

The Web Chases Alleged War Criminal Joseph Kony

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Teaser: The name Joseph Kony currently unsettles the web. The Ugandan rebel leader facing atrocity charges is subject to a social media manhunt.

Body: “Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come.” Victor Hugo once said that. The French writer didn’t know back then that it wouldn’t take more than a couple of hours for his ideas of revolution and revolt to unite more than ten million people.

“Kony 2012” is the phenomenon, under whose banner the World Wide Web community currently unifies. The American organization “Invisible Children Inc.” launched a 30-minute-video on the internet on Monday. Inconspicuous on a first glimpse, it unfolds its heartbreaking plea in the following minutes.

Joseph Kony is the leader of the Ugandan rebel army LRA (Lord’s Resistance Army). And: Joseph Kony is an alleged war criminal. He is searched for on an international warrant, he is alleged of manifold crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Central African country. In the 26 years of his underground regency, as many as 66.000 children have been abducted and used as child soldiers or sex slaves, according to various sources.

Subhead: Jacob wished he was dead

In 2003, the American filmmaker Jason Russell met a Ugandan boy named Jacob, who told him about how Kony’s rebels killed his brother with a machete. The documentary currently circulating the Web shows a deeply frightened Jacob who wished he was dead to be back at his brother’s side.

Humanity-flagged, Jason Russell fights for Kony’s arrest and an end to the cruelties ever since.

“Kony 2012” is meant to be his final strike. Within two days, more than ten million people saw the documentary on internet platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo. Another one million instant activists follow the campaign on Facebook by now. Kony is a trending topic on Twitter and is even supposed to be the reason for a Facebook server crash this morning that lasted more than two hours. The video was shared countless times – and triggered lots of controversy.

Subhead: Critics talk about “white starry-eyed idealism”

However, their offensive meets some resistance, too. Work of local NGO’s was dismissed, human rights activists say. Also, “Kony 2012” was some kind of white starry-eyed idealism that reminded them of colonialism. And native Ugandan Musa Okwanga wrote in the English *Independent*, “Kony 2012” left out a central aspect: “If a man commits crimes against his own people for years, there’s always a bunch of powerful people that cover it up. That’s why the politics of Ugandan president Museveni need to be in the focus of a solution for this problem.”

Despite the criticism, Russell and his allies never gave up in their longstanding fight. They dream of a *The New York Times* headline “Kony arrested” and are profoundly convinced of the greater good of their cause. But simply sharing the video is not enough for the creators. They hope for donations, ask for digital signatures under online petitions and bet on the evolving power of the World Wide Web. Posters

and stickers in the streets around the globe are meant to be photographed and entered into a web-tracking-system to make local support universally available.

“Cover the Night” in mid-April is another part of this campaign. Then, people are supposed to “quit the anonymity of the internet for good.” Supporters shall “form and give a voice to the outcry in the dark of the night”, the organizers declared boastfully.

Russell believes that it is not just money any more that determines the course of things, but that the tinderbox social media is becoming a truly decisive power. Twitter and Facebook, a hodgepodge of people’s voices, a modern agora.

“Nobody is taking care of us,” Jacob, the Ugandan boy, stammers into Russell’s camera. He couldn’t possibly know that things were about to change very soon.