

"The AES Must Continue Its Fight": Burkina Faso Security Conference Reactions Towards International Actors

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

11 December 2025

This briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses public social media activity from 01-07 December 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: [Let's Say No to Gender-Based Violence](#) (17-30 Nov), [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) | [All](#)

Continued Visibility on the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Between 01 and 07 December 2025, 20 posts across Mali and Niger referenced the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Despite this relatively active posting by UN agencies, INGOs, LNGOs and community groups, public engagement remained extremely limited, with only 17 comments recorded in total. Of these, 10 were positive and seven were neutral; none expressed negative sentiment toward aid or any of the campaigns. Most interactions were light and symbolic—such as stickers, emojis and simple expressions of support—rather than substantive engagement with GBV issues or the activities being promoted. Only a very small number of users referred directly to community mobilisation or the importance of collective action, indicating that deeper discussion of GBV remains rare in these online spaces.

What this tells us

- **GBV can be a non-controversial topic:** Users respond with supportive or neutral reactions. There was no sign of backlash against women's rights messaging, UN agencies or partner organisations.
- **Engagement is confined to sympathetic audiences:** The dominance of emojis, stickers and one-word responses suggests that the content reaches supportive but passive online communities rather than stimulating wider conversation or debate.
- **Campaign visibility is high but resonance is limited:** The multiplication of posts does not translate into meaningful interaction, indicating that the 16 Days campaign circulates mainly as an awareness activity rather than a catalyst for public discussion.

Key Takeaways

Conference on Victims of Terrorism: Mixed Reactions and Distrust Toward International Actors

Between 2 and 4 December 2025, four posts, two by edited media pages and two by official government pages covered Burkina Faso's participation in the **first international conference dedicated to African victims of terrorism**, held in Morocco with support from the United Nations Office for Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT).

Across these posts, **33 comments** were generated: **28 neutral**, **four negative**, and **only one positive**. Most reactions did not engage with the humanitarian focus of the conference. Instead, comments largely expressed **frustration**, **distrust of international partners**, and support for **AES (Burkina Faso–Mali–Niger) self-reliance**.

Narratives observed:

Minimal engagement with the humanitarian focus: Despite the conference highlighting the plight of victims, almost no comments engaged with this theme. Only one user responded positively to the government messaging, which might indicate that humanitarian narratives are overshadowed by geopolitical grievances.

- **“The real solution is to ensure that there are no victims of terrorism... That says it all. Thank you, Mr. Minister.”** (“La vraie prise en charge consiste à faire en sorte qu’il n’y ait pas de victimes de terrorisme... Tout est dit. Merci M. le ministre.”)

Distrust of international actors and conference diplomacy: Some users expressed scepticism toward the value of international conferences, arguing that global actors avoid identifying the real sponsors of terrorism and therefore cannot offer meaningful solutions. The event was described as symbolic rather than action-oriented.

- **“The most important thing in all of this is to try to find out who is arming the terrorists {...} if the meeting had focused on these scourges, we could understand {...} otherwise, the rest is a waste.”** (“Le plus important de tout ça, c’est de chercher à connaître qui arme les terroristes {...} si la réunion était basée sur ces fléaux, on pouvait comprendre {...} sinon le reste c’est du gaspillage.”)

Strong preference for AES self-reliance: Comments showed clear pride in the security efforts of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Users emphasised that only AES states can effectively fight terrorism and warned against relying on external organisations.

- **“AES, keep fighting... these organizations can only hold you back.”** (“L’AES, continuez à mener votre lutte... ces organisations peuvent juste vous mettre en retard.”)

Allegations of foreign sponsors of terrorist: A minority of social media users insisted that the only credible path forward is to confront states accused of arming or hosting terrorist groups. They considered this omission a sign that international partners lack serious investment in the issue.

- **“The killings and assassinations carried out by terrorists are crimes against humanity, and the perpetrators and their financiers must be brought before an international court. France must take the lead, and others will follow. This is what the UN Security Council must do, instead of sitting idly by and blocking the various complaints filed against France for financing and supplying weapons to terrorists in the AES...”** (“Les tueries et assassinat des terroristes est un crime contre l’humanité et les auteurs et leurs financiers doivent être traduit devant la juridiction internationale. A consommer par la France ensuite les autres suivront, voilà ce que le conseil de sécurité de l’ONU doit faire, au lieu de rester là-bas a bloqué les différentes plaintes déposées contre la France pour financement ravitaillement en armes aux terroristes dans le L’AES...”)

What this tells us:

- A group of commentators framed the international meeting as talk with little impact and used it as an opportunity to make allegations about international support for terrorism.

- Pride in AES self-reliance dominates: users emphasise that Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger must rely on their own forces, while the humanitarian focus on victims gets little traction compared with anger at perceived foreign interference.
- The conference's posts did not generate many comments, this indicates limited visibility, interest or possible self censorship.

Update: Agadez Refugees Centre

During November 2025, **50 posts** on X by four accounts consistently describing the long-running peaceful protest by refugees at the Agadez Humanitarian Center in Niger, and repeatedly stressing that they **"don't feel safe here"**. Two other accounts that previously posted on Agadez have remained offline since mid-September. Despite the volume of content, engagement was almost nonexistent: only **three comments** appeared across all posts offering no substantive reaction. Estimated reach for individual posts remained modest, usually between **under 50 and 580**, as noted in previous **periods**. The lack of comments indicates these messages did not reach wider online communities.

This mirrors October's pattern, when reach also remained modest, rarely approaching 1,000 views. Most posts used the same language, tone, and structure, accusing UNHCR and other UN agencies of **"malicious policies"**, **"trafficking refugees"**, or abandoning people **"in the desert without protection"**. Many posts featured nearly identical photos of women and children holding handwritten signs ("433 days", "We don't feel safe here", "We don't want to stay here").

Refugees at the Agadez Humanitarian Center Their suffering increases every day.The #UNHCR continues its malicious policies
#KeepEyesOnSudan
@MarkJCarney @MaryLawlorhds @UNHumanRights @antonioguterres



Patterns of Aid Narratives on Social Media Continued

Between 01-07 December 2025, online conversations about aid across Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger remained quite contained. A total of **286 public posts** were identified, generating **368 comments** dropped by about **44%** compared with the **658 comments** recorded between **24-30 November**. Engagement remains below the early October peaks.

In total, **13** negative comments were identified between 01-07 December, **39% targeted UN agencies** and **15.3% targeted INGOs**, and **46%** targeted **LNGOs**. This marks a contrast with previous weeks, when LNGOs typically received no negative comments.

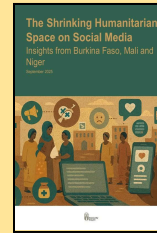
The distribution of engagement by organisation type :

- **UN agencies: 36.4%**
- **INGOs: 25.3%**
- **LNGOs: 38%**

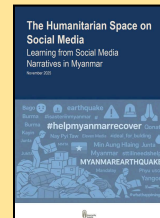
As in earlier periods, these findings should be read with caution. Technical issues affecting geolocation may still lead to under-detection of posts from Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. These findings are based solely on publicly accessible content and may not reflect discussions on private or encrypted 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/01-07Dec2025SMMBrief>**

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