

"Tomorrow it will all be sold on the street stalls "

Tracking Aid Narratives on Social Media: Recent Observations from Syria

14 April 2026

This briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses public social media activity from 01-31 March 2026 in Syria.



Understanding how aid actors are portrayed and understood online is increasingly critical. Social media narratives shape community perceptions of humanitarian organisations and can influence operational access, staff safety and shape community perceptions. 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.

Between 01 - 31 March 2026, this briefing analysed **1,052 social media posts related to the aid sector in Syria**, reaching **15.5 million users and generating 10,126 comments**, down from 16,551 comments in the [previous](#) reporting period. The lower level of engagement may partly reflect the timing of Ramadan, when daily routines and media consumption often shift.

The dataset includes publicly available posts published by or mentioning UN agencies, international NGOs, local NGOs and civil society organisations and general key words related to humanitarian and development assistance in Syria during the reporting period, providing a broad overview of aid-related conversations involving these actors on public social media platforms. By tracking both emerging and entrenched narratives on social media, this briefing provides insight into how public sentiment towards aid actors in Syria is developing. It aims to support policymakers and humanitarian practitioners in strengthening community acceptance in a rapidly shifting aid environment.

This edition covers

- **Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC): Aid distributions and humanitarian convoys to Sweida**
- **UNHCR: Cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor across Syria**
- **Syrian Society for Social Development Association (SSSD): Gender training and International Women's Day activities**

While the monitoring captures posts associated with the predefined list of aid actors, it does not represent all online discussions on aid in Syria, particularly posts in Kurdish could not be covered. 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, engagement and security approaches.

Past editions: "[They're telling us there's no registration](#)"; (28 Jan -28 Feb); "[The camera matters more than aid itself](#)" (12 Jan-27 Jan); "[Please support Syrian women](#)" (29 Dec-11 Jan)

Key Takeaways

Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC): Aid distributions and humanitarian convoys to Sweida

Between 01–31 March 2026, 267 social media posts related to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) were identified, generating **3,361 comments**, **33%** of all comments recorded during the monitoring period. Of these **64%** were positive, and only

6.7% of comments were critical of service delivery and perceived unfairness. Between 09–31 March 2026, a smaller subset of this discussion, consisting of four social media posts, three on Facebook and one on X reported on Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) service delivery to Sweida. The posts highlighted ongoing aid distributions to accommodation centres in the city and countryside of Sweida, where SARC said that over the previous two months 1,355 families had received food and hygiene kits, winter clothing, canned food, mattresses and blankets, with support from WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF. Other posts reported humanitarian convoys organised by SARC in coordination with local authorities and the Ministry of Health. Another post also referred to a convoy carrying medical equipment and supplies for SARC clinics, and fuel for the Directorate of Agriculture, with support from the IFRC. Collectively, the posts reached 4,906 social media users and generated 98 comments. Of these, 44.9% were positive, 34.7% were critical of the aid sector, and 20.4% were neutral, showing that while the aid delivery was welcomed by many, a substantial share of engagement focused on whether assistance was actually reaching people fairly.

Topics for consideration

- **Support and appreciation:** Many comments expressed gratitude to SARC staff and volunteers.
 “May God give you a thousandfold strength—men of humanity.” (”الله يعطيكن ألف عافية رجال الإنسانية“)
- **Non-receipt of aid:** A large set of comments said they had not received any of the announced assistance, despite being displaced or registered.
 “We’re not receiving anything. We’re registered with the Red Crescent, but we haven’t received the winter clothing package, any health support, or food parcels/canned goods.” (”ما عم يوصلنا شي مسجلين بالهلال ولم“)
 (”يصلنا البسة شتوية ولا صحة ولا ماعليات“)
- **Unequal distribution:** A common complaint was that aid was going to some families but not others, with repeated accusations of favouritism and unfairness.
 “It’s all favoritism—some people get help and others don’t. Damn you, you thieves.” (”اي لناس وناس“)
 (”وعالمحسوبيات يلعنكن حراميه“)
- **Allegations of resale:** few users claimed that aid items would later be sold in markets, which increased distrust.
 “Tomorrow it’ll all be sold on the street stalls.” (”بكرة كلها تباع على البسطات“)
- **Requests for information:** A small set of comments asked where distributions were taking place and how people could register or benefit.
 “Where do we register? Because we still haven’t received anything.” (”وين لتسجيل لانو بعدنا ما ستلمنا شي“)

What this tells us

- **Aid delivery is accepted in principle but judged by visible receipt:** The comments suggest that people do not reject the idea of SARC assistance, but assess its credibility based on whether support reaches them or people around them.
- **Perceptions of unfair targeting are a key driver of criticism:** Many comments focused on unequal access, repeated assistance for some households, and the sense that certain groups are being overlooked. Comments further mentioned uneven distribution patterns, including longer waits for assistance among some IDPs in other centres and residents of areas such as Shahba and Ta’ara.
- **Even limited claims that aid items are being sold can undermine confidence:** Although this appeared only in a small number of comments, it reflects how quickly concerns about misuse or weak oversight can damage trust in the response.
- **Communication around aid delivery is challenging:** Announcements about distribution are key for visibility. Yet the way information on social media is perceived as personal and direct, it creates expectations and frustrations when no personal benefits follow. Transparency about selection criteria and information on how to register or apply for support might offer social media users more context and possibilities to express legitimate concerns.

Posts driving critical content analysis

During 01–31 March 2026, three posts were identified that directly posted critical content about aid actors in Syria. An individual social media user posted one post, and a local edited media platform posted two. The posts topics focused on criticism of the United Nations, allegations that the SARC in Sweida failed to provide ambulance support in an emergency case, and the third post claims that delays linked to the Red Crescent were affecting electricity line repairs in Sweida.

The United Nations needs immediate revitalization, and Ms. Birbrooke should be appointed Secretary-General... because this organization, in its current state, is merely a spectator to events and has no connection to international peace.

Narratives of distrust in aid actors

→ **Criticism of the UN as passive and ineffective:** The post used hostile language toward the United Nations, portraying it as a bystander and questioning its relevance to international peace. It gained minimal visibility, reaching only 12 users and generating no comments. It was published by a low-profile, not clearly identifiable account using a false name and inauthentic profile picture, with no verification badge. The account, whose bio states the user is a law professor, has a small following (under 300) and primarily shares sports, political content, and local commentary, alongside some posts praising the United States and the United Arab Emirates. This mixed content may be perceived by some users as inauthentic or bot-like, although no clear signs of coordinated activity were observed.

→ **Allegations of discriminatory emergency response by SARC:** One edited media post alleged that the SARC branch in Sweida refused to transport a woman in urgent need of a caesarean section, framing the incident as potential sectarian discrimination and invoking Red Cross and Red Crescent principles of impartiality and non-discrimination. The post reached 5,834 users but generated only eight comments. It originated from an unverified local media outlet whose Facebook page, despite having around 200,000 followers, includes user reviews questioning its credibility and accusing it of spreading fear-inducing or misleading information.

→ **Perceived obstruction of public service repair:** A post by a local edited media platform in Sweida reported that approval had not yet been obtained “through the Red Crescent” to repair a 66 kV line feeding Shahba and Sweida substations. While not directly accusing SARC of refusal, it indirectly associated the aid sector with delays in electricity restoration. The post reached 16,329 users and generated 12 comments, which largely expressed frustration over ongoing power cuts rather than directly targeting SARC, with a smaller number shifting toward broader political grievances. The source is a verified and well-known local independent media outlet focused on Syria, particularly Sweida, and is generally regarded as credible, with around 50,000 followers.

Risk assessment

- **Risk of amplification.** Only three posts with directly critical content about aid actors were identified during the monitored period representing around 0.3% of the total posts.
- **Impact:** The small number of posts, combined with relatively low engagement and limited reach, suggests that the criticism did not gain significantly wider traction during the reporting period.
- **Overall risk appears low in amplification but higher in sensitivity.** Although criticism remained limited in scale, allegations related to medical assistance and electricity touch on essential needs and could undermine trust in aid actors. The risk is therefore best understood as contained at present, but potentially impactful if repeated or amplified.

UNHCR: Cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor across Syria

On 09 March 2026, two Facebook posts, one published by an official UNHCR page and the other by a government official page, highlighted cooperation between UNHCR and Syria’s Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. The posts focused on the signing of a memorandum of understanding aimed at strengthening support for vulnerable Syrians, including returnees and internally displaced people. The partnership was presented as covering return and reintegration, social protection, institutional capacity building, and emergency response. Together, the two posts reached 12,823 social media users and generated 132 comments.

Of these, 81.1% were neutral, 9.8% welcomed the initiative, and 9.1% were critical. The high proportion of neutral comments was mainly due to political and socio-economic complaints that were not directly related to UNHCR or the aid partnership itself.

Topics for consideration

- **Modest approval of coordination and partnership:** Some comments welcomed the agreement and described cooperation between UNHCR and the ministry as a positive step for sustainability.
“A successful partnership to expand and strengthen joint work for reconstruction and sustainability.”
(“شراكة موفقة لتوسيع وترسيخ العمل المشترك للبناء والاستدامة”)
- **Questions about concrete assistance for returnees:** some comments asked what the partnership would mean in practice, especially for Syrians returning from Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye, with repeated questions about delayed or missing return assistance.
“We’ve been back from Lebanon for a year and haven’t seen anything. We need livelihood/empowerment support. With these high prices, life is difficult.” (“بها غلا”)
(“صرنا سنة راجعين من لبنان ماشقنا شي. لازمنا مساعده تمكين. بها غلا”)
- **Scepticism about implementation:** Some comments dismissed the announcement, reflecting doubt that official meetings would translate into visible support on the ground.
“Honestly, it’s all just talk—nothing but ink on paper.” (“ولله سالف بس حير على ورق”)
- **Requests for help from specific areas and groups:** Many comments used the posts to raise local needs, including support for return areas, schools, water access, mobile clinics, women-headed households, older people, people with disabilities, and rural communities in Aleppo countryside and elsewhere.
“What about the Refugee Camps” (“شو منشان المخيمات”)
- **Political spillover and wider requests:** A large share of the neutral comments shifted away from the UNHCR-ministry partnership and instead focused on requests related to salaries, pensions, public sector jobs, inequalities, and other broader political and economic concerns.
“UNHCR Syria, the building here in Aleppo was demolished because of the earthquake. They decided to rebuild it, but it still hasn’t been rebuilt, and people are left without shelter.” (“المفوضية السامية للأمم المتحدة”)
(“لشؤون اللاجئين: المبنى هنا في مدينة حلب تم هدمه نتيجة الزلزال و قررو إعادة بناءه و لحد الان لم يتم إعادة البناء و الناس من غير مأوى”)

What this tells us

- **The partnership itself attracted limited direct opposition:** critical sentiment was relatively low, and most comments did not reject cooperation between UNHCR and the ministry.
- **Social media users requested concrete outcomes, not institutional language:** The strongest practical reactions focused on whether the agreement would lead to actual support for returnees, displaced people, and vulnerable households.
- **Return assistance is a key expectation:** Repeated questions about delayed grants and support for returnees suggest that many users judge UNHCR’s relevance through visible help with return and reintegration.
- **Official aid posts also function as public complaint spaces:** Many users treated the comment section as a place to raise wider service gaps and social hardship, even when these concerns were only loosely related to the post.
- **High neutral engagement does not mean disengagement:** In this case, the large neutral share reflects how official humanitarian announcements can become containers for broader public complaints rather than focused discussion of the aid partnership itself.

Syrian Society for Social Development Association (SSSD): Gender training and International Women's Day activities

Between 03–23 March 2026, three Facebook posts by the Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD) highlighted gender-related training and awareness activities. Two posts focused on internal staff and volunteer training: one, implemented with Oxfam in Aleppo (though none of the comments mentioned Oxfam), covered the basics of gender-based violence, including awareness, prevention, safe response, and referral pathways; the other, in Dar'a, focused on safeguarding and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, including reporting mechanisms, confidentiality, accountability, and professional conduct. A third post, published around International Women's Day and also implemented with Oxfam, highlighted a community activity in Bustan al-Qasr, Tal Aran, and Tal Hasel under the slogan "Rights, Justice, Action," focused on women's rights, dialogue, and the role of women in society, including legal awareness sessions delivered in cooperation with SARC. Together, the three posts reached 9,201 social media users and generated 88 comments. Of these, 48.9% were positive, 36.4% were critical, and 14.8% were neutral..

Positive reactions:

- **Support and encouragement:** Many comments welcomed the activities and expressed appreciation for SSSD, often through short supportive messages or emojis.
"May God give you a thousandfold strength—best SSSD ❤️." ("SSSD يعطيكم الف عافيه أحلى")
- **Interest in participation:** Few comments asked practical questions about where activities were taking place and whether they could attend.
"Where's the address? Where can I come to see you / visit you?" ("العنوان وين وين فيني اجي احضر عندكم")

Critical reactions:

- **Accusations of hypocrisy linked to unpaid salaries:** The strongest critical narrative argued that SSSD should not speak about dignity, justice, protection, or ethical values while commenters accused it of failing to pay women teachers involved in a compensatory education programme in Arbin. Many negative comments repeated this grievance and described the organisation as exploitative and dishonest.
"Since you claim to love commitment and principles, pay the women's salaries that you exploited—during their days off they came and worked hard for you." ("بما انو بتحبو التزام والمبادئ ادفعو رواتب الانسات يلي استغلتيون بايام")
("عطلتون واجو تعبوا واشتغلوا معكم")
- **Warnings and calls for accountability:** Some comments called for legal action, public complaints, or warned others not to engage with the organisation.
"No one should get involved with a scam association like this, because you'll end up dealing with lawsuits instead of doing any good 😊." ("لا حدا يشارك بهيك جمعية نصابة لان رح ياكل دواعي بدل ما يعمل خير")

What this tells us

- **The activities were not rejected in principle:** Positive comments show that women's rights, GBV, and safeguarding activities can attract support and interest.
- **Negative reactions were driven by organisational credibility, not the topic itself:** Critical comments focused on alleged unpaid salaries rather than opposing the gender-related content.
- **Unresolved grievances can shape reactions across different posts:** The same complaint appeared under both training and awareness posts, showing how reputational issues can spill into unrelated content.
- **Public messaging on rights and justice invites scrutiny:** Posts about dignity, protection, and accountability led some users to judge whether SSSD applies these values in practice.

Social media users requesting direct support from aid agencies

Across the posts analysed, between 01-31 March 970 comments requested direct assistance from aid actors, representing 9.6% of all comments, a small decrease from 11% recorded in the **previous report**. As in earlier monitoring periods, many users treated comment sections as an informal route to request help, follow up on pending cases, or draw attention to urgent needs. These requests went beyond appeals for relief items alone and often focused on how to access organisations, where support was available, and whether neglected communities would be reached. Common themes included:

Follow-up failures and need for direct contact: Many users used the comment sections to ask for contact points, or updates on pending applications. Some said they had already submitted names, reference numbers, or documents, but had received no answer.

“I applied six months ago, and no one has followed up until now.” (“انا مقدم من ٦ شهور ولهلق ماحد سال”)

Requests for support in neglected localities: A large share of comments asked organisations to reach specific towns, camps, schools, and rural areas that users described as forgotten or bypassed, including parts of rural Aleppo, Al-Hasakah, Qamishli, Tartous, and Daraa.

“The southern Aleppo countryside is forgotten and will stay forgotten—why?” (“الريف الجنوبي الحلبى منسى وراح يضل منسى”) (“لئيش”)

Pressure to expand local service points: Several detailed comments, mostly by the same account requesting the opening of centres, support to local branches, school rehabilitation, water provision, and strengthened services in places with weak infrastructure.

“We ask for support for schools in Al-Safira and its surrounding rural areas.” (“نرجو الدعم لمدارس منطقة السفيرة وريفها”)

Medical need and chronic vulnerability: Many appeals focused on costly or urgent health needs, including cancer treatment, chronic disease medicines, oxygen, disability-related needs, and support for families caring for seriously ill relatives.

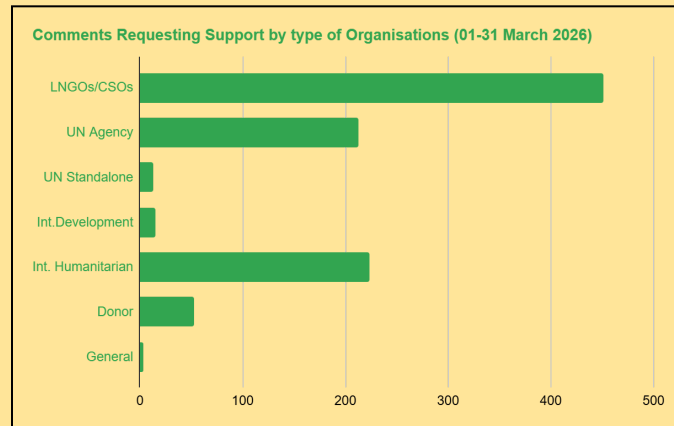
“My children are hungry, God help us, and I have a child with a disability (paralysis).” (“يارب جاعو وولادي وعندي ولد معاق”) (“شلل”)

Return, displacement, and shelter support: Many requests linked assistance to return from Jordan, Lebanon, or Türkiye, continued displacement, or lack of safe housing, including calls for return grants and support for families living in schools or temporary shelters.

“Where can we register for the \$600 grant for voluntary return from Turkey?” (“وين في تسجيل على منحه ٦٠٠ دولار عودة”) (“طوعيه من تركيا”)

What this tells us

- Requests for support remained a major feature of comment sections this month, although at a lower level than in the previous monitoring period. The requests show that online appeals are not limited to short-term relief, but increasingly combine immediate needs with demands for local services, recovery support, and more visible outreach to specific towns, camps, and rural areas.



Key numbers

Scale of analysis

- **Number of posts:** 1,052 posts
- **Estimated total reach:** 15.5 Million social media users
- **Total comments analysed:** 10,126 comments

Comment distribution by organisation type

- **LNGOs/CSOs :** 4,649 comments (45.91%)
- **UN agencies:** 3,255 comments (32.14%)
- **International humanitarian actor:** 1,464 comments (14.46%)
- **International development actors:** 361 comments (3.57%)
- **Donors:** 312 comments (3.08%)
- **General:** 85 comments (0.84%)

Distribution of negative comments by actor type:

- **Local NGOs / CSOs:** 44.80%
- **UN agencies:** 32.5%
- **International Humanitarian actors:** 8.64%
- **International development actors:** 1.89%
- **Donors:** 12.15%

Negative sentiment

- **Negative comments:** 741 comments (7.32% of all comments)

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.

Area	Posts
Rif-Dimashq	596
Dimashq (Damascus)	84
Al-Hasakah	66
Aleppo	63
Homs	49
Latakia	46
Sweida	32
Hama	32
Tartus	23
Idlib	16
Deir ez-Zor	7
Ar-Raqqah	5
Daraa	3

The social media monitoring platform identified 1,052 posts originating from Syria 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)*

Comment language

- **Arabic:** 6,443 comments (63.63%)
- **English:** 79 comments (0.78%)
- **Kurdish:** 5 comments (0.05%)
- **Emojis / no text:** 3,595 comments (35.50%)
- **Other Languages:** 4 comments (0.04%)

More resources

Social media sentiment analysis towards the aid sector in Syria: Insecurity Insight regularly examines key discussions around aid activities driven by information posted by IP addresses in Syria. Understanding how aid actors are portrayed online is increasingly critical. Social media narratives shape community perceptions of humanitarian organisations and can influence trust, 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. **Past editions**

Data Use and Data Privacy

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.

Disclaimer: This briefing is part of a long-term initiative to monitor social media perceptions of the aid sector in Syria. As a foundational release, the methodology, scope, and presentation will continue to evolve. Feedback on format or content is welcomed at info@insecurityinsight.org

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