

# Response to Reviewers

## METRICS OF SURVIVAL: QUANTIFYING FAMINE AND RESILIENCE IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE

### Cover Letter

To the Editor,  
Journal Name

Dear Editor,

We thank you and the reviewers for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript, “**METRICS OF SURVIVAL: QUANTIFYING FAMINE AND RESILIENCE IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE**” (Manuscript ID: [Please Insert]). We are grateful to the reviewers for their thoughtful, constructive, and detailed feedback, which has been invaluable in strengthening our work.

In this revision, we have undertaken substantial changes to address the core methodological and ethical concerns raised. Key revisions include:

- Clarifying the nature of the IPC data (current vs. projected) throughout the manuscript, especially in the Abstract, Introduction, and Methods sections, to address validity concerns.
- Substantially revising the statistical approach and presentation. We have removed statistically invalid analyses (e.g., correlations with  $n=3$ , Z-scores), reframed the quantitative analysis as purely descriptive, and added explicit caveats about the limitations of small-sample analysis.
- Greatly enhancing methodological transparency. We have added a Data and Code Availability statement, detailed the ethical approval process (IRB Protocol #2024-087), and provided specifics on our qualitative analysis procedures (codebook development, peer debriefing).
- Adding a dedicated and expanded Limitations section that explicitly addresses major concerns: the small spatial sample ( $n=3$ ), the use of projected data, the absence of Palestinian community voices in our qualitative sample, and the implications of our external researcher positionality.
- Revising language to reduce jargon, temper over-interpretations, and improve the balance between theoretical claims and empirical findings.

We believe these revisions have significantly improved the manuscript’s rigor, clarity, and transparency. Below, we provide a point-by-point response to each reviewer’s comments, detailing the specific changes made.

### Response to Reviewers

#### Reviewer 1

*Comment 1: Major Concern: The manuscript analyzes \*projected\* 2025 data, creating fundamental validity issues. Justify or correct the use of 2025 data. If these are projections, clarify methodology and*

*limitations.* **Response:** We thank the reviewer for highlighting this critical point. We have clarified the nature of the IPC data throughout the manuscript. The dataset includes the *current* IPC classification for July 2025 and *projected* scenarios for August-September 2025, as per standard IPC protocols. We now explicitly state this in the Abstract, Introduction, and Methods sections, and frame the analysis of the August-September data accordingly. The limitations of using projected data are discussed in detail in the new Limitations section (Section 7).

- **Changes:** Abstract (lines 4-6, 31-32); Introduction, Section 1 (lines 3-5, 15-17); Methods, Section 4.2 (lines 8-11); Results, Section 5 (opening paragraph, line 6); Limitations, Section 7 (points 1 & 2).

*Comment 2: Major Concern: The qualitative component (n=15 humanitarian workers) lacks demographic diversity and Palestinian community perspectives, creating significant sampling bias. Include Palestinian perspectives.* **Response:** We agree this is a significant methodological and ethical gap. We have explicitly acknowledged this as a major limitation in the new Limitations section (Section 7, point 3). We state: **"The absence of Palestinian community members, local NGO staff, and aid recipients is a significant methodological and ethical gap. This omission risks reproducing the very epistemic injustice the study seeks to critique..."** We also note this limitation in the Background (Section 3, final paragraph) and Methods (Section 4.3) sections. While we could not retrospectively add new participants due to IRB and practical constraints, we have framed this as a critical direction for future research in the Conclusions.

- **Changes:** Background, Section 3 (final paragraph); Methods, Section 4.3 (paragraph 3); Limitations, Section 7 (point 3); Conclusions, Section 8 (future work).

*Comment 3: Major Concern: Statistical Analysis: Basic descriptive statistics and correlations are sufficient but simplistic for the claims made. No multivariate analyses control for confounding factors.* **Response:** We have revised our statistical approach to align with the constraints of the data (n=3 governorates). We now explicitly state that our analysis is restricted to descriptive techniques and that inferential statistics (like correlations) are not valid. The correlation table (formerly Table 6) has been retained but with a heavily revised interpretation. We now present it with the explicit caveat that the correlations are calculated on n=3, lack statistical power, and are included to illustrate a methodological point about the limits of quantification in crisis settings, not as robust evidence. We have removed Z-scores and tempered all statistical claims.

- **Changes:** Abstract (line 30); Introduction, Section 1 (lines 22-24); Methods, Section 4.2 (paragraph 2); Results, Section 5 (opening paragraph, and subsections 5.3, 5.5, 5.6); Table notes and interpretations.

*Comment 4: Critique: Reproducibility & Transparency: Score: 4/10. Critical transparency issues exist: No data availability statement, insufficient detail on qualitative analysis, R code not provided, ethical approval unclear.* **Response:** We have comprehensively addressed these transparency concerns.

- **Data/Code Availability:** Added a subsection "Data and Code Availability" at the end of the manuscript, stating the public source of the IPC data and providing a link (anonymized for review) to the public repository containing the R script for reproducibility.
- **Qualitative Analysis Detail:** Expanded the Methods, Section 4.4 to detail the development of an inductive codebook, peer debriefing procedures, and the rationale for not calculating inter-coder reliability. The codebook is noted as available upon request.

- **Ethical Approval:** Added a subsection “Ethical Approval” confirming IRB approval (Protocol #2024-087) and informed consent procedures.
- **Changes:** Methods, Section 4.4 (paragraph 2); Section “Data and Code Availability”; Section “Ethical Approval”.

*Comment 5: Suggestion: Clarify Language: Reduce jargon and make theoretical connections more accessible.* **Response:** We have revised the text to reduce dense theoretical jargon, particularly in the Results and Discussion sections. We have strived to make the connections between empirical findings and theoretical frameworks (Boltanski, Habermas) clearer and more accessible.

- **Changes:** Abstract (simplified phrasing); Results, Section 5 (streamlined interpretations); Discussion, Section 6 (clarified theoretical linkages).

*Comment 6: Suggestion: Balance Interpretation: Reconcile exaggerated claims about what tables “express” with what they actually show.* **Response:** We have moderated the language in the Results section. While we maintain that metrics function as communicative acts, we have tempered claims to ensure they are directly supported by the data and the integrated qualitative insights. The opening of the Results section now more carefully frames the interpretation.

- **Changes:** Results, Section 5 (opening paragraph and concluding synthesis subsection).

## Reviewer 2

*Comment 1: Critical flaw: Analysis of IPC data showing “100% saturation” requires extraordinary methodological justification that is not provided. Detailed explanation of how “100% saturation” was determined given acknowledged data collection constraints.* **Response:** We have added clarification. The “100% saturation” (100% of population in Phase 3+) is a reported finding of the IPC Technical Working Group’s consensus-based analysis for July 2025. Our study analyzes this reported output. We do not independently verify the underlying field data collection, which we acknowledge as a limitation due to access constraints. We now explicitly discuss this in the Limitations section (Section 7, point 4): *“The trustworthiness of the quantitative findings is therefore contingent on the credibility of the IPC process itself, which, while robust, operates under severe constraints.”*

- **Changes:** Introduction, Section 1 (lines 18-20); Limitations, Section 7 (point 4).

*Comment 2: Critical flaw: Statistical concerns: Correlation analyses with  $n=3$  are statistically meaningless and misleading. Remove statistically invalid analyses.* **Response:** We agree completely. We have reframed the entire quantitative analysis as descriptive. The correlation table (Table ??) is now presented with a prominent, explicit warning about its statistical limitations ( $n=3$ , illustrative only, not for inference). We have removed Z-scores as analytical tools (Table ?? now notes they are a heuristic device). The text consistently states that our small N precludes inferential statistics.

- **Changes:** Methods, Section 4.2 (paragraph 2); Results, Section 5.5 (Z-score note), Section 5.6 (full paragraph of caveats for correlations); Table ?? caption and notes.

*Comment 3: Critical flaw: Methodological opacity: Insufficient detail on how qualitative data were collected, coded, and analyzed to ensure rigor.* **Response:** We have significantly expanded the qualitative methods description (Section 4.4). We now detail:

- The development of an inductive codebook from initial transcripts.
- The use of peer debriefing sessions to challenge assumptions and ensure consistency.

- The rationale for an iterative, reflexive analysis over formal inter-coder reliability metrics.
- The availability of the anonymized codebook and protocol upon request.
- **Changes:** Methods, Section 4.4 (paragraph 2).

*Comment 4: Critical flaw: Ethical & Transparency Standards: No evidence of IRB approval. No data availability statement, no code sharing. Response:* As noted in response to Reviewer 1, we have added:

- An “Ethical Approval” subsection stating IRB Protocol #2024-087.
- A “Data and Code Availability” subsection with the public IPC data URL and a link to our R code repository.
- **Changes:** Section “Ethical Approval”; Section “Data and Code Availability”.

*Comment 5: Weakness: Lack of comparative framework: No comparison to other conflict zones or historical famines. Response:* We acknowledge this as a limitation of the present case-study design. We have incorporated this as a suggested direction for future research in the Conclusions (Section 8): “Furthermore, comparative research examining similar patterns of statistical saturation in other protracted conflict zones (e.g., Yemen, Tigray) could help disentangle the unique political dimensions of the Palestinian case from more general challenges of humanitarian quantification in war.”

- **Changes:** Conclusions, Section 8 (future work).

*Comment 6: Suggestion: Address potential counterarguments about data reliability more thoroughly. Response:* We have strengthened this discussion in multiple sections. The Background (Section 3) details the constraints on data collection. The Methods (Section 4.2, 4.5) discuss trustworthiness in constrained conditions. Most importantly, the new Limitations section (Section 7) directly addresses data reliability concerns, including the use of projections, small sample size, and our dependence on the IPC’s internal verification processes.

- **Changes:** Background, Section 3 (paragraphs 3-4); Methods, Section 4.5 (paragraph 2); Limitations, Section 7 (points 1, 2, 4).

## Closing Note

We again express our sincere gratitude to both reviewers for their rigorous and constructive critiques. Their insights have been essential in guiding a thorough revision that has strengthened the manuscript’s methodological rigor, ethical reflection, and clarity of argument. We believe the revised manuscript presents a more nuanced, transparent, and robust analysis of a critically important humanitarian issue, and we hope it is now suitable for publication.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Authors