

“No to homosexuality!!! The UN must not insist”

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

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This briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses public social media activity from 09 February - 22 March 2026, assessing observed narratives based on 14 months of systematic social media monitoring in [Burkina Faso](#).



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. Public sentiment towards the aid sector develops over time, shaped by how individuals interpret and connect social media content through the lens of personal experience and prior exposure. To build and sustain acceptance in digital spaces, policymakers and practitioners need strategies that respond with appropriately adapted communication to these shifting online sentiments as part of broader acceptance and security approaches.

This briefing is part of a longer-term initiative for Burkina Faso to examine 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. Comments associated with posts that attracted the highest number of comments were analysed qualitatively to identify dominant narratives. It covers examples of

- **High-mobilisation backlash against UN rights-based messaging, particularly on sensitive social issues, which triggered negative and polarised reactions centred on sovereignty, cultural values, and distrust of international institutions.**
- **Positive engagement around Burkina Faso-Russia partnerships, and local development initiatives led by an INGO for community-based infrastructure projects.**
- **Low-engagement but consistently accepted gender-related content, where institutional and community-focused messaging generated supportive but limited interaction.**

Past editions: [“And What Does The UN Say About Venezuela?”](#) (12 Jan-08 Feb), [Even more unemployment](#) (05-11 Jan), [Hope They Aren’t Wearing Microphones](#) (15 Dec-04 Jan), [Madam, You Are Mistaken, You Are Not Nigerien](#) (08-14 Dec), [AI](#)

Key Takeaways

UN rights-based messaging triggers backlash (13-21 March)

Between 23 February - 21 March 2026, five posts published by Burkina Faso-based media outlets on Facebook and X relayed UN statements on human rights-related issues, including criticism of Senegal’s proposed law strengthening penalties related to homosexuality and messaging linked to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Collectively, these posts reached approximately 59K social media users and generated 427 comments, of which **92% were negative towards the UN** or the broader international system. The **negative comments generated by these five posts accounted for over 90 percent of all the negative comments between 09 February - 22 March towards the aid sector in Burkina Faso.**

Key narratives

- **Sovereignty and non-interference:** A dominant narrative framed the UN's position as illegitimate interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state.

“They can do that back home, but here in Africa, we’re still people with strong moral values.” (“Ils peuvent l'appliquer chez eux, mais en Afrique ici, nous tjrs des humains avec des bonnes morales .”)

- **Rejection of homosexuality as incompatible with local values:** Another recurrent narrative rejected homosexuality as contrary to African cultural, religious, and social norms.

“Homosexuality is for animals” (“L'homosexualité c'est pour les animaux”)

- **'Double standards' and selective outrage:** A highly repetitive pattern redirected attention to other international crises, including Gaza, and Iran. These references were used to frame the UN as hypocritical, active on sexuality-related issues but ineffective or silent on conflict, insecurity, and civilian harm.

“It really is sad. Always meddling in Africa's affairs. The UN should be dealing with Trump and Netanyahu.” (“Vraiment c'est triste. Toujours se mêler des problèmes de l'Afrique. Que L'ONU s'occupe de Trump et Netayaum.”)

- **Delegitimisation of the UN:** Many comments went beyond disagreement and portrayed the UN as irrelevant, biased, or malicious.

“So the UN has become a diabolical instrument? When people are killing innocent people, the UN can't say a word about it, can it? Shame on you, UN leaders 🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄” (“Donc l'ONU est devenu un instrument diabolique ? Ceux qui tuent les innocents l'ONU ne peut rien dire dans ça dèh ? Honte à vous les dirigeants de l'ONU 🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄”)

What this tells us

- **Different UN messages converge into the same backlash patterns:** Whether addressing sexuality, racial discrimination, or global power dynamics, reactions consistently converge around distrust of the UN, rather than engagement with the specific issue.
- **LGBTQ+ rights messaging is a high-sensitivity trigger:** Within a mixed set of UN communications, reactions were overwhelmingly driven by the issue of homosexuality, indicating that this topic generates stronger and more polarised engagement than other rights-based messaging.
- **Cross-border issues are rapidly internalised:** Although the issue concerned Senegal, Burkina Faso-based audiences used it to express broader positions on governance, external influence, and African identity.
- **Anti-UN sentiment is entrenched rather than issue-specific:** While triggered by this case, many comments reflect pre-existing distrust of the UN, including perceptions of hypocrisy, irrelevance, and political bias.
- **Cross-topic narratives reinforce each other:** Criticism of the UN on sexuality, conflict, and global governance does not remain siloed; instead, each reinforces a broader, coherent narrative of an ineffective and biased international system.
- **Implications for aid actors remain significant:** The convergence of narratives—sovereignty, anti-Western sentiment, and distrust of international institutions—continues to shape an environment where external actors risk being associated with illegitimacy, interference, or hidden agendas.

Burkina Faso-Russia cooperation generates strong positive and aspirational engagement

A post published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso on 12 February 2026 announcing the signing of an agreement on the foundations of relations between Burkina Faso and Russia generated overwhelmingly positive reactions. In contrast to UN-related content, engagement was characterised by approval, encouragement, and expressions of national pride. A few comments explicitly linked the agreement to hopes for strengthened military capacity, including requests for equipment

and defence guarantees.

“Excellent, Minister. Don't forget to bring us back the hunting licenses and the MI.SS.LE INTER. TINENTAL. THE HOMELAND OR DEATH—WE WILL PREVAIL.” (“Excellent monsieur le ministre. N'oubliez pas de nous ramener les A.V. de Chasse et les MI.SS.LE INTER. TINENTAL .LA PATRIE OU LA MORT NOUS VAINCRONS.”)

“Very, very good news! Long live Burkina Faso! Long live Russia! Long live the AES! 🇧🇫🇷🇺🇸🇨🇪” (“Très très fort bonne nouvelle vive le Burkina Faso vive la Russie vive l'AES 🇧🇫🇷🇺🇸🇨🇪”)

What this tells us

- The lack of negative or dissenting comments suggests a high level of alignment with official narratives, but may also reflect the nature of a government-run page, where audiences are more likely to be supportive, self-selecting, or less inclined to express criticism publicly.
- Support for Russia is closely tied to broader narratives of independence, dignity, and geopolitical realignment, particularly within the AES framework.
- While support is strong, comments indicate growing expectations for concrete deliverables, particularly in defence, infrastructure, and mobility (e.g. visas).

Res Publica activities in Nanoro generate strong positive, community-centred engagement

Between 27 February and 17 March 2026, six posts published by Burkina Faso-based media platforms covered activities by the international NGO Res Publica in the commune of Nanoro. Res Publica is a development-oriented organisation implementing community-based projects in Burkina Faso, including infrastructure, education, and local socio-economic support. The posts focused on two types of intervention: a smaller education-related activity (promotion of reading in a local high school) and the rehabilitation of the Nazoanga dam. The intervention was framed as addressing an immediate and practical need, in terms of safety, mobility, and local economic activity. Engagement was positive or neutral, with only two critical comments identified. Some commenters explicitly identified themselves as beneficiaries or recalled earlier interventions, reinforcing perceptions of continuity and visible impact.

“This NGO, which is a source of pride for the municipality of Nanoro, has made a contribution in a number of areas, such as education, health and agriculture. It also supports school and university students throughout their studies. All the best to the NGO!” (“L'ONG qui fait la fierté de la commune de Nanoro, elle a contribué dans plusieurs domaines tels que l'éducation, la santé, l'agriculture. Aussi elle accompagne les élèves et les étudiants dans leurs cursus scolaire et universitaire. Bon vent à l'ONG!!”)

What this tells us

- Comments reference concrete benefits (education support, infrastructure, assistance to families) and past interactions with the organisation. This suggests that approval is grounded in lived or observed impact rather than abstract perceptions.
- Many comments explicitly reference Nanoro or Nazoanga, indicating that geographically specific and personally relevant interventions generate stronger identification and support.
- Several comments come from individuals presenting themselves as beneficiaries or residents, sharing personal experiences or long-term appreciation. This type of engagement strengthens positive sentiment and anchors the organisation's image in concrete outcomes.
- The few critical comments do not challenge the organisation's role or legitimacy, but instead suggest alternatives (e.g. building a bridge) or raise localised concerns about resource allocation. This indicates acceptance of the intervention, even where improvements are proposed.

Key actor analysis: Sokoroni Média is a Burkina Faso–based Facebook page that presents itself as a media platform but functions in practice as a highly partisan, informal content outlet. Its posts are characterised by strong anti-Western, and anti-international institution rhetoric, expressed through emotive language, conspiracy narratives, and meme-style visuals rather than verifiable reporting.

The content observed includes direct insults toward Western democracy (“**Go and have your bloody democracy and forget about Africa**”), claims that international organisations such as the UN, ICC and ECOWAS are “terrorist” structures controlled by corrupt Western actors, and messaging that appears to normalise or endorse violence abroad (e.g. suggesting attacks in France would “liberate Africa”).

The page also republishes ideologically aligned content, including a post by Nathalie Yamb - a Swiss-Cameroonian activist known for her strong anti-French positions and links to Russian influence networks in Africa - featuring a reframed headline about the European Parliament calling for the release of former Nigerien president Mohamed Bazoum. Notably, Sokoroni Média does not appear in the official 2025 directory of online media published by **Burkina Faso’s media regulator (CSC)**. In the context of aid perceptions, this is the first observed instance of Sokoroni Média directly referencing the aid sector, through a post targeting the United Nations. While the reference itself is limited, it is embedded within a wider pattern of anti-international messaging that frames external actors as threats to African sovereignty.



Gender-related content generates low engagement and consistently positive reactions

Across the 37 gender-related posts collected during the reporting period, engagement remained consistently low and largely supportive. The posts were published by a mix of actors, including 10 INGOs, 12 LNGOs and civil society organisations, and the remainder by UN agencies. Content focused on International Women’s Day messaging, women’s economic empowerment, girls’ education, gender-based violence, female leadership, and community-based initiatives. Many posts highlighted completed activities (training, workshops, project closures), strategic processes (e.g. programme planning, consultations), or individual stories of women contributing to their households and communities. Others adopted a more institutional tone, emphasising rights, equality, and global advocacy campaigns.

- The limited number of comments was characterised by short, positive reactions such as congratulations, encouragement, or agreement or emojis. Only one critical comment was identified, and it focused not on gender issues themselves but on broader concerns around aid management and potential misuse of funds. Even posts referencing international actors or funding did not trigger sovereignty-based criticism or anti-external narratives.
- Overall, since **2025**, gender-related content continues to generate low-visibility, low-contestation engagement. The tone of interaction aligns closely with the framing of the posts themselves, with women and girls consistently presented, and received, as legitimate beneficiaries, community actors, and contributors to social and economic development.

Key numbers

Scale of analysis

- Number of posts: **362**
- Estimated total reach: **5.8 million** social media users
- Total comments analysed: **1,047**

Comment distribution by organisation type

- UN standalone: 550 (52.5%)
- LNGOs: 223 (21.3%)
- INGOs: 180 (17.2%)
- UN agency: 45 (4.3%)
- International development actors: 32 (3.1%)
- International humanitarian actors: 14 (1.3%)
- Donors: 3 (0.3%)

Comment language

- French: 986
- Emojis / no text: 49
- English: 11
- Italian: 1

Distribution of negative comments by actor type:

- UN standalone: 411 (96.9%)
- UN agency: 6 (1.4%)
- INGOs: 5 (1.2%)
- International humanitarian actors: 2 (0.5%)

*No negative comments were detected during the monitoring period targeting LNGOs/CSOs in Burkina Faso.

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. This document is funded and supported by the European Union (EU). The opinions expressed in the report do not in any way reflect the position of the EU who are not responsible for the content expressed in this document.

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Other resources

Insecurity Insight regularly examines key discussions around aid activities driven by information posted by IP addresses in the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), the [Sahel](#), [Sudan](#), and [Syria](#). 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. [Subscribe](#) to our Social Media Monitoring mailing list for regular updates.



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