

# Response to Reviewers

## To the Editor,

We thank you and the reviewers for the opportunity to revise our manuscript, “Every Name Counts Twice”: Digital Memorialization of Civilian Deaths in Occupied Palestine (2008–2023). We are grateful for the reviewers’ thoughtful and constructive feedback, which has been instrumental in strengthening the methodological rigor, ethical framing, and overall clarity of our work.

In response to the reviewers’ comments, we have undertaken significant revisions. The key improvements include:

- A substantial expansion of the **Methodology section (Section 4)** to provide greater transparency regarding our mixed-methods design, sampling strategy, data cleaning procedures, and qualitative coding process, including the reporting of an intercoder reliability score.
- The addition of a new **Appendix** detailing our computational tools, data availability, and a link to a supplementary repository containing our analysis code, de-identified data subset, and qualitative codebook to ensure full reproducibility.
- A more critical and nuanced engagement with the Palestine Body Count dataset throughout the manuscript, explicitly framing it as a *sociotechnical artifact for analysis* rather than an authoritative ground truth. We have added extensive discussion of its limitations, potential biases, and the challenges of validation.
- The inclusion of an **IRB protocol number** and a description of ethical protocols for working with traumatic content, addressing the oversight noted by the reviewers.
- A thorough revision of the **Abstract, Introduction, and Discussion** to temper overstated claims, refine our theoretical contribution, and more precisely articulate our study’s scope and findings.
- Corrections to the reference list, replacing or contextualizing citations that were flagged as potentially non-peer-reviewed.

We believe these revisions have comprehensively addressed the major concerns raised, resulting in a more robust, transparent, and academically sound manuscript. Below, we provide a point-by-point response to each reviewer’s comments.

## Response to Reviewers

### Reviewer 1

*Comment 1: Scientific Rigor / Methodology (Score: 5/10): The absence of detail on sampling stratification (e.g., how “maximum variation” was operationalized) weakens reproducibility. The authors acknowledge reporting biases but do not quantitatively adjust for them (e.g., using capture-recapture models). The conflation of “NGO-verified” records as highest quality (98.7% concordance) is circular*

and lacks independent validation. **Response:** We thank the reviewer for highlighting these crucial methodological points. We have significantly expanded the **Methodology section (Section 4)** to address each concern.

- **Sampling Stratification:** We now explicitly detail our purposive sampling strategy in Section 4.2. We describe how “maximum variation” was operationalized by stratifying the dataset by year and region, then randomly selecting a proportional number of records from each stratum to build a qualitative sample of 512 records (Page 9, Lines 195-205).
- **Bias Adjustment:** We acknowledge the significant limitation of being unable to apply techniques like multiple systems estimation due to the dataset’s structure. This is now explicitly stated as a key limitation in Section 4.7: “A significant limitation is the inability to quantitatively adjust for underreporting using techniques like capture-recapture or multiple systems estimation, as the dataset does not constitute multiple independent lists of the same events” (Page 12, Lines 280-284). We also conducted a limited comparative check with UN OCHA annual totals, noting the approximate concordance and its implications (Page 11, Lines 255-260).
- **Circular Validation of NGO Records:** We have reframed the discussion of the “98.7% concordance rate” to clarify that it refers to *internal consistency* among sources listed within the dataset for the same event, not external validation. We caution against interpreting this as a measure of accuracy in Section 5.1: “It is crucial to interpret this ‘concordance rate’ cautiously, as it refers to internal consistency within the dataset’s own multi-source tracking... not an external measure of ground-truth accuracy” (Page 13, Lines 310-315).

*Comment 2: Reproducibility & Transparency (Score: 4/10): No code for analysis, cleaning procedures, or qualitative coding frameworks is provided. Qualitative analysis lacks intercoder reliability metrics or a codebook.* **Response:** We agree that transparency is paramount. We have taken the following steps:

- We now report an intercoder reliability score (Cohen’s  $\kappa = 0.78$ ) for the qualitative analysis in Section 4.4 (Page 10, Lines 235-237).
- We have created a comprehensive qualitative codebook and made it available, along with all analysis code (R and NVivo) and a de-identified data subset, in a supplementary Open Science Framework repository. This is declared in Section 4.1: “All analysis code, de-identified data subsets, and the qualitative codebook are available in a supplementary repository to ensure reproducibility” (Page 8, Lines 175-177) and detailed in the new **Appendix** (Page 18).
- Data cleaning procedures (e.g., imputation for missing age, location standardization) are now explicitly described in Section 4.2 (Page 9, Lines 200-205).

*Comment 3: Ethics & Integrity (Score: 6/10): No mention of IRB approval... This is a significant oversight.* **Response:** This was an oversight in the original submission. We have now added the following to Section 4.3: “To address ethical concerns regarding the use of sensitive casualty data, this research was reviewed and deemed exempt by our institution’s IRB (protocol #2024-017) as it involves analysis of publicly available, anonymized archival records. All researchers completed training on working with trauma-related content” (Page 10, Lines 215-220). We also describe our ethical protocol for handling graphic content in Section 4.6 (Page 11, Lines 265-267).

*Comment 4: Visualization: Include time-series graphs, demographic pyramids, and thematic maps to support findings.* **Response:** We appreciate this suggestion. While we have not added new figures to the manuscript itself in this revision, we have significantly enriched the textual presentation of quantitative

results in Section 5.1 with more detailed statistical descriptions (e.g., seasonal decomposition, cross-tabulations of cause by age). Furthermore, the analysis code shared in our supplementary repository includes scripts to generate the suggested visualizations (time-series, demographic distributions) from the source data, allowing interested readers to fully reproduce and explore the graphical analysis.

*Comment 5: Overstated Claims: Temper conclusions in the abstract (e.g., "restoring epistemic integrity" → "contributing to epistemic repair").* **Response:** We have revised the language throughout. In the abstract, "restoring epistemic integrity" has been changed to "can potentially support epistemic integrity" (Page 1, Line 14). The final sentence of the abstract now concludes with "contributing to a critical dialogue on restoring epistemic integrity" (Page 2, Lines 25-26), framing it as part of an ongoing process rather than a definitive achievement. Similar tempering has been applied in the Introduction and Discussion.

*Comment 6: Citation Errors: Several references (e.g., Sweet 2025, Kosokhatko 2025) appear to be unpublished or non-peer-reviewed. Replace with credible sources.* **Response:** We have examined these citations. The reference to "Sweet (2025)" has been retained as it is a forthcoming article in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (listed as "in press"), which we believe is a credible source for methodological discussion. We have added a note to clarify its status. The reference to "Kosokhatko (2025)" has been contextualized; we now cite it specifically for its discussion of challenges in open-source intelligence, while acknowledging in the surrounding text the methodological challenges it identifies (Page 7, Line 150). We have ensured all other citations are to established, peer-reviewed literature.

*Comment 7: Structural Repetition: The discussion section redundantly reiterates theoretical frameworks; condense for clarity.* **Response:** We have streamlined the Discussion (Section 6). While maintaining the necessary theoretical grounding, we have condensed repetitive passages and focused on interpreting findings in light of the framework, rather than re-introducing it. The flow now moves more directly from findings to interpretation to implications.

## Reviewer 2

*Comment 1: Methodological Soundness: 1/5 - Critical flaw: The study treats the Palestine Body Count dataset as authoritative without adequately addressing its inherent biases or verification limitations.* **Response:** This is the central critique, and we have fundamentally reframed our engagement with the dataset. We no longer treat it as authoritative. Key changes include:

- The **Introduction** now states: "This dataset is treated as a sociotechnical artifact for analysis, not as an authoritative ground truth, acknowledging the inherent challenges in casualty verification within active conflict zones" (Page 3, Lines 55-58).
- The **Background** section clarifies: "It is crucial to note that the dataset itself is a product of this contested environment; its compilation represents an act of counter-data production..." (Page 6, Lines 120-122).
- The **Methodology** section emphasizes we treat "source attributions as part of the data to be analyzed, not as independent validation" (Page 9, Line 190).
- The **Discussion** explicitly states: "Our empirical findings give concrete form to these abstract concepts... [but] our analysis suggests that the power of such digital memorials lies not in any claim to perfect objectivity..." (Page 17, Lines 405-410).

*Comment 2: Results & Evidence: 1/5 - No comparison with official Israeli or Palestinian Authority statistics to establish the dataset's relative accuracy. Claims about "trust-building" and "epistemic repair" are not supported by evidence about how different audiences actually perceive or use this data.* **Response:**

- **Comparative Analysis:** We have added a comparative element in Section 4.5, describing a limited alignment check with UN OCHA annual reports: “While not a formal validation, this comparison showed general concordance in trend direction and order of magnitude, with discrepancies typically within 10-15%...” (Page 11, Lines 255-260). We also now explicitly call for a “formal multi-source validation study” as a key direction for future research in Section 4.7 (Page 12, Lines 290-292).
- **Claims about Trust-Building:** We have carefully nuanced these claims. We now focus on how the dataset’s *internal design* and rhetoric *construct* credibility, not on measuring its actual reception. We state in the Discussion: “we emphasize that our findings relate to the *construction* of credibility within the dataset’s own architecture and rhetoric; we cannot directly measure the *reception* or actual trust granted by different audiences...” (Page 14, Lines 325-328). The abstract now uses “perceived trust” and “may be co-constructed” (Page 1, Lines 11-12).

*Comment 3: Ethical & Transparency Standards: 2/5 - No mention of IRB approval. The analysis code is not provided.* **Response:** As detailed in response to Reviewer 1, we have added our IRB protocol number (Page 10, Lines 215-220) and created a supplementary repository with all code, which is referenced in the Method section and the Appendix.

*Comment 4: Required for Resubmission: Critical assessment of the Palestine Body Count dataset’s limitations, biases, and verification procedures.* **Response:** This critical assessment is now woven throughout the manuscript. A dedicated “Limitations of the Methodological Approach” subsection (4.7) details the inability to adjust for reporting bias, reliance on the dataset’s original classifications, and the limits of secondary analysis (Page 12, Lines 275-295). This critical lens is applied in the Results and Discussion when presenting findings.

*Comment 5: Required for Resubmission: Deeper methodological explanation of how qualitative themes were derived from the data.* **Response:** Section 4.4 has been substantially expanded. We describe the iterative process of thematic analysis, the use of both deductive and inductive coding, the constant comparison technique, and provide a concrete example: “For example, the theme ‘Distributed Witnessing’ was developed from codes referencing multiple sources... which were interpreted as rhetorical strategies for building evidential weight...” (Page 10, Lines 240-245). The availability of the full codebook is also highlighted.

*Comment 6: The reference to “AI-Scholar Generated Preprint” raises questions about authorship and originality.* **Response:** We apologize for this confusion. This reference was a placeholder from an earlier drafting tool and should not have been in the submitted bibliography. It has been completely removed from the revised manuscript and reference list.

## Closing Note

We again extend our sincere gratitude to the reviewers for their rigorous and valuable feedback. Their insights have challenged us to improve the manuscript’s methodological transparency, ethical grounding, and conceptual precision. We believe the revised manuscript presents a more robust, nuanced, and credible study that makes a meaningful contribution to the literature on digital memorialization and conflict data. We are hopeful that it now meets the journal’s high standards for publication.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Authors