

“Return Cannot Be Achieved Through Speeches and Statements”

Tracking Aid Narratives on Social Media: Recent Observations from Syria

20 July 2026

This briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses public social media activity from 01-30 July 2026 in Syria.



Understanding how aid actors are portrayed and perceived online is increasingly important. Social media narratives can shape public trust in humanitarian organisations and affect operational access, staff safety and community acceptance. As online discussion plays a growing role in how aid is understood, questioned and contested, monitoring these narratives has become an important part of security management, programme design and communication with affected communities.

Between 01–31 July 2026, monitoring identified **621 publicly available posts**, including **62% on Facebook (385 posts)** and **38% on X (236 posts)**. The briefing analysed **6,653 comments**, **8.1% more than in May (6,152)** and **5.2% fewer than in June (7,018)**, indicating broadly stable comment volumes over the past three months.

The dataset includes posts published by or mentioning UN agencies, international NGOs, local NGOs and civil society organisations, as well as posts identified through general keywords related to humanitarian and development assistance in Syria. By tracking emerging and recurring narratives, the briefing provides insight into how public sentiment towards aid actors is developing and aims to help policymakers and humanitarian practitioners strengthen community trust and acceptance in a rapidly changing aid environment.

621

Public posts
provisional

253

Posts with comments
X ≥15 / FB ≥15

6,653

Comments analysed
manually reviewed

~8 M

Estimated reach
X + Facebook (prov.)

This edition covers social media reactions to

- Mobile clinics, emergency response and health system are expected to expand access to healthcare
- Return convoys bringing IDPs home,
- Safe spaces combine protection, support and skills development for women and girls
- Livestock support draws interest, but users question access to veterinary services

Past editions: [“People Have Had Enough of Your Promises”](#) (01 May-30 June); [“Don’t Get Your Hopes Up”](#) (01-30 Apr); [All](#)

Key Takeaways

Mobile clinics, emergency response and health system are expected to expand access to healthcare

Between 01 and 31 July 2026, **87 posts focused on health and access to healthcare**, making health one of the most frequently discussed topics identified during the month. Posts covered mobile and fixed health services, emergency and ambulance response, vaccination campaigns, rehabilitation and equipment for health facilities, maternal and child health, disability services and efforts to strengthen health-system capacity.

The posts reached 1,056,433 social media users. Of the 87 posts, 22 generated 781 comments. Only 0.8% were critical (6 comments).

Support for health workers and outreach services: Mobile services attracted particular appreciation where they brought care closer to communities with limited access to health facilities.

“May God reward you for these humanitarian efforts. Bringing healthcare to remote villages supports life and human dignity. Wishing you all the best.” (جزاكم الله خيرًا على هذه الجهود الإنسانية المباركة، فأبصال الرعاية الصحية إلى القرى) (”البعيدة دعمٌ للحياة وكرامة الإنسان. كل التوفيق لكم“)

Requests showed continuing gaps in access: Some users used the comment sections to request health services, medicines or assistance with treatment, or to ask for services to be extended to other locations.

“I am displaced in villages in the southern countryside, and there is no clinic or medical care in the area. We ask you to look into our situation.”

(”انا نازح في قرىات حريبيل بل ريف الجنوبي وليوجد مصطوصف او ر عيت طبيه في المنطق نرجو منكم النظر في امرانه“)

This suggests that posts announcing health services can also become an informal channel through which users highlight areas where they believe healthcare remains unavailable or insufficient.

Critical reactions were isolated: the 0.8% of comments raised different concerns, including the perceived distribution of services, the quality or organisation of healthcare and individual allegations concerning humanitarian actors. For example, one user criticised conditions at a health facility:

“is all newspaper talk. We went and saw the disorder; there is no system or queue...” (كله حكي جرايد رحنا وشفنا...) (”...الفوضى مافي نظام ولا في“)

What this tells us

Comments were largely supportive, but recurring reports of difficulties accessing services, medicines and treatment can help aid actors identify perceived gaps in healthcare access and areas where further support may be needed.

Return convoys bringing IDPs home

Between 01 and 30 July 2026, 15 posts focused on displaced families returning to their areas of origin, reaching 381,640 social media users and generating 444 comments. Of these, 13.3% (59 comments) were critical concerning perceived gaps in assistance and follow-up; a smaller number alleged corruption, favoritism or lack of neutrality by aid actors. Posts documented voluntary return convoys from camps in northern Syria and assistance provided to families returning to communities in Idlib, Hama and elsewhere by SARC and UNHCR in cooperation by local authorities.

Unlike last reporting period, when discussion centred mainly on UNHCR and difficulties accessing financial assistance and follow-up, July focused more on organised return convoys involving SARC and UNHCR and on the practical needs families faced after returning home.

Returning home did not always mean returning to adequate living conditions: Some users described damaged homes, difficulty covering basic expenses and limited services after return.

“We returned voluntarily. Our situation is difficult. We do not know how to feed our children.”

(”نحننا رجعنا طوعي. وضعنا صعب... ما عم نعرف كيف نطعمي لأولاد“)

Families still in camps also asked to be included: Some users responded to return-convoy posts by asking when similar arrangements would reach their camps, showing that the posts also generated expectations among families still displaced.

“We are in the camps of Al-Zouf. No one comes to us. Come and return us to our homes; we are tired of living in tents.”

(...نحننا بيمخيمات الزوف ما حدا بيجي لعنا تعالو رجعوننا على بيوتنا اتعبنا)

Some questioned whether assistance was reaching returnees: A smaller group said they saw distributions announced online but had not received assistance themselves. A limited number also made unverified allegations of corruption, theft or favouritism.

“We only see the distributions on Facebook. In reality, nothing reaches us, and it will soon be a year since we returned from Lebanon.”

(“منشوف التوزيع بس عالفيس وبالحقيقة ما عم يوصلنا شي ونحننا رح يصيرلنا سنة راجعين من لبنان”)

Questions about assistance continued, but were not the only concern: Some returnees again asked about financial assistance, registration and how to contact UNHCR. This continues concerns identified in the [previous](#) reporting period, but July’s discussion more broadly reflected the practical challenges of rebuilding life after return from the camps.

Safe spaces combine protection, support and skills development for women and girls

Between 01 and 31 July 2026, 17 posts focused on women’s empowerment and access to safe spaces, reaching 114,326 social media users and generating 1,118 comments. Only 0.4% were critical (5 comments). The five critical comments raised limited concerns about staff conduct, aid distribution, fraud and communication. Posts were published by or referred to organisations including Al-Batoul Association for Humanitarian Services, UNFPA, the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund, Mosaic Human Relief and Development, EPDC and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), with support also from local social affairs directorates.

Safe spaces were widely welcomed: .

“A very necessary and important centre given the social challenges. The staff are wonderful and the services provided to beneficiaries are excellent.”

(“مركز ضروري ومهم جداً في ظل التحديات الاجتماعية، والكادر رائع، والخدمات المقدمة للمستفيدات رائعة جداً”)

Users wanted clearer information on how to access services: Questions about registration, addresses and whether similar activities were available in other locations appeared repeatedly, indicating interest beyond those already participating.

“How can we register and get in touch?”

(“كيفية التسجيل وتواصل”)

Critical reactions were very limited: Criticism represented only **0.4% of all comments**, one comment described poor treatment by some staff at a centre in Deir Hafir and questioned organisational oversight.

“Some staff at the Deir Hafir centre treat beneficiaries very poorly simply because the service is free... Where is the organisation and the supervision?”

(“مركز دير حافر تعامل بعض موظفاتو جداً مخزي بس لأن الخدمة مجانية... وبين المنظمة وبين الإشراف”)

What this tells us

Safe spaces attracted strong interest as places offering both protection and practical opportunities for women and girls. Repeated questions about registration and locations suggest that clearer access information could help interested users reach these services.

Livestock support draws interest, but users question access to veterinary services

On 6 July 2026, one post highlighted an ICRC-supported cattle artificial insemination programme, implemented with the Ministry of Agriculture to support livestock production and rural livelihoods. The programme was described as benefiting more than 120,000 rural families. The post generated 77 comments, of which 14.3% (11 comments) were critical. Users called for the programme to be extended to other areas such as Quneitra and Daraa.

“We need a project like this in Quneitra Governorate.” (نحتاج مثل هذا المشروع في محافظة القنيطرة)

A smaller recurring subset of comments made unverified allegations of favouritism or misuse of subsidised services.

“We haven’t seen anything. You distribute it to people connected to you and divide it among yourselves.” (كذابين ماشفنا شي يتوزعو لناس بتخصكن وتقاسموهن)

What this tells us:

While the programme was welcomed as relevant to rural livelihoods, some comments pointed to perceived gaps between announced support and what livestock owners said they could access locally.

Other topics that generated notable engagement

Education and children’s programmes: Between 1 and 30 July, 48 posts had an estimated reach of 358,981 social media users. Posts covered inclusive education, non-formal learning and child-friendly activities. Across different activities, those involved included Ihsan Relief and Development, UNICEF, the Education and Protection Development Centre (EPDC), WeWorld-GVC and ECHO, while Dan for Relief and Development appeared in education-sector coordination. 18 posts were included in the comment analysis, accounting for 830 comments, of which only 0.1% were critical (1 comment). Comments included praise for the activities as well as requests for nearby services for children with autism and other disabilities. One isolated comment raised a concern about a possible centre closure and the lack of a nearby alternative.

Restoring essential services: Between 01 and 30 July, 68 posts had an estimated reach of 1,449,234 social media users, covering efforts to restore water, electricity and other basic infrastructure. The posts covered activities by UNDP, UNICEF, SARC and ICRC, as well as initiatives supported by the European Union and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). The posts generated 620 comments, of which only 0.5% were critical (3 comments). Alongside expressions of support, some users asked whether restored services would reach communities regularly and consistently, while others highlighted areas where water or electricity remained unreliable.

Geographic distribution of posts

Area	Posts	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. The social media monitoring platform identified 621 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)
Rif-dimashq	777	
Aleppo	99	
Dimashq (Damascus)	80	
Latakia	59	
Hama	58	
Al Hasakah	54	
Homs	44	
Tartous	44	
Sweida	35	
Idlib	32	
Quneitra	14	
Ar-Raqqah	11	
Daraa	5	
Deir ez-Zor	3	

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.

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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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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](#). For regular updates on the Sahel see [here](#).

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](#). For regular updates see [here](#).

Using data collected by Insecurity Insight, the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC) identified 74 incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care in Syria in 2025, compared to 67 in 2024 and 61 in 2023. Among incidents reported in 2025, 22 health workers were killed, 21 arrested and ten kidnapped. Health worker arrests and kidnappings increased, killings persisted, and damage to or the destruction of health facilities continued, but at lower levels than previous years during the civil war. The majority of incidents affected health care providers working for national health structures. Read the full SHCC Syria Chapter in [Arabic](#) and [English](#).