals and health centers was circulating in Sudanese social media space. Some posts also encouraged others to question COVID-19 testing results. These types of social media posts contained false or misleading information, as people widely shared false medical advice to treat a COVID-19 infection.

A Sudanese woman on Facebook shared that she started her travel procedures, but tested positive for COVID-19, adding: "I postponed my travel plans and quarantined myself and I started showing symptoms, do you know an excellent isolation center I can go to?" Rapidly she received this advice: "The isolation center has very serious Coronavirus cases, and you may not have Corona. Better isolate yourself at home, save your money, and take vitamins C ... D ... zinc, acacia, fresh juices, tamarind and baobab." Meanwhile a Sudanese woman on Facebook said: "If you test positive, you can pay them and then have a negative result, so that you can leave this country".

In Sudan, the Rooted in Trust (RiT) project aims to mitigate and disrupt misinformation about COVID-19 by collecting and analyzing rumors on the Sudanese social media space in the period of 13 to 26 January 2021, the team collected 308 rumors from social media sources commonly used in Sudan (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram) and through face-to-face discussions with community members in Khartoum, Kassala, South Darfur, West Darfur, Blue Nile and South ..Kordofan States





## Destinations you can communicate with:

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## Helpful resources and references

[How do you identify misleading health news on the Internet?](#)

[Fake News "spreads faster" than facts](#)

[Beware of COVID-19 health advice on social media- AFP](#)



Please contact Internews' Media Liaison Officer Hassan Ahmed Berkia ([hberkia@internews.org](mailto:hberkia@internews.org)) for support and further information.

## Cultural and Religious beliefs

Many rely on their cultural and religious beliefs during times of hardship, especially with the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the wide restrictions that have been imposed across the globe. These restrictions have affected religious gatherings, for example, in most Muslim countries, governments called on their citizens to adhere to the preventative measures, and restricted Friday prayers and other prayers in mosques.

Some people shared COVID-19 news and misinformation based on religious beliefs. For instance, some local communities in Sudan circulated a rumor that COVID-19 does not affect Muslims. A Sudanese woman from Kassala state in eastern Sudan said: "Corona does not come to people that perform Wudu during every prayer", while a man from Damazine, Blue Nile State concluded: "Corona does not come to Muslim countries".

## Facts

Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by the newest coronavirus, and can infect any person regardless of their place of residence, religion, or race. According to the World Health Organization, there are more than 110 million COVID-19 cases across the world, and according to the statistics of the Sudanese Ministry of Health, there are more than 30,000 cases in Sudan. Muslims are just as vulnerable to infection as others. There is no immunity against Covid-19 for any religious, cultural or ethnic group.