

## News agencies recall image of Catherine, Princess of Wales, citing manipulation concerns

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Several major news agencies have withdrawn an image distributed by Kensington Palace showing Catherine, Princess of Wales, and her children, saying they believe the photo has been manipulated.

The photograph is [the first officially released image of the princess](#) since she underwent abdominal surgery in January, and comes after weeks of intense public speculation and mounting social media conspiracy theories as to her exact whereabouts and health.

The image was released on Sunday with a message from the princess thanking the public for its support while marking Mother's Day in the United Kingdom. CNN has reached out to Kensington Palace for comment.

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An initial CNN review of the image has identified at least two areas that appear to show some evidence of potential manipulation, including Princess Charlotte's sleeve cuff, and a zipper on the lefthand side on the jacket of the Princess of Wales.

CNN is continuing to use the original photo, appropriately captioned, in the context of the debate around its alleged manipulation.

Three major international news agencies also said they found evidence of manipulation.

The Associated Press noted that "at closer inspection it appears that the source has manipulated the image."

Agence France-Presse said it had withdrawn the photo due to "an editorial issue."

In a note to clients the agency wrote: "It has come to light that this handout photo... issued by Kensington Palace today of the Princess of Wales and her kids had been altered and therefore it was withdrawn from AFP systems."

Reuters and the AP also both pointed to the sleeve of Kate's daughter Charlotte as an area that showed evidence of being manipulated or changed.

Reuters said the sleeve did not line up properly, suggesting the image had been altered. It said the agency could not immediately determine how, why, or by whom the alteration was made.

AP also pointed to "an inconsistency in the alignment" of the daughter's hand, saying the image had been manipulated "in a way that did not meet AP's photo standards."

Most photo agencies and news organizations have stringent rules against publishing images that have been overly edited or manipulated. Reuters, for example, says it only allows the use of Photoshop in “very limited” ways such as cropping or resizing images, or balancing their color.

Removing elements from a photo or adding to them is strictly forbidden because it undermines trust in both the image and a news organization’s credibility even if they are not the source of the changes.

News agencies also often use [specialist software](#) to check photographs to check for evidence of manipulation. Rapid advances in generative AI in recent years have made it increasingly easy for bad actors to churn out convincing fake photographs and video, [creating further verification](#) difficulties for media organizations.

The removal of the images by major news agencies creates a fresh public relations headache for Britain’s royal family at a time when it was trying to tamp down some of the more wild speculation that had exploded online in the aftermath of Kate’s surgery.

Kensington Palace had said in January that the princess, 42, is [unlikely to return to public duties until Easter](#) at the end of March. The palace did not reveal what her surgery was for, but said that it was noncancerous.

Her long disappearance from the public eye sparked furious rumors online and international media coverage. Some of this died down somewhat after a photograph emerged in early March of Kate in a car driven by her mother; she was seen wearing dark sunglasses and sitting in the front passenger seat.

But the speculation largely continued raging online, especially on social media, fueled by other incidents within the royal family – such as Prince William pulling out of an important family gathering earlier this month without public explanation.

The palace faced mounting pressure to share more information about the future Queen, without compromising her medical privacy.

In February the palace made the rare move of pushing back against the rumors, saying it had “made it clear in January the timelines of the Princess’ recovery and we’d only be providing significant updates. That guidance stands.”