

# lecourrier-du-soir.com

A website covering French and international news that has published false and unsubstantiated claims, including about COVID-19.



**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.**

**Score: 25/100**

## Ownership and Financing

LeCourrier-du-soir.com is owned by Cheikh Dieng, the website's editor in chief. Dieng's author page says he has been a student in Paris, Dijon, and Senegal. Dieng told NewsGuard in an August 2020 telephone interview that he was pursuing a PhD in media at the University of Paris 8.

Dieng also owns ElCorreo-de-la-tarde.com, the Spanish-language version of Le Courier du Soir.

The site derives revenue from advertising and donations.

## Content

Le Courier-du-soir, which means "the Evening Courier" in English, states on its Who We Are page (Qui sommes-nous) that it "relies on the credibility of breaking news, through the creation of a network of efficient and very well-informed international journalists in the four corners of the world." ("Le Courier-du-soir, lui, mise sur la crédibilité de l'information en temps réel, à travers la mise en place d'un réseau de journalistes internationaux efficaces et très bien informés dans les quatre coins du monde.")

The website covers French and international news. Content is divided into sections such as International, Politics (Politique), Economy (Economie), and Society (Société).

Typical headlines include "Technological and diplomatic war: The West is heading for a military war against China and will lose it" ("Guerre technologique et diplomatique : l'Occident se dirige vers une guerre militaire contre la Chine et il la perdra"); "The United Arab Emirates just opened a nuclear power plant, a first in the Arab world" ("Les Emirats Arabes Unis viennent d'ouvrir une centrale nucléaire, une première dans le monde arabe"); and "War in Libya: Macron releases 1

-  Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
-  Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
-  Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
-  Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
-  Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
-  Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
-  Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
-  Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
-  The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

*Criteria are listed in order of importance.*

[More information.](#)

million euros for the return of displaced populations” (“Guerre en Libye : Macron débloque 1 million d’euros pour le retour des populations déplacées”).

#### Credibility

Dieng, the editor in chief and owner, told NewsGuard in an August 2020 telephone interview that he produces approximately 90 percent of the website’s content. Articles are sometimes based on reporting from other news sites, including 20 Minutes, Le Parisien, and Les Echos.

However, the site has also published false or unsubstantiated claims, including about the origins of the COVID-19 virus.

For example, in a March 2020 article titled “The Coronavirus is an American weapon of war to destroy China and here is the proof” (“Le Coronavirus est une arme de guerre américaine pour détruire la Chine et en voici la preuve”), Dieng claimed that the virus was deliberately created as a bioweapon to damage China’s economy.

Dieng wrote of the COVID-19 virus, “There is no doubt that it was introduced in Wuhan with the sole objective of weakening the economic power of a country that has become, in recent years, a real threat to the West, especially the United States.” (“Il n’y a aucun doute qu’on l’a introduit à Wuhan avec l’unique objectif d’affaiblir la puissance économique d’un pays devenu, ces dernières années, une menace réelle pour l’Occident, notamment les Etats-Unis.”)

Dieng continued, “‘The Coronavirus is a weapon of war against China,’ said Nicolas Maduro a week ago. Yes, the Venezuelan president is quite right.” (“‘Le Coronavirus est une arme de guerre contre la Chine’, disait Nicolas Maduro il y a une semaine. Oui, le président vénézuélien a bien raison.”)

Another March 2020 article by Dieng, titled “Exclusive: China accuses the United States of deliberately introducing the Coronavirus in Wuhan” (“Exclusif: la Chine accuse les Etats-Unis d’avoir volontairement introduit le Coronavirus à Wuhan”), claimed without evidence that the COVID-19 virus was manufactured in

a U.S. military laboratory. The article cited comments made by Chinese diplomat Zhao Lijian, including a tweet in which he suggested that the virus was brought into China by the U.S., as well as an article by the Canadian website GlobalResearch.ca.

“He [Lijian] shared an article from the investigative site Global [Research] Canada which confirms that the strain did indeed come from a US military laboratory,” Dieng wrote. “Indeed, according to Global [Research] Canada, which relied on expert accounts, only the United States has the stem cell for all varieties of the virus. Global [Research] Canada concludes that the Coronavirus could have originated from a US military biological warfare laboratory based in Fort Drick [Detrick], Maryland.” (“Il partage un article du site d’investigation Global Canada qui confirme que la souche provient bien d’un laboratoire militaire américain... En effet, selon Global Canada qui s’appuie sur le témoignage de plusieurs spécialistes, seuls les Etats-Unis disposent de la cellule souche de toutes les variétés du virus. Global Canada conclue que le Coronavirus pourrait provenir du laboratoire militaire américain de guerre biologique basé à Fort Drick, dans le Maryland.”) Global Research, a site that NewsGuard has determined to have repeatedly published false content and conspiracy theories, has since deleted the article.

There is no evidence that the virus is a bioweapon. Several peer-reviewed studies in 2020 have concluded that the COVID-19 virus -- which first emerged in Wuhan, China, not the U.S. -- had natural origins. A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” An earlier study, published in February 2020 in the journal Nature, found that the COVID-19 virus is “96% percent identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.” In an April 2020 statement published on its website, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence said it “concur[s] with the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not manmade or genetically modified.”

Asked about the claims about the COVID-19 virus' origin in his articles, Dieng told NewsGuard, "Perhaps, it does not correspond to reality."

He added, "This is an opinion. I rarely do opinion articles but I do occasionally give my opinion because I feel like there is a lot of gray area in this story." ("C'est un article d'opinion. Ça ne correspond pas à la réalité, peut-être. C'est une opinion. Je fais rarement des articles d'opinion mais j'en fais de temps en temps pour donner mon avis parceque j'ai l'impression qu'il y a beaucoup de zones d'ombre dans cette histoire.") The stories were not labeled as opinions.

In August 2020, the website published an article about protests related to the contested reelection of Belarus President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, titled "Crisis in Belarus: The media is hiding the truth from you: The West wants to completely neutralize Putin's Russia" ("Crise en Biélorussie: les médias vous cachent la vérité : l'Occident veut neutraliser totalement la Russie de Poutine").

In the article, Dieng suggested that in Belarus, the European Union was planning something similar to the "coup" that the EU supposedly plotted against former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich in 2014. Russian officials have claimed that U.S. and pro-Western governments were involved in a supposed "coup" during the Ukrainian Revolution of 2014, which led to the resignation of Yanukovich, the country's pro-Russian president.

"What is at stake and what very few media outlets talk about is that basically NATO (and therefore the West) does not want to lose control of a crucial country in its war against Russia," the article claimed. "The European Union is replaying the Ukrainian coup from 6 years ago. The scenario remains exactly the same ... The European Union and the United States had completely orchestrated the coup d'état against Viktor Yanukovich." ("Ce qui se joue et dont très peu de médias parlent d'ailleurs est qu'au fond, l'OTAN (donc l'Occident) ne veut surtout pas perdre le contrôle d'un pays crucial dans sa guerre contre la Russie... L'Union Européenne est en train de nous rejouer le coup

ukrainien il y a 6 ans (sic). Le scénario reste exactement le même... L'Union Européenne et les Etats-Unis avaient totalement orchestré le coup d'Etat contre Viktor Ianoukovytch.”)

In August 2020, the European Council said that the Aug. 9 elections in Belarus “were neither free nor fair and did not meet international standards.” The Council added that the European Union did not recognize the Belarus election results. There is, however, no evidence that Western countries were planning a coup in the country. According to EUvsDisinfo, a fact-checking website run by European Union's East Stratcom Task Force, pro-Russia disinformation efforts have included false claims that the West staged a coup in Ukraine and plans to do the same in Belarus.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, has previously denied the claims, renewed in Dieng’s article, that it has plotted against Russia. In a statement updated in 2019 on its website, the organization wrote, “Since Russia began its aggressive actions against Ukraine, Russian officials have accused NATO of a series of threats and hostile actions.... NATO is a defensive alliance, whose purpose is to protect our member states. Our exercises and military deployments are not directed against Russia – or any other country. Any claims that NATO is preparing an attack on Russia are absurd.”

Asked about the claims made in the article, Dieng said, “Everyone knows it. Everyone knows that the Ukrainian crisis was totally created. I know saying this bothers some people... Today, there is clear evidence that what happened in Ukraine was a completely created revolution to bring down the Yanukovych government.” (“Tout le monde le sait. Tout le monde sait que la crise Ukrainienne a été totalement créée. je sais que ça dérange certains de le dire.... Aujourd'hui, il y a des preuves évidentes que ce qui s'est passé en Ukraine a été une révolution complètement créée pour faire tomber le gouvernement de Yanukovych.”)

Because LeCourrier-du-soir.com has published false and unsubstantiated claims about world affairs, including the COVID-19 pandemic, NewsGuard has

determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

LeCourrier-du-soir.com does not articulate a corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

“When I do an article and I’m told that this article is fake news, I immediately delete it. It hardly ever happens,” Dieng said. “When an information is false, in my opinion, we don’t need to correct it, we eliminate it. It’s over, we move forward because otherwise other people will take the information and spread it, although it is false.” (“Quand je fais un article et qu’on me fait savoir que cet article est une fake news, je supprime immédiatement. Ça ne m’arrive pratiquement jamais... Quand une information est fausse, pour moi, on n’a pas besoin de rectifier, on l’élimine. C’est terminé, on avance parce que sinon il y a d’autres personnes qui vont prendre l’information et la faire circuler alors qu’elle est fausse.”)

Because LeCourrier-du-soir.com acknowledges it deletes false stories without issuing transparent corrections, and has left other false content uncorrected, NewsGuard has determined that it does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for regularly and transparently correcting errors.

The website’s “Finance Us” page (“Financez Nous”) states that the site “provides an impartial coverage of the news” (“traitement impartial de l’actualité”). The site also labels some of its opinion content by a few contributing authors, listing them as “analysis” or “editorial.” However, opinionated articles written by Dieng, which make up most of the content on the site, are not labeled as opinion.

For example, in a March 2020 article titled “Coronavirus: Any poll about Macron’s rising popularity is a pure lie” (“Coronavirus : tout sondage sur la hausse de la popularité de Macron est un pur mensonge”), Dieng wrote, “Authorities have no other choice but to use polling institutes to manipulate the masses. But, the reality is that he [French President Emmanuel Macron]

does not have the support of the French, who are fed up with his laxity and neglect. The poll results are false.” (“Le pouvoir n’a plus d’autres choix que recourir aux instituts de sondages pour manipuler les masses. Mais, la réalité est qu’il n’a pas le soutien des Français qui n’en peuvent plus de son laxisme et de sa négligence. Les résultats des sondages sont mensongers.”) The article was labelled “International,” “Europe ” and “Politics ”

In an April 2020 article about the French government’s response to the COVID-19 public health crisis, Dieng wrote, “The government’s methods are becoming quite disturbing. The handling of the crisis is a big joke, the individual freedoms of French people are no longer respected.” (“Les méthodes du gouvernement deviennent assez troublantes. La gestion de la crise est une vaste plaisanterie, les libertés individuelles des Français ne sont plus respectées.”) The article was also labelled “International,” “Europe,” and “Politics.”

Because LeCourrier-du-soir.com inserts commentary in articles that are not labelled as such, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

“Once I have enough funds, I will rework the site to have a section for news and a section for opinion articles,” Dieng told NewsGuard, when asked about the site’s unlabeled opinion. (“Une fois que j’aurai assez de fonds, je vais retravailler le site pour avoir une partie réservée aux actualités et une partie qui est réservée aux articles d’opinions.”)

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#### Transparency

LeCourrier-du-soir.com discloses its ownership by Cheikh Dieng on its Legal Notice page (Mentions légales). The page also identifies Dieng as the site’s publishing director and provides his mailing address and email address.

Articles generally include author names. A staff page (L’Equipe) lists the site’s content creators, and includes their biographies, photos and email addresses.

Advertising is distinguished from editorial content.

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History                    LeCourrier-du-soir.com launched in 2014.

Written by: [Sophia Tewa](#)

Edited by: [Amy Westfeldt](#)

Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

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Ownership and  
Financing

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Credibility

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[peut-finir-tres-mal](#)

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Transparency <https://lecourrier-du-soir.com/lequipe/>  
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