“Even More Unemployment”

Tracking Aid Narratives on Social Media: Recent Observations from the Sahel
14 January 2026.

This briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses public social media activity from 05-11 January 2026, 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 aid environment.

Past editions: Hope They Aren’t Wearing Microphones (15 Dec-04 Jan), Madam, You Are Mistaken, You Are Not Nigerien (08-14 Dec), The AES Must Continue Its Fight (01-07 Dec), Let’s Say No To Gender-Based Violence (17-30 Nov), All

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Key Takeaways

Niger: Official Dissolution of “Non-Compliant” NGOs and Development Associations (07–08 January)

Between 07–08 January 2026, ten Facebook posts published by Nigerien media outlets reported on the Ministry of Interior’s decision to dissolve NGOs and CSOs deemed non-compliant with national regulations. The measure followed administrative and financial controls conducted between 14 November and 15 December 2025, with dissolution attributed primarily to failure to submit required financial documentation within mandated deadlines. Of more than 3,000 registered NGOs and associations nationwide, **1,684 national NGOs and 125 international NGOs** were confirmed as compliant and authorised to continue operating. Across all ten posts, **only 22 comments** were recorded, indicating exceptionally low public engagement relative to the scale of the decision.

No comments explicitly challenged the legitimacy of the decision, defended dissolved organisations, or questioned its implications for aid delivery or civil society. The absence of visible dissent is notable given the breadth of the administrative action. Supportive comments framed the dissolution as a corrective governance measure rather than a political or punitive act.

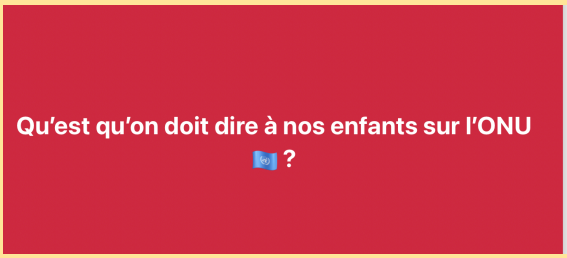
- **“The number of those that continue to exist is already enormous!”** (“C'est déjà énorme le nombre de celles qui continuent à existera !”)

What This Tells Us

- Public engagement is low, suggesting normalisation of restrictive administrative measures affecting NGOs in Niger.
- There is no visible public defence of NGOs or aid actors, reinforcing patterns observed elsewhere of declining social legitimacy for organised civil society.
- The lack of debate may reflect reduced civic space, limited perceived relevance of NGOs, or caution in publicly contesting state decisions.

Key Actor Analysis: Civil Society Page Amplifying Anti-UN Narratives (Mali)

A Facebook post published on 07 January by a Malian CSO, Facebook page with approximately 93,000 followers, posed a deliberately open-ended question: *"**What should we tell our children about the UN?**"* The post generated 28 comments. While not viral, the post is notable due to the source, framing, and engagement profile. The page regularly promotes pro-AES and pro-military narratives and has previously shared images from official state press conferences, suggesting proximity to, or alignment with, governing authorities.



The open-question format acted as a catalyst for hostile framing. Several comments explicitly argued that the UN should not be explained to children at all, or that children should instead be taught self-reliance, distrust of international institutions, and rejection of external support.

Reactions to media posts covering U.S. withdrawal from international organisations (08 January)

On 08 January 2026, eight Facebook posts published by media outlets in Burkina Faso (2), Niger (3), and Mali (3) reported on President Donald Trump's withdrawal of the United States from 66 international organisations and treaties. These posts generated a total of **142 comments**, of which **81 percent originated from Niger**, a concentration that contrasts with the **very low engagement observed in reactions to the suspension of NGOs in Niger during the same period**, and remains modest compared to responses to earlier geopolitical developments, notably the USAID freeze in early 2025.

Social media comments showed limited concern expressed about the implications for multilateral cooperation or humanitarian assistance. Many commenters framed the announcement as either irrelevant to Sahelian populations or as a legitimate assertion of national sovereignty that should be replicated nationally.

- **"In my opinion, African countries should also take advantage of this opportunity to leave organizations that are not useful to their countries." (**"A mon avis les pays africains aussi doivent en profiter pour sortir dans des organisations qui sont pas utiles à leur pays")

International organisations were portrayed as ineffective, financially wasteful and disconnected from tangible results rather than neutral multilateral bodies.

- **"Budget-consuming organizations with no real impact on the ground. We must reduce this unnecessary bureaucracy."** ("Organisations budgetivores sans impact réel sur le terrain Il faut réduire cette bureaucratie inutile")

12% of comments were anti-Trump, portraying him as unstable, dangerous, or authoritarian, with some users warning that his actions could trigger global instability or even a world war.

- **"This guy is a danger to humanity."**("Ce type est un danger pour l'humanité")

A small number of comments mentioned potential job losses within aid organisations as a consequence of the withdrawal, but these concerns remained marginal and were not developed further.

- **"Kam more unemployed in progress "** ("Kam encore des chômeur encours")

What This Tells Us

- Engagement remains relatively low, suggesting fatigue or desensitisation to U.S. disengagement narratives.
- Sovereignty remains the dominant interpretive frame, outweighing considerations of humanitarian impact or global cooperation.
- The discussion reinforces entrenched anti-multilateral narratives, contributing to an environment in which international aid actors are increasingly viewed as illegitimate or unnecessary.

Patterns of Aid Narratives on Social Media Continued

Between 05–11 January 2026, online conversations related to aid across Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger remained moderate, with 46 percent of comments concentrated around a small number of politically salient issues rather than aid policies directly. A total of 354 comments were recorded across monitored posts during this period.

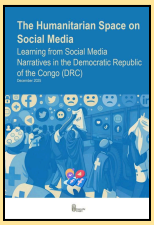
Engagement was heavily skewed towards UN-related content, particularly posts referring to the UN system as a whole or to individual UN agencies. Posts referencing UN agencies generated 165 comments, of which 63 were negative, while UN standalone references (including the UN as an institution or multilateral system) generated 59 comments, with 23 negative comments.

By contrast, locally rooted organisations attracted comparatively lower hostility. Posts related to local NGOs (LNGOs) generated 100 comments, with 12 negative, while engagement with INGOs (7 comments), international development actors (6 comments), and international humanitarian actors (2 comments) remained extremely limited and largely neutral. Donor-related posts generated 15 comments, with only one negative comment recorded.

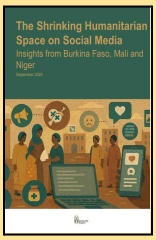
As in previous periods, these findings should be interpreted with caution. Technical limitations affecting geolocation may lead to under-detection of relevant content, and the analysis reflects only publicly accessible posts, excluding private or encrypted platforms where narratives may circulate differently.

Other resources

Humanitarian action in the DRC is increasingly shaped by public digital narratives that the aid sector cannot afford to ignore. The distorted nature of some online discussions about aid can at times feel shocking or uncomfortable. While they may be dismissed as expressing the views of marginal voices, their growing reach and impact make it essential to understand the motivation behind them. *The Humanitarian Space on Social Media: Learning from Social Media Narratives in the DRC* shares findings from social media sentiment monitoring in the DRC, with the intention of helping aid organisations to better understand and track emerging narratives and shifts in sentiment. By monitoring online discourse on the humanitarian space that go beyond the brand name of individual aid agencies, aid actors can anticipate local attitudes, build community acceptance and adapt to a rapidly evolving operational environment. In **English** and **French**.



Public online narratives are reshaping the operating environment of the aid sector in the Sahel. *The Shrinking Humanitarian Space on Social Media in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger* 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. In **English** and **French**.



Public digital narratives about humanitarian operations shape access, safety, and legitimacy for aid agencies and their partners in Myanmar. *Learning from Social Media Narratives in Myanmar* **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/05-11Jan2026SMMBrief**

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