

Joseph Kony campaign- good or bad?

On Monday, Invisible Children released a 30-minute documentary about Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord Resistance Army. *"We want to make him famous,"* they said. *"Not to glorify him, but so that his crimes would not go unnoticed or be forgotten."* Surprisingly enough it worked.

The video became a viral sensation with more than 35 million views. Kony's story was the #1 topic of conversations on Twitter and on Facebook by concerned citizens and celebrities.

By Wednesday, the tables turned. Critics pointed out that Invisible Children had a less-than-perfect rating on Charity Navigator - an independent charity evaluator based in the US - and questioned the whereabouts of their funds.

Ugandan nationals noted the situation on the ground was much more complicated than just the crimes of one man. Ugandan journalist Rosebell Kagumire was among those pointing out that Invisible Children oversimplified a complicated geopolitical struggle. Most damning were some complaints that the entire campaign reeked of colonialism.

"There has not been a single soul from the LRA since 2006," Dr Beatrice Mpora told the Daily Telegraph from Gulu, a town that was once the centre of the rebels' activities. *"Now we have peace, people are back in their homes, they are planting their fields, and they are starting their businesses. That is what people should help us with."*

The belief that online activism can change the mindset of international politics is another selling point of the social media generation who consider themselves citizens of an online world. *"And as more people contribute to the online world, the more people pay attention,"* says Gerald C Kane.

"The LRA (thankfully!) Does not have 30,000 mindless child soldiers. This grim figure, cited by Invisible Children in the film (and by others) refers to the total number of kids abducted by the LRA over nearly 30 years," points out Joshua Keating in Foreign Policy magazine.

"Something isn't always better than nothing. Sometimes it's worse," wrote a student on his Invisible Children blog. The Invisible Children campaign may represent the next step in online activism. *"Now you have two sides going to war in a social media campaign for the public opinion,"* says Kane.

In the meantime, people are becoming more constructive and critical about what they read online, especially charity causes. *"You can't just put something out there and let it sit. People are going to challenge it"* says Bower.

Before Monday, many people didn't know of anyone called Joseph Kony, and now today they do. That's a positive thing. But, how positive is it for the people of Uganda who, from now on, have to live with the eyes of the world constantly on them: expectantly.