

Response to Reviewers

Cover Letter

To the Editor,

We thank you and the reviewers for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript, “**The Architecture of Detention: Administrative Control, Torture, and Epistemic Trust under Gaza Hostilities (2023–2025)**” (Manuscript ID: [PLACEHOLDER]). We are grateful to the reviewers for their thoughtful, detailed, and constructive feedback, which has been invaluable in strengthening our work. In response to the reviewers’ primary concerns, we have undertaken significant revisions to enhance the manuscript’s methodological transparency, moderate its causal claims, and clarify its theoretical and ethical positioning. The key revisions include:

- A comprehensive expansion of the **Method** section (Section 4), detailing our analytical procedures, including inter-coder reliability statistics, robustness checks for quantitative findings, and explicit protocols for addressing data limitations.
- A substantial revision of the **Discussion** and **Conclusion** sections to temper legal conclusions, explicitly acknowledge the correlational nature of our evidence, and discuss alternative explanations for observed patterns.
- The addition of new sections on **Researcher Positionality** and **Ethical Considerations** within the Method and Discussion sections, addressing concerns about reflexivity and the use of secondary trauma data.
- A thorough refinement of terminology, table formatting, and narrative flow throughout the manuscript to improve clarity and accessibility.

We believe these revisions have directly addressed the reviewers’ major critiques, resulting in a more rigorous, nuanced, and transparent manuscript. Our detailed point-by-point responses follow.

Sincerely,
The Authors

Response to Reviewers

Reviewer 1

Comment 1: Major concerns: Secondary data limitations: Complete reliance on human rights organization data without methodological critique of collection procedures, potential selection biases, or verification

mechanisms. Causal overreach: Strong correlational findings (e.g., $r=0.86$ between overcrowding and mortality) are presented as evidence of systematic causation without addressing confounding variables or alternative explanations. Sampling justification: Purposive sampling of 114 testimonies from millions affected requires stronger justification for representativeness. Missing methodological details: No inter-coder reliability statistics provided for qualitative coding, no documentation of how "medical access" was quantified across facilities.

Response: We thank the reviewer for highlighting these critical methodological points. We have substantially revised the **Method** section (Section 4) to address each concern.

- **Data Limitations & Critique:** We now explicitly acknowledge the limitations of secondary human rights data, including potential selection biases and variability in documentation methodologies. New text in Sections 4.1 (Research Design) and 4.3 (Data Collection) details our procedures for systematic comparison across sources and transparent reporting of these constraints (pages 8-9).
- **Causal Claims & Robustness Checks:** We have moderated our language regarding causation throughout. In Section 4.4 (Data Analysis) and Section 5.2 (Correlation Analysis), we now present our correlational findings with appropriate qualifications. We have added robustness checks, including Spearman's rank correlations, partial correlations controlling for facility size and time, and regression analysis with facility fixed effects. These are detailed on page 10 and in the revised results on page 12, confirming the stability of the observed patterns while acknowledging their correlational nature.
- **Sampling Justification:** We have expanded the justification for our qualitative sample size in Section 4.2 (Participants and Sampling), noting it represents all available documented accounts and exceeds thresholds for thematic saturation (page 9).
- **Methodological Details:** We now report inter-coder reliability (Cohen's kappa = 0.78) in Section 4.4 (page 10). The operationalization of variables like "medical access" (derived from categorical reporting in source documents) is clarified in Section 4.3 (page 9).

Comment 2: Terminology issues: Heavy reliance on theoretical jargon ("epistemic silencing," "testimonial erasure") without operational definitions. Overstated conclusions: Abstract and conclusions contain strong legal claims ("fulfills Genocide Convention conditions") that exceed the evidentiary support. **Response:**

- **Terminology:** We have operationalized key theoretical terms where they are first used in the Introduction and Method sections. For instance, "epistemic silencing" is now explicitly linked to the systematic restrictions on communication documented in the testimonies (pages 2, 10).
- **Legal Conclusions:** We have significantly tempered our legal conclusions. In the Abstract, Discussion (Section 6), and Conclusion (Section 7), we have replaced definitive claims with more cautious language. We now state that the documented conditions "may potentially align with," "warrant consideration under," or are "relevant to" Article II(c) of the Genocide Convention, while explicitly noting that correlation does not equal proof of genocidal intent (pages 1, 14, 15). A new paragraph in the Discussion (page 14) is dedicated to these important qualifications.

Comment 3: Reproducibility & Transparency: Critical flaws: No data availability statement or access to raw datasets. Qualitative coding framework not provided (codebook, decision rules). Missing statistical details. **Response:** We have enhanced transparency throughout.

- **Data Availability:** Given the sensitive nature of the data (witness testimonies from an active conflict zone), providing raw datasets would violate the security and consent agreements of the source organizations. We now explicitly state this limitation in the Trustworthiness subsection (Section 4.5, page 11).
- **Coding Framework:** While the full codebook is extensive, we now provide the major code categories (e.g., dehumanization, medical neglect) and describe the structured, iterative process used to develop it in Section 4.4 (page 10).
- **Statistical Details:** We have added confidence intervals and p-values to the correlation matrix in Table 3 (page 12) and detailed the specific statistical tests (Pearson, Spearman, partial correlation) in Section 4.4 (page 10).

Comment 4: Ethical considerations: Concerns: Positionality: Lack of reflexivity regarding researchers' relationship to the conflict. Informed consent: Unclear if secondary use of testimonies respected original consent agreements. Trauma sensitivity: No discussion of ethical protocols for analyzing traumatic testimony.

Response: We have added a new subsection on **Trustworthiness** (Section 4.5) that directly addresses these points.

- **Positionality:** We now include a reflection on researcher positionality and how our theoretical orientation prioritizes centering marginalized voices, while acknowledging this epistemological stance (page 11).
- **Informed Consent & Trauma Sensitivity:** We explicitly state that our secondary analysis respected the original consent agreements of the source organizations and that we focused on aggregated patterns. We also note that the source organizations employed trauma-informed interview protocols, and our analysis followed ethical guidelines for working with sensitive material (page 11).

Reviewer 2

Comment 1: Major flaw: The mixed-methods design claims triangulation but demonstrates confirmation bias. Qualitative and quantitative components appear selected to reinforce predetermined conclusions. Statistical limitations: Correlation analysis is presented as causal evidence. No controls for confounding variables. Sampling bias: Exclusive reliance on human rights organizations without methodological critique.

Response: We have revised the manuscript to directly counter the perception of confirmation bias and address the statistical limitations.

- **Confirmation Bias:** In Section 4.4 (Data Analysis), we now describe our integration procedure as explicitly seeking both convergent and **divergent** patterns, using joint displays to examine contradictory evidence (page 10). The Discussion (Section 6) includes a new paragraph on "Alternative Explanations" (page 15), actively considering resource constraints or security rationales as potential interpretations.
- **Statistical Limitations & Controls:** As noted in response to Reviewer 1, we have added robustness checks (partial correlations, fixed-effects regression) that control for potential confounders like facility size and temporal trends. These analyses are reported in Sections 4.4 and 5.2 (pages 10, 12).
- **Methodological Critique:** We have integrated a critical discussion of the limitations of human rights data methodologies into the Research Design and Data Collection subsections (Sections 4.1,

4.3), framing our multi-source approach as a strategy to mitigate, while not eliminating, these biases (pages 8-9).

Comment 2: Required for Resubmission: Remove all genocide claims unless supported by legal analysis that engages with genocide jurisprudence and standards of proof. Add rigorous critique of human rights data methodologies and limitations. Acknowledge researcher positionality and potential advocacy biases.

Response:

- **Genocide Claims:** We have substantially revised these claims as detailed in response to Reviewer 1 (Comment 2). We now engage with the high burden of proof and the distinction between empirical patterns and legal determination in the Discussion (page 14). We cite relevant legal scholarship (e.g., Chakhmakhchyan & Meyroyan, 2025) to ground the discussion.
- **Critique of Data:** This has been added throughout the Method section, as described above.
- **Researcher Positionality & Bias:** We have added explicit reflection on positionality in Section 4.5 (Trustworthiness) and the Discussion (page 14). We acknowledge our epistemological stance while detailing the procedures (peer debriefing, reflexive journaling, negative case analysis) implemented to maintain analytical rigor and minimize advocacy bias (page 11).

Comment 3: Ethical & Transparency Standards: Critical flaw: No discussion of researcher positionality or potential conflicts of interest despite clear advocacy orientation. No indication of IRB approval for secondary data use or data sharing plans. Ethical concern: Using witness testimony for academic publication without clear informed consent procedures for secondary analysis. **Response:**

- **Positionality/Conflict of Interest:** Addressed above in new text in Section 4.5.
- **IRB Approval & Data Sharing:** As our study involved secondary analysis of publicly available, anonymized reports and aggregated data, it was exempt from IRB review. This is now stated in Section 4.5. Data sharing plans are constrained by security concerns, as noted above.
- **Informed Consent for Secondary Analysis:** We clarify in Section 4.3 and 4.5 that our use of testimony was strictly secondary, relying on the original consent procedures of the documenting organizations (PHRI, Amnesty, etc.), whose ethical protocols we describe (page 11).

Comment 4: Strengthening Revisions: Engage with scholarship critical of human rights methodology in conflict zones. Include alternative explanations for observed patterns. Develop more nuanced theoretical framework that doesn't presuppose systematic intent. **Response:**

- **Critical Scholarship:** While our focus is on documenting patterns using available data, we now acknowledge in the Method section that human rights methodology is a contested field with inherent limitations in conflict zones (page 8).
- **Alternative Explanations:** A dedicated paragraph in the Discussion (page 15) now explores alternative interpretations (e.g., resource constraints, security rationale) for the observed correlations.
- **Nuanced Theoretical Framework:** We have refined our theoretical framing in the Introduction and Background. We present the "conditions-of-life" and "epistemic injustice" frameworks as analytical lenses for examining outcomes and documentation barriers, rather than as presumptions of intent. The connection between empirical findings and these frameworks is now more carefully argued in the Discussion (page 14).

Closing Note

We again extend our sincere gratitude to both reviewers for their rigorous engagement with our work. Their critiques were challenging but immensely productive. The revisions undertaken have, we believe, significantly strengthened the manuscript's methodological rigor, theoretical nuance, and ethical transparency. We are confident that the revised version presents a more balanced, robust, and credible analysis of this critically important subject.