



#JusticeForCwecwe Social Media Analytics Fact Sheet

Introduction

Reports of the alleged rape of seven-year-old Cwecwe have reignited the conversation around the safety of women and children in South Africa. While the case has received nationwide outrage at the ongoing scourge of gender-based violence, problematic responses centred along the lines of victim blaming and trivialisation continue to exist. This fact sheet unpacks the prominent narratives around #JusticeForCwecwe online, particularly focusing on X and Facebook. The data points towards a key question: When will enough be enough?

Overview of X Data

- The conversation received more than 400,000 mentions between 1 March and 15 April 2024 on X. The highest peaks were recorded on 29 March, around the time when Cwecwe's mother shared details of what happened to her child; 31 March, 1 and 2 April, when petitions were circulated and increased efforts were being made to amplify calls for #JusticeForCwecwe. This is also around the time reports surfaced that Cwecwe's mother had been in a car accident [1] ; [2]; [3]. Another peak was recorded on 6 April when plans for a national shutdown on 8 April were underway. According to some posts, the shutdown was also aimed at calling for resignation of Police Minister Senzo Mchunu, who was accused of failing to address the case properly. [1]; [2].
- While the movement gained high traction between 26 March and 8 April, questions have been raised about attention on the matter, with some expressing fears that Cwecwe's case might turn cold as attention fades.

Overview of Conversation on Facebook

- Between 1 March 2025 and 15 April 2025, conversation centred around the matter received an estimated 11,000 mentions on Facebook. This figure is low, as Facebook only allows publicly available data such as posts from events, public groups, public pages and profiles with a verified badge or that have more than 25,000 followers. The highest peak was observed on 1 April 2025, which coincides with the march held in Johannesburg under the hashtag #JusticeForCwecwe and, as noted above, following Cwecwe's mother sharing what happened. The conversation predominantly focused on providing for Cwecwe's mother through advocacy, with some individuals offering to donate towards the family's legal fees.

Key themes

Trivialising abuse

- In previous reports, the CABC has highlighted how victims' experiences are trivialised under the guise of jokes, while simultaneously being blamed for inviting the abuse. This was noted in the online conversation about #JusticeForCwecwe, where some individuals made insensitive remarks about the victim. Some posts originated from Facebook [1] ; [2] ; [3], and others were shared on X [1]; [2]; [3]; [4].
- The trivialisation of abuse was strongly condemned, most notably, the South African Justice, Crime Prevention and Security account, which issued a statement around irresponsible use of social media, noting that appropriate action should be taken where necessary and that the identified posts shall be addressed [1].

Opportunism

- According to some posts, #JusticeForCwecwe revealed how some individuals relied on the case's popularity to advance their interests and set up a foundation on behalf of Cwecwe's family without their consent. [1]; [2]; [3]; [4].

Allegations of selective activism

- We noted online debates around perceived 'selective activism' and whataboutism directed towards individuals who supported Chris Brown's concerts last year, given the singer's history of violence against women. In defence, some individuals highlighted that the two incidents were unrelated and should not be viewed in comparison. (1); (2); (3).

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- We further noted debates and confusion around the case. These included questions on whether the principal was a suspect and whether DNA was taken. The principal was recently offered an apology by Police Minister Senzo Mchunu for identifying him as a suspect. Debates around who may be responsible continue online. [1] ; [2] ; [3] ; [4].
- In a letter addressed to Eastern Cape's Provincial Commissioner, AfriForum's Gerrie Nel came on record for the principal and confirmed the principal is not a suspect in the case, and was not in the vicinity of the minor child at the time of the incident or any time prior or after. Reports subsequently clarified that the principal did not submit his DNA [1].
- The CABC recorded that the appointment of AfriForum's Gerrie Nel added a racial tone to the conversation. Individuals noted that Nel took the case because the principal is white, further noting that white South Africans defended the principal because of his race [1].
- It was also reported that no foreign DNA was found on Cwecwe, however, others question why DNA was requested if no foreign DNA was found on the minor child [1] ; [2].

Conclusion

A petition calling for #JusticeForCwecwe has garnered more than 1 million signatures, and while the data reveals a decline in the conversation online, calls are still being made to the government and the police to take swift action and apprehend perpetrators of abuse and violence. The process may be taking some time, but encouragingly, there is a significant number of individuals and organisations who have vowed to continue protesting until Cwecwe and all victims receive justice.

In the midst of this, we urge the public to be cautious about spreading unverified information that may confuse and distract attention away from the key issue, being the safety of women and children in a country where gender-based violence, misogyny and femicide are issues of concern.

Disclaimer: This factsheet contains data accessed from Meta Platforms, Inc., (Accessed April, 2025) and its contents are the sole responsibility of the Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change and does not represent the view of Meta Platforms, Inc nor any of its subsidiaries.

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