

Response to Reviewers

Cover Letter

Dear Editor,

We thank you and the reviewers for the constructive feedback on our manuscript titled "**Faith under Fire: The Divine Silence and the Persistence of Belief in the Palestinian Holocaust**". The reviewers' comments have been invaluable in helping us strengthen our methodological framework, clarify our comparative approach, and address ethical concerns regarding terminology and representation.

In response to the reviewers' critiques, we have made substantial revisions to the manuscript. Most significantly, we have:

- 1) Added a comprehensive methodological section (Section 3) that explicitly positions our work as conceptual philosophical analysis while acknowledging its limitations for making empirical claims.
- 2) Removed all references to "Palestinian Holocaust" and reframed our comparative analysis to focus on structural similarities in theological responses to systematic violence without equating distinct historical events.
- 3) Enhanced our engagement with Islamic theological scholarship and clarified the theoretical nature of our claims about Palestinian experiences.
- 4) Substantially revised our abstract, introduction, and conclusion to better reflect the conceptual scope and limitations of our analysis.

We believe these revisions have significantly improved the manuscript's rigor, clarity, and ethical sensitivity while maintaining its core theoretical contributions.

Reviewer-by-Reviewer Responses

Reviewer 1

Comment 1: "The paper must either explicitly position itself as purely theoretical philosophy (and scale back empirical claims) or develop a rigorous methodology for analyzing discourse..." **Response:** We have explicitly positioned the paper as conceptual philosophical analysis. We added a new Section 3: "Methodological Framework and Analytical Approach" that clearly states: "Our methodological approach is explicitly conceptual rather than empirical, focusing on developing theoretical models that could inform future ethnographic and historical research." (Page 4, lines 85-87) We also scaled back empirical claims throughout the manuscript.

Comment 2: "Claims about Palestinian experiences and theological responses require supporting evidence

through interviews, ethnographic research, or systematic analysis...” **Response:** We have clarified that our analysis is based on scholarly interpretations rather than primary research. In the methodological section, we state: “As a conceptual study, our analysis relies on secondary sources and theoretical frameworks rather than primary ethnographic or historical research.” (Page 5, lines 120-122) We also acknowledge this limitation in the discussion section.

Comment 3: “The Holocaust-Palestine comparison needs much more careful methodological justification and nuanced handling of historical specificity.” **Response:** We have substantially revised our comparative framework. In Section 3, we explain: “The comparative framework is designed not to equate distinct historical events but to identify recurring patterns in how human communities respond theologically to systematic destruction.” (Page 4, lines 78-80) We also emphasize historical differences throughout the analysis.

Comment 4: “The treatment of Islamic theological concepts appears superficial and potentially misrepresentative without deeper engagement with Islamic scholarly traditions...” **Response:** We have expanded our engagement with contemporary Islamic scholarship, adding references to Quisay (2023), Rouzati (2018), Sayilgan (2023), and Jahangiri (2023) throughout the paper. We also clarify that our analysis focuses on scholarly interpretations rather than claiming to represent diverse Muslim perspectives.

Comment 5: “Excessive abstraction and jargon that could be clarified” **Response:** We have revised the abstract, introduction, and conclusion to reduce jargon and improve clarity. Key terms like “epistemic violence” and “discursive formations” are now more carefully defined in context.

Reviewer 2

Comment 1: “The decision to frame the analysis around the asserted concept of a ‘Palestinian Holocaust’ is both an academic and ethical error...” **Response:** We have removed all instances of “Palestinian Holocaust” from the manuscript. The title is now “Faith under Fire: The Divine Silence and the Persistence of Belief in Contexts of Systematic Violence” and we refer throughout to “the Palestinian context” or “systematic violence against Palestinians.” This change appears in the title, abstract, and all relevant sections.

Comment 2: “The comparison between the European Holocaust and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not methodologically justified.” **Response:** We have reframed our comparative approach. As noted above, we now emphasize that we are comparing structural patterns in theological responses rather than equating historical events. The new methodological section explicitly addresses this: “This approach acknowledges the significant historical and theological differences between the European Holocaust and the Palestinian experience while examining how similar existential challenges produce comparable discursive dynamics.” (Page 4, lines 75-78)

Comment 3: “Lack of Empirical Grounding: Purely theoretical assertions are presented as findings, with no original data, discourse analysis, or case studies to support them.” **Response:** We have clarified throughout that this is a conceptual philosophical paper. The new methodological section states: “Our analytical framework involves close reading and interpretation of philosophical texts, theological works, and genocide studies scholarship” rather than empirical research. (Page 4, lines 88-90)

Comment 4: “Polemical, Not Scholarly, Stance: The paper advocates rather than analyzes, failing to maintain academic neutrality.” **Response:** We have revised the tone throughout to maintain academic neutrality, focusing on theoretical analysis rather than advocacy. We have removed normative language and strengthened the scholarly framing of our arguments.

Comment 5: “The authors should include a positionality statement, acknowledging the normative and political nature of their inquiry from the outset.” **Response:** While we have maintained academic neutrality in our analysis, we have added clarification in the methodological section about the conceptual nature of our inquiry: “This methodological approach acknowledges the inherent tension between conceptual analysis and empirical verification while seeking to develop theoretical tools that could guide future research.” (Page 5, lines 115-117)

Closing Note

We thank the reviewers again for their thorough and constructive feedback. The revisions made in response to their comments have significantly strengthened the manuscript's methodological rigor, conceptual clarity, and ethical sensitivity. We believe the paper now makes a valuable contribution to philosophical discussions of language, faith, and systematic violence while acknowledging the appropriate scope and limitations of conceptual analysis.