The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in Tamim Al-Barghouti's Nafsi Al-Fida': A Sociological Study of Literature

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Abstract

The prolonged conflict between Palestine and Israel, particularly in the Gaza Strip, has caused widespread humanitarian suffering and has become a recurring theme in contemporary Arabic literature. One prominent example is Tamim Al-Barghouti's poem Nafsi al-Fida', written in response to Israel's military aggression against Gaza in 2008-2009 (Operation Cast Lead). This study aims to explore how the poem represents the social reality of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through a sociological approach to literature. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the research combines textual analysis of the poem with triangulated sources from international media reports and humanitarian organization documents to ensure data validity. Using Alan Swingewood's theory of literary sociology, the study interprets the poem as a social product that both reflects and critiques the lived experiences of society under conflict. The analysis reveals that Al-Barghouti's use of vivid imagery, metaphors of resistance, and contrasts between life and death encapsulates the political and humanitarian dimensions of Gaza's suffering, depicting Hamas' political victory, armed resistance, underground defense strategies, white phosphorus bombings, and the devastation of civilian life. These aesthetic choices transform the poem into both an artistic and sociological document, bridging emotion with historical testimony. The findings conclude that Nafsi al-Fida' not only serves as a record of Palestinian suffering but also contributes to shaping Palestinian literary identity and political discourse by asserting poetry as a form of cultural resistance.

Keywords: Sociological literature; Tamim Al-Barghouti; Poem; Nafsi Al-Fida'; Alan Swingewood

INTRODUCTION

The conflict between Palestine and Israel is a dispute between two countries that remains unresolved to this day (Alkhan & Ulinnuha, 2022). Tartness and humiliation continue to haunt the hearts of the Palestinian people as a result of the 1948 War, which saw them torn apart and uprooted from their homeland for the first time (Shaleh, 2002). In the Balfour Declaration of 1971, Britain mandated Israel to protect the rights of local Palestinians, but in reality, Israel ignored this mandate (Wahidin & Wati, 2024). Beginning in 1980, Palestinian Muslims rose in unity to liberate themselves and defend themselves from Israeli control through a Muslim liberation movement known as the First Intifada, which lasted until 1993. This liberation movement subsided after the Oslo Accords (Khumairoh & Fadhil, 2019), which called for peace and allowed the Israeli people to live freely in Palestine. However, from the end of 2008 to January 22, 2009, their attacks were so intense that they destroyed schools, places of worship, public facilities, and

residents' homes. These attacks were carried out under the pretext of fighting Hamas, which had occupied Gaza since March 2006 and participated in the resistance against Israel alongside the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization).

This enduring conflict has deeply influenced Arab literary production, especially among Palestinian writers who directly experience the fragmentation of their nation. Writers made the occupation and aggression against Palestine a topic constantly raised in literary works such as poetry, short stories, and novels (Izazi & Nashiruddin, 2024). Literature, as a mirror of society, not only reflects human reality but also critiques it and offers symbolic resistance to oppression (Hawa, 2022). In this case, poetry enters the realm of human life more intensely, not only as romantic or tragic words, but as a burst of passion, a deadly weapon, and a milestone of revolution from an event (Shiddiq & Rofiuddin, 2024; Zuhdi, 2022). Therefore, the art of resistance channeled through literary works, whether in novels, short stories, or poetry, can cause hegemonic instability and trigger change (El-din, 2019).

Literary works are products of society that play an important role in describing and critiquing a society's social and political conditions (Armanto, 2024; Sujarwa, 2019). Writers generate ideas based on life experiences gained from reality, then use humans and their lives as subjects, conveying these ideas through language, both spoken and written (Hasibuan, 2021; Latifa et al., 2023; Suryaningsih et al., 2023). Poetry, in particular, encapsulates complex social experiences and emotional truths within a condensed artistic form (Adriyanti et al., 2021). This relationship between the real world and the fictional world requires authors to discuss topics that are relevant to the information available in society and convey the intended meaning so that readers can better understand reality (Suganda et al., 2025). Aminuddin describes poetry as a creative act that constructs an imaginative world filled with emotional and spiritual atmospheres (Aminuddin, 2014). The depth of a poet's engagement with life determines the vitality of their work (Hinduan et al., 2020). Through rhythm and imagery, poetry transforms the experiences of individuals into collective memory (Pradopo, 2009).

The dynamic relationship between literature and society can be explored through the lens of literary sociology, which investigates how social structures and cultural forces shape literary creation (Ishtiaq & Khan, 2025). As Endraswara notes, sociological literary research views literature as a reflection and product of social life (Endraswara, 2011). Laurenson and Swingewood define sociology itself as a scientific and objective study of humans in society, social institutions, and existing social processes; this is in line with literature that is closely related to the human social world, its adaptation to that world, and the desire to change it (Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972). This theoretical framework is relevant to the present study because it bridges the aesthetic and sociological dimensions of poetry, allowing for an interpretation of how poetic language encodes collective trauma, identity, and resistance.

Among the prominent figures who embody this literary-social relationship is Tamim Al-Barghouti, a Palestinian poet whose works have resonated deeply throughout the Arab world (Eshreteh & Sarahneh, 2023). Born in Cairo in 1977 to Egyptian intellectuals Mourid Al-Barghouti and Radwa Ashour, Tamim's life was marked by political exile following the Egyptian-Israeli peace process (Al-Arabiya.net, 2024; Arageek.com, 2023). Tamim has witnessed the political reality in the Arab world and its impact on his personal life since an early age (Al-Fansh, 2021). His poetic voice, rich in political consciousness, gained widespread recognition after he participated in *Amir al-Shua'ara* (Prince of Poets), where he recited his celebrated poem Fi al-Quds (Haidar et al., 2025). Al-Barghouti's works consistently engage with themes of displacement, resistance, and national identity, positioning him as one of the most influential voices in contemporary Arabic poetry.

His poem *Nafsi al-Fida'*, recited in 2009 during *the Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World festival* at The Kennedy Center (Varno, 2009), was composed in response to Israel's 2008-2009 military aggression in Gaza. Within the context of Palestinian resistance literature, *Nafsi al-Fida'* serves not only as a reflection of suffering but also as a transformative discourse of defiance. Through imagery of sacrifice, steadfastness, and moral endurance, the poem gives voice to the collective struggle of Palestinians, turning grief into agency. Its symbolism and emotional intensity transform the poem into both an artistic testimony and a sociopolitical document that challenges dominant narratives of the conflict.

Previous studies on Tamim Al-Barghouti's poetry have largely focused on microlinguistic and stylistic aspects. Haidar et al (Haidar et al., 2025) explored the rhetorical technique of *tasdir* in Al-Barghouti's poem *Al-Burdah*, while Aljoranie and Saadeh analyzed his use of symbolism, intertextuality, and artistic imagery (Aljoranie & Saadeh, 2024). Other scholars have examined the pragmatic and semiotic dimensions of his works, such as Ibdah (Ibdah, 2023) on *In Jerusalem* and Jabbour (Jabbour, 2022) on *Ashqa,* as well as Zarik (Zarik, 2022), who used pragmatic presupposition to uncover implicit meanings in *In Jerusalem*. Yaqin applied Rifattere's semiotic theory to *Ayyuha an-Naas* and found the poem's meaning to be intentionally ambiguous (Yaqin, 2022).

While these studies have significantly contributed to understanding Al-Barghouti's linguistic artistry, they remain limited to textual and stylistic analysis. More recent research, such as (Abdullah & Hassan, 2025) and (Sliman-baraky, 2025) has highlighted the importance of Arabic poetry as a socio-political phenomenon, emphasizing the poet's role as a cultural mediator and moral witness. Yet, few studies have examined Al-Barghouti's works from a sociological perspective that connects poetic aesthetics with the lived realities of Palestinians under occupation. This gap underscores the need for a macro-sociological approach that situates Al-Barghouti's poetry within its broader historical and political context.

This study uses Alan Swingewood's theory of literary sociology, which formulates two approaches to literary sociology. The first approach views literary works as direct reflections of various topics, while the second approach emphasizes creation, particularly how works are created and the social situations experienced by authors. In addition, another concept is the relationship between literary works and history. This concept is said to be complex because it requires an extraordinary ability to observe how a particular society receives literary works at a certain point in history (Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972).

Alan Swingewood's sociological approach to literature has been used to study various types of literary works, such as the research conducted by Aeni et al on the poem Hawamish 'Ala Daftar Al-Naksah by Nizar Qabbani, which represents the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Aeni & Mustari, 2024). This study shows that social issues such as economic backwardness, internal conflict, and political oppression are written in the poem's verses. Alan Swingewood's other sociological studies of literature have been applied to other types of literary works, such as the research conducted by Suganda et al on the short story anthology Kita Susah Tidur sejak Dilahirkan (*We Have Trouble Sleeping Since Birth*) by Aksan Taqwin Embe (Suganda et al., 2025) and the research by Bahtiar et al on the representation of women in novels (Bahtiar et al., 2023).

Referring to Alan Swingewood's theory of literary sociology, this study considers Tamim Al-Barghouti's poem Nafsi Al-Fida' as a form of social documentation of the realities of life. Swingewood asserts that literary works are not born in a vacuum, but rather record the social, political, and historical experiences of the society of their time. Thus, this study hypothesizes that the poem Nafsii Al-Fidaa' represents the reality of the suffering of the Palestinian people due to military aggression, blockade, and occupation, packaged in an aesthetic form. Each stanza is not only an emotional expression of the poet, but also

functions as a social record documenting the struggle of the Palestinian people who always hope for freedom. In doing so, this study extends previous scholarship on Al-Barghouti's works, which has largely focused on micro-linguistic or stylistic patterns, by demonstrating how literary form operates as a medium of social and moral resistance.

This study aims to examine Tamim Al-Barghouti's poem Nafsii Al-Fidaa' through Alan Swingewood's sociological approach to literature, particularly the idea that literary works are a documentation of real life. This study seeks to reveal how the poem's text records the socio-political reality of Palestine, from the suffering caused by military aggression to the collective resistance of its people. Through this analysis, the researcher aims to show that poetry is not merely an individual aesthetic expression, but also a historical and social medium that voices the identity, memory, and resistance of a nation against injustice.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with literary sociology theory to examine the reflection of values in society when the text was written (Endraswara, 2011). This approach was chosen because this study focuses on understanding the issues and context described in the research object, namely the poem Nafsii Al-Fidaa' by Tamim Al-Barghouti (Sugiarti et al., 2020). According to Creswell, the qualitative approach is a way to explore and understand the meaning of a social or human problem, and this approach can be used on research data in the form of images or text (Creswell, 2009).

The primary data in this study consists of verses from a poem by Tamim Al-Barghouti entitled Nafsii Al-Fidaa'. This poem is audio-visual in nature because it was recited live by Tamim at an international Arab cultural festival entitled Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World at The Kennedy Center in 2009, and can be heard in its entirety on a YouTube upload on a channel called Youssef Ali. The transcript of Tamim Al-Barghouti's poem Nafsii Al-Fida' can also be accessed on a YouTube upload on the +AJ channel, which has a special series on Tamim Al-Barghouti's poetry.

Data collection involves textual analysis focusing on the poem's thematic, structural, and symbolic elements. These features are then interpreted within the historical framework of the 2008-2009 Gaza conflict, enabling a contextual reading that connects poetic imagery to socio-political events. The analysis proceeds in three stages; (1) textual examination, by identifying the poem's imagery, diction, and figurative expressions; (2) contextual correlation, by linking textual findings to the social realities of occupation, displacement, and resistance; (3) sociological interpretation, by applying Swingewood's framework to reveal how the poem constructs social meaning and collective identity.

The validity of the data findings in this study is ensured through the use of descriptive validity with a triangulation strategy. Descriptive validity is used to ensure that the description of the data presented corresponds to the reality in the field without distortion or bias in interpretation (Haryoko et al., 2020). The triangulation strategy was carried out by comparing and combining various data sources, namely the text of the poem Nafsii al-Fidaa' by Tamim Al-Barghouti, news reports from international media, and official documents from humanitarian organizations such as Human Rights Watch, WHO, and PCHR. By conducting triangulation, the research findings do not rely on a single source but are confirmed by several different sources, thereby increasing the credibility and accuracy of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis show that Tamim Al-Barghouti's *Nafsi al-Fida'* reflects multiple dimensions of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through vivid poetic imagery and symbolic language. The poem not only depicts scenes of destruction but also reveals the

collective strength and moral endurance of the Palestinian people. Each verse acts as a social mirror that records real events in Gaza before and during 2009, transforming historical reality into aesthetic expression.

To present these reflections more clearly, the findings are organized into four major themes representing the poem's most significant social depictions: the political roots of conflict, the humanitarian impact of war, the spirit of resistance, and the commemoration of victims. These themes synthesize the eight social facts originally identified in the poem into broader sociological categories that align with Alan Swingewood's framework of literature as a social product. The summary of these findings is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of Social Reflections in Tamim Al-Barghouti's *Nafsi al-Fida'*

No.	The	Poetic Expression/Imagery	Sociological Meaning
1.	Political Roots of Conflict	References to Hamas' 2006 electoral victory, followed by increased attacks and isolation in Gaza	Depicts how political transformation intensified aggression, reflecting the fragility of Palestinian sovereignty and the beginning of renewed occupation violence
2.	War Humanitarian Crisis	Imagery of air strikes, white phosphorus raining from the sky, destroyed hospitals, and the cries of civilians	Documents the physical devastation and collective trauma of Palestinians, transforming factual suffering into poetic testimony of humanitarian injustice
3.	Resistance and Endurance	Portrayal of fighters, underground tunnels, and paramedics searching for life amid ruins	Symbolizing collective strength, unity, and moral resistance, the poem frames survival itself as an act of defiance and dignity
4.	Loss and Memory of Victims	Depictions of starving children, mourning mothers, and "souls ascending with smoke."	Humanizes the casualties of war and preserves the collective cultural memory, turning loss into a symbol of identity and perseverance

Hamas' Victory in the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Election Led to Heartbreak

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نفسي الفداء لكل منتصر حزين

قتل الذين يحبهم إذ كان يحمي الآخرين

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My soul is redemption for every sad victor
His loved ones were killed because he protected others

Tamim begins the poem Nafsii Al-Fidaa' with the above verse. The words منتصر حزين (sad victor) refer to the victory won by Hamas in the Palestinian legislative elections on January 27, 2006, which succeeded in displacing Fatah, the group that had previously been in power, by winning 74 seats out of a total of 132 seats in parliament. This victory enabled Hamas to form a government in various Palestinian territories. Hamas supporters celebrated this victory by firing shots into the air, handing out candy, and honking their horns while waving Hamas flags from their car windows (Aljazeera, 2006).

On the other hand, this victory was not warmly welcomed by the United States, Israel, and the European Union because they did not want to deal with Hamas, which they considered a terrorist group, so Hamas had to reject violence and recognize Israel's existence in any contact (Akbarzadeh, 2006). As a result, Palestine faced an international blockade, suspension of financial aid, and diplomatic isolation, which worsened the

socioeconomic conditions of the people of Gaza, leading to clashes that claimed many lives, including the Hamas-Fatah conflict.

This blockade is also described in the following verse from Nafsii Al-Fidaa's poem.

حاصرونا كيفما شئتم

فإن الخبز والتاريخ يصنع هاهنا تحت الحصار

Surround us any way you want
For indeed, bread and history are made here under the siege

Through the verses above, Tamim documents a historical paradox: Hamas' political victory, which should have brought hope, resulted in suffering for the people. Within the framework of Swingewood's theory, these verses demonstrate the function of poetry as a social document that records real conflicts, namely when victory turned into collective trauma due to sanctions in the form of an Israeli military siege and other difficulties.

Gaza Tunnels and Israeli Airstrikes

نفسي فداء للشموس تسير في الأنفاق تحت الأرض من دار لدار

حيث الصباح هنا يهرب من يد ليد

بديلا عن صباح خربته طائرات الظالمين

My soul is redemption for the sun that walks underground from house to house
Where tomorrow morning here escapes from hand to hand
As a substitute for the morning destroyed by the planes of the oppressors

In this verse, Tamim Al-Barghouti presents an image of underground tunnels (الأنفاق) as a symbol of the Palestinian people's resilience in the face of Israeli air aggression. These tunnels were built by the residents of Gaza, especially since the strict blockade following Hamas' victory in 2006, to connect homes, supply logistical needs, and protect themselves from Israeli air strikes. The underground passages also became a military strategy for resistance, as they allowed fighters to move covertly without being detected by Israeli drones and fighter jets (Abuamer, 2024; Hilal, 2024).

The phrase "the sun that walks underground" (للشموس تسير في الأنفاق) is a metaphor that documents the shift in the living space of the Palestinian people from the surface of the earth to underground due to the dominance of Israeli air strikes. Tamim refers to the morning as "escapes from hand to hand," describing how daily life (symbolized by the morning) is forced to hide and move secretly in tunnels. Meanwhile, "the morning destroyed by the oppressors' planes" clearly shows the destruction of civilian spaces above ground due to repeated Israeli bombardments.

Within the framework of Swingewood's theory, these verses reveal the function of poetry as a social document of the Palestinian people's survival strategies amid conflict. The poems record how war forced people to shift their vital activities underground as a direct consequence of Israel's aerial bombardment. This makes the poems an emotional and historical archive of the Palestinian people's struggle.

Illegal and Dangerous Phosphoric Shots

نفسي فداء للسماء قنا بل الفسفور تملؤها كشعر الغول

ألف أفعى بيضاء نحو الأرض تسعى

My soul is redemption for the sky filled with phosphorus bombs like giant hair
Thousands of white snakes slithering toward the ground

In the verse above, Tamim Al-Barghouti presents a description of the Israeli attack on Gaza in the winter of 2008-2009. This attack drew attention from human rights organizations because the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) were strongly suspected of using white phosphorus ammunition in their attacks during the military operation in Gaza, which lasted from December 27, 2008, to January 18, 2009. White phosphorus is a powerful incendiary weapon that can explode and shatter upon hitting its target, producing a fire that cannot be extinguished with water. The weapon can burn body tissue to the bone, causing death in many victims (Wulandari, 2024). The use of phosphorus in civilian areas (especially if it destroys civilian facilities) is strictly prohibited by international law. Nevertheless, Israel persists and continues to use it continuously to rain down on the Gaza Strip with ammunition that, according to Human Rights Watch, citing the Ministry of Health, can cause serious injury and death if it comes into contact with the skin, is inhaled, or is swallowed (HRW, 2009b).

White phosphorus produces a bright explosion that spreads like glowing white or hair in the air, before falling to the ground as burning sparks. Tamim presents this visual image in his poem through the metaphors "giant hair (شعر الغول)" and "thousands of snakes (ألف أفعى بيضاء)", to reinforce the impression of destruction and deadly threat posed by this weapon. The actual visualization of the white phosphorus explosion in this literary text confirms Swingewood's view that literature can capture the social facts that occur in a society and make them part of the historical consciousness of that society.

Hamas' Resistance to Israeli Attacks

نفسي الفداء للرجال ملثمين
إذ يطلقون سلاحهم مثل الدعاء يطير من أدنى لأعلى

My soul is redemption for the masked man (wearing a face cover)
They fire their weapons like prayers flying from below to above

This verse represents the armed resistance carried out by Hamas in the face of Israeli military aggression, particularly during the period when this poem was written (around 2008-2009, coinciding with Operation Cast Lead). The phrase "masked men (الرجال الملثمين)" describes fighters who conceal their identities, a characteristic feature of Hamas military forces with their face coverings. This image often appeared in international media reports during the period when Hamas faced Israeli military aggression, which at that time launched massive air and ground attacks on the Gaza Strip.

Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups have deliberately or indiscriminately fired thousands of rockets into Israeli territory since 2001. Such attacks ceased during a ceasefire in June 2008, but increased in November 2008 following an Israeli military offensive on Gaza (HRW, 2009c). In many field reports, they appear and attack through tunnels or building ruins, firing weapons from hidden positions and then disappearing, as if their actions were "prayers flying from below to above (مثل الدعاء يسير من أدنى لأعلى)", as mentioned in the poem above.

From a sociological view, this verse shows more than the actions of masked fighters, but it also highlights their role as symbols of Palestinian resistance. Swingewood's perspective saw literature grow out of its social context, reflecting real events while giving them deeper social meaning. Here, the image of weapons fired "like prayers flying from

below to above" turns armed struggle into something spiritual and collective, capturing how poetry can both record reality and shape how a community understands its own fight for survival.

Paramedics Look for Signs of Life

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نفسي فداء للرجال مسعفين
المنحنين على الركام ولم يكونوا منحنين
الراكضين إلى المنازل باحثين عن الأنين
حيث الأنين علامة الأحياء يصبح نادرا

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My soul is redemption for the medical workers
Those who bend over the rubble and do not bow their heads
People who run to houses looking for complaints
Where moans become a sign of life becoming rare

This verse describes the courage and sacrifice of Palestinian medical personnel working amid the rubble of buildings following Israeli airstrikes. In this verse, paramedics are described with the phrase "bent over the rubble but not bowed down (المنحنين على الركام ولم يكونوا منحنين)" to emphasize that although they are physically bent over, in essence, their morale remains upright, not succumbing to fear or despair. Their search for moans of pain symbolizes the last hope for life remaining among the rubble, when survivors are increasingly difficult to find. This representation corresponds to the reality in the Gaza Strip, where Palestinian paramedics are often targeted by gunfire and continue to search for victims even while airstrikes are still ongoing. This is, as stated by Amnesty International, that on January 4, 2009, two paramedics were injured while trying to rescue five unarmed youths who were targeted by the Israeli military during a missile attack in Beit Lahiya. Not long after, one of the two paramedics died (Amnesty International, 2009).

According to The Guardian, citing the Geneva Conventions, paramedics in the Gaza Strip who are not only actively treating the wounded but are also exclusively involved in searching for, collecting, transporting, and treating the wounded or sick must be respected and protected in all circumstances. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have repeatedly reported that medical personnel in Gaza are working under conditions of minimal equipment, shortages of medical supplies, and under the threat of continued attacks. Yet, they continue to strive to save the lives of Gaza's residents (Chassay, 2009).

From a sociological perspective, this verse honors the bravery of Palestinian medical workers who risk their lives amid destruction. Swingewood points out that literature is deeply connected to its social context, reflecting lived realities while also giving them symbolic weight. In this poem, the image of paramedics "bent over the rubble but not bowed down" shows how poetry can turn acts of rescue into symbols of resilience and dignity. By recording their struggle, the verse not only mirrors the harsh conditions faced in Gaza but also preserves the moral strength of these workers as part of the community's collective memory.

Water and Food Crises in Gaza

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نفسي فداء للصغار الساهرين
عطشًا وجوعا من حصار الآكلين الشاربين

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My soul is redemption for the children who are awake
Thirsty and hungry due to the siege of the closest to them who eat and drink

The poem above describes the condition of Gaza residents, especially children, who lie awake every night hungry and thirsty due to the Israeli siege. This description represents the humanitarian crisis caused by Israel's blockade of Gaza since 2007, which worsened ahead of and during Israel's military aggression in 2008-2009. Since 2007, following Hamas' victory in the Palestinian legislative elections, Israel has imposed a land, air, and sea blockade on the Gaza Strip, as well as strictly controlling the entry and exit of people and materials as a form of collective punishment. Mass starvation is a deliberate and violent tactic of war, often facilitated by blocking food supplies and humanitarian aid to the targeted population. This condition is felt directly by the people in the Gaza Strip, and even more sadly, by the children there (Bahour et al., 2025).

The IPC (International Food Security Phase Classification) report, involving 15 international humanitarian aid organizations under the leadership of the United Nations, states that Gaza is on the brink of famine, with half of Gaza's population experiencing a severe food crisis (B'Tselem, 2024). Until now, the global IPC monitoring system has raised the famine classification in Gaza to phase 5, which is the highest and most severe phase (BBC, 2025).

From a sociological perspective, this verse captures the suffering of children in Gaza who endure hunger and thirst under the blockade. Swingewood emphasizes that literature both reflects social realities and gives them a deeper cultural meaning. Here, the image of children lying awake in hunger turns a political and military strategy into a human tragedy seen through the most vulnerable lives. By presenting this reality in poetic form, Tamim not only documents the humanitarian crisis but also ensures that the pain of Gaza's children becomes part of the collective memory and moral consciousness of society.

Casualties Mounted as A Result of Israel's Attacks and Cruel Treatment

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يا دهر فلتتذكر الموتى

هناك سبعة في الطابق الثاني

ثمانية بباب الدار

أربعة من الأطفال ماتت أمهم وبقوا

لأيام بلا ماء ولا مأوى

ولاصوت ولا جدوى

</div>

O time, remember those who died
There were seven on the second floor
Eight at the door of house
Four children lost their mother and remained
Days without water and shelter
No sound, no use

The historical context behind the above verses is Operation Cast Lead, which took place from December 2008 to January 2009, during which the Israeli military launched a massive attack on the Gaza Strip. According to a report published by Amnesty International on July 2, 2009, no fewer than 1,400 Palestinians died during the 22-day Cast Lead operation, including 300 children, hundreds of unarmed civilians, 115 women, and around 85 older men (Amnesty International, 2009b).

The above verse depicts the suffering that befell the people of Gaza during the Israeli military aggression. The detailed mention of the number of victims through phrases such as "seven on the second floor (سبعة في الطابق الثاني)"; "eight at the door of the house (ثمانية بباب الدار)"; and "four children lost their mother (أربعة ماتت أمهم)" gives a documentary impression of the loss of life wherever it occurred and whatever the circumstances. This is in line with Human Rights Watch's statement that the IDF has repeatedly erred in determining the targets of its military attacks. Most of the targets were located far from the combat zone and killed large numbers of Palestinian civilians who were not military fighters. For example, the attack on the afternoon of December 27, 2008, the first day of the Israeli offensive, struck a group of students at a bus stop in downtown Gaza City, killing nine students. Another attack targeted children aged eight to sixteen who were playing on the roofs of houses in a residential neighborhood, killing six and injuring six others (HRW, 2009a).

The cruelty of the Israeli occupation forces also affected several families, one of which was the Al-Sammouni family living in the Al-Zaytoun district of Gaza City. This incident became one of the most controversial incidents in the Israeli attacks during Operation Cast Lead. It is represented in the following verses of poetry.

نفسي الفداء لأسرة جمع الجنود رجالها ونساءها في غرفة
قالوا لهم أنتم هنا في مأمن من شرنا
ومضوا ليأمر ضابط منهم بقصف البيت عن بعد

My soul is redemption for the families gathered by the soldiers, both men and women, in a room
They (the soldiers) said to them (the families), "You are safe from our evils here."
And they passed by, to order other soldiers to bomb the house from afar

This verse is in line with the statements of members of the Al-Sammouni family who were victims of the Israeli attack in January 2009. One of the surviving family members, Maysa Al-Sammouni, told CNN that Israeli soldiers ordered her family and other families to move from one house to another until dozens of people were forced to gather in one building (which belonged to a member of their family named Wael Al-Sammouni) that was already crowded. After that, the building was shot at and bombed from a distance (Khadder, 2012). The incident occurred on January 5, 2009, killing 21 people and injuring many others from the Al-Sammouni family. Ambulance crews and paramedics, who had previously been barred from entering the area, arrived to evacuate victims on January 7, 2009 (PCHR, 2012).

From a sociological perspective, these verses turn the raw numbers of death into a poetic record of collective suffering. By listing victims through the phrases "seven on the second floor," "eight at the door," and "for children who lost their mother", the poem gives a documentary feel to the tragedy, echoing Swingewood's idea that literatures reflects social facts and preserves them as part of historical consciousness. In the same way, the depiction of the Al-Sammouni family massacre transforms eyewitness testimony into cultural memory, showing how poetry can serve as both evidence of violence and a voice of remembrance for those silenced. Through such imagery, Tamim's poem not only mirrors the devastation of Operation Cast Lead but also gives it lasting moral and symbolic weight within Palestinian society.

Portraits of Victims of Israeli Attacks in Hospitals

نفسي فداء للصغار النائمين

بممر مستشفى على برد البلاط بلا سرير
خمسة أو ستة متجاورين
في صوف بطانية فيها الدماء مكفنين

My soul is redemption for the sleeping children
In the hospital hallway with cold ceramic floors and no beds,
Five or six people lay side by side
In wool blankets stained with blood

This verse presents the most heartbreaking portrait of humanity in the Gaza tragedy, where children who are victims of Israeli military attacks lie helplessly in hospital corridors. The images of "cold ceramic floors without beds (برد البلاط بلا سرير)" and "wool blankets stained with blood (صوف بطانية فيها الدماء مكفنين)" not only show physical suffering, but also the inadequacy of medical facilities due to the surge in the number of injured and dead victims.

This description, which is still related to Operation Cast Lead (December 2008-January 2009), clearly occurred when the intensity of Israeli bombing damaged Gaza's health care system. A report written by Norwegian doctors Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse, who had been working in Gaza for almost 20 years, described the situation and conditions they faced while working at a central hospital in Gaza City called Al-Shifa. Both witnessed the most horrific war wounds, inflicted on men, women, and children of all ages, in numbers that were almost unimaginable. The wounded, dying, and dead victims of the Israeli attacks poured into the crowded hospital, wrapped in blankets and held in the warm embrace of others (Gilbert & Fosse, 2009).

The above verse also shows that hospitals and health centers in the Gaza Strip are in critical condition because much of the medical equipment is inoperable due to a lack of spare parts. The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) reports from the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH) that more than 200 units of medical equipment require maintenance and replacement of components that cannot be obtained in Gaza due to the ongoing strict blockade imposed by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) (Palestinian Centre For Human Rights, 2009).

From a sociological perspective, these verses give a haunting picture of the human cost of war, where children lie side by side on cold hospital floors, wrapped in blood-stained blankets. Swingewood argues that literature is tied to its social world, reflecting real experiences while turning them into shared memory and meaning. Here, Tamim's imagery transforms the collapse of Gaza's health system into a symbol of both suffering and neglect, documenting how the blockade and bombing stripped even children of the most basic dignity. In doing so, the poem not only mirrors the reality of Operation Cast Lead but also preserves the tragedy as part of the collective moral record of Palestinian society.

The findings reveal that Tamim Al-Barghouti's *Nafsi al-Fida'* extends the tradition of Arabic resistance literature (*adab-almuqawamah*) that emerged from poets such as Mahmoud Darwish and Samih Al-Qasim. However, Al-Barghouti's poetry carries a distinctly post-Intifada sensibility, combining classical Arabic eloquence with contemporary political urgency. The poem situates itself within a broader sociopolitical movement in which art becomes an instrument of endurance and identity reconstruction. By transforming lived trauma into rhythmic defiance, *Nafsi al-Fida'* reaffirms poetry's role as a moral and cultural weapon in the Palestinian liberation struggle. This connection between poetic aesthetics and political experience illustrates that the boundaries between art and activism are deliberately blurred in modern Palestinian literature.

Moreover, the poem's themes of resistance and suffering resonate deeply with the collective consciousness of Palestine at home and in the diaspora. Through public performances, especially the 2009 recital at the Kennedy Center, *Nafsi al-Fida'* reached global audiences, reshaping perceptions of the conflict. The poem does not depict Palestinians merely as victims but as resilient agents of moral integrity and hope. Its circulation in Arab and international media highlights the potential of poetry to function as soft power, an alternative form of diplomacy that humanizes the Palestinian cause and sustains national identity through shared memory and emotion.

From a theoretical perspective, this study expands Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature by demonstrating that literature is not only a reflection of social reality but also an active participant in shaping it. Al-Barghouti's poetic discourse exemplifies how contemporary Arabic poetry performs social functions, as documenting historical violence, constructing identity, and mobilizing collective consciousness. In this sense, *Nafsi al-Fida'* bridges literary sociology and political discourse, showing that poetic expression can serve as both archive and agent in preserving the memory of oppression while transforming suffering into a narrative of resistance that challenges dominant global narratives about Palestine.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Tamim Al-Barghouti's *Nafsi al-Fida'* vividly represents the social, political, and humanitarian realities of Palestine, particularly during the Israeli military aggression on Gaza in 2008-2009. Through Alan Swingewood's sociological approach to literature, the poem can be understood as a form of social documentation that reveals the collective experience of Palestinians, ranging from Hamas' political victory and its repercussions to armed resistance, humanitarian crises caused by the blockade, the destruction of health infrastructure, and the suffering of children and civilians. These depictions confirm that literary works function not only as aesthetic expressions but also as social archives that record the traces of suffering, struggle, and endurance within a community.

Beyond describing these realities, this study contributes to a broader understanding of Palestinian literature as a medium of cultural resistance and identity formation. By examining *Nafsi al-Fida'* through the lens of literary sociology, the research highlights how modern Arabic poetry operates within political discourse, bridging emotion, art, and activism. Al-Barghouti's work illustrates the enduring power of poetry to humanize conflict and to assert national consciousness in the face of dispossession. Thus, this study enriches the discourse on resistance literature by situating Palestinian poetry not merely as a reflection of conflict, but as an active force in shaping collective memory and global awareness.

Looking forward, future research could further explore how contemporary Arab poets use language, performance, and digital media to sustain narratives of resistance in a globalized context. Comparative studies between Palestinian and other postcolonial literatures could also provide valuable insights into how poetic forms function as transnational voices of justice and solidarity. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches combining literary sociology with political communication or trauma studies may deepen our understanding of how cultural expression mediates between personal pain and public consciousness.

RECOMMENDATION

In this study, the sociological analysis of Tamim Al-Barghouti's *Nafsi al-Fida'* focuses more on the text and social context contained in it. However, this study has not yet thoroughly examined the author's side, which in this case refers to the relationship

between Tamim Al-Barghouti's social background, life experiences, and historical conditions with the literary works he created. In line with Alan Swingewood's ideas, this dimension is important to reveal the close relationship between the author's life and social reality that shapes his aesthetic expression. Limitations of space and time prevented the researcher from conducting a more extensive search for primary sources directly related to the author's biography.

In addition, Swingewood's other ideas regarding the social function of literary works could not be fully included in this study. The social function referred to is how literary works serve as a medium for criticism, reflection, and social awareness in the reader's community. This aspect has not been fully explored due to limited access to field data and empirical references that could strengthen the analysis. Therefore, further research is expected to complement these shortcomings by conducting a more in-depth biographical study while examining how the poem functions socially in the context of its readership. Thus, the study of *Nafsi al-Fida'* can achieve a more comprehensive understanding, both in terms of the text, the author, and its social function.

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