



## Is it legal to reveal the identity of child victims of sexual abuse?

We were sent a link to this post by Media Diversified: [Is it legal to reveal the identity of child victims of sexual abuse?](#) which questions the publication of images of child victims of sexual violence in Kenya by BuzzFeed covering the story of a young Australian woman who used the photos to raise funds for them (and apparently was labelled a 'hero'). We highly recommend reading all the comments on the post for their discussion on the impact of racism, classism, and colonialism on the ways in which children living in poverty are exploited within the narratives of 'white saviours'.

The simple answer to this question is that it is illegal in the UK, but many jurisdictions have no interest in protecting the privacy of children who have experienced severe trauma. However, we believe the question itself is problematic. The question should not be "is it legal" rather "is it ethical". We should not have to legislate to protect the privacy of children. Ethical journalists would not use the images of children without consent and those engaged in fundraising to support vulnerable children would do so without exploiting them.

The problem is not just irresponsible media and those with 'white saviour' complexes exploiting vulnerable children. The issue is also the audience that consumes these exploitative images without concern or care for the vulnerable children involved. We need ethical media consumers who challenge these narratives (as the original poster in the piece above did) by writing formal complaints to journalists who violate the privacy of individuals who have experienced trauma, campaigners who hold individuals who exploit people in the name of 'fundraising' or 'raising awareness' accountable, and an audience who support alternative media platforms who report news without exploiting vulnerable people.

Frankly, if you need to see an image of a child who has been sexually assaulted in order to feel empathy for that child or to support an organisation working with people who've experienced trauma, you're doing humanity wrong.

We do **NOT** give permission for posts to be reproduced, translated or otherwise published elsewhere. We will not contact people who submit their personal experiences on behalf of journalists, bloggers or other third sector organisations. These testimonies remain the intellectual copyright of their authors and must be treated with the ethical guidelines used by academics for research involving human subjects. Our full guidelines can be read [here](#).