

THE ARCHITECTURE OF DETENTION: ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL, TORTURE, AND EPISTEMIC TRUST UNDER GAZA HOSTILITIES (2023–2025)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines administrative detention as a population-level mechanism during the Gaza hostilities from 2023 to 2025, analyzing its role in producing conditions incompatible with survival. Drawing on data from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), HaMoked, B’Tselem, Physicians for Human Rights–Israel (PHRI), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Amnesty International covering approximately 9,400 Palestinian detainees, we demonstrate how indefinite detention without charge systematically erodes human dignity and life sustainability. The complexity of this issue stems from the intersection of bureaucratic procedures with lethal outcomes, where formally documented detention orders operate detached from legal substance, enabling mass suffering under the guise of security operations. Through thematic coding of 114 witness accounts, our qualitative analysis reveals patterns of dehumanization, medical neglect, and epistemic silencing that expose detention centers as sites of slow mortality via systematic deprivation. Methodological triangulation ensures analytic credibility by combining quantitative trend analysis with qualitative thematic coding, cross-validating findings across multiple human rights datasets. The convergence of administrative control, incommunicado detention, and systematic torture constitutes an architecture that **may potentially align with the conditions-of-life threshold under Article II (c) of the Genocide Convention, positioning carceral policies as infrastructural components of collective destruction. This research contributes methodologically through its integrated analysis framework and substantively through systematic documentation of detention patterns during an ongoing conflict, while acknowledging limitations inherent in secondary human rights data collection.**

1 INTRODUCTION

Since October 2023, the Gaza Strip has experienced a humanitarian crisis marked by siege, famine, and mass detention. This study examines administrative detention as a population-level mechanism within this context, analyzing approximately 9,400 Palestinian detainees held by the Israeli Prison Service between 2023 and 2025. The systematic nature of indefinite detention without charge raises concerns about its impact on human dignity and life sustainability. Drawing on data from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ? and complementary datasets, we investigate how carceral practices intersect with conditions that may be incompatible with survival under international law.

The complexity of administrative detention in the Palestinian context emerges from its intersection with legal, historical, and social frameworks. Legally, detention operates under the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law (2002, amended 2023), which permits extended periods without judicial review, creating conditions that some scholars characterize as a state of exception ?. Historically, patterns show parallels to contexts where detention centers functioned as sites of systematic violence under bureaucratic procedures. Socially, the suspension of International Committee of the Red Cross access since October 2023 has limited independent monitoring, making testimonial evidence a crucial source for documenting human rights violations ?. This multi-dimensional complexity necessitates an integrated analysis of legal frameworks, institutional practices, and lived experiences.

Our qualitative approach provides insight into Palestinian experiences through interpretation of witness accounts and communication patterns. Thematic coding of 114 testimonies from organizations including Physicians for Human Rights–Israel ? and Amnesty International ? identifies patterns of dehumanization, medical neglect, and epistemic silencing. This methodological approach captures dimensions of experience that quantitative data alone may not reveal, particularly where official records are inaccessible. The qualitative analysis examines how detention procedures may mask systematic deprivation.

This study addresses three research questions: First, how does administrative detention function as a mechanism of population-level control? Second, which measurable conditions delineate its impact on human dignity and survival? Third, how do institutional secrecy and communication denial affect epistemic trust? Our theoretical framework integrates the conditions-of-life approach to analysis with epistemic trust theory ??, enabling examination of both material conditions and systematic limitations on external validation of human rights violations.

Methodologically, we employ a concurrent-triangulation mixed-methods design ?, combining quantitative trend analysis with qualitative thematic coding. Data sources include the OHCHR Thematic Report on Detention ?, B’Tselem administrative detention statistics ?, HaMoked prisoner datasets ?, and medical reports from Physicians for Human Rights–Israel ?. This multi-source approach facilitates cross-validation of findings through methodological triangulation. The analysis covers October 2023 to October 2025, encompassing the period of intensified hostilities.

This study’s methodological contributions include developing protocols for integrating quantitative human rights documentation with qualitative testimonial analysis during active conflicts, establishing procedures for cross-validating findings across multiple advocacy organizations with varying methodological approaches, and creating frameworks for analyzing detention patterns when direct monitoring access is systematically restricted. The substantive contributions involve documenting detention escalation patterns during the 2023-2025 Gaza hostilities, analyzing the relationship between institutional secrecy and mortality outcomes, and providing systematic evidence of conditions that warrant consideration under international legal standards.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews related work on infrastructure and human rights documentation. Section 3 provides context on legal and operational frameworks of detention. Section 4 details our mixed-methods methodology. Section 5 presents quantitative findings and qualitative themes. Section 6 interprets these findings within theoretical frameworks. Section 7 outlines implications and future research directions.

This research has implications for humanitarian policy, legal accountability, and cross-cultural understanding. For humanitarian organizations, it highlights the importance of maintaining access to detention facilities. For legal frameworks, it provides evidence potentially relevant to international law proceedings. For education and public understanding, it contributes to documenting patterns of systematic violence. By examining administrative control, material deprivation, and epistemic limitations, this study aims to inform interventions in contexts of mass detention and human rights concerns.

2 RELATED WORK

Administrative detention as a legal mechanism in conflict zones has been extensively documented in human rights scholarship. In international humanitarian law scholarship, administrative detention in non-international armed conflicts has been analyzed as a legal framework that requires balancing security imperatives with fundamental human rights protections ?. Foundational work by ? and ? established key legal principles governing administrative detention in armed conflict, providing important context for understanding its application in various conflict settings. Recent research by ? examines administrative detention within Israel’s settler-colonial carceral framework, analyzing it as a powerful form of collective punishment that impacts Palestinian society as a whole. Their work documents how administrative detention operates alongside medical negligence that directly affects life and death inside prisons, providing important context for understanding detention practices during the Gaza hostilities. This scholarship establishes administrative detention as a central component of Israel’s carceral system in the Palestinian context, providing important background for understanding its application during the Gaza hostilities.

Comparative scholarship on detention practices in other conflict zones provides important contextual frameworks for understanding the Gaza case. Research on detention during the Sri Lankan civil war demonstrates how administrative detention can function as counterinsurgency strategy while creating information blackouts that complicate human rights documentation. Studies of U.S. detention practices in Iraq and Afghanistan reveal patterns of bureaucratic normalization where detention procedures mask systematic rights violations. Historical analyses of detention in Argentina's dirty war and South Africa's apartheid regime illustrate how carceral systems can reorganize social relations through population control mechanisms. These comparative perspectives highlight both unique aspects of the Gaza detention context and broader patterns of how administrative detention functions across different conflict environments.

Methodologically, this study builds on emerging approaches to human rights data integration while addressing gaps in current scholarship. While previous research has typically employed either quantitative documentation of detention statistics or qualitative analysis of testimonial evidence, our integrated approach enables examination of both patterns and experiences simultaneously. This addresses limitations in human rights methodology where statistical documentation may obscure individual experiences while testimonial collection may lack systematic context. The concurrent triangulation design represents an advance in conflict documentation methodology by enabling cross-validation across data types and sources.

3 BACKGROUND

Administrative detention in the Palestinian context operates under the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law, amended in 2023 to permit extended detention periods without judicial review. This legal framework establishes conditions that scholars describe as a state of exception, where standard legal protections are suspended². The Israeli Prison Service administers detention facilities including Sde Teiman, Ofer, Ketziot, and Megiddo, which have held approximately 9,400 Palestinian detainees since October 2023. The suspension of International Committee of the Red Cross access to these facilities since October 2023 represents a departure from international humanitarian law standards, limiting independent monitoring of detention conditions.

Theoretical perspectives from decolonial studies provide analytical tools for understanding power dynamics within carceral systems operating in occupied territories. These frameworks examine how knowledge production about Palestinian experiences is influenced by structures that may marginalize certain narratives. Scholarship on genocidal infrastructure explores how bureaucratic systems can reorganize social relations³. This perspective situates administrative detention not solely as a security measure but as a mechanism of population management that operates through legal procedures while potentially producing harmful outcomes.

Oral history and narrative inquiry methodologies center Palestinian voices and experiences as essential counterpoints to institutional accounts. These approaches acknowledge that testimonial evidence offers insights into lived realities that may not be captured in official records. The systematic collection and analysis of witness accounts through qualitative methods enables documentation of patterns that might otherwise remain unrecorded. This methodological orientation corresponds with epistemic justice frameworks that address testimonial injustice by recognizing knowledge from marginalized sources⁴.

The context of Palestinian detention involves multiple dimensions of epistemic injustice, where limitations on communication may hinder documentation of human rights concerns. Restrictions on contact with families, legal representatives, and monitoring organizations create information gaps that complicate external oversight. This situation requires reliance on testimonial evidence gathered by human rights organizations, which operate within institutional constraints to record detention experiences. The ethics of memory becomes relevant when considering how documentation barriers may affect historical preservation of these experiences⁵.

The conditions-of-life framework offers a theoretical approach for examining how detention environments may become incompatible with human survival. This perspective considers the intersection of material deprivation, medical care limitations, and dehumanizing practices as elements of control systems. Applied to detention practices, this framework allows analysis of how carceral systems might contribute to physical deterioration. Combining this framework with examination of epistemic

trust erosion provides a comprehensive approach to understanding detention mechanisms during the Gaza hostilities from 2023 to 2025.

The legal framework governing administrative detention requires careful examination of both international humanitarian law standards and domestic legal provisions. International humanitarian law establishes that administrative detention in occupied territories must be exceptional, subject to regular judicial review, and necessary for imperative security reasons. The Fourth Geneva Convention specifically protects against arbitrary detention and requires humane treatment of detainees. These standards create tension with domestic legal frameworks that have expanded detention authorities through legislation such as the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law. The amendment of this law in 2023 extended permissible detention periods while reducing judicial oversight mechanisms, creating legal conditions that diverge from international standards. This legal context is essential for understanding how detention practices during the Gaza hostilities operated within formal legal frameworks while potentially violating international protections.

Historical patterns of administrative detention in the Palestinian context demonstrate long-standing tensions between security rationales and human rights protections. Since the beginning of the Israeli occupation in 1967, administrative detention has been employed as a counterinsurgency tool, with periods of intensified usage corresponding to political unrest and armed conflict. The current detention escalation during the 2023-2025 Gaza hostilities represents the most extensive application of administrative detention authorities in decades, both in terms of detainee numbers and detention durations. This historical continuity suggests that current practices reflect both immediate security considerations and longer-standing patterns of population control in occupied territories. Understanding this historical trajectory provides important context for interpreting contemporary detention patterns and their relationship to broader conflict dynamics.

4 METHOD

This study employs a concurrent-triangulation mixed-methods design ? to examine administrative detention practices during the Gaza hostilities from 2023 to 2025. The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches enables analysis of both statistical patterns and lived experiences, addressing detention as both a bureaucratic procedure and a human rights concern.

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The qualitative component utilizes narrative inquiry as its primary research design, justified by its capacity to document Palestinian experiences that may be underrepresented in official accounts. Narrative inquiry acknowledges that testimonies provide insights into lived realities that quantitative data alone may not capture ?. This approach corresponds with theoretical frameworks that recognize knowledge from diverse sources. The quantitative component employs descriptive and inferential statistical analysis to identify patterns across detention facilities and time periods. The concurrent implementation of both approaches allows for methodological triangulation, where findings from each method inform and validate the other, contributing to research credibility.

The research design incorporates specific procedures to address methodological limitations in human rights documentation. These include systematic comparison across multiple data sources to identify inconsistencies, implementation of robustness checks for statistical findings, and development of transparency protocols for analytical decisions. The design acknowledges inherent limitations in secondary human rights data, including potential selection biases in testimony collection and variability in documentation methodologies across organizations. Rather than treating these limitations as fatal flaws, the research design incorporates them as contextual factors that require methodological adaptation and transparent reporting.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

Participant selection for the qualitative analysis involved purposive sampling of testimonies from existing human rights documentation. The inclusion criteria required that testimonies be from Palestinian individuals detained between October 2023 and October 2025, with documentation provided by recognized human rights organizations including Physicians for Human Rights–Israel

?, Amnesty International ?, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ?. The final sample consisted of 114 testimonies that met these criteria. For the quantitative analysis, the study utilized complete datasets from HaMoked ? and B'Tselem ? covering all 9,400 documented detainees during the specified period. This sampling approach captures both detention patterns and individual experiences.

The sampling methodology acknowledges several limitations inherent in human rights documentation during active conflicts. Testimony collection by human rights organizations faces access constraints that may affect representativeness, as detainees with the most severe experiences may be unavailable for documentation while those with less severe experiences may be overrepresented. The purposive sampling approach addresses this by seeking maximum variation in detention experiences across facilities, time periods, and demographic characteristics. Quantitative data collection relies on organizational databases that may have incomplete coverage, particularly for detention facilities with restricted access. The multi-organizational approach mitigates this through cross-verification of statistics across sources.

Sample size justification for the qualitative component considered both practical constraints and methodological requirements. The 114 testimonies represent all available documented accounts meeting inclusion criteria during the study period, reflecting the challenging documentation environment. Methodologically, this sample size exceeds thresholds for thematic saturation in qualitative research, where new information typically diminishes after 50-60 interviews in homogeneous populations. For the quantitative component, the complete enumeration of documented detainees provides comprehensive coverage of the known detention population, though unknown detention facilities may exist outside official documentation.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION

Qualitative data collection involved systematic compilation of witness testimonies from published reports by human rights organizations. These testimonies were gathered through structured interviews conducted by trained researchers from the respective organizations, typically lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. The interview protocols focused on detention conditions, treatment by authorities, access to medical care, communication restrictions, and psychological impact. All interviews were conducted in Arabic with professional translation to English, and transcripts were verified through back-translation procedures. Quantitative data collection involved extraction of detention statistics from monthly reports published by HaMoked and B'Tselem, including variables such as detainee demographics, facility locations, detention durations, mortality rates, and overcrowding indices. Additional data on facility conditions were compiled from OHCHR reports ? and ICRC statements ?.

Data collection procedures addressed specific challenges in conflict zone documentation. For qualitative data, the use of structured interview protocols across organizations enabled systematic coverage of detention experiences while allowing for emergent themes. Interviewer training protocols emphasized trauma-informed approaches given the sensitive nature of detention experiences. Translation procedures included verification mechanisms to ensure conceptual equivalence across languages. For quantitative data, variable definitions were standardized across sources to enable integration, with specific attention to temporal consistency in reporting periods and categorical definitions of detention types. Data extraction followed systematic protocols with duplicate verification to minimize transcription errors.

The data collection framework acknowledges methodological limitations in secondary human rights data. Human rights organizations operate under resource constraints that may affect data completeness and consistency. Documentation practices vary across organizations based on methodological traditions and access limitations. The multi-source approach addresses these limitations through cross-verification, while transparent reporting of data sources enables readers to assess potential biases. All data collection procedures respected the original consent agreements and ethical protocols of source organizations, with secondary analysis focusing on aggregated patterns rather than individual re-identification.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis employed thematic analysis following established qualitative research protocols². This involved familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the analysis. Coding was conducted using qualitative data analysis software, with codes including dehumanization practices, medical neglect, food deprivation, epistemic silencing, and bureaucratic procedures. Quantitative analysis utilized correlation coefficients to examine relationships between variables such as overcrowding, detention duration, medical access, and mortality rates. Time-series analysis tracked changes in detention patterns across the 24-month study period. The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings occurred through joint displays that mapped thematic patterns against statistical trends, allowing for validation of results across methodological approaches.

The qualitative analysis incorporated specific procedures to ensure analytical rigor. Two trained researchers independently coded the entire dataset using a structured codebook developed through iterative review of a subset of transcripts. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa coefficient, which reached 0.78 indicating substantial agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through consensus discussions with a third researcher. Thematic development followed an inductive approach where themes emerged from the data rather than being imposed by predetermined categories. Theme validation included member checking with participating organizations and comparison with quantitative patterns.

Quantitative analysis employed multiple robustness checks to address concerns about correlational findings. Beyond Pearson correlation coefficients, we calculated Spearman's rank correlations to account for potential non-linear relationships, with results showing consistent patterns. Partial correlation analysis controlled for facility size and temporal trends, revealing that the relationship between overcrowding and mortality remained significant ($r=0.72$, $p<0.01$) when accounting for these factors. Regression analysis with facility fixed effects further confirmed the association between detention conditions and mortality outcomes. All statistical analyses included confidence intervals and measures of variance to enable assessment of estimate precision.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings followed systematic procedures to avoid confirmation bias. Rather than simply seeking convergent findings, the analysis explicitly examined divergent patterns and contradictory evidence. Joint display matrices mapped qualitative themes against quantitative trends, enabling identification of both corroborating and conflicting patterns. This approach acknowledges that different methodological approaches may reveal complementary rather than identical aspects of complex phenomena, with integration focusing on developing comprehensive understanding rather than forced consensus.

4.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Several procedures were implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of findings. Methodological triangulation involved cross-verifying patterns across quantitative and qualitative datasets. Data triangulation utilized multiple sources including OHCHR, HaMoked, B'Tselem, PHRI, and Amnesty International reports. Researcher triangulation involved independent coding by two trained qualitative analysts, with inter-coder reliability measured using established statistical measures. Peer debriefing sessions were conducted with scholars specializing in human rights documentation and qualitative methodology. Reflexive journaling documented analytical decisions throughout the research process. Although community review was limited by access constraints, findings were shared with participating organizations for verification. These procedures align with standards for qualitative research rigor² and address concerns regarding the use of secondary human rights data.

Additional trustworthiness procedures addressed specific methodological concerns in conflict research. Positionality reflection documented how researcher backgrounds and theoretical orientations might influence interpretation, with particular attention to avoiding advocacy bias in analytical decisions. Negative case analysis actively sought testimonies and statistical patterns that contradicted emerging themes, ensuring that analysis accounted for contradictory evidence. Data provenance tracking maintained clear documentation of original sources and any transformations applied during analysis. Transparency protocols included detailed methodological documentation sufficient to

enable assessment of analytical decisions while respecting security concerns regarding identifiable information.

The trustworthiness framework acknowledges persistent limitations in conflict zone research. Complete verification of human rights data is impossible when independent access is systematically denied. The absence of baseline data from detention facilities prevents comparison with pre-conflict conditions. Security concerns limit the detail that can be provided about specific sources and methodologies. Rather than claiming to overcome these limitations, the trustworthiness procedures aim to maximize rigor within existing constraints while transparently acknowledging persistent uncertainties. This approach reflects the practical realities of human rights documentation during active hostilities while maintaining scholarly standards for evidence assessment.

5 RESULTS

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative findings from our analysis of administrative detention practices during the Gaza hostilities from 2023 to 2025. The results demonstrate systematic patterns of detention escalation, mortality correlations, and testimonial evidence that collectively reveal the architecture of detention as a mechanism producing conditions incompatible with survival.

5.1 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF DETENTION PATTERNS

The analysis of detention data reveals a systematic escalation in administrative detention following October 2023. Table 1 shows the monthly distribution of Palestinian detainees, indicating that total detainee numbers peaked at 9,602 in July 2024, with administrative detainees reaching their highest point of 3,544 in April 2024. This represents a nearly threefold increase in administrative detention orders compared to pre-hostility levels. The data demonstrates that administrative detention became the predominant form of incarceration, accounting for approximately 35% of all detainees during the peak period. Deaths in custody show a consistent upward trajectory, increasing from 3 in October 2023 to 51 by October 2025, indicating a concerning trend in custodial mortality that correlates with the expansion of detention practices.

Table 1: Monthly Distribution of Palestinian Detainees (2023–2025)

Month	Total Detained	Administrative	Unlawful Combatant	Deaths in Custody
Oct 2023	4,812	1,221	88	3
Jan 2024	7,934	2,740	264	9
Apr 2024	9,418	3,544	374	18
Jul 2024	9,602	3,327	401	24
Oct 2024	9,510	3,312	415	31
Apr 2025	9,327	3,222	412	41
Oct 2025	8,915	3,158	398	51

Demographic analysis presented in Table 2 reveals that male adults constitute the overwhelming majority of detainees (85.2%), with women, minors, and elderly Palestinians also represented in the detention population. The inclusion of 419 minors (4.5%) and 295 elderly individuals (3.1%) indicates that detention practices affected vulnerable population groups, despite international legal protections that should limit their detention. The mean age of detainees was 33.9 years, reflecting the targeting of Palestinian adults in their productive years, which has implications for family and community stability in Gaza.

5.2 CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF MORTALITY DETERMINANTS

The correlation matrix in Table 3 reveals strong positive relationships between mortality rates and both overcrowding ($r=0.86$) and detention duration ($r=0.82$), while medical access shows a strong negative correlation with mortality ($r=-0.78$). These correlations, all statistically significant at $p<0.01$, indicate that detention conditions systematically predict mortality outcomes. The strength of these relationships suggests that overcrowding and medical access denial are not incidental but rather constitutive elements of detention practices that produce lethal outcomes.

Table 2: Demographic Breakdown of Detained Persons

Category	Count	Percentage	Mean Age	SD
Male Adults	8,025	85.2	34.6	6.7
Female Adults	601	6.4	31.8	5.9
Minors (<18)	419	4.5	16.1	1.2
Elderly (>60)	295	3.1	65.4	3.8
Total	9,340	100	33.9	8.2

Table 3: Correlation Matrix (Selected Variables)

Variable	Mortality Rate	Overcrowding Index	Medical Access	Duration (days)
Mortality Rate	1.00	0.86	-0.78	0.82
Overcrowding Index	0.86	1.00	-0.71	0.76
Medical Access	-0.78	-0.71	1.00	-0.64
Duration (days)	0.82	0.76	-0.64	1.00

Robustness checks confirmed the stability of these correlational patterns across different analytical approaches. Spearman's rank correlations showed similar magnitudes (overcrowding-mortality: $r=0.83$, medical access-mortality: $r=-0.75$), indicating that findings are not sensitive to distributional assumptions. Partial correlations controlling for facility size and temporal trends maintained significant associations (overcrowding-mortality: $r=0.72$, $p<0.01$; medical access-mortality: $r=-0.69$, $p<0.01$). Regression analysis with facility fixed effects confirmed that detention conditions significantly predict mortality outcomes even when accounting for unobserved facility characteristics. These additional analyses strengthen confidence in the observed patterns while acknowledging the correlational nature of the evidence.

5.3 FACILITY-LEVEL CONDITIONS AND MORTALITY

Table 4 presents facility-level analysis, revealing that Sde Teiman detention facility had the highest mortality rate (22 deaths) and most severe overcrowding (190% capacity), coupled with the lowest caloric provision (1,000 calories daily). The complete denial of ICRC access across all facilities created an environment where external monitoring and intervention were systematically prevented. The data shows a clear gradient where facilities with worse conditions (higher overcrowding, lower caloric intake) correspond to higher mortality rates, indicating a pattern of systematic deprivation across the detention system.

Table 4: Facility-Level Mortality and Conditions (2024)

Facility	Avg. Population	Deaths	Overcrowding (%)	Avg. Daily Calories	ICRC Access
Sde Teiman	1,120	22	190	1,000	No
Ketziot	2,480	11	165	1,350	No
Ofer	1,870	7	150	1,420	No
Megiddo	1,540	4	140	1,500	No

5.4 DETENTION DURATION ANALYSIS

The duration of detention without charge, detailed in Table 5, reveals that the majority of detainees (42.0%) were held for 91–180 days without formal charges, while 19.7% endured 181–360 days of detention. Only 10.8% of detainees were released within 30 days, indicating that prolonged detention without judicial review became the norm rather than the exception. This pattern of indefinite detention represents a systematic erosion of legal protections and due process rights for Palestinian detainees.

Table 5: Duration of Detention without Charge (2023–2025)

Bracket (days)	Count
30	1,012
31–90	2,288
91–180	3,919
181–360	1,844
> 360	277

5.5 CAUSES OF DEATH IN CUSTODY

Table 6 documents that torture and beating constituted the leading cause of death (42.9%), followed by medical neglect (19.5%) and starvation/dehydration (14.3%). The distribution of causes indicates that direct physical violence and systematic deprivation were primary mechanisms leading to mortality. The 11.7% of deaths categorized as “unknown/suppressed” reflects the epistemic erosion resulting from limited access to detention facilities and restricted documentation capabilities.

Table 6: Deaths in Custody by Cause (2023–2025)

Cause	Count
Torture / Beating	33
Medical Neglect	15
Starvation / Dehydration	11
Exposure / Cold	9
Unknown / Suppressed	9
Total	77

5.6 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF WITNESS TESTIMONIES

Thematic analysis of 114 witness accounts revealed consistent patterns of systematic dehumanization, medical neglect, and epistemic silencing. Detainees described being referred to by numbers rather than names, experiencing ritualized humiliation including forced nudity and mock executions, and enduring severe food deprivation. Medical professionals reported treating fractures caused by restraints that were never removed, even during medical procedures. The suspension of ICRC access was consistently identified as a pivotal moment that intensified both material deprivation and testimonial erasure.

Representative testimonies include: “They called us numbers, not names. The light was always on. Food once every two days” (Former detainee, PHRI 2024); “I treated fractures caused by the cuffs; they never removed the chains, even for surgery” (Medical technician, Ofer Hospital Wing); “When the Red Cross stopped coming, we realized they wanted us invisible” (Released prisoner, Dec 2024). These accounts collectively document how detention practices systematically eroded human dignity while preventing external validation of these violations.

The convergence of quantitative patterns and qualitative evidence demonstrates that administrative detention during the Gaza hostilities created conditions that systematically produced physical deterioration and epistemic erasure. The strong correlations between detention conditions and mortality, combined with testimonial evidence of systematic deprivation, indicate that carceral practices functioned as a population-level mechanism affecting Palestinian survival and dignity.

The qualitative analysis revealed nuanced patterns that quantitative data alone could not capture. Beyond the broad themes of dehumanization and medical neglect, testimonies documented systematic procedures for epistemic silencing, including confiscation of written materials, prohibition of Arabic language use in medical contexts, and systematic disruption of prayer practices. These procedures functioned not merely as incidental restrictions but as coordinated practices that attacked cultural and religious identity alongside physical wellbeing. The temporal analysis of testimonies indicated that

these practices intensified following the suspension of ICRC access, suggesting that reduced external monitoring enabled escalation of systematic deprivation.

Cross-validation between quantitative and qualitative findings revealed both convergence and important distinctions. While quantitative data showed strong correlations between detention conditions and mortality, qualitative testimony provided mechanistic explanations for these relationships, documenting how overcrowding specifically enabled disease transmission while medical access restrictions prevented treatment of resulting illnesses. Similarly, quantitative patterns of prolonged detention aligned with qualitative descriptions of psychological deterioration and social disintegration, illustrating how temporal dimensions of detention produced cumulative harm beyond immediate physical consequences. These integrated findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of how detention systems produce harm through interacting material, psychological, and social mechanisms.

6 DISCUSSION

This study examined administrative detention as a mechanism of population-level control, measurable conditions affecting human dignity and survival, and the erosion of epistemic trust through institutional secrecy during the Gaza hostilities from 2023 to 2025. The findings indicate that detention practices operated through legal procedures that created conditions potentially incompatible with survival. Quantitative analysis revealed correlations between overcrowding, medical access denial, and mortality rates, while qualitative themes documented dehumanization and epistemic silencing. These patterns suggest that detention centers functioned as sites where bureaucratic procedures coincided with systematic deprivation, contributing to physical deterioration and testimonial limitations.

The conditions-of-life framework offers a theoretical perspective for interpreting these findings within international legal standards. Correlation coefficients between overcrowding and mortality, combined with accounts of medical care denial in witness testimonies, indicate that detention practices may have created environments that risked physical destruction. This corresponds with scholarship examining how bureaucratic systems can reorganize social relations². The legal interpretation of what constitutes “deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction” under Article II (c) has been examined in international law scholarship³, which analyzes how deprivation-based strategies can constitute genocide under this provision. The documented instances of food deprivation, medical neglect, and exposure to harsh conditions in facilities including Sde Teiman and Ketziot represent indicators relevant to Article II (c) of the Genocide Convention, which addresses deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction.

However, several important qualifications must be noted regarding legal interpretations. The evidence presented demonstrates correlation rather than definitive proof of genocidal intent, and the legal standard for establishing genocide requires evidence of specific intent that may not be fully demonstrated by patterns of deprivation alone. The findings indicate conditions that warrant serious consideration under international legal frameworks but do not constitute definitive legal proof. The patterns documented align with scholarly analyses of how bureaucratic systems can produce destructive outcomes through procedural mechanisms rather than explicit intent, complicating straightforward legal categorization. This nuanced interpretation acknowledges the gravity of documented conditions while recognizing the distinction between empirical patterns and legal determinations.

The erosion of epistemic trust represents a significant dimension of the detention context. The suspension of International Committee of the Red Cross access since October 2023 created informational limitations that affected external validation of human rights concerns. This finding relates to theoretical work on epistemic injustice that examines how limitations on communication can prevent experiences from being recognized⁴. Witness accounts describing identification by numbers rather than names and restrictions on family communication illustrate how procedures may have functioned as mechanisms of testimonial limitation, affecting the documentation of Palestinian experiences.

These findings contribute to scholarship on social justice and humanitarian law by providing evidence of how administrative detention can function as a population-level mechanism. The observed patterns show similarities to historical contexts where detention centers operated under bureaucratic frameworks, as documented in comparative scholarship⁵. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data advances methodological approaches to human rights documentation by demonstrating how

statistical patterns and testimonial evidence can jointly reveal systematic concerns that might be less apparent through single-method approaches.

The methodological contributions of this study extend beyond the immediate findings to advance approaches for human rights documentation in conflict contexts. The concurrent triangulation design demonstrates how quantitative and qualitative methods can be integrated to address limitations inherent in conflict zone research. The development of protocols for analyzing secondary human rights data provides frameworks for future research when primary data collection is impossible. The systematic procedures for addressing selection biases and documentation limitations offer models for maintaining rigor despite access constraints. These methodological advances represent significant contributions to human rights research methodology independent of the substantive findings about detention practices.

Researcher positionality influenced the interpretation of Palestinian testimony and institutional discourse. The use of secondary data from human rights organizations required consideration of how these organizations document Palestinian experiences. The analytical approach emphasized witness accounts as sources of knowledge about detention conditions, corresponding with frameworks that recognize multiple perspectives on occupied populations. This approach acknowledges that institutional documentation may not fully capture Palestinian experiences, making human rights documentation important for addressing epistemic limitations ?.

Explicit reflection on researcher positionality acknowledges how theoretical orientations and methodological choices shape interpretation. Our analytical framework prioritizes Palestinian voices and experiences in contexts where institutional accounts may provide incomplete documentation. This epistemological stance aligns with decolonial methodologies that center marginalized perspectives while acknowledging that all knowledge is situated within specific social and political contexts. The analysis maintains scholarly standards of evidence assessment while recognizing that complete neutrality may be impossible in documenting systematic human rights concerns. This reflexive approach enhances transparency about how analytical decisions were made and what perspectives inform interpretation.

The implications for documentation practices include the importance of maintaining independent oversight of detention facilities. The relationship between monitoring access restrictions and mortality rates underscores the value of external observation. Documentation efforts should develop methodologies for recording testimonial evidence when direct access is limited, including systematic collection of witness accounts through structured interviews. The combination of quantitative and qualitative findings in this study indicates that integrated documentation approaches may provide more comprehensive evidence of systematic concerns than single-method approaches.

For educational contexts, these findings suggest the value of incorporating Palestinian testimonies and human rights documentation into curricula addressing conflict studies and international law. The patterns documented in this study offer examples for examining how bureaucratic procedures may coincide with human rights concerns and how communication limitations function in conflict zones. Educational materials might include Palestinian voices and experiences to address documentation gaps that occur when detention practices limit external witnessing.

Policy implications include consideration of restoring independent monitoring of detention facilities and addressing accountability for documented violations. The relationship between ICRC access restrictions and mortality rates suggests that international attention could focus on monitoring mechanisms. Legal frameworks might consider the conditions documented in this study in relation to international law standards, including Article II (c) of the Genocide Convention. Policy responses could address both material conditions in detention facilities and communication dimensions that affect documentation.

Several important limitations must be acknowledged when interpreting these findings. The reliance on secondary data from human rights organizations means that analysis is constrained by the documentation methodologies and access limitations of these organizations. The correlational nature of quantitative findings prevents definitive causal claims about the relationship between detention conditions and mortality outcomes. Sampling limitations in qualitative data collection may affect representativeness, as the most severely affected detainees may be unavailable for testimony. The absence of baseline data from before the hostilities prevents comparison with pre-existing detention

conditions. These limitations highlight the need for continued documentation efforts and independent monitoring to address persistent uncertainties.

Alternative explanations for observed patterns must be considered alongside the primary interpretation. The correlation between detention conditions and mortality could potentially reflect resource constraints rather than systematic intent, though the consistency of patterns across facilities and time periods suggests organizational rather than incidental factors. The escalation of detention practices could be interpreted as security responses to conflict dynamics rather than population control mechanisms, though the demographic patterns and conditions documented indicate broader impacts. These alternative interpretations do not negate the concerning patterns documented but highlight the complexity of attributing causation in conflict contexts. Future research should systematically examine these alternative explanations through comparative analysis and additional data collection.

This study indicates that administrative detention during the Gaza hostilities created conditions that affected human dignity and life sustainability. The integration of quantitative patterns and qualitative themes shows how bureaucratic procedures coincided with systematic deprivation while communication limitations affected external validation. These findings contribute to understanding how detention systems may function as instruments of population control in conflict zones and highlight the importance of integrated documentation approaches for human rights considerations.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This study examined administrative detention practices during the Gaza hostilities from 2023 to 2025, analyzing how carceral systems function as mechanisms of population-level control. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data revealed correlations between detention conditions and mortality rates, while witness testimonies documented patterns of dehumanization and epistemic silencing. These findings contribute to understanding how bureaucratic procedures may coincide with systematic deprivation that affects human dignity and life sustainability. The evidence indicates that detention practices during this period created conditions that warrant consideration under international legal standards, including Article II (c) of the Genocide Convention, which addresses deliberately inflicted conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction.

The qualitative approach employed in this study supports ethical documentation by centering Palestinian voices and experiences that might otherwise be underrepresented in official records. Through systematic collection and analysis of witness testimonies, this research contributes to preserving narratives that provide alternative perspectives to institutional accounts and address concerns related to epistemic injustice². This methodological approach facilitates dialogue in policy and education by providing evidence of lived experiences that can inform humanitarian interventions and legal considerations. The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods offers a framework for comprehensive human rights documentation that captures both statistical trends and individual accounts.

Future research directions include expanding cross-cultural analysis of detention practices in conflict zones through comparative studies with other historical contexts. Investigations in conflict medicine could examine the health consequences of deprivation and medical care limitations in detention settings. Research on humanitarian response might develop protocols for documentation and monitoring when access to detention facilities is restricted. Additional work could explore computational approaches for analyzing human rights data and developing systems for identifying patterns of systematic violations. These directions would enhance understanding of carceral systems in conflict zones and support interventions in contexts of mass detention.

Specific methodological advancements needed in future research include developing standardized protocols for human rights data collection across organizations, establishing verification mechanisms for testimonial evidence in conflict contexts, and creating frameworks for assessing the representativeness of documented cases. Substantive research priorities should include longitudinal studies of detention impacts on community health and social structures, analysis of how detention practices intersect with broader siege conditions, and examination of accountability mechanisms for documented violations. The development of ethical guidelines for secondary analysis of human rights data represents another important direction, particularly regarding trauma-informed approaches to working with sensitive testimony.

This study demonstrates both the possibilities and limitations of human rights documentation during active conflicts. While systematic patterns emerge from integrated analysis of available evidence, persistent data gaps and access restrictions prevent comprehensive understanding of detention conditions. The methodological innovations developed here provide frameworks for maximizing rigor within existing constraints, but ultimately highlight the need for independent monitoring and institutional accountability. The findings contribute to ongoing scholarly and policy discussions about detention practices in conflict zones while acknowledging that definitive conclusions require additional evidence and continued documentation efforts.

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