

“The aid never reaches those in need”

Tracking Aid Narratives on Social Media: Recent Observations from Sudan

16 March 2026

This briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses public social media activity from 19 January - 08 March 2026 in Sudan



Understanding how aid actors are portrayed online is increasingly critical. Social media narratives shape community perceptions of humanitarian organisations and can influence operational access and staff safety. As online discourse becomes more central to how aid is understood and contested, monitoring these narratives is an important component for aid acceptance, security management, programming and communication with affected populations. By tracking both emerging and entrenched narratives on social media, this briefing provides insight into how public sentiment towards aid actors is developing. It aims to support policymakers and humanitarian practitioners in strengthening community acceptance in a rapidly shifting aid environment.

The briefing examines how aid agency acceptance or rejection is expressed on social media. The content is selected based on predefined lists of UN agencies, international NGOs, local NGOs and civil society organisations and general key words related to humanitarian and development assistance in Sudan. Comments associated with posts that attracted the highest number of comments were analysed qualitatively to identify dominant narratives.

This edition covers examples of

- **how reference to attacks on humanitarian operations that generate limited online engagement can be politicised**, with links being made in discussions on attribution of responsibility, foreign involvement, and international accountability,
- **how local NGOs attract the highest levels of engagement online**, with social media visibility generating strong expectations for participation, training opportunities, and direct assistance across multiple regions.

The selection does not represent the full scope of online discussions on aid in Sudan but highlights the narratives that are most visible within a **highly constrained and fragmented information environment**. Ongoing conflict has severely disrupted Sudan’s media landscape, with an **estimated 90% of media houses destroyed**, journalists displaced or operating in exile, and independent reporting capacity sharply reduced. As a result, public discourse is increasingly shaped through social media and external broadcast channels, but overall online activity remains uneven and limited by connectivity constraints. This analysis draws only on **publicly accessible content and posts with identifiable Sudan-based IP addresses**, meaning that discussions taking place in private groups, closed networks, encrypted messaging platforms, or from users masking their location are not captured and may reflect different dynamics. Public sentiment towards the aid sector continues to develop over time, shaped by personal experience, exposure to selective narratives, and evolving conflict dynamics.

Disclaimer: This is a long-term initiative to monitor social media perceptions of the aid sector in Sudan. Feedback on format or content is welcomed at info@insecurityinsight.org

Key Takeaways

Attacks on WFP aid convoys: limited engagement but polarised discussions draw the incident into polarised conflict narratives

Eight posts related to drone attacks on **World Food Programme (WFP)** aid convoys in North Kordofan generated **35 comments** during the monitoring period. The posts appear to refer to two separate incidents on **06 February**. In the first, a four-truck WFP convoy travelling from Kosti to El Obeid was struck by a drone near El Obeid, killing one person, injuring three others, and destroying three trucks and food supplies. The same day in Umm Rawaba, a WFP truck and a fuel truck were hit by drones

attributed to the **Rapid Support Forces (RSF)** and the **Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North**. The posts included incident reports from Sudanese news networks as well as statements from diplomats, humanitarian officials, and Sudanese authorities condemning the attacks and calling for accountability.

Despite the seriousness of the incidents online engagement remained **relatively limited**. Of the 35 comments identified, **31 were written in Arabic** and **14% were negative against WFP or the aid sector**.

A dominant feature of the discussion was the **politicisation of responsibility for the attack**, with commenters debating which actors were responsible and accusing external governments of supporting armed groups.

A smaller subset of comments questioned the reliability of the information being shared, describing some reports as misleading or suggesting that responsibility for the attack remained disputed between conflict parties.

"Misleading news" ("اخبار مضللة")

Some commenters referred to reporting about the attack on the WFP convoy and discussed competing claims about responsibility for the incident, while others rejected these explanations and instead framed the event through broader political narratives, alleging links between armed groups, foreign governments, and international actors.

"You support the murderers, the Islamic Republic, which is the murderer of millions of Iranians, because you receive money from the IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] terrorists" (comment written in English)

Some comments also expressed frustration with what was perceived as insufficient international accountability.

"An international investigation committee and monitoring committees are necessary to ensure that aid reaches those who need it" ("لابد من لجنة تحقيق دولية ولجان مراقبة لضمان وصول المساعدات الي من يحتاجونها")

What this tells us

- The relatively small number of comments suggests that, despite the operational significance of attacks on aid convoys, such incidents do not always generate high online engagement compared with posts offering opportunities for participation, employment, or direct assistance. When discussed, however, they can quickly become embedded in wider political narratives related to accountability, foreign involvement, and the conduct of the war.
- Although humanitarian organisations were not the primary target of criticism in this discussion, attacks on aid convoys can rapidly become politicised online. For aid actors, this underscores the importance of timely and transparent communication about incidents affecting humanitarian operations, including their impact on aid delivery and measures taken to protect staff and assistance for the benefit of people needing food aid. Clear communication can help limit misinformation, reduce speculation, and reinforce the neutrality of humanitarian activities.

Reactions to Local NGOs: high engagement and strong expectations

During the monitoring period, **five LNGOs** generated the highest level of engagement in the dataset. Posts published by LNGOs or referring to their activities accounted for **approximately 64% of all comments analysed**, reaching an estimated **390,000 social media users**. At the same time, LNGO-related discussions accounted for **43% of all negative comments**, indicating that while these organisations attract significant attention and support online, they are also subject to greater scrutiny.

Posts highlighted a wide range of activities, including training workshops for women and youth, community health promotion, cholera response initiatives, gender-based violence awareness sessions, e-learning programmes for children, livelihood support such as home gardening, and multi-purpose cash assistance projects. Many activities were implemented with international partners

including **United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, and the International Rescue Committee**, as well as Sudanese government ministries and coordination bodies.

The most prominent narrative across comments was a **strong demand for participation and opportunities (21% of comments)**. Many users asked how to join training programmes, volunteer with organisations, or participate in workshops. Requests frequently included personal details such as professional background or location.

A second recurring pattern was **requests for programmes to expand geographically**. Commenters repeatedly asked organisations to conduct activities in additional neighbourhoods of Khartoum and Omdurman as well as other states including Al Jazirah, Gedaref, Kassala, North Kordofan, Sennar, and White Nile. Many comments also shifted toward **direct appeals for help**, including requests for financial assistance, Ramadan food support, medical help, or educational opportunities.

“We want training for the women of the organisation” (عازين تدريب لنساء المنظمة)

“Peace be upon you. We need courses in Amba, Libya. There are no organisations here except for the Red Crescent, and their programmes are limited to certain areas.” (سلام عليكممحتاجين دورات في امبده سوق ليبيا مافي منظمات هنا غير الهلال الاحمر) (وبرامجهم محدوده ومناطق معينه)

Negative comments were present but focused mainly on **access, visibility, and communication around programmes**. Some users said they had heard about projects online but had **not seen activities implemented in their communities** or had not received assistance despite living in affected areas. Others questioned why workshops were **announced only after they had taken place**, limiting opportunities to participate. A smaller number of comments raised concerns about fairness in distribution or questioned whether support described online had reached those most in need.

“Corruption. Look at the comments. No one has received anything. The country is corrupt.” (الفساد شوف للتعليقات ماف زول) (استلم شي دوله فاسده)

“We hear about this support only from publications, but not from specific people. You have confused us, and we have lost our support.” (بنسمع بالدعم دا الا منشورات بس ولا ناس معينين عندكم اتمرمطنا و عينا طلعت عدييل مالقينا البدعنا)

“No one received any support. Where is this support?” (كل الناس مالقت دعم طيب الدعم دة مشا وين)

What this tells us

- The discussion suggests that LNGOs function as one of the most visible entry points to the aid sector for online audiences in Sudan, particularly for individuals seeking opportunities, training, or direct assistance. Their use of Arabic-language communication and focus on community-level activities appear to generate high levels of engagement and participation requests.
- At the same time, the discussion shows that visibility rapidly generates expectations. Posts about workshops, training programmes, or assistance frequently trigger requests from communities across the country, reflecting both widespread need and limited access to opportunities during the conflict.
- Negative sentiment appears to be driven primarily by perceived gaps between online communication and absence of such programmes in the offline world where the user lived, with many commenters stating that they had heard about programmes but had not seen them implemented locally. This highlights the importance of clear communication about programme locations, eligibility, timing, and scale in order to manage expectations and maintain trust.

Reactions to reports of an attack on a health facility in Kadugli

On **04 February 2026**, the Military Medical Hospital in Kadugli city, South Kordofan state, was reportedly struck by drones attributed to the **RSF** and the **Sudan People's Liberation Movement–North**, killing one person and injuring eight others. The incident was

reported by several international and regional media outlets and humanitarian sources. A post by the **European Union** delegation in Sudan on X condemned the attack. While this discussion likely represents only a **portion of the broader online conversation about the incident**, the post generated the **highest level of engagement on this topic during the monitoring period**.

The comments responding to the post focused mainly on **questions of attribution and political responsibility**, rather than on the humanitarian implications of the attack. Some questioned the claim that the **RSF** carried out the strike, asking what evidence supported the accusation and arguing that responsibility should not be assigned without proof. Other remarks reflected frustration with international reactions to the conflict, with some suggesting that external actors respond too slowly to violence affecting civilians.

“What evidence is there that the attacks were carried out by the Rapid Support Forces? You cannot make accusations without evidence.” (“ما الدليل على أن الهجمات شنتها قوات الدعم السريع؟ لا يجوز تقديم اتهام دون دليل؟”)

“After the people die, the European Union will take action.” (“بعد ما يموت الشعب كلو اشان الاتحاد الأوروبي يتحرك”)

What this tells us

- This pattern reflects a broader dynamic observed in other discussions related to conflict incidents: humanitarian violations can become embedded in wider political narratives, where competing interpretations of responsibility overshadow discussion of civilian protection or humanitarian impact.
- Commentators condemning such attacks express frustration and disillusionment that the foreign bodies condemning the attacks are not able to stop them or to ensure protection.

Key actor analysis

During the monitoring period, individual social media accounts generated posts which contributed to shaping narratives about the conflict, humanitarian operations, and international involvement in Sudan. The analysis focuses only on publicly visible indicators, including posting behaviour, narrative framing, profile characteristics, and engagement patterns. No conclusions are drawn about the identity of account holders beyond information they publicly present on their profiles, in line with privacy and data protection considerations.

A. Commentator amplifying accountability narratives

- One verified X Arabic-language account with approximately 7,000 followers published 10 posts during the monitoring period. The profile describes the user as a researcher and includes references to academic training abroad. The profile image appears to be a personal photograph. Posting patterns appear consistent with manual management rather than automated activity, with moderate frequency and varied post formats.
- Most posts focused on conflict reporting and international accountability discussions. Several summarised findings from international investigations concerning events in El Fasher, including claims that actions attributed to the RSF may constitute war crimes.
- Posts frequently translated or summarised statements from international organisations, investigative bodies, and media outlets, suggesting the account functions partly as a translator and amplifier of institutional reporting for Arabic-speaking audiences.

→ **For aid actors, accounts of this type can influence how humanitarian incidents are interpreted by online audiences, particularly when institutional reporting is translated and framed within narratives of accountability and conflict responsibility and discussed among communities hoping for support and protection from international actors.**

B. Political commentator linking humanitarian events to geopolitical narratives

- A second verified account with approximately 6,000 followers published 12 posts during the monitoring period. The profile presents the user as a Sudan-based commentator focusing on political developments and international policy. Posting behaviour suggests human-managed advocacy activity, including direct tagging of policymakers, reposting statements from organisations, and commentary linking humanitarian developments to international policy debates.

- Posts largely framed humanitarian developments within political and geopolitical narratives, highlighting alleged foreign involvement, particularly by the United Arab Emirates, while also discussing attacks on humanitarian aid convoys and displacement-related violence as violations of international humanitarian law. In this context, the account amplified statements from humanitarian organisations and called for stronger international accountability measures.
- Comments responding to the account's highest-engagement post reflected **highly polarised reactions**. Some responses supported the account's framing of the conflict and called for international investigations into alleged abuses, including appeals to bodies such as the **International Criminal Court** and the **United Nations Human Rights Council**. One comment expanded the narrative by introducing additional allegations related to humanitarian operations: **"The international community must look beyond the 'humanitarian' label. We demand a full audit of foreign field hospitals in Sudan. Are they providing aid, or are they hubs for treating RSF militias and committing atrocities against Sudanese captives?"** Other comments challenged the account's position or criticised the author directly. Overall, the discussion illustrates how posts linking humanitarian issues to geopolitical narratives generate contentious debate and competing interpretations of responsibility for the conflict, including claims that **question the neutrality of humanitarian actors**.

C. Regional commentator amplifying viral humanitarian content

- A third verified account with a larger audience (approximately 66,000 followers) shared content that generated notable engagement during the monitoring period. The profile identifies the user as a journalist and regional analyst focused primarily on developments in eastern Syria. The post analysed was shared from Sudan according to platform location indicators, although the profile suggests the user is based elsewhere; this may reflect travel related to journalistic work or the use of a VPN.
- The account shares videos or visual content highlighting humanitarian issues. During the monitoring period it posted a video allegedly showing a charity in Syria distributing bread to vulnerable individuals in a manner portrayed as humiliating. The accompanying commentary criticised practices perceived as undermining dignity in aid distribution. Although the incident depicted appears to originate outside Sudan, the post circulated in Sudan within broader discussions about humanitarian ethics and aid practices, illustrating how humanitarian narratives can move across regional information spaces, with **incidents from one context influencing debates in another**.



What this tells us

These accounts illustrate three ways individual actors contribute to shaping humanitarian narratives online:

- Documentation and translation of international reporting, making institutional findings accessible to local audiences.
- Political interpretation of humanitarian events, linking them to geopolitical and foreign policy debates.
- Viral amplification of humanitarian content, enabling incidents to circulate across regional audiences.

Although their follower bases are relatively modest compared with major media outlets, such actors can influence how online audiences interpret humanitarian developments by framing responsibility, amplifying specific narratives, and connecting humanitarian events to broader political debates.

Scale of analysis

- **Posts analysed: 110**
- **Estimated total reach: 1.5 million social media users**
- **Total comments analysed: 1,907**

Comment language

- **Arabic:** 1,671 comments (87%)
- **English:** 84 comments (4%)
- **Emojis / no text:** 151 comments (8%)

Comment distribution by organisation type

- **Local NGOs / CSOs:** 65% (1,235 comments)
- **UN agencies:** 17% (326 comments)
- **International humanitarian actors:** 12% (226 comments)
- **Donor :** 2.9% (56 comments)
- **UN system (general):** 0.2% (3 comments)
- **General aid sector:** 0.05% (1 comment)

Negative sentiment

- **Negative comments:** ~4.5% of all comments (up 1.5% from Jan 05-18)

The table reflects the subset of posts with identifiable regional IP addresses, which provides an indicative - but partial - picture of where online discussions are most active, as location data can be obscured by VPN use.

State / Area	Number of Posts
Khartoum	629
Red Sea	106
Southern Darfur	23
River Nile	18
Al Jazirah	14
Northern	14
South Kordofan	11
Blue Nile	9

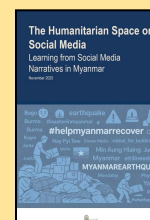
The social media monitoring platform identified 2,059 posts originating from Sudan using aid related keywords, of which this table includes only the smaller subset with identifiable regional IP addresses. Source: *Insecurity Insight / Topics (Powered by Radarly)*

Other resources

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.



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](#).



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/19Jan-08March2026SDNSMMBrief>**

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