

Photo costs the credibility of Kenyan newspaper

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All eyes are on the Kenyan daily newspaper, *The Star* for allegedly publishing a fake image of a helicopter crash that killed two Kenyan government officials on the morning of Sunday, 10 June 2012, bringing into question the credibility of the newspaper.



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The helicopter was carrying two officials and four others who died in the crash minutes after take off. News of the crash was the lead for most of Sunday's news as victims included the minister for internal security, Prof. George Saitoti, and his assistant minister, Orwa Ojode.

The following day, as expected, all newspapers covered the incident. *The Star*, one of the four daily newspapers in Kenya, published an image (among others about the crash) on its front page. The image showed the helicopter on fire in air. The image had been sourced from an online photo website.

The newspaper ran an apology on Tuesday, 12 June, explaining that a source had sent the photo to one of its editors and they had published it without verifying the source.

Following the goof, the information and communication permanent secretary, Bitange Ndemo complained to the Media Council of Kenya - the media watchdog - asking the paper to retract the story and photo with the same prominence because it had caused distress to the families of the deceased.

Second incident this year

The photo publishing error is the second incident made by the paper this year. In January, *The Star* published a photo of a man being executed in Somalia - where the Kenyan Defense Force is fighting the Al Shabaab terror group. The newspaper picked the photo after it was posted on Twitter by the Kenya military spokesman, Major Emmanuel Chirchir.

It later emerged that the photo was three years old and was of a man being stoned to death for alleged adultery. The photo

had won a prize in the 2010 World Press Photo contest.

In a comment published in the Wednesday issue of *The Star*, the paper's public editor Karen Rothmyer says, "... on matters of breaking news, *The Star* should closely monitor social media, especially Twitter, which can serve both to offer up fresh leads and information (not all of which is correct) and also to correct wrong information."

Accuracy of facts

While the business of media is to be the first to break news, the accuracy of reports from social media is obviously becoming a challenge for journalists in Kenya and other parts of the world.

Accuracy and verification of facts remains a key issue in reporting. While the internet has certainly made life easier, editors and journalists now have to question and investigate sources of articles and images.

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