

“This NGO Must Disappear”

05 May 2026

This briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses public social media activity from 23 March - 28 April 2026, assessing observed aid narratives based on over 14 months of systematic social media monitoring in [Burkina Faso](#).



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.

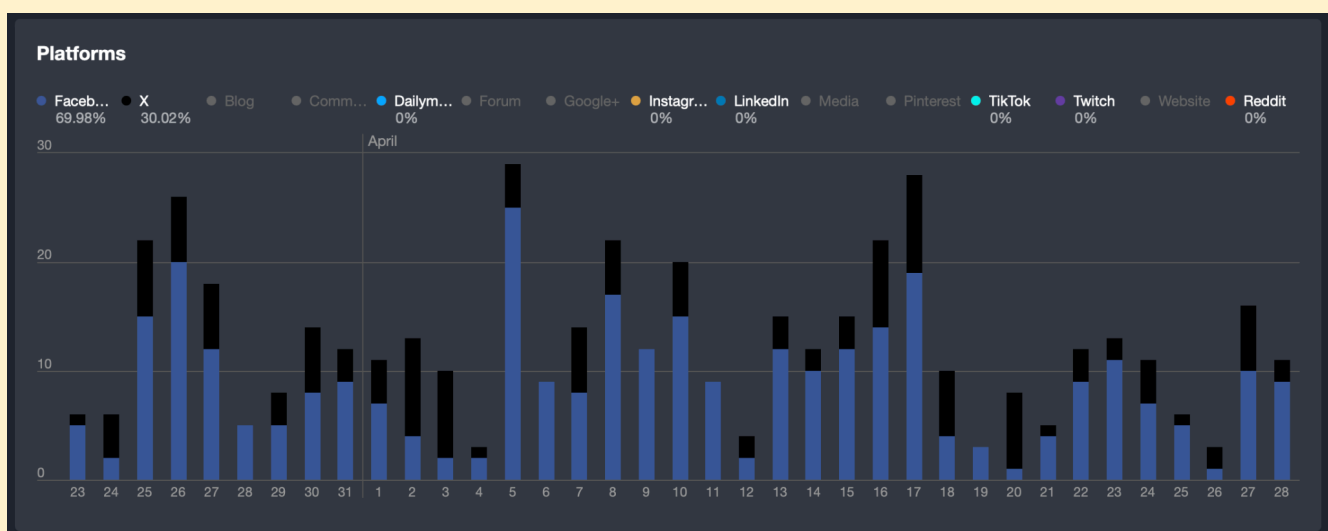
By tracking both emerging and entrenched narratives on social media, this briefing provides insight into how public sentiment towards aid actors in Burkina Faso is developing. It aims to support policymakers and humanitarian practitioners in strengthening community acceptance in a rapidly shifting aid environment.

This edition covers

- High-volume backlash against Human Rights Watch following its 02 April report on Burkina Faso, with criticism extending to NGOs, donors and international actors, and some comments calling for restrictive or punitive measures.
- Limited but supportive engagement around state regulation for NGOs and CSOs in Burkina Faso and Niger, where a small number of posts framed tighter oversight of associations as necessary and aligned with national sovereignty.
- Discussion of the UN resolution on slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, where reactions focused on Western abstentions and opposition, distrust of the UN, demands for reparations, and scepticism towards Western donor.

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.

Timeline of aid-related social media activity



Aid-related social media activity fluctuated across the monitoring period, with three main spikes between 23 March and 28 April. Facebook accounted for around 70% of monitored posts and X for around 30%.

- **26 March:** Posts on the UN slavery resolution accounted for 53% of aid-related content that day. Discussion focused on recognition of the transatlantic slave trade as the gravest crime against humanity and on voting patterns.
- **05 April:** The Burkina Faso Ministry of Foreign Affairs' statement on Facebook, and its ensuing reactions, criticizing the 02 April HRW report drove the largest spike, accounting for 86% of aid-related content that day and 16% of all aid-related content in Burkina Faso between 23 March and 28 April. This generated sustained negative engagement towards HRW and some spillover criticism of NGOs, donors and international actors.
- **17 April:** Posts on a UNICEF visit to the government accounted for 75% of aid-related content that day. Engagement remained limited and largely neutral, suggesting that not all UN-related visibility triggered negative or polarised reactions.

Graph generated by Meltwater

Past editions: [“No To Homosexuality”](#) (09 Feb - 22 March), [“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), [All](#)

Key Takeaways

Human Rights Watch report generates strong negative engagement and broader anti-ONG sentiment

Between 23 March and 28 April, 75 posts reacting to [Human Rights Watch's 02 April 2026 report](#) on Burkina Faso reached approximately 1.4 million social media users. The posts generated 713 public comments, 96% of the comments were critical towards HRW, and this criticism was extended to the aid sector, and/or donors. Around 32% of the posts were critical, likely linked to wider engagement by individual social media users, alongside amplification by prominent figures including Nathalie Yamb. At the time of analysis on 01 May, activity observed on [Nathalie Yamb's X account](#) indicated that she was still posting about HRW in connection with the Burkina Faso report.



The discussion focused less on the detailed findings of the HRW report than on the perceived legitimacy of HRW as an organisation. Critical comments portrayed HRW as foreign-based, disconnected from the realities of the field, politically motivated, or aligned with Western and “imperialist” interests. Several comments also extended criticism from HRW to other NGOs and the aid sector more broadly.

Key narratives

- **HRW is portrayed as lacking credibility because it is perceived as distant from the field:** Many comments questioned HRW's ability to report on Burkina Faso without a physical presence or representation in the country.

“People who write documents by phone call, they have never been in the field” (“Des gens qui rédigent des documents Sur appel téléphonique , ils n'ont jamais été sur le terrain”)

- **The report framed as destabilisation or information warfare:** A recurring narrative presented the report as part of an external effort to weaken Burkina Faso, undermine the authorities, or discredit the country's security forces.
- **Defence of the Forces de défense et de sécurité (FDS), Volontaires pour la défense de la Patrie (VDP) and national authorities:** Many comments rejected criticism of the FDS and VDP and instead presented them as protecting civilians and defending the country.

“Lightning is going to strike your damned organisation” (“La foudre va s’abattre sur sur votre maudite organisation”)

- **Calls for action against HRW and NGOs:** Some comments called for HRW to be banned, expelled, prosecuted, or investigated. Others extended this to foreign-funded NGOs more broadly. These comments indicate that the backlash did not remain limited to disagreement with the report.

“An arrest warrant must be issued for these terrorists” (“IL faut lancer un mandat d’arrêt contre ces terroristes”)

- **Influencer amplification around Nathalie Yamb:** Comments responding to Nathalie Yamb’s intervention were strongly supportive of her criticism of HRW. Commenters praised her analysis, called for it to be broadcast more widely, and treated it as helping explain alleged external manipulation around the HRW report. The manipulation alleged by commenters is primarily political and informational: HRW is portrayed as a Western or French-aligned tool used to discredit AES authorities, demoralise security forces, and shape international opinion. Several comments also frame the report as fabricated or remotely produced, while a more hostile subset alleges that HRW and NGOs act as proxies for, or supporters of, terrorist groups. Based on the comments posted, her role appears to have reinforced existing anti-HRW claims rather than introduced a unique or new narrative, contributing to further polarisation around rights’ based approaches.

“Thank you to Nathalie Yamb for the work done to enable us once again to understand the external manipulation” (“Merci a Nathalie yamb pour le travail abattu pour nous permettre une fois de plus de comprendre les manipulation extérieur”)

What this tells us

- **Rights based approaches are questioned and attacked on social media platforms:** the criticism of alleged human rights violations is rejected based on allegations of external manipulation and reference to sovereignty. Critics of the report did not consider the rights or situation of citizens of Burkina Faso affected by violence.
- **Personal risk to individuals associated with the report:** Some comments moved beyond criticism of the content of the report and called for restrictive or punitive measures against HRW, including expulsion, closure, prosecution, arrest warrants or anti-terrorism proceedings. A smaller number of comments specifically called for identifying HRW’s local “correspondents”, representatives or alleged collaborators, with some suggesting that such individuals should be arrested, brought before justice, or made to answer to the population. While these comments do not provide evidence of concrete action, they indicate a hostile online environment and potential risks for contacts staff perceived to have contributed to, represented, or supported the report.
- **Risks to the wider aid sector:** Criticism of the report also spilled over to foreign-funded NGOs more broadly irrespective of whether they work on rights based subjects, long-term aid or humanitarian support, with some comments calling for Western-linked NGOs or all NGOs in the AES space to be banned or removed.
- **The discussion was overwhelmingly negative, but not entirely uniform:** A small number of comments questioned the government’s response, asked whether parts of the report might be true, called for official data or counter-evidence, or warned against responding emotionally. These comments were marginal compared with the dominant negative reaction, but they show that the discussion was not fully homogeneous, and that some users continue to use the anonymity of the internet to express dissent.



NGO and CSO regulation generates limited engagement but supportive pro-sovereignty framing

Eight posts relating to NGO and association regulation in Niger and Burkina Faso reached approximately 200K social media users. The posts covered Niger’s suspension of 2,900 associations and NGOs described as irregular out of 4,700 identified nationwide, and Burkina Faso’s stated intention to better regulate the civil society sector by addressing unclear funding sources,

limited transparency and missing activity information among some associations and NGOs. Engagement was limited. Only the post on Niger's suspension of associations and NGOs generated comments.

Although comment engagement was low, a handful of accounts amplifying the issue generally framed regulation as lawful, necessary, or aligned with national sovereignty:

- **Account A:** This individual X account has around 20K followers and no verification badge. The post defends Burkina Faso's dissolution of 118 associations as a legal consequence of the new law on freedom of association and warns against being distracted by "obscurantist, imperialist, colonialist and neocolonialist" actors.
- **Account B:** This Facebook page presents itself as an edited media page based in Ouahigouya, with around 20K followers and no visible platform verification. Its post amplifies the Prime Minister's remarks as direct and uncompromising, referring to "unlawful CSOs" and "the end of humanitarian dependency".
- **Account C:** This smaller individual X account has around 1,000 followers and no visible verification badge. The profile features national symbols, and a pinned post praising a military uniform. Its public post states that only those who are "effective and consequential for Burkina Faso" will remain in the country, in response to a thread defending the dissolution of NGOs and associations. The account's visual identity suggests alignment with pro-AES narratives.

What this tells us

- The low number of comments suggests that NGO dissolution or suspension generated limited public engagement compared with higher-mobilisation issues such as the HRW report or the UN slavery resolution. Where users did react, comments were broadly accepting of government regulation and focused on the perceived excess number of associations.

UN slavery resolution receives high-reach engagement and prompts criticism of Western states and the UN

Twenty-four posts relating to the UN General Assembly resolution on slavery and the transatlantic slave trade reached approximately 3.3 million social media users. The posts generated 234 analysable comments, of which **74% were critical towards the UN, the aid sector and/or Western donors**. The posts largely presented the resolution as a historic recognition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade as among the gravest crimes against humanity. Audience reactions, however, were more mixed. While some comments welcomed the resolution, many focused on the abstentions by European countries, especially France. Others questioned the value of symbolic recognition without reparations or changes in current Western policies towards African countries.

Key narratives

- **Western abstentions and opposition reinforce distrust of Western states:** The most consistent negative reaction focused on France, Europe, the United States, Israel and Argentina.

"That's only natural – the executioner doesn't want to vote against himself" ("C'est normal le bourreau ne veut pas voter contre lui meme")

- **The UN is viewed as late, weak or hypocritical:** A repeated reaction questioned the value of UN recognition, either because it came too late or because commenters viewed the UN as controlled by powerful states.

"The UN itself is an empty shell, and whether it admits it or not, history bears witness to this. What about reparations now?" ("l'ONU même est une coquille vide et qu'elle la reconnaisse ou pas l'histoire est témoin. Quid des réparations maintenant ?")

- **Western partnerships and donor language are treated with suspicion:** A smaller but relevant set of comments linked the vote to distrust of Western cooperation, donor engagement, and NGOs.

“The European Union has abstained, yet here it is, parading around with its NGOs to lecture us on peace and universalism 🙄🙄” (“L’union européenne s’est abstenue et elle se balade avec ses ONG pour nous parler de paix , d’universalisme 🙄🙄”)

“If I were a head of state, and the European Union were to set foot in my country under the pretext of cooperation between our nations, I would refuse.” (“Si je suis un chef d’état, et que l’union européenne mettait pied dans mon pays pour soi-disant une coopération entre nos pays, je refuserai.”)

What this tells us

- **The main reputational impact is on Western states and donors, not the aid sector as a whole:** The negative comments were primarily directed at France, Europe, and the United States. The aid sector was not the central target. However, aid agencies receiving funding from criticised states may be affected by association.
- **The UN remains vulnerable to distrust even when the resolution itself is welcomed by some users:** Some commenters welcomed the resolution or praised Ghana, but many still portrayed the UN as late, weak, hypocritical or controlled by powerful states. This suggests that positive UN action may not automatically improve perceptions of international institutions where distrust is already entrenched.
- **Interpretation of history matters for acceptance today:** This discussion suggests that aid actors should avoid treating slavery, colonialism or reparations as distant historical issues disconnected from current perceptions of foreign organisations. In this dataset, historical injustice is used to interpret present-day donor behaviour, foreign cooperation and international messaging. For Western donors in particular, credibility may depend less on general language about partnership and more on whether audiences perceive concrete respect for sovereignty and accountability for past abuse and arrogance.

Key numbers

Of the 461 posts identified in Burkina Faso during the monitoring period, the social media monitoring platform assigned a subnational location to 361 posts. 95% were linked to the Centre region, and the remaining were assigned to: Boucle du Mouhoun, Est, Centre-Nord, Hauts-Bassins and Nord. The remaining posts could not be assigned to a precise subnational location within Burkina Faso.

Scale of analysis

- **Number of posts: 461**
- **Estimated total reach: 16.2 million** social media users (179% increase from 09 February - 22 March)
- **Total comments analysed: 1,521**

Comment distribution by organisation type

- INGOs: 766 (50.4%) — of which 713 Human Rights Watch
- UN standalone: 574 (37.7%)
- LNGOs: 81 (5.3%)
- UN agency: 62 (4.1%)
- Donors: 20 (1.3%)
- General aid sector: 18 (1.2%)

Comment language

- **French: 1,414**
- **Emojis / no text: 106**
- **English: 1**

Distribution of negative comments by actor type:

- INGOs: 688 (77.7%) — all towards Human Rights Watch
- UN standalone: 168 (19.0%)
- Donor: 18 (2.0%)
- General aid sector: 10 (1.1%)
- LNGO: 1 (0.1%)
- UN agency: 1 (0.1%)

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.

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/23Mar-28April2026SMMBFABrief>**

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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.

