

“All the NGOs are there to supply terrorists” : Hijacking of an INGO truck sparks controversy

Tracking Aid Narratives on Social Media: Recent Observations from the Sahel
09 April 2025

This new briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses social media activity from 31 March to 6 April 2025, assessing observed narratives based on 12 months of systematic social media monitoring in [Burkina Faso](#), [Mali](#) and [Niger](#).



SUMMARY: Between 31 March and 06 April, 87 social media posts generated 175 comments across Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso — a 50% increase in comment engagement compared to the previous week. The rise in engagement is likely driven by negative reactions to two media reports about the hijacking of an INGO vehicle in Mali, which sparked allegations of support for terrorist groups and calls for all NGOs to be expelled.

LAST WEEK: ["They want to come back with the virus" \(24-30 March\)](#); [Wolves in Sheep's Clothing \(17-23 March\)](#); [WFP funding cuts \(09-16 March\)](#); [UNHCR Niger \(01-08 March\)](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON: INGO Accused of Aiding Terrorists Following Supply Truck Hijacking

A Facebook [post](#) by a local media platform on April 6, reporting the hijacking of a vehicle belonging to an INGO, prompted a strong online reaction. The INGO was founded by Malians and Americans and works in one other country beside Mali. While the original post was neutral, the comments section was dominated by negative sentiment.

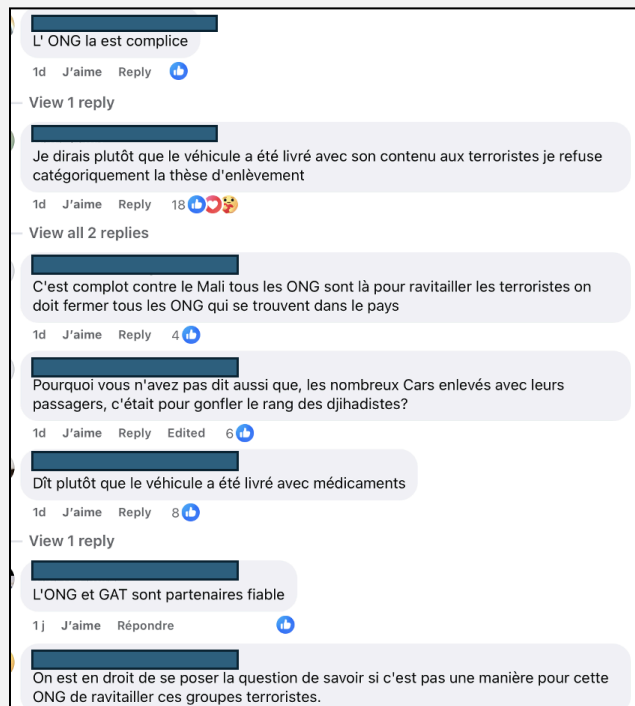
75% of the comments were negative. Many users rejected the narrative of a hijacking and instead suggested the incident was a deliberate delivery of medical supplies to armed groups. Terms such as “*ravitaillement*” (refueling), and “*complot*” (plot) featured frequently, with some commenters accusing the NGO of direct collaboration with jihadist groups. Several called for the organisation to be banned or investigated, while others extended the criticism to all NGOs operating in Mali.

A social media user on X commenting on a [media article](#) on the topic accused NGOs of sustaining insecurity as part of their business model. Although engagement with the post was limited, it echoed the same themes of distrust and suspicion.

Among the negative comments, two social media users offered a defence of the NGO, highlighting its work since 2016 in supporting eight health zones in Bankass, and another requested that the media page do a better job at fact checking the harmful comments. These comments, however, received little traction and did not shift the overall tone of the discussion.

What this tells us

Security incidents are a common trigger for false accusations on social media platforms that link the work of aid agencies, and particularly frequently medical aid, with alleged terrorist support. This highlights the importance of monitoring the wider humanitarian space and underlines the need to carefully consider communication in the aftermath of an incident.



- **Attempts to emphasise facts had little impact:** Efforts to defend the INGO or call for fact-checking by social media users were largely ignored, failing to shift the tone. The lack of engagement with fact-checking efforts shows that once negative narratives take hold, they are difficult to reverse—highlighting a trust gap and the limited influence of corrective voices in polarized online spaces.
- **It doesn't take many comments for misinformation to dominate the tone:** Misinformation quickly dominated the discourse on social media, regardless of the original message. It is untested whether real-time monitoring and instant intervention with multiple accounts would have the capacity to influence the discourse and address harmful narratives. It is unclear where the resources for such a labour intensive programme would come from.

Key Takeaways

Positive sentiment was dominant for all aid agencies

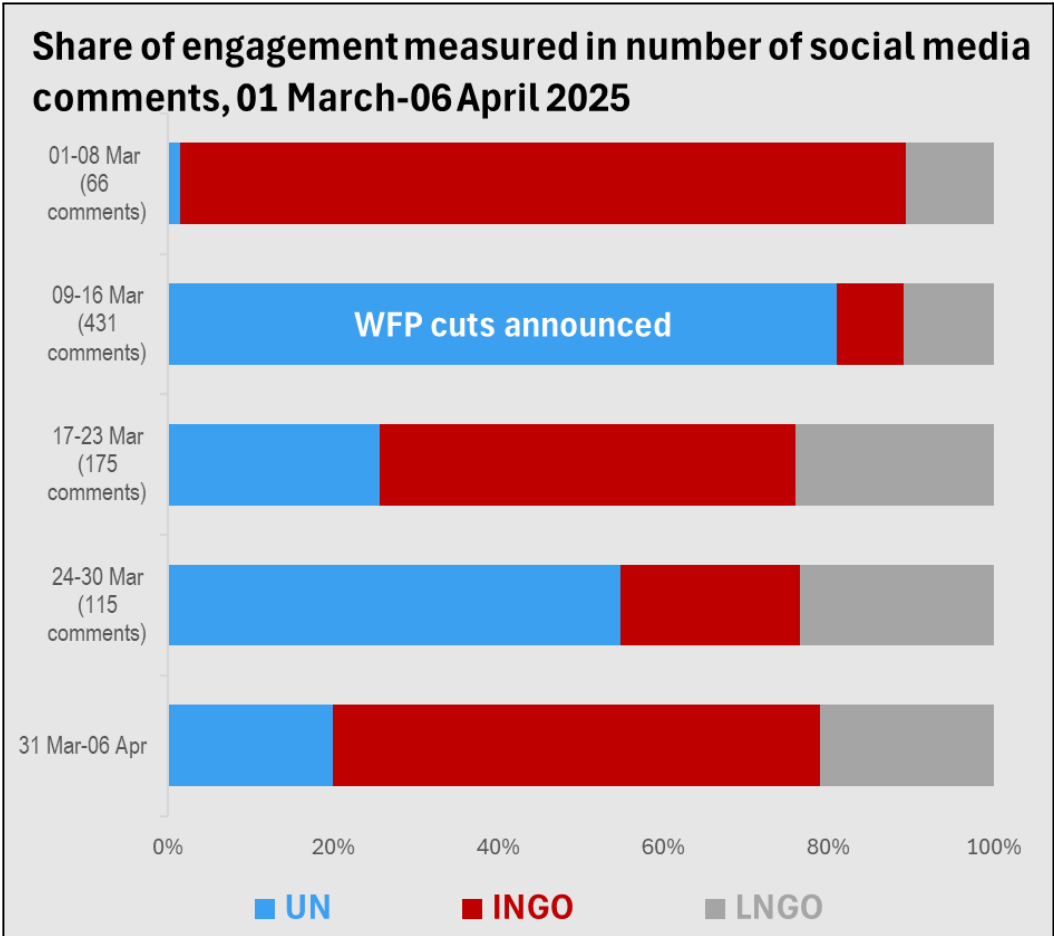
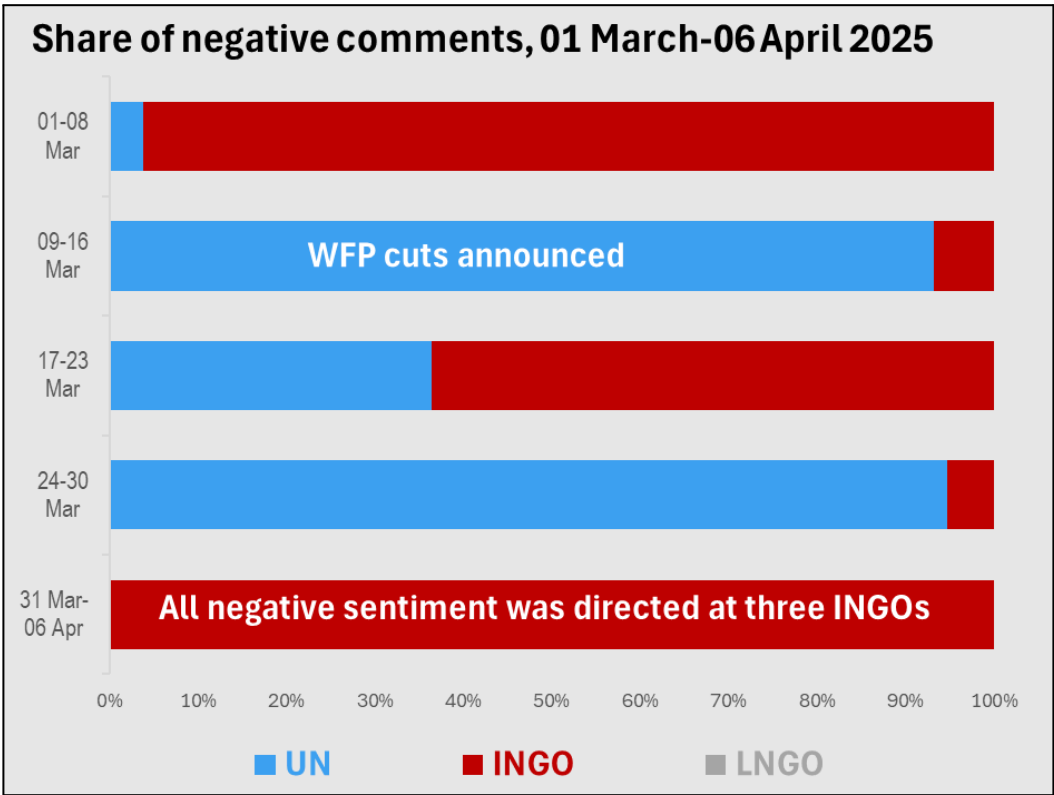
Last week, posts from UN agencies, LNGOs and INGOs received relatively low engagement in terms of comments. Where users did respond, the tone was largely neutral or positive (58 percent of comments). Only two social media comments across all tracked posts expressed negative sentiment. A small number of posts came from state-linked entities in Burkina Faso (and one Russian), including diplomatic pages and government-affiliated media. These focused on cooperation and logistical support and were met with similarly neutral or mildly supportive responses.

What this tells us

- The low level of engagement may reflect not only the choice of less controversial themes—such as education, food assistance, and youth development—but also the broader online climate in the region. In Burkina Faso, where authorities continue to restrict media and crack down on dissent, public discussion—particularly critical or politicised commentary—may be increasingly suppressed. Recent reporting by [Human Rights Watch](#) highlights ongoing efforts to stifle independent voices, which could be contributing to the subdued response observed this week.

Patterns of aid narratives on social media continued

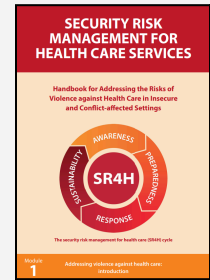
- **LNGOs** did not receive negative sentiment last week and generated **slightly lower levels of engagement** than the previous week (21% of the comments compared to 23% on March 24-30).
- **INGOs** received 59% of comments last week of which 42% were negative which is higher than the previous week but lower than early March.
- **UN agencies received 63 percent less comments than the previous week and no negative comments.**



More resources

Security Risk Management for Health Care Services (SR4H) Handbook

Health care provision has unique characteristics that shape its specific exposure to security risks in conflict zones. The Security Risk Management for Health Care (SR4H) Handbook – available in [Arabic](#), [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#)– provides guidance on how to implement a range of actions intended to promote respectful and violence-free environments and prepare individuals or organisations to face and respond appropriately to violent incidents, also dealing with the aftermath of such events.



While this handbook is primarily aimed at health programme managers providing frontline services, it is also highly relevant for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working with partners who implement healthcare services. The handbook helps to identify practical activities that local health partners can implement and that NGO partners can include in partnership agreements and budget for. **The SR4H Handbook brings together some of the best practices on security risk management and proposes a framework adapted for health care providers working with limited resources. The objective is to promote an approach that considers the safety and security of health professionals while ensuring patients' access to care.**

Stay informed and get involved

We welcome questions and feedback. Share what you're observing both on the ground and online. Your insights help us keep the analysis accurate and up-to-date. Email: info@insecurityinsight.org

Join our efforts to protect humanitarian space. Subscribe to our [Social Media Monitoring](#) mailing list.

Find more resources at the [Social Media Monitoring](#) website.

Help support our work by sharing this resource. Please copy and paste this link: <https://bit.ly/31Mar-06Apr2025SMMBrief>

This document is published by Insecurity Insight. The contents are the responsibility of Insecurity Insight. The analysis and opinions expressed in this report belong solely to the publisher, Insecurity Insight. Insecurity Insight is a Humanitarian to Humanitarian (H2H) organisation committed to the Humanitarian Principles.

Suggested citation: Insecurity Insight. 2025. Tracking Aid Narratives on Social Media: Emerging Trends in the Sahel, 31 March to 06 April 2025. Switzerland: Insecurity Insight. <https://bit.ly/31Mar-06Apr2025SMMBrief>

