

OBSTRUCTION AS INTENT: STARVATION, HUMANITARIAN DENIAL, AND THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE IN GAZA (2023–2025)

Swift Eagle¹, Thunder Cloud²

¹Academy of the Great Plains, Cibola

²Institute of First Nations, Turtle Island

ABSTRACT

This study examines the systematic obstruction of humanitarian aid in Gaza from 2023 to 2025 as a potential manifestation of genocidal intent under Article II (c) of the Genocide Convention. Using a mixed-methods approach, we integrate quantitative data from United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations with qualitative analysis of testimonies and official discourse. Quantitative findings demonstrate strong statistical associations between aid denial rates and deterioration in life-sustaining conditions, including a 90% reduction in water availability, 60% decline in hospital functionality, and famine declarations affecting 30% of the population. The obstruction of humanitarian missions, framed through bureaucratic language of coordination and security screening, substantiates patterns of deliberate deprivation. Qualitative evidence reveals how dehumanizing rhetoric and administrative barriers functioned as legitimized tools for dismantling life-sustaining systems. The study documents a redistribution of epistemic authority from traditional state actors to humanitarian data custodians and satellite-based witnessing platforms. Methodological rigor is ensured through triangulation of multiple data sources, correlation analysis of quantitative indicators, and thematic coding of narrative evidence. Robustness checks included sensitivity analysis of correlation coefficients and comparative assessment with other conflict-affected regions. This convergence of empirical patterns with discursive practices provides a coherent framework for understanding administrative starvation as a potentially prosecutable act under international law, while centering Palestinian lived experiences of systematic deprivation.

1 INTRODUCTION

The systematic obstruction of humanitarian aid in Gaza between 2023 and 2025 presents a critical examination of how administrative mechanisms can impact human survival. During this period, restrictions on food, fuel, and medical supplies led to conditions that prompted famine declarations by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (2025) and multiple provisional measures orders from the International Court of Justice International Court of Justice (2024). This research investigates how the creation of conditions that undermine physical existence may constitute genocidal intent under Article II (c) of the Genocide Convention, drawing on documented evidence of aid obstruction Amnesty International (2024).

The complexity of this situation arises from intersecting institutional and geopolitical factors. Long-standing political arrangements have shaped dependencies on external assistance, while security narratives often influence humanitarian access. International legal frameworks have demonstrated limitations in protecting essential life-sustaining systems during conflicts. The management of aid missions through bureaucratic procedures, including coordination requirements and screening processes, can obscure patterns of deprivation behind administrative formalities Feldman (2018). These dynamics necessitate an analytical approach that incorporates both measurable indicators of suffering and qualitative dimensions of human experience.

This study utilizes a mixed-methods framework that combines quantitative data from United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations with qualitative analysis of testimonies and institutional communications. Quantitative measures include rates of aid denial, hospital operational capacity, water accessibility, and food security levels UN OCHA (2025); World Health Organization (2025); UNRWA (2025). Qualitative components incorporate accounts from medical personnel, aid workers, and affected community members. The integration of these data sources enables a comprehensive examination of how administrative decisions manifest in physical consequences, while foregrounding perspectives that frequently remain peripheral in international policy discussions Fricker (2007).

The analytical perspective incorporates concepts from epistemic justice and moral witnessing literature Fricker (2007); Margalit (2002); Oliver (2001). This theoretical orientation helps elucidate shifts in how knowledge about the crisis is produced and validated, particularly the movement from state-centered information channels toward humanitarian data systems and remote monitoring technologies. The investigation addresses three central questions: How do quantitative measures demonstrate conditions that threaten physical existence? What institutional and communicative practices indicate deliberate obstruction? How does moral authority become redistributed among different witnessing entities?

The research contributes to existing scholarship in several ways. It provides empirical evidence linking aid restrictions to deteriorations in essential living conditions. It identifies operational processes through which administrative language enables physical harm. It examines the transfer of epistemic credibility from governmental institutions to humanitarian data sources. Additionally, it proposes a conceptual structure for understanding systematic deprivation as actionable under international legal standards.

The study addresses methodological concerns through multiple robustness checks, including sensitivity analysis of correlation coefficients using alternative data aggregations and comparative assessment with similar patterns in other conflict-affected regions. We explicitly acknowledge the limitations of correlational analysis for establishing causal relationships while demonstrating the strength and consistency of observed associations across multiple indicators and data sources.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 surveys relevant literature in humanitarian studies, legal frameworks, and knowledge production. Section 3 establishes the historical and institutional context. Section 4 explains the research methodology. Section 5 presents empirical findings. Section 6 analyzes these results through theoretical perspectives. Section 7 discusses implications and future directions.

The outcomes of this research have significance for humanitarian policy, legal accountability mechanisms, and intercultural understanding. They indicate potential reforms to ensure humanitarian access during hostilities. They advance legal interpretations of intentional harm through administrative means. They emphasize the value of incorporating local knowledge into humanitarian interventions. The study highlights ethical considerations regarding the use of bureaucratic systems in contexts of civilian vulnerability.

2 RELATED WORK

Legal scholarship on the Genocide Convention provides essential context for interpreting Article II (c)'s prohibition of "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction." Foundational works by international law scholars have examined how administrative measures and systematic deprivation can satisfy this threshold when they create circumstances that undermine physical survival Chakhmakhchyan & Meyroyan (2025); Klamberg (2019); Sagatiené (2021). These interpretations are particularly relevant for analyzing how bureaucratic obstruction of humanitarian aid may constitute genocidal intent through the creation of life-threatening conditions.

This study builds upon existing research in humanitarian studies, legal frameworks, and knowledge production. Previous work has documented patterns of aid obstruction in conflict zones, though few have examined these patterns through the lens of genocidal intent under international law. Research by Feldman Feldman (2018) explores how bureaucratic politics shape humanitarian access, providing important context for understanding administrative barriers to aid delivery. The current study extends this work by quantitatively linking obstruction patterns to deterioration in life-sustaining conditions while examining the legal implications under the Genocide Convention.

Epistemic justice literature Fricker (2007) and moral witnessing frameworks Margalit (2002); Oliver (2001) inform the theoretical approach to understanding how knowledge about humanitarian crises is produced and validated. These perspectives help explain the redistribution of epistemic authority from traditional state actors to humanitarian witnesses during systematic obstruction. The integration of these theoretical frameworks with legal analysis represents a novel contribution to the literature on humanitarian crises and international accountability.

Quantitative studies of humanitarian conditions typically focus on descriptive statistics of mortality, displacement, and infrastructure damage Checchi et al. (2021); Gómez-Ugarte et al. (2025); Faris et al. (2025); Brown et al. (2007). This study advances this tradition by employing correlation analysis to examine relationships between aid denial rates and deterioration in life-sustaining conditions Sabah (2025). The mixed-methods design bridges quantitative and qualitative approaches, addressing limitations in previous scholarship that treated these as separate evidentiary streams. This integrated framework provides a more comprehensive basis for legal determinations of genocidal intent than any single methodology could provide alone.

Research on visual documentation and satellite-based witnessing Zelizer (2021); Pantti (2022) has examined how technological platforms shape humanitarian response. The current study contributes to this literature by documenting how epistemic authority shifts to these platforms when traditional information channels are compromised. The high correlation between aid denials and mortality rates underscores the importance of maintaining evidentiary records through alternative witnessing practices amid systematic obstruction.

Methodological approaches in conflict studies have increasingly emphasized mixed-methods designs Creswell & Creswell (2018) and rigorous qualitative analysis Flick (2014). This study adopts these best practices while addressing the specific challenges of research in active conflict zones. The use of publicly available, aggregated data from recognized humanitarian organizations ensures ethical standards while maintaining analytical rigor. The transparency regarding data sources and analytical procedures supports the replicability of findings while contributing to methodological innovation in humanitarian research.

Our methodological approach addresses recent calls for improved conflict mortality estimation techniques Brown et al. (2007) and uncertainty accounting in humanitarian data analysis Gómez-Ugarte et al. (2025). The study design incorporates comparative elements by contextualizing Gaza's humanitarian indicators against established benchmarks from other conflict-affected regions, though data comparability limitations require careful interpretation of such comparisons. The research also responds to scholarly demands for greater integration of local knowledge systems in humanitarian assessment methodologies.

3 BACKGROUND

The Gaza Strip has experienced various forms of closure since the early 1990s, with a comprehensive land, sea, and air blockade established in 2007. This situation created dependency on external humanitarian assistance for basic survival needs. The management of aid access involves complex bureaucratic procedures with multiple Israeli military and civilian authorities. These institutional arrangements constrain the flow of essential goods and services, establishing a framework where humanitarian needs are mediated through security and political considerations Feldman (2018). The period from 2023 to 2025 intensified these patterns, with near-total restrictions on humanitarian access leading to deterioration in living conditions.

The analytical approach incorporates decolonial perspectives that question dominant narratives about humanitarian crises. These frameworks contextualize Palestinian experiences within histories of displacement and territorial fragmentation. Epistemic justice theory examines how knowledge about the crisis is produced and validated, particularly the exclusion of Palestinian voices from international discourse Fricker (2007). This orientation reveals how power dynamics influence which accounts are considered credible in discussions of humanitarian need and legal accountability.

Moral witnessing literature addresses the ethical dimensions of documenting systematic suffering Margalit (2002); Oliver (2001). This framework considers how individuals and institutions bear responsibility for acknowledging human rights violations. In Gaza, witnessing involves active documentation and testimony amid administrative obstruction. The concept explains shifts in epistemic

authority from state actors to humanitarian organizations and affected communities, who become primary sources of evidence about ground conditions.

Palestinian society in Gaza has developed adaptation mechanisms through decades of restrictions and military operations. Local community organizations, health workers, and municipal authorities operate under chronic resource scarcity and infrastructure damage. The humanitarian ecosystem includes United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations, and Palestinian civil society groups, all navigating relationships with governing authorities and donor countries. This institutional landscape forms the context for understanding aid obstruction practices.

The systematic nature of aid obstruction during 2023–2025 requires examination through interconnected theoretical and contextual lenses. Bureaucratic mechanisms regulating humanitarian access exist within political and historical relationships. Similarly, knowledge production about deteriorating conditions involves struggles over narrative authority and evidential standards. This background provides foundation for analyzing how administrative practices intersect with physical survival and legal accountability in prolonged conflict.

The research design reflects theoretical commitments through mixed methods and data triangulation. Quantitative indicators from international organizations combine with qualitative accounts centering Palestinian experiences. This approach acknowledges that statistical data alone cannot capture all dimensions of systematic deprivation, while recognizing the importance of empirical evidence for legal and policy audiences. Multiple data sources address complex epistemic challenges identified in theoretical literature.

Comparative analysis reveals that Gaza's aid obstruction patterns exceed typical conflict-related humanitarian access challenges. While most active conflict zones experience periodic aid denials averaging 10-15% of missions, Gaza's consistent 25%+ denial rate represents a significant outlier. Similarly, the systematic nature of infrastructure targeting—particularly water and health facilities—distinguishes this case from collateral damage patterns observed in other contemporary conflicts. These comparative benchmarks help contextualize the exceptional nature of the documented obstruction patterns.

4 METHOD

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs a concurrent mixed-methods design that integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single analytical framework Creswell & Creswell (2018). The design combines analysis of humanitarian indicators with thematic analysis of testimonies and institutional communications. This approach enables triangulation between patterns of deprivation and evidence of intent, addressing the systematic nature of aid obstruction in Gaza. The framework is informed by decolonial perspectives that center Palestinian experiences in the analysis.

The research design explicitly acknowledges the limitations of establishing causal relationships through observational data in conflict settings. Rather than claiming definitive causation, the analysis focuses on demonstrating consistent associations across multiple data sources and time periods, while acknowledging potential confounding factors including active hostilities, pre-existing vulnerabilities, and broader geopolitical constraints.

4.2 DATA SOURCES AND SAMPLING

Data were collected from October 2023 to October 2025. Quantitative sources include UN OCHA situation reports, WHO hospital functionality assessments, UNRWA situation reports, IPC famine classifications, and UNOSAT damage assessments UN OCHA (2025); World Health Organization (2025); UNRWA (2025); Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (2025); UNOSAT (2025). These provide systematic documentation of humanitarian conditions. Qualitative data comprise 312 textual excerpts from Amnesty International reports, UN agency communications, and media documentation Amnesty International (2024). The sample includes accounts from medical personnel, aid workers, logistics coordinators, and community members. Inclusion criteria required relevance to aid obstruction patterns and geographic representation across Gaza.

All quantitative datasets utilized standardized humanitarian measurement frameworks to ensure cross-temporal and cross-regional comparability. Data extraction followed consistent protocols with double-entry verification for 20% of records to minimize transcription errors. Qualitative sampling employed purposive techniques to capture diverse perspectives across geographic regions and institutional affiliations, with saturation achieved when new excerpts no longer yielded novel thematic insights.

4.3 QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND MEASURES

Quantitative collection focused on indicators of life-sustaining conditions and humanitarian access. Measures included monthly aid mission denials, hospital functionality status, water availability per capita, food insecurity levels by IPC phases, displacement figures, structural damage assessments, malnutrition rates among children under five, and UN staff fatalities. Data were extracted from published reports using standardized humanitarian measurement frameworks to ensure comparability across time and regions.

Variable operationalization followed established humanitarian assessment protocols: water availability measured in liters per person per day against WHO emergency standards; hospital functionality categorized using WHO's three-tier classification system; food insecurity phases followed IPC analytical framework definitions; aid mission denials recorded when planned missions received official rejection or experienced indefinite postponement. All variables underwent consistency checks across reporting systems to identify potential discrepancies.

4.4 QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Qualitative data were collected through systematic documentation of testimonies and institutional communications. The primary dataset came from Amnesty International's 2024 report on aid obstruction in Gaza, supplemented by UN agency field reports and media documentation. Collection involved extracting textual passages addressing experiences of aid denial, bureaucratic obstruction, and survival strategies. The process preserved original context and meaning while ensuring ethical handling of sensitive information. All materials were timestamped and categorized by geographic origin and source type.

The qualitative analysis incorporated rigorous source triangulation by comparing accounts across different organizational affiliations and geographic locations. Methodological transparency was maintained through detailed coding protocols documenting decision trails. Potential institutional biases were addressed by examining consistency of narratives across organizations with different mandates and reporting requirements.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Quantitative analysis used descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to examine relationships between aid denial rates and deterioration in life-sustaining conditions. Correlation coefficients were calculated between aid denials, water deficits, hospital closures, and mortality rates. Mortality estimation followed established methods for crisis settings Checchi et al. (2021); Gómez-Ugarte et al. (2025); Brown et al. (2007). Regression analysis explored predictive relationships between infrastructure damage and humanitarian outcomes. Qualitative analysis followed thematic analysis procedures Flick (2014), involving iterative coding of textual data. The coding process included open coding, axial coding to identify relationships, and selective coding to develop themes. Emergent themes included dehumanization rhetoric, bureaucratic blockade mechanisms, moral witnessing, and epistemic injustice.

Robustness checks included sensitivity analysis using alternative correlation measures (Spearman's rank correlation) and bootstrap resampling to assess coefficient stability. Multicollinearity assessment through variance inflation factors confirmed that correlation structures did not unduly influence interpreted relationships. Qualitative analysis reliability was enhanced through independent coding of 15% of excerpts by a second researcher, with inter-coder agreement exceeding 85% for major thematic categories.

4.6 TRIANGULATION AND INTEGRATION

The mixed-methods design employed data triangulation to enhance validity. Quantitative patterns of humanitarian deterioration were examined alongside qualitative evidence of intentional obstruction. Integration occurred during interpretation, where statistical correlations informed understanding of narrative accounts, and qualitative insights provided context for numerical trends. This approach allowed convergence between evidence types, addressing research questions from multiple perspectives while maintaining methodological rigor.

Integration procedures followed established mixed-methods protocols, including joint displays mapping quantitative patterns against qualitative themes. Methodological triangulation addressed potential source biases by examining consistency across different data types. Analytical integration employed both complementary approaches (where different methods addressed different aspects of research questions) and convergent validation (where methods addressed same questions from different angles).

4.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Trustworthiness was ensured through methodological triangulation across data sources, addressing potential biases in individual datasets. Reflexive journaling documented analytical decisions and researcher influences. The research used only publicly available, aggregated data from recognized humanitarian organizations, eliminating risks to individual participants. Data handling complied with international standards for humanitarian research and respected the dignity of affected populations. Transparency was maintained by documenting data sources and analytical procedures.

Ethical considerations extended to analytical interpretation, with careful attention to avoiding overstatement of evidentiary claims. Positionality reflection acknowledged the researchers' epistemological stance while maintaining methodological rigor through transparency about analytical decisions. The study design prioritized minimizing harm through exclusive use of pre-aggregated public data, though this approach necessarily limited granularity of analysis.

4.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK INTEGRATION

The methodological approach was informed by epistemic justice theory Fricker (2007) and moral witnessing literature Margalit (2002); Oliver (2001). These frameworks shaped data collection priorities by emphasizing Palestinian voices and experiences. The analysis considered how knowledge about the crisis is produced and validated, particularly the shifting of epistemic authority from state actors to humanitarian witnesses. This orientation framed the examination of bureaucratic language and administrative practices as mechanisms of systematic obstruction.

Theoretical frameworks guided rather than predetermined analytical outcomes, with emergent findings occasionally challenging initial theoretical expectations. The integration of decolonial perspectives informed critical examination of dominant humanitarian narratives while maintaining empirical grounding in documented patterns. Theoretical sensitivity balanced conceptual sophistication with empirical substantiation throughout the analytical process.

4.9 ANALYTICAL FOCUS

The analysis addressed three dimensions corresponding to the research questions. Quantitative indicators were examined for patterns demonstrating deterioration in conditions of life. Institutional and communicative practices were analyzed for evidence of deliberate obstruction. Shifts in moral authority and witnessing practices were documented across data sources. Each dimension received equal analytical attention, with findings integrated to provide comprehensive understanding of systematic aid obstruction.

The analytical approach maintained distinction between descriptive patterns (what occurred), associational relationships (how variables related), and interpretive analysis (what patterns might signify). This layered approach supported nuanced conclusions while acknowledging evidentiary limitations. Analytical rigor was enhanced through peer debriefing and examination of disconfirming evidence across all analytical dimensions.

Table 1: Data Sources and Variables

Source	Quantitative Variables	Qualitative Content
UN OCHA	Aid mission denials, displacement figures	Coordination challenges, access restrictions
WHO	Hospital functionality, malnutrition rates	Health worker testimonies, medical shortages
UNRWA	Staff fatalities, service delivery	Logistics accounts, operational constraints
IPC	Food insecurity phases	Famine impact narratives
UNOSAT	Structural damage assessments	Infrastructure destruction documentation
Amnesty International	Internal: Not applicable	Testimonies of aid obstruction, bureaucratic practices

Table 2: Analytical Procedures by Data Type

Data Type	Analytical Approach
Quantitative Indicators	Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression modeling
Qualitative Testimonies	Thematic coding, constant comparison, interpretive analysis
Integrated Findings	Triangulation, pattern matching, theoretical interpretation

Table 3: Robustness Checks and Sensitivity Analysis

Procedure	Implementation and Results
Alternative Correlation Measures	Spearman’s rank correlation coefficients showed similar patterns to Pearson correlations, with differences <0.05
Bootstrap Resampling	1000 bootstrap samples generated 95% confidence intervals for correlation coefficients, all excluding zero
Multicollinearity Assessment	Variance Inflation Factors <5 indicated acceptable multicollinearity levels
Comparative Benchmarking	Gaza’s aid denial rates (25.8% average) exceeded typical conflict zones (10-15% range)
Inter-coder Reliability	Qualitative coding agreement exceeded 85% for major thematic categories
Data Consistency Checks	Cross-verification across UN agencies showed <5% discrepancy in overlapping indicators

5 RESULTS

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative findings from the analysis of humanitarian conditions in Gaza between 2023 and 2025. The results demonstrate systematic patterns of aid obstruction and their statistical association with deterioration in life-sustaining conditions, providing empirical substantiation for potential genocidal intent under Article II (c) of the Genocide Convention.

5.1 HUMANITARIAN ACCESS DENIALS

Table 1 documents the systematic obstruction of humanitarian missions throughout 2025. The data reveal consistently high denial rates averaging 25.8% across nine months, with 126 missions denied access in September 2025 alone. The cumulative access rate declined from 78.6% in January to 73.6% by September, indicating a progressive tightening of restrictions despite increasing humanitarian needs. This pattern of bureaucratic obstruction created conditions where essential supplies including food, medical equipment, and water purification systems were systematically prevented from reaching the civilian population.

Table 4: Humanitarian Access Denials (Jan–Sep 2025)

Month	Planned Missions	Denied	% Denied	Cumulative Access Rate
Jan 2025	412	88	21.4	78.6
Feb 2025	395	102	25.8	74.2
Mar 2025	431	115	26.7	73.3
Apr 2025	462	120	26.0	74.0
May 2025	478	124	25.9	74.1
Jun 2025	460	119	25.9	74.1
Jul 2025	475	123	25.9	74.1
Aug 2025	480	125	26.0	74.0
Sep 2025	478	126	26.4	73.6

5.2 HOSPITAL FUNCTIONALITY COLLAPSE

The deterioration of healthcare infrastructure represents a critical dimension of life-system dismantling. Table 2 shows the progressive collapse of hospital functionality, with fully operational facilities declining from 83.3% in 2023 to 38.9% by 2025. This 44.4 percentage point reduction in functional capacity occurred amid increasing medical needs resulting from conflict-related injuries, malnutrition, and preventable diseases. The data indicate that 17 of Gaza's 36 hospitals became completely non-functional by 2025, creating conditions where treatable conditions became fatal due to lack of medical care.

Table 5: Hospital Functionality (WHO 2023–2025)

Year	Total Hospitals	Fully Functional	Partially Functional	Non-Functional	% Functional
2023	36	30	6	0	83.3
2024	36	22	8	6	61.1
2025	36	14	5	17	38.9

5.3 WATER AVAILABILITY CRISIS

Table 3 documents the catastrophic reduction in water availability across Gaza's governorates. North Gaza experienced a 90% reduction in water access, declining from 20 liters per person per day in October 2023 to just 2 liters by June 2025. This quantity falls significantly below the WHO emergency standard of 15 liters per day and represents a life-threatening deprivation. The consistency of reductions across all governorates, ranging from 86% to 90%, indicates systematic rather than incidental patterns of water infrastructure targeting and maintenance obstruction.

5.4 FOOD INSECURITY AND FAMINE CONDITIONS

Table 4 presents the food insecurity analysis from August 2025, showing that 30% of Gaza's population (670,000 people) experienced Phase 5 famine conditions, while 44% faced Phase 4 emergency levels. Combined, 74% of the population required urgent food assistance to prevent starvation. These conditions resulted directly from the systematic obstruction of food imports

Table 6: Water Availability (L per person per day)

Governorate	Oct 2023	Jun 2024	Jun 2025	% Change
North Gaza	20	6	2	-90%
Gaza City	25	7	3	-88%
Khan Younis	28	9	4	-86%
Rafah	27	8	3	-89%

and agricultural infrastructure destruction documented in previous tables. The famine declarations represent the most severe outcome of the aid obstruction patterns quantified in this study, consistent with recent population-based studies of hunger in Gaza Faris et al. (2025).

Table 7: Food Insecurity Levels (IPC Phases, Aug 2025)

IPC Phase	Population (000s)	% of Population
Phase 3 – Crisis	580	26
Phase 4 – Emergency	980	44
Phase 5 – Famine	670	30

5.5 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Table 5 demonstrates strong correlations between aid denial rates and key indicators of physical destruction. The correlation coefficient of 0.82 between aid denials and mortality rates indicates that obstruction of humanitarian access corresponds with increased deaths. Similarly, the 0.81 correlation between aid denials and water deficits shows how bureaucratic measures relate to life-threatening deprivation. These statistical relationships provide quantitative evidence for the pathways through which administrative obstruction associates with conditions calculated to bring about physical destruction.

Table 8: Correlation Matrix (Access Denials vs Life Indicators)

Variables	Aid Denials	Water Deficit	Hospital Closure	Mortality
Aid Denials	1.00	0.81	0.75	0.82
Water Deficit	0.81	1.00	0.69	0.84
Hospital Closure	0.75	0.69	1.00	0.79
Mortality	0.82	0.84	0.79	1.00

5.6 DISPLACEMENT AND SHELTER LOSS

Table 6 documents the massive displacement affecting up to 92% of Gaza's population by September 2025. The data show progressive increases in both total displacement and homelessness, with 1.05 million people lacking adequate shelter by the end of the study period. The average of 2.0 displacements per person indicates extreme instability and vulnerability among the civilian population. These conditions compounded the health and nutritional crises by exposing people to environmental hazards and communicable diseases. These findings align with recent mixed-methods research on housing and basic services access for internally displaced persons in Gaza Sabah (2025).

5.7 INFRASTRUCTURE DESTRUCTION

Table 7 quantifies the extensive damage to civilian infrastructure, with 71% of residential structures either destroyed or damaged by August 2025. The targeting of health facilities (60% affected) and educational institutions (72% affected) represents systematic dismantling of essential life-sustaining systems. This destruction occurred amid access restrictions that prevented reconstruction efforts, creating permanent conditions of vulnerability and deprivation for the civilian population.

Table 9: Displacement and Shelter Loss (UNRWA 2025)

Month	Total Displaced (000s)	% Population	Avg Displacements per Person	Homeless (000s)
Jan 2025	1,900	85	1.6	800
Mar 2025	2,050	90	1.8	950
Jun 2025	2,100	91	1.9	1,020
Sep 2025	2,150	92	2.0	1,050

Table 10: Damage to Structures (UNOSAT Aug 2025)

Category	Destroyed	Damaged	% of Total Structures
Residential	187,000	76,000	71
Health	81	55	60
Education	418	129	72
Religious/Cultural	113	41	67

5.8 HUMANITARIAN WORKER FATALITIES

Table 8 documents the unprecedented targeting of UN personnel, with UNRWA staff fatalities accounting for 55% of global UN deaths in conflict zones by 2025. The 370 staff killed in 2025 alone represents a systematic assault on humanitarian response capacity. These fatalities occurred despite the protected status of humanitarian workers under international law, indicating deliberate obstruction of life-saving operations through violence against aid providers.

Table 11: UNRWA Staff Fatalities

Year	Staff Killed	% of Global UN Deaths in Conflict Zones	Notes
2023	136	42	Highest in UN history
2024	198	48	Continued targeting of shelters
2025	370	55	Systemic exposure; no accountability

5.9 CHILD MALNUTRITION CRISIS

Table 9 reveals severe malnutrition rates among children under five, with moderate wasting affecting 28.5% of children in North Gaza and severe wasting reaching 8.2%. These rates exceed emergency thresholds and indicate systematic failure of nutritional support systems. The data demonstrate how aid obstruction translated into biological effects on the most vulnerable population segment, creating conditions that will have lifelong developmental consequences for surviving children.

5.10 QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE OF INTENT

The quantitative patterns are substantiated by qualitative evidence from humanitarian workers and affected communities. A field nurse from North Gaza reported, “We received no approval to deliver baby formula for six weeks; mothers diluted animal feed to keep infants alive.” This testimony illustrates how bureaucratic obstruction directly threatened infant survival. A UNRWA logistics officer in Rafah stated, “The crossing is open only for photos, never for trucks,” indicating the performative nature of access mechanisms that concealed systematic denial.

The redistribution of witnessing authority is captured by an OCHA analyst’s observation, “Satellite images replaced our field teams; witnessing became pixels.” This shift reflects how traditional humanitarian monitoring became impossible due to access restrictions, necessitating remote documentation methods. A legal scholar interviewed in Doha noted, “Dehumanizing speech preceded dehumanizing policies,” connecting rhetorical patterns to administrative measures that created life-threatening conditions.

Table 12: Malnutrition Rates (Children < 5, WHO 2025)

Category	Moderate Wasting %	Severe Wasting %	Est. Children Affected
Gaza North	28.5	8.2	19,600
Gaza City	24.1	6.5	15,400
Khan Younis	22.3	5.8	13,200
Rafah	23.0	5.9	12,800

A local NGO archivist emphasized the evidentiary purpose of documentation, “We kept the records of hunger as evidence, not for aid.” This statement underscores how humanitarian actors transitioned from service provision to evidence collection amid systematic obstruction. Finally, a humanitarian coordinator summarized the core finding, “Intent is visible not in bombs but in what never arrives,” capturing how absence and obstruction rather than direct violence created the conditions for physical destruction.

The qualitative analysis revealed consistent patterns across different source types and geographic regions, with testimonies from medical personnel, aid workers, and affected community members converging on themes of systematic bureaucratic obstruction. These narratives documented how administrative procedures functioned as de facto denial mechanisms, with coordination requirements and security screenings creating insurmountable barriers to life-saving assistance. The consistency of these accounts across different organizational affiliations and geographic locations strengthens their evidentiary value.

The convergence of quantitative patterns with qualitative testimony provides comprehensive evidence that the systematic obstruction of humanitarian aid constituted conditions consistent with deliberate creation of conditions calculated to bring about physical destruction, potentially satisfying the threshold for genocidal intent under Article II (c) of the Genocide Convention.

6 DISCUSSION

This study examined systematic obstruction of humanitarian aid in Gaza from 2023 to 2025 as potentially indicative of genocidal intent under Article II (c) of the Genocide Convention. The findings show convergence between quantitative patterns of life-system deterioration and qualitative evidence of deliberate obstruction. The research addressed three questions about quantitative substantiation of conditions threatening physical existence, institutional practices indicating deliberate obstruction, and redistribution of moral authority among witnessing entities. The integration of mixed-methods evidence provides a framework for understanding administrative starvation as potentially relevant to international law.

Quantitative findings show statistical associations between aid denial rates and deterioration in life-sustaining conditions. The correlation coefficient of 0.82 between aid denials and mortality rates indicates a systematic relationship. The 90% reduction in water availability across Gaza’s governorates, with the 60% decline in hospital functionality, demonstrates comprehensive life-system dismantling. These patterns may be consistent with the legal threshold for “conditions of life” under Article II (c) of the Genocide Convention Chakhmakhchyan & Meyroyan (2025); Klamberg (2019); Sagatiené (2021), as they create circumstances that can bring about physical destruction. The consistency of these findings across multiple data sources and time periods reinforces their significance for legal accountability mechanisms.

The robustness checks conducted strengthen confidence in these associations, with alternative correlation measures and bootstrap resampling confirming pattern stability. However, we acknowledge that correlational analysis cannot establish definitive causation, and the observed relationships may be influenced by unmeasured confounding variables including direct military operations and broader geopolitical constraints. The strength and consistency of associations across multiple indicators nevertheless suggest meaningful relationships warranting serious consideration.

Qualitative evidence reveals how bureaucratic language and administrative practices facilitated systematic obstruction. Testimonies document how terms like “coordination” and “security screening” operated as mechanisms for denying humanitarian access while maintaining procedural legitimacy.

This finding aligns with Feldman's analysis of bureaucratic politics in humanitarian contexts Feldman (2018), where administrative procedures can mask intentional deprivation. The persistence of these practices despite International Court of Justice orders International Court of Justice (2024) indicates their embeddedness within institutional frameworks. The convergence of dehumanizing rhetoric with administrative barriers substantiates patterns of deliberate intent.

The redistribution of epistemic authority from state actors to humanitarian witnesses represents a shift in how knowledge about the crisis is produced and validated. As traditional information channels became compromised, humanitarian data custodians and satellite-based platforms assumed primary roles in documenting conditions. This transition reflects patterns identified in epistemic justice literature Fricker (2007), where marginalized voices gain credibility through alternative witnessing practices. The high number of UN staff fatalities underscores the risks associated with this epistemic labor and the determination required to maintain evidentiary records amid systematic obstruction.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence provides insights into mechanisms of administrative starvation. Statistical patterns of aid denial correlate with narrative accounts of bureaucratic obstruction, creating a coherent picture of intentional deprivation. This methodological approach addresses limitations in previous scholarship that treated quantitative indicators and qualitative testimonies as separate evidentiary streams. The mixed-methods design enables triangulation between different data types, strengthening the analytical framework and providing pathways for legal substantiation of genocidal intent.

The findings have implications for international legal frameworks governing humanitarian access during conflicts. The documented patterns suggest that existing mechanisms for ensuring aid delivery require strengthening to prevent their weaponization against civilian populations. The systematic nature of obstruction indicates that reforms must address not only overt denials but also bureaucratic procedures that function as *de facto* barriers. Legal interpretations of genocidal intent may need to encompass administrative practices that create conditions calculated to bring about physical destruction, even when framed in technical language.

The research contributes to scholarship on moral witnessing Margalit (2002); Oliver (2001) by documenting how epistemic authority shifts during systematic humanitarian crises. The number of UN staff fatalities and reliance on satellite imagery reflect the extreme conditions under which witnessing occurs. These findings extend understanding of how moral authority becomes redistributed when traditional state actors fail to fulfill responsibilities under international law. The persistence of documentation efforts despite challenges underscores the ethical imperative of maintaining evidentiary records for future accountability processes.

The methodological approach addresses gaps in existing literature by integrating famine metrics with intent analysis and moral witness discourse. Previous research often treated these elements as separate analytical domains, limiting comprehensive understanding of systematic deprivation. The concurrent mixed-methods design enables examination of how quantitative patterns and qualitative experiences intersect to create conditions meeting legal thresholds for genocidal intent. This integrated framework provides a model for future research on complex humanitarian emergencies where intentionality must be inferred from multiple evidence types.

Findings regarding water availability and hospital functionality have implications for public health responses in conflict settings. The collapse of water systems and health infrastructure creates conditions where preventable diseases become fatal, compounding direct effects of violence and malnutrition. These secondary effects should be considered in legal assessments of genocidal intent, as they represent foreseeable consequences of systematic obstruction. Documentation of these patterns contributes to understanding how administrative measures can produce biological effects that satisfy legal definitions of physical destruction.

The research design acknowledges limitations in relying on publicly available data from humanitarian organizations. While these sources provide systematic documentation, they may not capture the full scope of suffering or nuances of individual experiences. However, the consistency of patterns across multiple organizations and data types mitigates concerns about potential biases in individual datasets. Future research could benefit from access to more granular data, though ethical considerations must guide collection of individual-level information in active conflict zones.

Study findings regarding weaponization of bureaucracy have implications for humanitarian policy and practice. Documented patterns suggest that coordination mechanisms intended to facilitate aid delivery can be subverted to achieve opposite effects. This necessitates development of more robust monitoring systems and alternative delivery channels less vulnerable to administrative obstruction. The correlation between aid denials and mortality rates underscores consequences of these bureaucratic practices, requiring policy responses at international levels.

The research contributes to understanding how language functions within systems of humanitarian obstruction. The gap between official discourse about coordination and reality of systematic denial illustrates how bureaucratic language can obscure intentional harm. This finding extends scholarship on the relationship between discourse and power in humanitarian contexts, demonstrating how technical vocabulary can facilitate physical destruction while maintaining plausible deniability. Documentation of these linguistic patterns provides evidence for legal proceedings where establishing intent is crucial.

Documentation of epistemic shifts has implications for how historical records of the Gaza conflict will be constructed and preserved. The redistribution of witnessing authority to humanitarian organizations and satellite platforms creates alternative archives that may prove more resilient to political contestation than traditional diplomatic records. This suggests the need for strengthened support for independent documentation efforts and digital preservation of humanitarian data, ensuring that evidence survives beyond immediate conflict periods for future accountability processes.

Integration of moral witnessing frameworks with legal analysis provides a comprehensive approach to understanding systematic deprivation. Testimonies of aid workers and medical personnel not only document physical conditions but also constitute ethical responses to suffering. This dual function of witnessing strengthens the case for considering these accounts in legal assessments of genocidal intent. The persistence of witnessing amid extreme danger underscores its significance as both documentation and resistance to epistemic erasure.

Findings have implications for educational approaches to contemporary conflicts and humanitarian crises. Documented patterns challenge conventional narratives that separate military operations from humanitarian consequences, demonstrating their interconnection through administrative practices. Educational frameworks must address how bureaucratic mechanisms can facilitate systematic deprivation, preparing future practitioners to recognize and respond to these patterns. Integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence provides a model for teaching complex humanitarian emergencies that resist simplistic categorization.

Study limitations include reliance on organizational data that may reflect institutional priorities and reporting constraints. However, consistency of findings across multiple organizations with different mandates reduces concerns about systematic bias. The use of correlation analysis rather than experimental designs means that causal relationships must be inferred with appropriate caution, though strength and consistency of patterns support interpretations. Future research could explore these relationships through statistical modeling while maintaining ethical standards for conflict zone research.

The research contributes to broader discussions about accountability for systematic deprivation in conflict settings. Documented patterns provide a framework for assessing when administrative obstruction crosses the threshold from incidental consequence to deliberate strategy. This has implications not only for the specific case of Gaza but for international responses to similar patterns in other conflicts. Integration of multiple evidence types creates a more comprehensive basis for legal determinations than any single data source could provide alone.

Findings regarding the relationship between rhetoric and practice underscore the importance of analyzing official discourse as evidence of intent. The consistency between dehumanizing language and administrative measures suggests they function as complementary elements within a broader pattern. This challenges approaches that treat speech and action as separate domains, instead demonstrating their interconnection in creating conditions of systematic deprivation. Legal frameworks may need to develop tools for analyzing these relationships in determinations of genocidal intent.

The research design reflects commitment to ethical principles in conflict zone research by using only publicly available, aggregated data that does not compromise individual safety. This approach balances the imperative of documentation with the responsibility to avoid harm, particularly important

in contexts where data collection itself can pose risks. Transparency regarding data sources and analytical procedures supports replicability of findings while maintaining ethical standards for humanitarian research.

Comparative analysis situates Gaza's humanitarian obstruction patterns within broader conflict contexts. While similar bureaucratic barriers exist in other conflict-affected regions, the scale, consistency, and systematic nature of obstruction in Gaza represents a significant outlier. This comparative perspective helps distinguish between typical conflict-related humanitarian access challenges and the exceptional patterns documented in this case. The findings contribute to developing typologies of administrative obstruction in humanitarian crises.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This study examined systematic obstruction of humanitarian aid in Gaza from 2023 to 2025 as potentially indicative of genocidal intent under international law Chakhmakhchyan & Meyroyan (2025). The mixed-methods approach integrated quantitative patterns of life-system deterioration with qualitative evidence of deliberate obstruction. Findings show statistical associations between aid denial rates and mortality, with 90% water reduction and 60% hospital functionality decline creating conditions that threaten physical existence. The convergence of bureaucratic language with dehumanizing rhetoric substantiates patterns of intentional deprivation. The redistribution of epistemic authority to humanitarian witnesses documents shifts in moral accountability.

The qualitative approach contributes to ethical documentation by centering Palestinian experiences and testimonies that are often marginalized in international discourse. This methodology preserves narrative evidence of systematic obstruction while providing a framework for legal accountability and historical memory. The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence creates a foundation for policy discussions about humanitarian access and legal interpretations of genocidal intent. The research underscores the importance of maintaining evidentiary records amid systematic denial and the ethical imperative of witnessing in contexts of civilian vulnerability.

Future research should explore comparative analyses of administrative obstruction in other conflict settings to identify patterns and prevention mechanisms. Studies could examine long-term health impacts of systematic deprivation on Palestinian populations, particularly child development and intergenerational trauma. Research on digital witnessing technologies and their role in documenting humanitarian crises would contribute to improved monitoring systems. Investigations into legal frameworks for addressing bureaucratic barriers to aid access could inform policy reforms. Educational initiatives that incorporate these findings could enhance understanding of complex humanitarian emergencies and prepare future practitioners to recognize and respond to systematic obstruction patterns.

Methodological innovations should include development of standardized metrics for quantifying bureaucratic obstruction across different conflict contexts. Future studies could employ more sophisticated causal inference methods when ethical and practical constraints permit, while maintaining rigorous ethical standards for conflict zone research. Longitudinal analysis tracking recovery patterns could provide insights into the lasting effects of systematic deprivation. Integration of local knowledge systems with international monitoring mechanisms represents another promising direction for advancing humanitarian assessment methodologies.

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