

FROM WITNESS TO WORLD: HOW GLOBAL PROTEST SOLIDARITY CONSTRUCTS CREDIBILITY IN THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE WAR

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ABSTRACT

This study provides an exploratory mixed-methods analysis of how global protest solidarity constructs credibility in the context of the Israel-Palestine war from 2017 to 2024. Using a dataset of 26 protest events from the Global Protest Tracker, the research integrates quantitative descriptive statistics with qualitative thematic coding of protest frames. Findings indicate that pro-Palestinian solidarity predominates in the sampled protest landscape, with credibility being associated with the co-occurrence of witness testimony, statistical evidence of casualties, and embodied protest practices. Larger protest events that encounter violent government responses achieve heightened visibility, which is associated with the amplification of their credibility claims in public discourse. The study employs methodological triangulation and systematic coding procedures to ensure analytic rigor, while explicitly acknowledging the exploratory nature and sample limitations of the analysis. This research contributes to understanding how epistemic trust is constructed in contentious political contexts and how moral authority emerges through the interaction of street action and media dynamics during humanitarian crises, offering a methodological template and conceptual framework for larger-scale studies.

1 INTRODUCTION

Global protest activity surrounding the Israel–Palestine war from 2017 to 2024 provides a critical context for examining how solidarity movements construct credibility in contentious political environments. These demonstrations function as communication arenas where claims about civilian harm, human rights violations, and ceasefire demands are articulated and contested. This study analyzes a sample of 26 protest events from the Global Protest Tracker dataset that reference Israel, Palestine, or Gaza to address a fundamental research question: how do protesters establish epistemic trust and moral authority when mainstream narratives are polarized and institutional responses vary? The analysis is framed as an exploratory investigation that prioritizes depth of qualitative insight and methodological development over broad statistical generalization, given the sample size and the complexity of the phenomenon under study.

The construction of credibility in this context involves multiple complex factors. Competing historical narratives, geopolitical alignments, and institutional constraints shape public understanding of the conflict Tufekci (2017). Media systems refract protest messages through national interests and editorial policies, while digital platforms create opportunities for witnessing alongside vulnerabilities to content moderation Livingstone (2009). The circulation of testimony from conflict zones through protest activities encounters counter-speech framed around security concerns and accusations of misinformation Wardle & Derakhshan (2017). This complexity necessitates a research approach that accounts for both quantitative patterns in protest activity and qualitative dimensions of credibility construction. However, it also presents significant methodological challenges concerning data comprehensiveness, the coding of political stances, and the isolation of specific causal mechanisms, which are addressed in the design of this study.

This research employs a mixed-methods approach integrating quantitative analysis of protest event characteristics with qualitative thematic coding of protest frames. This convergent design is particu-

larly suited to exploratory research on complex social phenomena, as it allows for the triangulation of findings from different data types and analytical lenses Creswell & Creswell (2018). The quantitative component examines temporal distributions, protest sizes, and government responses, while the qualitative analysis identifies frames of solidarity, atrocity witnessing, and institutional contestation. Methodological triangulation ensures analytic rigor through concurrent integration of different data types Creswell & Creswell (2018). The study builds on traditions of protest event analysis Tilly (2004) and frame analysis Benford & Snow (2000) while addressing gaps in understanding trust formation across street action and media dynamics in the current conflict cycle. Its novelty lies not in discovering wholly new empirical patterns, but in the integrated application of epistemic trust frameworks to the specific communicative practices of solidarity protests within this protracted conflict, using a mixed-methods lens to unpack the micro-processes of credibility construction.

The theoretical framework draws from literature on epistemic trust Fricker (2007), moral witnessing Margalit (2002), and communicative action Habermas (1984). Credibility emerges where testimony, evidence rituals, and ethical claims align in the public sphere. The study examines how authenticity, empathy, and authority are constructed through protest practices, and how institutional responses including repression may influence these credibility claims Davenport (2007). This framework informs the analysis of pro-Palestinian solidarity predominance and its relationship to visibility in public discourse. The study's contribution is to empirically trace how these abstract theoretical constructs—epistemic trust, moral witnessing—are operationalized in the concrete, situated practices of global protest events.

Three research questions guide this investigation. First, how do protesters construct and perceive credibility and authenticity in the context of the Israel–Palestine war? Second, which communicative and contextual factors foster trust in protest claims? Third, how do institutional and cultural framings shape the reception of protest claims? These questions structure the analysis of both quantitative patterns and qualitative themes across the dataset. They are addressed with the understanding that the sample provides a detailed view of specific cases rather than a complete map of the global protest field.

This research provides a mixed-methods account of how solidarity protests enact credibility in the Israel–Palestine war context. The study documents the prevalence of pro-Palestinian stance across regions and examines relationships between protest size and government responses. It extends understanding of epistemic trust construction in contentious politics by analyzing how event characteristics influence trust dynamics. Methodologically, the research contributes through integration of quantitative protest event analysis with qualitative frame analysis in a convergent design. Furthermore, it provides a transparent account of the procedures and challenges involved in coding protest stance from event descriptions, serving as a reference point for future research seeking to scale up similar analyses.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews related work on social movements, media systems, and credibility construction. Section 3 provides background on the Israel–Palestine conflict and global protest mobilization. Section 4 details the mixed-methods approach, including data collection and analysis procedures. Section 5 presents quantitative findings and qualitative insights. Section 6 interprets the results in relation to the research questions and theoretical framework. Section 7 outlines limitations and future research directions.

The findings have implications for humanitarian policy, education, and cross-cultural understanding. They suggest the importance of protecting peaceful assembly and considering civilian-protection claims grounded in witness evidence. They highlight the need for witness literacy in evaluating testimonies and evidence from conflict zones. The research illustrates how moral authority emerges through the interaction of street action and media dynamics during humanitarian crises, offering insights for conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.

2 RELATED WORK

Protest event analysis represents a key methodological tradition in social movement research that systematically documents collective action through media reports and other sources. This approach enables quantitative examination of protest patterns including frequency, size, location, and state responses. Early methodological foundations were established by researchers developing systematic

coding procedures for protest events Tilly (2004), with subsequent refinements addressing challenges of media bias and event verification. Seminal work by Koopmans and Statham established political claims analysis that integrates protest event and discourse approaches, while providing a comprehensive overview of protest event analysis as a tool for political mobilization studies, tracing its development through multiple generations and addressing systematic biases in data collection. This methodological tradition provides tools for analyzing how protest characteristics influence movement outcomes and public visibility. The current study engages with this tradition but adapts it for an exploratory, mixed-methods purpose, focusing on depth of analysis within a constrained sample to elucidate credibility construction mechanisms. It also intersects with a growing body of work on "digitally enabled social change" Earl & Kimport (2011) and "affective publics" Papacharissi (2015), which examine how emotions and personal storytelling circulate through networked media to fuel solidarity. However, a specific gap exists in applying frameworks of epistemic justice and moral witnessing Fricker (2007); Margalit (2002) to the empirical analysis of protest event data, particularly within the polarized communicative ecology of the Israel-Palestine conflict. This study aims to bridge that gap by examining not just if protests occur, but how they perform credibility through specific discursive and embodied practices.

3 BACKGROUND

The Israel–Palestine conflict has generated sustained global attention and protest mobilization from 2017 to 2024. This period witnessed escalations in violence that precipitated international solidarity actions. These protests function as sites for articulating moral claims and constructing credibility around civilian experiences of conflict. The global protest landscape reflects diverse geopolitical alignments and institutional responses that shape how conflict claims are received and validated across national contexts.

The theoretical foundations of this research draw from literature on epistemic trust and moral witnessing. Epistemic trust concerns conditions under which testimony is deemed credible, particularly when speakers occupy marginalized positions Fricker (2007). Moral witnessing involves public articulation of suffering to generate ethical response and historical accountability Margalit (2002). In the context of the Israel–Palestine conflict, these frameworks help explain how protest movements bridge geographical distances to establish credibility of civilian harm claims. The communicative action paradigm illuminates how protest messages circulate through media systems and public spheres Habermas (1984). These theories predict that credibility is not a pre-existing attribute but is dynamically "co-produced" through interactions between testifiers, audiences, mediators, and institutional actors. The protest event, therefore, becomes a crucial site where this co-production is publicly staged and negotiated.

Social movement theory provides context for understanding protest dynamics in conflict settings. Research on networked protest highlights how digital technologies transform mobilization patterns and witnessing practices Tufekci (2017). The logic of connective action describes how personalized communication shapes contemporary protest participation Bennett & Segerberg (2012). Frame analysis illuminates how movements package ideas to resonate with target audiences Benford & Snow (2000). These perspectives inform the examination of how protest events reference the Israel–Palestine conflict and construct credibility through framing strategies and mobilization patterns. A key insight from frame analysis is that successful frames must possess "credibility," which is analytically distinct from their "empirical credibility" (fit with facts) and "narrative fidelity" (fit with cultural stories) Benford & Snow (2000). This study focuses precisely on the practices through which this empirical and narrative credibility is assembled and performed in protest contexts.

Media systems play a crucial role in circulating conflict narratives and protest claims. The interaction between social movements and media represents a key dimension of contemporary conflict communication Gamson & Wolfsfeld (1993). Digital platforms create opportunities for witnessing conflict experiences while introducing vulnerabilities related to content moderation and algorithmic visibility Livingstone (2009). The spread of information across national borders involves mediation processes that affect which voices are amplified in public discourse about the conflict Wardle & Derakhshan (2017). The concept of "mediated witnessing" Liew (2022) is particularly relevant, describing how digital tools allow distant publics to bear witness to suffering, often through the curation and circula-

tion of user-generated content from conflict zones. Protests often integrate this digitally mediated witness material into their physical gatherings, creating a hybrid space of credibility construction.

Institutional contexts and geopolitical constraints shape protest dynamics around the Israel–Palestine conflict. State responses to protest vary from protection of peaceful assembly to violent repression (Davenport (2007)). These responses influence the visibility and perceived legitimacy of protest claims. Geopolitical alignments affect how national media systems frame protest events and conflict narratives. The research examines how these institutional factors interact with protest characteristics to influence credibility construction across different national settings from 2017 to 2024. However, it is crucial to note that the dataset used in this study is not designed to capture the full spectrum of institutional variation or to serve as a representative sample of all global protests. Its value lies in the detailed, event-level data it provides for qualitative analysis, even as the quantitative patterns must be interpreted with appropriate caution regarding generalizability.

This research positions itself within conflict studies by focusing on communicative dimensions of protest solidarity. Rather than examining the conflict’s historical roots or proposing political solutions, the study analyzes how global protest events become sites for credibility work and trust construction. The mixed-methods approach bridges quantitative patterns in protest event characteristics with qualitative analysis of framing strategies. This integrated perspective offers insights into how moral authority emerges through the interplay of street action, media dynamics, and institutional responses in prolonged conflict. It treats each protest event as a case study in the performance of credibility, where multiple forms of evidence (testimonial, statistical, embodied) are orchestrated to make claims on distant publics and institutions.

4 METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to examine how global protest solidarity constructs credibility in the context of the Israel–Palestine war from 2017 to 2024. The research integrates quantitative analysis of protest event characteristics with qualitative thematic coding of protest frames. This convergent design enables methodological triangulation by analyzing credibility construction through different analytical approaches (Creswell & Creswell (2018)). The design is explicitly exploratory, given the complexity of the phenomenon and the sample size. Its primary objective is to develop a nuanced understanding of credibility construction mechanisms and to generate insights and hypotheses for future, larger-scale research, rather than to test definitive hypotheses or establish generalizable laws.

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design follows a concurrent mixed-methods approach where quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed simultaneously. This design addresses the complex nature of credibility construction in protest contexts by examining both numerical patterns and thematic content within the same dataset. The quantitative component focuses on protest event characteristics, while the qualitative component examines protest frames and credibility construction strategies. This integrated approach builds on traditions of protest event analysis (Tilly (2004)) and frame analysis (Benford & Snow (2000)). The two strands of analysis were given equal priority (QUAN + QUAL) and were integrated during the interpretation phase to provide a more complete understanding than either approach could alone (Creswell & Creswell (2018)). Integration occurred through the process of "following a thread" (Flick (2014)), where a quantitative pattern (e.g., large protests with violent state response) prompted deeper qualitative investigation into the framing strategies used in those specific events, and vice-versa.

4.2 DATA SOURCE AND SAMPLING

The study analyzes 26 protest events from the Global Protest Tracker dataset that reference Israel, Palestine, or Gaza between 2017 and 2024 (Gibin (2024)). The dataset, compiled by Willian Oliveira Gibin, aggregates protest event information from various English-language news sources and public reports. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this source: it is a single, non-peer-reviewed compilation that may reflect media selection biases, under-report certain regions or smaller events, and rely on varying levels of source verification. The dataset version used was accessed in March

2024. The dataset includes publicly available information about protest events worldwide. The sampling strategy involved filtering the complete dataset to include only events where the triggers or motivations fields contained references to Israel, Palestine, or Gaza using case-insensitive text matching. This filtering resulted in the 26-event sample. This sample size is modest and precludes robust inferential statistics; therefore, the quantitative analysis is restricted to descriptive statistics and careful interpretation of associations. The sample is treated as a purposive collection of cases that provide rich material for analyzing credibility construction processes, not as a statistically representative sample of a global population.

The dataset provides information for each protest event, including country location, start date, protest name, triggers, motivations, peak size estimates, size categories, government responses, and binary indicators for significant outcomes, large protests, and violent government responses. This dataset enables both statistical analysis of protest patterns and qualitative examination of protest framing.

4.3 QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND PROCEDURES

Quantitative data were extracted from the filtered dataset using systematic coding procedures following protest event analysis methodology. Temporal distributions were analyzed by parsing start dates to monthly intervals. Geographic patterns were examined through country and region grouping, with regions categorized as MENA (Middle East and North Africa) and Non-MENA. Protest sizes were analyzed using both categorical size classifications and numerical peak size estimates. Given the highly skewed distribution of protest sizes (with one event over 1 million participants), the median is reported as the primary measure of central tendency alongside the mean, as the median is less sensitive to extreme outliers.

Stance coding was performed using rule-based text analysis of triggers and motivations fields. Events were classified as pro-Palestinian, domestic-Israeli, or neutral/other based on explicit references in protest descriptions. The coding rules were developed iteratively. A protest was coded as "pro-Palestinian" if its description included explicit solidarity with Palestine or Gaza, condemnation of Israeli military actions, or demands centered on Palestinian rights (e.g., "ceasefire in Gaza," "stop the war on Gaza," "solidarity with Palestine"). It was coded as "domestic-Israeli" if the description focused primarily on internal Israeli politics related to the conflict (e.g., protests against the Israeli government's handling of hostage crises). Events that mentioned the conflict context but without a clear alignment (e.g., general calls for peace) or that focused on other primary issues were coded as "neutral/other." This coding is inherently interpretative and heuristic; it captures the primary discursive orientation of the event as reported in the dataset description, not the full complexity of participant motivations. To enhance transparency, the full codebook and example coding decisions are provided in Appendix A. No inter-coder reliability was calculated due to the single-coder design of this exploratory study; future large-scale work would necessitate such measures. Government responses were coded based on the violent government response indicator, and binary indicators were converted to numerical values for correlation analysis.

Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics for protest characteristics, cross-tabulations of region by stance, and comparisons of peak sizes across categories. Correlation analysis examined relationships between binary indicators including protest size, government responses, and significant outcomes. Given the small sample size ($N=26$) and the presence of several binary variables with low frequencies, the correlation matrix (Table 5) should be interpreted with extreme caution. The Pearson correlations reported are unstable, and several cells contain 'nan' values due to zero variance in one of the paired variables (e.g., where all protests had a "Political motivation"). Therefore, these correlations are presented primarily for descriptive completeness, and no causal or strong associational claims are based upon them. The primary quantitative findings rely on descriptive comparisons of medians and counts.

4.4 QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND PROCEDURES

Qualitative data were derived from systematic analysis of protest triggers and motivations. The qualitative approach employed thematic analysis to identify patterns in credibility construction. The analysis followed an iterative coding process that moved from initial open coding to focused thematic development Krippendorff (2018).

The coding framework was developed through reading of protest descriptions and identification of recurring themes related to credibility construction. Initial codes included references to solidarity expressions, casualty counts, witness testimony, institutional critiques, and moral demands. These codes were consolidated into broader thematic categories through constant comparison. For instance, codes like "citing death tolls," "naming specific victims," and "referencing UN reports" were grouped under the theme "Statistical Evidence and Authoritative Sourcing." The theme "Embodied and Symbolic Practice" emerged from codes like "die-in," "prayer vigil," "wearing keffiyehs," and "symbolic coffins."

The qualitative analysis examined how protest events employed framing strategies to establish credibility, including statistical evidence, personal testimony, moral appeals, and institutional contestation. Each protest event was analyzed for framing techniques and credibility construction mechanisms. This analysis was documented in a qualitative analysis memo, tracking how different credibility practices clustered within events of different sizes, stances, and regions.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS INTEGRATION

The mixed-methods design employed concurrent integration of quantitative and qualitative findings. Quantitative patterns in protest size, geographic distribution, and government responses were examined alongside qualitative themes in protest framing and credibility construction. This integration allowed for triangulation of findings about credibility construction across different protest contexts. For example, the quantitative observation that larger protests were more likely to experience violent state response (Table 6) was integrated with the qualitative finding that many of these large, repressed protests also prominently featured embodied practices like die-ins and the display of casualty statistics. This integration suggested a potential link between the scale/visibility of an event, the intensity of state reaction, and the deployment of multi-modal credibility strategies, though the design cannot establish causality.

The analysis examined relationships between quantitative characteristics and qualitative themes. This approach enabled identification of patterns where credibility construction strategies were more prevalent in specific protest contexts or in response to particular institutional conditions.

4.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND RIGOR

Procedures were implemented to ensure trustworthiness and rigor of research findings. Methodological triangulation was achieved through concurrent use of quantitative and qualitative analysis methods (Creswell & Creswell (2018)). Systematic coding procedures were employed for both quantitative and qualitative components, with documentation of coding decisions. To address potential researcher bias, particularly in the interpretative stance coding and qualitative analysis, an audit trail was maintained documenting all analytical decisions. Furthermore, the heuristic and exploratory nature of the stance coding is explicitly acknowledged as a limitation, and the coding rules are made as transparent as possible in Appendix A. The primary safeguard for the qualitative analysis is its systematic, iterative approach and its grounding in direct excerpts from the event descriptions.

For quantitative analysis, reliability was enhanced through consistent coding procedures and cross-verification of extracted data. The stance coding framework was applied consistently across all protest events. Statistical analyses were conducted using established methods. Given the sample size constraints, the quantitative analysis avoids over-interpretation and focuses on descriptive patterns. The correlation matrix is included with prominent caveats about its interpretability.

For qualitative analysis, trustworthiness was maintained through systematic coding procedures and thematic development. The analysis followed established approaches to qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff (2018)). Analytical decisions were documented to ensure transparency.

The research acknowledges limitations related to dataset completeness and the heuristic nature of stance coding. The stance variable was derived through systematic text analysis of protest descriptions. A primary limitation is the event-catalog bias of the dataset, which may over-represent protests that achieve international media attention and under-represent smaller, local, or repressed events that leave less of a digital trace. Additionally, the dataset's focus on English-language sources introduces a geographical and cultural bias. These limitations mean the sampled events are not representative of all global protests on this issue, but they do represent a set of events that achieved a certain level of

recorded public visibility, which is itself relevant to the study of credibility construction in the public sphere.

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research utilized publicly available protest event data that does not contain personally identifiable information. All data handling followed established ethical guidelines for secondary data analysis. The study complied with standard research ethics principles regarding use of publicly available archival data. The researcher's positionality as an analyst external to the conflict and the protest movements is acknowledged. This position allows for a degree of analytical distance but also means the analysis is based on mediated reports of events rather than direct ethnographic engagement. The interpretations offered are therefore focused on the discursive construction of credibility in publicly available descriptions, not on the internal experiences or intentions of participants.

The analysis maintained focus on protest events as collective phenomena rather than individual participants. The use of aggregated event data aligns with standard practices in social movement research.

5 RESULTS

The analysis of 26 protest events referencing Israel, Palestine, or Gaza from 2017 to 2024 reveals distinct patterns in temporal distribution, geographic spread, protest sizes, and government responses. These quantitative findings, combined with qualitative insights into protest framing, provide a comprehensive understanding of how credibility is constructed through global protest solidarity. All quantitative findings are presented as descriptive patterns from this specific sample; generalizability to the broader universe of protests is limited by the sample size and dataset characteristics discussed in the Methods section.

5.1 TEMPORAL AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The temporal distribution of protest events shows increased activity in recent years, particularly in 2023–2024, coinciding with escalations in the Israel–Palestine conflict (Table 1). The geographic analysis indicates that the majority of events occurred in MENA regions, with Israel, Gaza Strip, and West Bank accounting for the highest concentration of protests (Table 7). This concentration is expected given the proximity to the conflict zone. The presence of protests in Non-MENA regions (e.g., Cyprus, Indonesia) within the sample indicates the transnational reach of solidarity mobilization, though their smaller number in this dataset may reflect reporting biases or actual differential mobilization levels.

5.2 PROTEST STANCE AND SIZE CHARACTERISTICS

Pro-Palestinian solidarity dominated the protest landscape, accounting for 19 of 26 events (73%), with this pattern consistent across both MENA and Non-MENA regions (Table 2). It is critical to reiterate that this finding describes the sample obtained through the specific filtering of this particular dataset. It should not be interpreted as a definitive measurement of the global proportion of protest stances, as the dataset likely under-reports certain types of events (e.g., pro-Israeli solidarity events outside Israel may be less frequently cataloged under the used keywords, or may be framed differently in source reports). The two "Domestic-Israel" events both occurred within Israel and focused on internal policy. The size distribution of protests varied widely, with most events falling into the hundreds to tens of thousands range (Table 3). The median protest size across all events was 1,000 participants. The distribution is right-skewed, with a small number of very large events (hundreds of thousands, over 1 million) pulling the mean (54,328) substantially higher than the median.

5.3 GOVERNMENT RESPONSES AND PROTEST DYNAMICS

A notable finding concerns the relationship between protest size and government responses. Protests experiencing violent government responses had substantially higher mean peak sizes (158,867) compared to those without violent responses (28,438) (Table 6). The median sizes show a less

Table 1: Temporal distribution of protest events (2017–2024)

Month	Count	Percentage
2017–12	1	3.8
2018–03	1	3.8
2018–08	1	3.8
2019–10	1	3.8
2020–03	1	3.8
2021–05	3	11.5
2021–06	1	3.8
2021–11	1	3.8
2022–02	1	3.8
2023–01	1	3.8
2023–03	2	7.7
2023–05	2	7.7
2023–07	1	3.8
2023–08	1	3.8
2023–12	2	7.7
2024–01	3	11.5
2024–03	3	11.5

Table 2: Region group by stance (event counts)

RegionGroup	Domestic-Israel	Neutral/Other	Pro-Palestinian
MENA	2	5	17
Non-MENA	0	0	2

dramatic but still present difference (1,000 vs. 500). This pattern is consistent with established literature on protest policing, where larger, more disruptive protests are more likely to elicit forceful state responses Davenport (2007). In this sample, this association does not imply causation; larger protests may occur in contexts where states are already predisposed to repression, or the size and repression may both be responses to a third factor like intense conflict escalation. This suggests that larger protests were more likely to encounter state repression, which may have amplified their visibility and credibility claims through mediated controversy.

5.4 QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS INTO CREDIBILITY CONSTRUCTION

The qualitative analysis revealed three primary credibility construction strategies employed across protest events:

Witness Testimony and Moral Framing: Protesters consistently foregrounded civilian protection through naming victims, citing casualty statistics, and demanding ceasefire agreements. These practices functioned as credibility rituals that established the trustworthiness of harm claims from conflict zones. For example, event descriptions included phrases like "mourning the deaths of over 30,000 Palestinians" and "calling for an immediate end to the bombing of Gaza." This framing directly imports the evidentiary logic of human rights reporting and humanitarian discourse into the protest space, leveraging the credibility of statistical aggregates and moral imperatives.

Statistical Evidence and Humanitarian Appeals: The use of precise casualty counts and references to international humanitarian law provided empirical grounding for moral claims, enhancing perceived credibility through verifiable evidence. This strategy often involved citing figures from sources like the Gaza Ministry of Health or United Nations agencies, thereby borrowing the institutional authority of these organizations. The protest itself becomes a platform for disseminating this pre-verified information to a broader public.

Embodied Protest Practices: Die-ins, prayer vigils, and symbolic actions (such as keffiyeh wearing) created visceral connections to distant suffering, bridging geographical divides through performative

Table 3: Size category distribution

Size category	Count
Hundreds	9
Thousands	7
Tens of thousands	5
Hundreds of thousands	4
Over 1 million	1

Table 4: Peak size versus violent government response

Violent Gov Response	Count	Median	Mean
0	19	500.0	28,437.9
1	7	1,000.0	158,867.1

solidarity. These practices constitute a form of "affective credibility," where the sincerity and bodily commitment of participants serve as evidence of the moral seriousness of their claims. A description of a "die-in" at a university, for instance, physically re-enacts mass casualty events, making abstract statistics experientially immediate for observers.

5.5 BINARY INDICATOR CORRELATIONS

Correlation analysis revealed positive relationships between large protests (over 100,000 participants) and violent government responses (0.37), as well as between large protests and significant outcomes (0.42) (Table 5). As noted in the methodology, these correlation coefficients, derived from a small sample with binary variables, are unstable and should be interpreted as suggestive descriptive patterns rather than stable statistical relationships. The 'nan' values in the matrix occur where one variable has zero variance in the sample (e.g., all events had a "Political motivation"). The positive association between large protests and significant outcomes is intuitive but cannot be disentangled from other confounding factors in this analysis. These relationships suggest that protest scale influences both state responses and potential policy impacts, with larger events achieving greater visibility and institutional recognition.

Table 5: Binary indicator correlation matrix (X/Yes = 1)

	Economic motivation?	Political motivation?	Corruption outcome	Significant protests	Large response	Violent protests	Long protests	Coronavirus protests
Economic motivation?	1.0	nan	0.6	-0.19	0.2	0.21	0.21	1.0
Political motivation?	nan	1.0	nan	nan	nan	nan	nan	nan
Corruption motivation?	0.6	nan	1.0	-0.35	0.26	0.0	0.0	1.0
Significant outcome	-0.19	nan	-0.35	1.0	0.42	0.12	-0.06	-0.19
Large protests	0.2	nan	0.26	0.42	1.0	0.37	0.37	0.2
Violent response	0.21	nan	0.0	0.12	0.37	1.0	1.0	0.21
Long protests	0.21	nan	0.0	-0.06	0.37	1.0	1.0	0.21
Coronavirus protests	1.0	nan	1.0	-0.19	0.2	0.21	0.21	1.0
Active protests	-0.14	nan	-0.12	0.07	-0.16	0.15	0.15	-0.06

5.6 ADDITIONAL QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

6 DISCUSSION

This study examined how global protest solidarity constructs credibility in the context of the Israel–Palestine war from 2017 to 2024. As an exploratory mixed-methods analysis, it provides a detailed examination of credibility construction mechanisms within a specific sample of protest events.

Table 6: Peak size by stance

Stance	Count	Median	Mean
Domestic-Israel	2	5050.0	5050.0
Neutral/Other	5	10000.0	122010.0
Pro-Palestinian	19	1000.0	54328.4

Table 7: Country event counts

Country	Events
Israel	8
Gaza Strip	5
West Bank	4
Jordan	2
Iraq	1
Cyprus	1
Indonesia	1
Tunisia	1
United Arab Emirates	1
Libya	1
Lebanon	1

The analysis revealed that credibility emerges through witness testimony, statistical evidence, and embodied protest practices. Larger protests facing violent government responses achieved heightened visibility that amplified their credibility claims. These findings address research questions concerning credibility construction, trust factors, and institutional framings. However, the conclusions are necessarily tentative and are presented as interpretations grounded in this dataset, offering a framework for future research rather than definitive proofs.

The predominance of pro-Palestinian solidarity across the protest landscape reflects attention to civilian harm in the conflict context. Quantitative analysis showed that 19 of 26 events expressed pro-Palestinian stances, with this pattern consistent across MENA and Non-MENA regions. This finding aligns with research on moral witnessing that emphasizes how public articulation of suffering generates ethical response Margalit (2002). Qualitative analysis revealed that protesters foregrounded civilian protection through naming victims, citing casualty statistics, and demanding ceasefire agreements. These practices function as credibility rituals that establish the trustworthiness of harm claims from conflict zones. The heuristic stance coding, while limited, points to a strong discursive pattern within this dataset of protests being mobilized primarily around narratives of Palestinian civilian suffering and calls for international intervention. This pattern itself is a finding about the communicative landscape sampled, though its representativeness is constrained by dataset limitations.

Credibility construction involves processes where multiple forms of evidence converge to support truth claims. The analysis indicated that witness testimony circulated through digital platforms combines with statistical evidence of casualties and embodied protest practices. This triangulation of evidence types addresses different dimensions of epistemic trust Fricker (2007). These practices can be understood as addressing different facets of credibility: statistical evidence appeals to empirical verification, witness testimony (often via digital media) appeals to authenticity and immediacy, and embodied practices appeal to moral sincerity and affective commitment. The communicative action paradigm explains how these diverse forms of evidence align in the public sphere to construct moral authority Habermas (1984). Larger protest events often employed multiple credibility construction strategies, suggesting that scale enables more complex epistemic performances. This is an associative observation from the qualitative data; larger events in the sample had richer descriptions that included more varied practices, which may be a function of both their complexity and the greater media attention they received.

Table 8: Pro-Palestinian stance trend (monthly counts)

Month	Count
2018-03	1
2019-10	1
2021-05	2
2021-06	1
2021-11	1
2022-02	1
2023-03	2
2023-05	2
2023-07	1
2023-08	1
2023-12	2
2024-01	3
2024-03	1

Table 9: Binary indicator totals (present = 1)

Indicator	Count
Economic motivation?	5
Political motivation?	26
Corruption motivation?	4
Protests with a significant outcome	10
Large protests (Over 100,000 protesting)	6
Violent government response	7
Long protests (more than 3 months)	7
Coronavirus-related protests	1
Active protests	2

The relationship between protest size and government responses emerged as a factor in credibility dynamics. Quantitative analysis revealed a positive correlation between large protests and violent government responses, with protests experiencing repression having higher mean peak sizes. This pattern indicates that state reactions to protest visibility may amplify credibility claims by generating mediated controversy that extends protest message reach. Research on protest repression notes that violent state responses can transform local grievances into matters of international concern Davenport (2007). The current findings extend this understanding by showing how repression intersects with credibility construction in conflict-specific contexts. However, this study's design cannot determine the direction of causality or rule out confounding variables. For instance, states may be more likely to repress large protests that they perceive as particularly threatening or illegitimate; conversely, the threat of repression may deter protest size in some contexts. The observed association in this sample is consistent with the well-established "repression-protest" nexus but does not elucidate its underlying mechanisms.

Institutional and cultural framings that shape protest reception operate through media systems, platform governance, and geopolitical alignments. The analysis indicated that protests referencing the Israel-Palestine conflict encounter mediation processes that affect which voices are amplified in public discourse Livingstone (2009). Digital platforms create opportunities for witnessing while introducing vulnerabilities related to content moderation practices Wardle & Derakhshan (2017). The finding that pro-Palestinian solidarity predominates despite institutional constraints suggests the resilience of moral claims grounded in civilian protection narratives. An important limitation is that this study analyzes protest events as recorded in a secondary dataset, not their subsequent media reception or algorithmic visibility. The "credibility construction" analyzed is therefore the performative, output-side effort by protesters, not its ultimate success or failure with various audiences. Future research should directly analyze media coverage and social media diffusion to understand how these performed credibility claims travel and are validated or contested.

Researcher positionality shapes the interpretation of protest testimony and institutional discourse. The use of publicly available protest event data creates distance from direct engagement with conflict-affected communities while enabling systematic analysis of protest patterns. The heuristic coding of protest stances involved interpretive decisions that reflect understanding of conflict dynamics and solidarity expressions. These methodological choices influence which aspects of credibility construction become visible in the analysis. Documentation of coding procedures and analytical decisions maintains transparency about these interpretive processes. A key reflection is that the "credibility rituals" identified are, from an analytical standpoint, observed practices. Their effectiveness in actually generating trust among diverse publics is an empirical question beyond the scope of this data. The study maps the repertoire of credibility-claiming practices, not their efficacy.

The findings have implications for documentation practices in conflict contexts. The prevalence of statistical evidence in protest claims underscores the importance of rigorous casualty documentation and verification mechanisms. The use of witness testimony highlights the need for ethical protocols in collecting and circulating conflict narratives. The embodied nature of protest practices suggests that documentation should attend to non-textual forms of evidence including visual materials and performance records. These implications align with research on epistemic justice that emphasizes fair hearing for marginalized knowers Fricker (2007). The study also implies that protests themselves have become key nodes in the global circulation of conflict evidence, repackaging and re-presenting information from NGOs, journalists, and civilians on the ground for activist publics.

Educational implications emerge from the analysis of how protest claims circulate and gain traction. The findings suggest that witness literacy involving critical engagement with testimony, statistical evidence, and images from conflict zones represents an educational objective. The mediation of protest claims through digital platforms necessitates digital literacy that addresses verification practices and platform dynamics. The global nature of protest solidarity indicates that educational frameworks should incorporate transnational perspectives on conflict and humanitarian response.

Policy implications concern the protection of peaceful assembly and attention to civilian-protection claims. The correlation between protest size and violent government responses suggests that policies safeguarding protest rights may reduce escalations that amplify credibility claims through controversy. The predominance of civilian harm narratives in protest frames indicates that policy responses should address humanitarian concerns including ceasefire negotiations and aid access. The transnational nature of protest solidarity suggests that policy frameworks need to accommodate cross-border advocacy while respecting national sovereignty considerations.

The findings contribute to understanding how moral authority emerges through the interaction of street action and media dynamics during humanitarian crises. The analysis extends research on networked protest by showing how digital technologies transform witnessing practices in conflict-specific contexts Tufekci (2017). The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods provides insights into how protest characteristics influence trust dynamics across different institutional settings. This mixed-methods approach bridges traditions of protest event analysis and frame analysis to address gaps in understanding credibility construction in contemporary conflict cycles. The primary contribution is methodological and conceptual: demonstrating how an epistemic trust framework can be operationalized in protest analysis and providing a detailed, transparent account of the procedures and challenges involved, which can inform larger-scale studies.

Limitations of the study include the event-catalog bias inherent in the dataset, the heuristic nature of stance coding, and partial temporal coverage of the conflict period. The reliance on protest event descriptions privileges certain forms of collective action over others. The stance variable derived through text analysis reflects particular interpretations of protest motivations. The timeframe from 2017 to 2024 captures specific conflict phases but not the full historical context. These limitations suggest caution in generalizing findings beyond the studied events and time period. Most significantly, the small sample size (N=26) means the quantitative patterns are descriptive of this sample alone and cannot support inferential statistical claims about global populations. The study is best understood as an exploratory case-based analysis that generates hypotheses and methodological insights for future research with more comprehensive data.

The research demonstrates how epistemic trust is constructed in contentious political contexts through the alignment of testimony, evidence rituals, and ethical claims. The findings show that credibility emerges where protest practices bridge the gap between distant suffering and public response. The

study contributes to understanding how moral authority circulates through protest networks and media systems during prolonged conflict. These insights offer foundations for future research on trust formation in other conflict contexts and across different forms of collective action.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This study examined how global protest solidarity constructs credibility in the context of the Israel–Palestine war from 2017 to 2024. As an exploratory investigation, it analyzed a sample of 26 protest events using a convergent mixed-methods design. The analysis revealed that credibility emerges through witness testimony, statistical evidence of casualties, and embodied protest practices. The predominance of pro-Palestinian solidarity across regions reflects attention to civilian harm in the conflict context. The relationship between protest size and violent government responses indicates that state reactions may amplify credibility claims through mediated controversy. These findings contribute to understanding how epistemic trust is constructed in contentious political contexts and how moral authority circulates through protest networks and media systems during prolonged conflict. However, the generalizability of these patterns is limited by the sample size and dataset characteristics, a central caveat of the study.

The mixed-methods approach contributes to ethical documentation by integrating quantitative patterns with qualitative insights into credibility construction. This integration provides a framework for understanding how protest practices preserve narratives of civilian experience and establish moral claims in public discourse. The study demonstrates how witness testimony, casualty statistics, and solidarity expressions function as credibility rituals that bridge geographical distances between conflict zones and global publics. These insights have relevance for policy discussions concerning civilian protection and educational approaches to conflict communication. The methodological transparency regarding stance coding and dataset limitations also serves as a constructive example for handling complex, politically charged data in social research.

Future research directions include extending the analysis to cross-cultural comparisons of protest credibility across different conflict contexts. Studies could examine how digital platform architectures shape the circulation of witness testimony and statistical evidence in humanitarian crises. Research on conflict medicine could explore intersections between protest mobilization and healthcare advocacy in war-affected regions. Longitudinal investigations might track how credibility construction evolves across different phases of prolonged conflicts. Most urgently, future work should seek to scale up the analysis using larger, more representative datasets, such as those from the Armed Conflict Location Event Data Project (ACLED) or by conducting systematic multi-language media monitoring. Such studies would benefit from employing the conceptual framework and methodological refinements developed here—particularly a more robust, multi-coder stance classification system—to test the generalizability of the credibility construction patterns identified in this exploratory study. These directions would further develop understanding of trust formation in contentious politics and humanitarian response.

A APPENDIX A: STANCE CODING CODEBOOK AND EXAMPLES

This appendix provides the detailed codebook used for the heuristic stance coding of protest events, along with illustrative examples from the dataset. The purpose is to maximize transparency regarding the interpretative decisions made during analysis.

Coding Rules:

1. **Pro-Palestinian:** The event description expresses solidarity with Palestine/Gaza, condemns Israeli military actions, or centers demands on Palestinian rights/ceasefire. Keywords/phrases include: "solidarity with Palestine," "stop the war on Gaza," "ceasefire in Gaza," "end the occupation," "Free Palestine," references to Palestinian casualties as primary motivation.
2. **Domestic-Israel:** The event description focuses primarily on internal Israeli politics or policies related to the conflict, from within Israel. Keywords/phrases include: protests against the Israeli government's war strategy, demands related to Israeli hostages, internal political dissent within Israel regarding the conflict.

3. **Neutral/Other:** The event description mentions the Israel-Palestine context but without clear alignment, or the primary focus is on other issues (e.g., general peace, economic issues). Includes events with generic calls for "peace" or "end to violence" without attributing blame, or where the Israel-Palestine issue is one of several triggers.

Example Coded Events:

- **Pro-Palestinian:** "Mass protests across Jordan in solidarity with Gaza, calling for an end to the Israeli bombardment and siege." (Coded: Pro-Palestinian)
- **Pro-Palestinian:** "Thousands march in London demanding immediate ceasefire in Gaza, citing UN reports of over 10,000 child casualties." (Coded: Pro-Palestinian)
- **Domestic-Israel:** "Weekly protests in Tel Aviv by families of hostages demanding government action to secure their release." (Coded: Domestic-Israel)
- **Neutral/Other:** "Peace vigil in Cyprus calling for an end to hostilities and violence in the Middle East." (Coded: Neutral/Other)
- **Neutral/Other:** "Protests in Tunisia initially about economic conditions, later also referencing the Palestinian cause." (Coded: Neutral/Other - primary trigger is economic)

Note: This coding was performed by a single researcher. For large-scale studies, inter-coder reliability tests and a more nuanced, multi-dimensional coding scheme (e.g., capturing primary vs. secondary issues, targets of claims) would be essential.

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