"Let's Say No To Gender-Based Violence"

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

04 December 2025

This briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses public social media activity from 17-30 November 2025, assessing observed narratives based on 14 months of systematic social media monitoring in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

Understanding how aid actors are portrayed online is increasingly critical, as social media narratives shape community perceptions, operational access, and staff safety. By tracking emerging and entrenched narratives, this briefing offers indications on sentiments to support organisations strengthening community acceptance in a rapidly shifting operating environment.

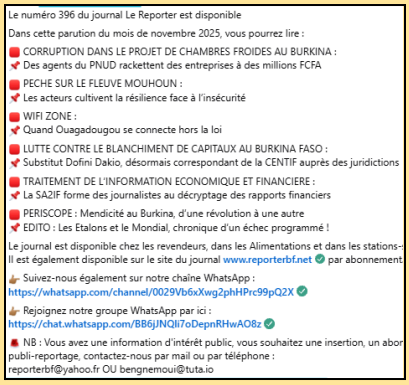
Past editions: These Aren't Journalists (10-16 Nov) | Without Women, Peace Is Incomplete (27 Oct-09 Nov) | I Don't Think He's A Civilian (20-26 Oct) | The Country Is Now Governed (13-19 Oct) | We Must Kill Them (06-12 Oct) | Without Transparency (29 Sept-05 Oct) | It Is A Disgrace (15-28 Sept) | Keep Eyes on Agadez (01-14 Sept) | All

Allegations against UNDP Staff in Burkina Faso but no visible engagement

On 21 November 2025, three posts from different Burkinabè media outlets on Facebook promoted the latest issue of the newspaper *Le Reporter*, which included a headline alleging that "UNDP agents [were] racketeering companies for millions of FCFA".

The posts did not expand on the claim beyond this headline and teaser, and were shared alongside other investigative topics. The posts reached an estimated 70,122 users for one post, 24,810 for another, while a third reached just 1,701.

However, none of the posts generated comments during the monitoring period, indicating that the allegation did not gain traction


Le numéro 396 du journal Le Reporter est disponible

Dans cette parution du mois de novembre 2025, vous pourrez lire :

- CORRUPTION DANS LE PROJET DE CHAMBRES FROIDES AU BURKINA : Des agents du PNUD rackettent des entreprises à des millions FCFA
- PECHE SUR LE FLEUVE MOUHOUN : Les acteurs cultivent la résilience face à l'insécurité
- WIFI ZONE : Quand Ouagadougou se connecte hors la loi
- LUTTE CONTRE LE BLANCHIMENT DE CAPITAUX AU BURKINA FASO : Substitut Dofini Dakio, désormais correspondant de la CENTIF auprès des juridictions
- TRAITEMENT DE L'INFORMATION ECONOMIQUE ET FINANCIERE : La SA2IF forme des journalistes au décryptage des rapports financiers
- PERISCOPE : Mendicité au Burkina, d'une révolution à une autre
- EDITO : Les Etalons et le Mondial, chronique d'un échec programmé !

Le journal est disponible chez les revendeurs, dans les Alimentations et dans les stations-
Il est également disponible sur le site du journal www.reporterbf.net par abonnement

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Key Takeaways

Niger lifts suspensions on 100 NGOs out of 4,000

Between 18 and 22 November 2025, five edited media posts and one post by an individual (four Niger-based accounts and two Mali-based accounts) reported that Niger had lifted the suspension of nearly 100 NGOs and associations that had published their 2024 financial statements. These organisations were authorised to resume their activities, while around **4,000 NGOs** operating in the country remained suspended but were given 60 days to regularise their status.

These five posts generated **22 comments**, with only **two** negative comments toward the aid sector, and the rest were supportive of stronger regulation or focused on technical questions about the process. 20 of the 22 comments were concentrated under a single post by a local influencer, who also presents themselves as a journalist on their social media profile and has at least 300,000 followers. Their usual content focuses on local issues, including participation in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Narratives observed in the discussion around NGO suspensions:

Transparency and rule-of-law as necessary: some users frame the suspension and lifting of bans as a legitimate way to enforce national laws. NGOs are expected to publish financial statements, respect tax and reporting rules, and align with government priorities if they want to operate as real partners of the state.

- **“On this point, I completely agree with the Government of Niger. I myself work for an NGO, and I believe that one of the primary obligations is to fully comply with the laws of the host country.”** (“Sur ce point, je suis totalement d'accord avec le Gouvernement du Niger. Je suis moi-même agent d'ONG et je pense que l'une des premières obligations… est de se mettre en conformité totale avec les Lois du pays hôte…”)
- **"It's important in any case, and it will allow people to wake up."** (“C'est important en tout cas et ça va permettre aux gens de se reveiller”)

Concern about NGO practices and composition: one comment questioned the recruitment practices, and the number of expatriates in certain NGOs, asking why organizations can have more foreign than local staff and calling for better monitoring of how NGOs operate.

- **"We would also be interested to know if the recruitment process is being followed correctly? How can an NGO have more expatriates than locals?"** (“ Ça nous intéresserait aussi de savoir si le processus de recrutement est respecté ??? Comment une ONG peut avoir plus d'expatriés que d'autochtones ?”)

Constructive criticism of government implementation: few users support stricter controls but criticise how they are applied, saying that compliant NGOs were listed as suspended in the list, so they were calling for a better approach.

- **“What you forget in your analysis is that many international NGOs have complied with the state's requirements, but many of them are not on the list. A more professional approach from state officials would be welcome.”** (“Ce que tu oublie dans ton analyse c'est que de nombreuses ONG internationales se sont conformées aux exigences de l'État mais nombreuses d'entre elles ne sont pas dans la liste. Une approche plus professionnelle des agents de l'État serait la bienvenue”).

Minority defence of NGOs as service providers: one comment was critical of the process itself that NGOs fill gaps left by the state and should not be “harassed”.

- **"These NGOs are trying to fill the void left by states, and we spend our time harassing them? Have pity on the people!"** (“Ces ONG essaient de combler le vide laissé par les États et on passe son temps à les harceler ? Ayez pitié des populations !”)

What this tells us

- Among this small sample, the dominant narrative supports tighter regulation of NGOs, linking financial transparency to public trust and state sovereignty, rather than seeing it mainly as an attack on the sector.
- At the same time, users highlight doubts about administrative capacity and fairness, worrying that compliant NGOs may have been omitted and calling for clearer communication and more professional handling of lists and procedures.

- The isolated critical comment of the process, defending NGOs, underscores a minority concern that stricter controls could undermine services to vulnerable communities, but this view did not gain traction in the observed discussion.

Security Cooperation with the UN in Mali: Low Engagement, Clear Distrust

On 20 November 2025, the visit of the UN Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Leonardo Santos Simão, to Mali's Prime Minister was covered in two Facebook posts: one by a Malian media page (TV segment) and one on the government's official page. The two posts generated **73 comments**, but interaction with the substance of the topic was limited: most comments were greetings, praise for the programme and hosts, technical complaints about the sound ("the mic", "volume"), or job requests to the UN, with only **nine comments were identified as negative** toward the UN and the security partnership being discussed.

Narratives observed:

- **UN as ineffective and complicit:** one comment presented the UN as part of the security problem rather than the solution.
  "XXX the United Nations has never solved a problem in a country. It's the mafia, by God. They were there, but what good did they do?" (" XXX les Nations unis n'ont jamais résolu un problème dans un pays. C'est la mafia walahi. Ils étaient là qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait de bon ?")

- **UN as Western proxy with hidden agendas:** UN engagement is framed as serving foreign interests and masks ulterior motives.
  "My brother XXX, for me it's them, you shouldn't trust them, it's false that the government is well thought out, the whites don't help people like that, there's something behind it, may God heal Mali, Inshallah." (" Mon frère XXX pour moi c'est eux faut pas mettre confiance à eux il est faux que les gouvernement il est bien réfléchi bien les blancs aide pas les gens comme ça y a quelque chose derrière de ça que dieu chauve mali inch'Allah")

- **Call for vigilance and mistrust of international actors:** users urge Mali authorities to remain wary of the UN in security matters.
  "Mali needs to be careful with the UN." ("Il faut que le Mali fais attention avec onu")
  Hey, Massa, we're going back to the UN again, what a shame!" ("He massa on retourne encore avec l' ONU quel honte")

- **Sovereign pride and AES self-reliance:** Several comments stress that Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have armed and financed themselves "without external financial aid" and International partnerships are acceptable only once AES strength and sovereignty are secured.
  "Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso armed themselves and were well-equipped using their own funds without external financial assistance. Now, the other countries in the sub-region […] must acquire weapons and experience warfare; only then will the support and collaboration of the ESA countries follow." ("Le Mali, Niger et Burkina se sont armée bien équipé par leurs propres fonds sans aide financière de l'extérieur. Maintenant les autres pays de la sous-région […] doivent s'équiper en armement et goûter à la guerre, après vient le soutien et la collaboration des pays de l'AES.")

What this tells us

- Among the few users who engaged substantively with the security angle, the UN is framed as a **Western-aligned actor** that has failed to deliver security gains and may even fuel instability.

- The dominance of non-political comments (greetings, technical issues, personal requests) suggests that **broad audiences are not actively debating security policy in this space**, but when the UN is mentioned, the small number of reactions can still surface strong distrust and accusations of hidden agendas.

Even though the comments number is relatively low, these engagements still feed into a wider pattern of distrust toward international security actors in the Sahel region, a common regional narrative.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV): Strong Support, Low Visibility

Between **24 and 29 November,** UN agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women), INGOs and LNGOs across **Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali** published **25 posts** about the launch of the *16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence*. These posts generated just **42 comments in total 36 positive** and **six neutral**, and **no negative comments** toward the aid sector or the initiatives. This highlights that while online engagement remained **very limited** despite broad institutional participation, it did not trigger opposition or backlash.

Most comments were brief but clearly supportive: users congratulated the organisers.

"Congratulations" ("Félicitations"), **"A Very good initiative"** ("Très belle initiative") **"Good Luck to everyone"** "Bonne campagne à toutes et à tous").

Some comments urged the organisers to continue **"Courage"** ("Du courage") **"Good luck for the future"** ("Bonne chance pour la suite").

Some users are clearly against GBV and repeated the campaign's slogan with direct calls such as **"Let's say no to Gender-based violence"** ("Disons non aux violences sur le genre") **"Stop GBV"** ("STOP aux VBG / VGB")

A few comments engaged more substantively, welcoming discussions on digital violence and stressing the importance of safe online spaces for women and girls; one user, for example, suggested that a speech with young students and their parents is important. **"Interesting and important speech to be shared widely with young students and parents! Personally, I learned a lot, "I who was inclined towards prohibition"...etc..."** ("Intéressant et important discours à partager massivement aux jeunes étudiants et aux parents ! Personnellement j'ai beaucoup appris ""moi qui penchais à l'interdiction""...etc...")

Several local organisations used the comment space to publicly align themselves with UN messaging:

- *" …reaffirms its support for all initiatives to fight GBV… Together, let's mobilise to end violence against women and girls, including in digital spaces."*
- *"...fully supports the statement of the UNFPA Executive Director… It is time to take concrete measures to prevent and respond to digital violence."*

The overall tone is one of solidarity, mobilisation and moral consensus that violence against women and girls – online and offline – is unacceptable.

What this tells us

- **Shared norms, no visible backlash:** In this small sample, GBV and digital violence are treated as clear injustices; users rally around the same message rather than contest it. There is no visible backlash against women's rights, UN agencies or partner NGOs.
- **Aid actors seen as legitimate**: UN agencies, INGOs and LNGOs are thanked and encouraged, which suggests that, for those who comment, these organisations are trusted voices on GBV, not outsiders pushing an unwanted agenda.

Burkina Faso: Online Reactions to Possible Rejection of EU Social Protection Funding

On 27 November 2025, a Burkinabè edited media page posted on Facebook that the government might refuse €6.2 million in European Union funding for social protection programmes if the money is channelled through NGOs rather than state structures. The post explains that the EU initially wanted to work via NGOs, while the Burkinabè authorities insist that only national institutions should implement and manage the funds. The post generated 52 comments with 18 negative comments towards the aid sector.

Narratives observed:

Support for rejecting EU-funded aid through NGOs: Most users welcome the reported decision, thanking the government. Several argue that if the EU does not accept Burkinabè conditions, it should "keep its money". Aid is framed as a tool of domination rather than solidarity, with comments warning that "we don't need their help" and calling European offers "poisoned aid".

- **"It's clear and simple, straightforward: it's up to the Burkinabe state to manage the funds. If they don't want to, they can just leave with their money."** ("C'est clair et nette, simple comme bonjour, c'est à l'État Burkinabè de gérer les fonds, s'ils ne veulent pas sa ils n'ont qu'à partir avec leurs argent")
- **"It's crystal clear. In Europe, there are people in need; they should just help them. We'll manage on our own. We're not involved in that poisonous aid anymore."** ("Weh clair comme l'eau de roche. En Europe là-ba ya des démuni, il n'ont qu'à les aider. Nous on va se débrouiller. Les aide empoisonné, nous ne sommes plus dedans.")

NGOs portrayed as spies and channels of foreign influence: Some users describe NGOs as tools of espionage and foreign interference, suggesting that EU funds channelled through them form part of a wider strategy of control.

- **"NGOs are spies."** ("LES ONG C'EST DES ESPIONS")

Sovereignty, dignity and AES pride: Many users frame the decision as an assertion of national sovereignty and dignity, arguing that refusing conditional aid protects Burkina Faso and the wider AES from "recolonisation" and long-term dependence.

- **"NEVER AGAIN ANY FINANCIAL AID TO ONCE AGAIN RECOLONIZE US FOR ETERNAL DEPENDENCE GOODBYE PYROMANIAC FIREFIGHTERS."** ("PLUS JAMAIS UNE QUELCONQUE AIDE FINANCIERE POUR UNE FOIS DE PLUS NOUS RECOLONISER POUR UNE DEPENDANCE ETERNELLE A DIEU LES PYROMANES SAPEURS POMPIERS.")

A small pragmatic minority: A few voices strike a more nuanced tone. One user notes that if the money genuinely targets "the most deprived" and the EU accepts national rules, there is no reason to refuse it. Another jokingly urges, **"My friends, let's take the money."** ("mes amis prenons le frique"), suggesting that some users still see value in external funding if it can be controlled.

What this tells us

- **Aid framed through sovereignty and distrust:** In this thread, many users see EU funding via NGOs not as help but as a political tool, with NGOs portrayed as spies or instruments of Western influence.

- **Support for state-led aid and nationalist pride:** Commenters expect the Burkinabè state to run social programmes itself and largely applaud the idea of limiting or refusing EU aid, even though this conclusion is based on a small sample of 52 comments under one post.

Patterns of Aid Narratives on Social Media Continued

Between 17-30 November, online conversations about aid across Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger picked up but remained quite contained. The week between **17–23 November 2025** shows a clear rebound in online engagement with aid-related content across Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. A total of **248 public posts** were identified, generating **466 comments**, an increase of around **78%** compared with the **262 comments** recorded between 10–16 November. Engagement remains below the early October peaks but is higher than in the previous two weeks.

In total, **14** negative comments were identified between 17–23 November**, 56% targeted UN agencies and 44% targeted INGOs**, while **LNGOs drew no negative comments (0%)**.

This broadly mirrors last week's pattern, when most negative comments also focused on UN actors 66.7%. INGOs 33%, with LNGOs receiving no explicit criticism. Although the total volume of negative comments remains very low, criticism continues to concentrate on **UN agencies and INGOs**, while **local NGOs are not criticized** in the observed discussions.

The distribution of engagement by organisation type :

- **UN agencies: 71.9%**
- **INGOs: 17.4%**
- **LNGOs: 10.7%**

Between **24-30 November,** a total of **240 posts** were across Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. The posts produced **658 comments,** this number **of comments** is considered an increase of around **41.2%** compared to last week's number of comments.

24 negative comments were identified toward the aid sector, **4.1%** targeting the UN and **95.8%** targeting the INGOs.

A good portion of these comments were posted under content that was not primarily about the aid sector (for example, broader political or social content), but they were still included in this analysis because the posts **mentioned an aid organisation or UN agency.**

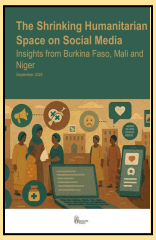
The distribution of engagement by organisation type:

- **UN agencies: 57.4%**
- **INGOs: 26.6%**
- **LNGOs: 16%**

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 in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger: This report provides an in-depth analysis of how public online narratives are reshaping the operating environment of the aid sector in the Sahel. It 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.. In **English** and **French**.



Learning from Social Media Narratives in Myanmar: This **report** provides a structured analysis of how public digital narratives about humanitarian operations shape access, safety, and legitimacy for aid agencies and their partners in Myanmar. It explores the implications of online narratives for communication strategies, policy decisions, and accountability to aid beneficiaries in one of the world's most restrictive and polarised digital environments. Drawing on seven months of public social media monitoring, the report highlights how narratives around aid delivery, health care, displacement, and access blockades intersect with conflict dynamics. The findings are designed to offer contextualised, actionable insights for humanitarian actors seeking to safeguard the principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality while navigating Myanmar's contested information space.

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.

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/17-30Nov2025SMMBrief**

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