

“We Must Kill Them”: Death Threats And Doxing Risks In Burkina Faso

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

15 October 2025



This briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses public social media activity from 06-12 October 2025, assessing observed narratives based on 14 months of systematic social media monitoring in [Burkina Faso](#), [Mali](#) and [Niger](#).

SUMMARY: Between 06-12 October 2025, **274 public posts** on the aid sector across Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger generated **2,014 comments**, marking a 220% increase in engagement compared to the previous week. The sharp rise was driven primarily by the espionage allegations against INSO in Burkina Faso, which dominated public discourse and fuelled a significant wave of online hostility, including death threats, toward international NGOs. In contrast, local NGOs received public praise following an award ceremony in Burkina Faso. No other harmful narratives toward the aid sector were detected during this period.

PAST EDITIONS: [Without Transparency](#) (29 Sept-05 Oct) | [It Is A Disgrace](#) (15-28 Sept) | [Keep Eyes on Agadez](#) (01-14 Sept) | [Burkina Faso !\[\]\(e3f8612927870f2e0f9f5989e6dd3064_img.jpg\) Has To Cut All Ties With ALL International Organizations](#) (18-31 Aug) | [Mixed Opinion](#) (11-17 Aug) | [We Will Expose Them](#) (04-10 Aug) | [Attack, Suspension etc.](#) (21 Jul-03 Aug) | [Congratulations](#) (14-20 Jul) | [All](#)

Key Takeaways

Burkina Faso: Espionage Allegations Against INSO Spark Intense Negative Reactions

Between 7 and 8 October 2025, the Government of Burkina Faso publicly accused the International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO) of espionage, announcing the suspension of its activities and the arrest of several staff members. The allegations were communicated during an official press conference by the Minister of Security and rapidly disseminated via the government’s information Facebook page and dozens of local edited media and major local outlets.

According to the government statement, INSO (headquartered in The Hague and active in Burkina Faso since 2019) had exceeded its authorised mandate of training humanitarian organisations in security management. Authorities alleged that INSO had been collecting sensitive information concerning military convoys, supply routes, and security operations reportedly with the support of Burkinabè nationals.

The initial public announcement of INSO’s suspension pending an investigation for ‘data-handling and security monitoring practices’ earlier in the year, by contrast had only generated 65 comments in [August 2025](#), the October allegations therefore mark a transition from administrative sanction to criminal accusation, re-framed as espionage and national betrayal.

The online conversation in Burkina Faso rapidly reached an estimated **1,789 comments** across Facebook and X within 48 hours, and only 22 comments in Mali (none were detected in Niger), reaching an estimated **2.4 million social media users**. **91% of the analysed comments were negative towards INSO or the aid sector**. The tone was overwhelmingly punitive, praising the authorities for their vigilance and calling for the severest penalties against those involved. The dominant tone of the comments combined praise for state action, hostility toward NGOs, and demands for punishment. Comments explicitly called for execution or capital punishment. A much smaller minority of users urged restraint, due process, and transparency, asking for judicial evidence

and warning against political manipulation. However, these calls were largely drowned out by the dominant discourse.

An alleged monthly salary table entitled “Espionage activities of the NGO INSO in Burkina Faso - Staff salaries”¹ further amplified online reactions. Many users interpreted the figures as confirmation of corruption and foreign manipulation. Some questioned why an NGO would pay above public-sector levels, while others demanded that such organisations be expelled entirely.

Death threats and doxxing - prevalence and patterns

- **Direct calls for lethal violence** were widespread and explicit. Comments invoked killing, hanging, or shooting as appropriate punishment. This was not marginal rhetoric but a normalised feature of the online debate.

“Au poteau. Zéro pitié pour ces gens là. 😞😞” (“To the gallows. No mercy for these people. 😞😞”)

“EGORGEZ LES TOUS! MR SANA ! EGORGEZ LES POURQUE SA RÉPÈTE PAS ! MR SANA ECOUTES MOI ATTENTIVEMENT ! EGORGEZ LES EN CACHETTE ? OU EMPOISONNEZ LES ! ILS SONT MAUDITS PAR DIEUX ! C'EST POUR CELA JE RÉPÈTE, EMPOISONNEZ CEUX LÀ !” (“SLAUGHTER THEM ALL! MR SANA! SLAUGHTER THEM SO IT DOESN'T HAPPEN AGAIN! MR SANA, LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY! SLAUGHTER THEM IN SECRET? OR POISON THEM! THEY ARE CURSED BY GOD! THAT'S WHY I REPEAT, POISON THEM!”)

“Nous devons les faire disparaître clandestinement, sans trop parler, enfin de n est plus voir ses genre de choses” (“We must make them disappear secretly, without talking too much, so that we don't see this kind of thing anymore.”)

“On doit les exécuter sans bruit Siiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii Ou bien On les amène dans un forêt en les habillent façon tero tero et les tuer avec des armes vide à main après on donne un communiqué C'est fatigant” (“We must execute them quietly. Siiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii Or we take them to a forest, dress them up as tero tero and kill them with empty handguns, then issue a statement. It's tiring.”)

- **Public exposure demands** were systematic. Users requested that authorities broadcast the trials on national television and publish full lists of those implicated. Some social media users encouraged others to share information.

“Tolérance zéro. Il faut les présenter à la presse et diffuser leur image et leur identité.” (“Zero tolerance. They must be presented to the press and their image and identity must be made public.”)

- **Targets.** Threats extended to both foreign and national staff. Burkinabè employees, in particular, were branded “sell-outs,” exposing them to community hostility and potential violence.

“Les 4 burkinabés la il faut déchue de leurs nationalité” (“The four Burkinabe must be stripped of their nationality.”)

“Tous les Burkinabè qui travaille avec ses O?G sans les dénoncé doit être considérés comme l ennemis du peuple,” (“All Burkinabe who work with these OGs without denouncing them must be considered enemies of the people.”)

- **These combined patterns - state-led framing, amplified media narratives, and user-driven targeting - created an online environment conducive to offline risks for INSO staff and for the broader humanitarian community.**

¹ “Activités d’espionnage de l’ONG INSO au Burkina Faso-Salaires du personnel.”

Key Indicators NGOs Should Monitor

- Posts or comments explicitly naming staff, sharing photos, or requesting identity information.
- Sharing of salary or personnel data.
- Spikes in threats under social media posts.

Suggested Precautionary Measures

- **Digital monitoring:** Track public mentions of the organisation and staff names to detect early targeting.
- **Information control:** Limit publication of identifiable staff data, photos, or role descriptions, particularly on public platforms.
- **Staff protection briefings:** Remind staff to review their privacy settings on their social media profiles, avoid political discussions online, and report threats immediately.
- **Staff support:** Anticipate stress and anxiety among staff and maintain communication explaining the organisation's neutral mandate.

What This Tells Us

- **The INSO case became a catalyst for anti-NGO sentiment.** What began as a specific espionage allegation quickly evolved into a generalised indictment of all international organisations.
- **The convergence of state messaging and social-media amplification normalised punitive discourse.** The coordinated release of official statements, press coverage, and salary data shaped an information ecosystem where violent rhetoric appeared legitimate.
- **Online calls for punishment and exposure represent a serious protection risk.** The scale and repetition of death threats and doxxing language indicate potential spillover into real-world intimidation or violence, particularly against Burkinabè aid staff.
- **Public anger is anchored in economic and sovereignty narratives rather than verified evidence.** The lack of visible proof regarding espionage left space for salary data and nationalist tropes to fill the interpretive void.
- The exceptionally high volume and intensity of hostile comments, including widespread and graphic death threats, mark a significant escalation from previous discussions about INSO. This sharp increase in both the scale and severity of online rhetoric in 24 hours may indicate a coordinated or deliberately amplified campaign intended to legitimise punitive sentiment toward international NGOs.

Positive Reactions To LNGOs Award Ceremony (11 October 2025)

On 11 October 2025, two Burkinabè LNGOs received awards during an event celebrating development actors across sectors. Both organisations posted celebratory posts on Facebook highlighting collaboration with the Ministry of Health, local authorities, and development partners.

The two posts generated **76 comments, all positive**, and almost all expressions of pride and encouragement such as "*Félicitations,*" ("*congratulation*") and "*Reconnaissance bien méritée.*"

(“*Well-deserved recognition*”). Some users described the LNGOs as integral parts of their communities, and others emphasised perceived good management, and teamwork.

What This Tells Us

- **Local NGOs continue to enjoy high levels of trust and legitimacy.** The enthusiastic, uniform positivity contrasts sharply with the hostility directed at international NGOs a few days prior, suggesting that LNGOs are key to sustaining credibility.
- **Recognition events can rehabilitate the image of the aid sector.** The award ceremony created a space for collective pride on social media.
- Amid ongoing distrust toward international agencies, the celebration of these two LNGOs shows that humanitarian principles still resonate positively when embodied by nationally rooted organisations collaborating visibly with state institutions.

Patterns of Aid Narratives on Social Media Continued

Available data for the period 06-12 October 2025 indicates an increase in overall engagement volume compared to the previous reporting week (29 September-05 October). During this period, 2 014 comments were recorded across all monitored posts, a 220% rise from the week before. This spike in activity reflects the impact of the INSO espionage allegations, which dominated public discourse and drew widespread negative reactions toward the aid sector.

Sentiment dynamics shifted sharply. Unlike the preceding week, when 65% of negative sentiment targeted UN agencies and 35% targeted INGOs, the 06-12 October period saw 100% of all negative sentiment directed exclusively at INGOs (99% of the comments in response to the INSO allegations). Distribution of engagement by organisation type also shifted significantly. Of the total 2,014 comments recorded:

- INGOs accounted for 91.8% of all engagement,
- LNGOs for 4.5%, and
- UN agencies for 3.7%.

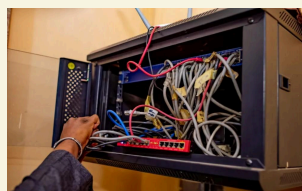
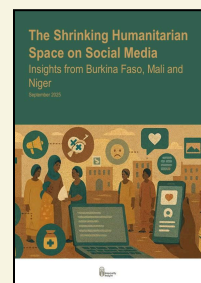
This represents a reversal from earlier weeks, where the UN had consistently dominated comment volume (between 60 to 80% since August 2025).

As in earlier periods, these findings should be read with caution. Technical issues affecting geolocation may still lead to under-detection of posts from Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

These findings are based solely on publicly accessible content and may not reflect discussions on private or encrypted platforms.

Other resources

The Shrinking Humanitarian Space on Social Media: This report provides an in-depth analysis of how public online narratives are reshaping the operating environment of the aid sector in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The report focuses on the risks and harms posed by harmful public narratives that frame aid as illegitimate, politicised or foreign controlled. These narratives are steadily shrinking the humanitarian space. As online and offline threats increasingly converge, the report argues that safeguarding digital legitimacy is no longer optional - it is essential to the continuation of principled, neutral, and effective humanitarian action. The findings are especially urgent given the fragility of the Sahel context. Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger face overlapping security, political, and humanitarian crises. Available in [English](#) and [French](#).



AI And Hostile Discourses: An Emerging Issue For Humanitarian Aid In The Sahel: In this Hironnelle Foundation [interview](#), Insecurity Insight's Christina Wille and Clara de Solages discuss the role of AI in shaping hostile narratives against humanitarian actors in the Sahel, as well as recommendations for humanitarian organizations operating in the region on how to better navigate the risks posed by AI on social media.

Data Use and Privacy Disclaimer

This report includes analysis of publicly available social media content collected from open platforms. All data has been anonymised to remove or obscure identifying details, and no content from closed groups was used. The analysis was conducted in the public interest and in line with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), under a legitimate interest basis. The purpose of this analysis is to support humanitarian dialogue, inform policy, protect aid workers and those they help, and contribute to public interest research.

This document is published by Insecurity Insight - a Humanitarian to Humanitarian (H2H) organisation committed to the Humanitarian Principles.

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