

## DISCOURSE ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT: SARA MILLS' CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini membahas wacana kekerasan seksual dan ketidaksetaraan gender terhadap perempuan Palestina dalam konflik Palestina-Israel melalui pendekatan Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkap bagaimana posisi perempuan direpresentasikan dalam media Arab daring, yaitu Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, dan CNN Arabic. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif, dengan menelaah sepuluh teks berita berdasarkan empat aspek utama teori Sara Mills: posisi subjek, objek, penulis, dan pembaca. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perempuan Palestina mengalami penindasan berlapis. Mereka menjadi korban kekerasan seksual, pelecehan, penelanjangan, dan pembunuhan yang dilakukan pasukan Israel, sekaligus menghadapi ketidaksetaraan struktural berupa keterbatasan akses terhadap kesehatan reproduksi dan kebutuhan dasar. Media Al Arabiya menampilkan perempuan sebagai objek penderitaan yang tidak berdaya, Al Jazeera memberi ruang bagi perempuan untuk menjadi subjek yang bersuara dan menyampaikan pengalaman pribadi, sedangkan CNN Arabic menggambarkan penderitaan perempuan secara kolektif dengan struktur kalimat pasif yang cenderung menghapus pelaku kekerasan. Hasil ini menegaskan bahwa konflik Palestina Israel tidak hanya persoalan politik dan militer, tetapi juga isu gender dan representasi media, di mana perempuan sering diposisikan sebagai simbol penderitaan tanpa kuasa. Dengan demikian, media memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk kesadaran publik terhadap keadilan dan kesetaraan gender bagi perempuan Palestina.*

**Kata kunci:** analisis wacana kritis, Sara Mills, kekerasan seksual, ketidaksetaraan gender, Palestina-Israel

### Abstract

This study examines the discourse of sexual violence and gender inequality against Palestinian women in the Palestine-Israel conflict using Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis approach. It aims to reveal how women's positions are represented in Arabic online media Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, and CNN Arabic. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method, analyzing ten news texts based on four key elements of Mills' framework: the subject, object, writer, and reader positions. The findings show that Palestinian women experience multiple layers of oppression. They are victims of sexual violence, harassment, humiliation, and murder by Israeli forces, while also facing structural inequality such as limited access to reproductive health and basic needs. Al Arabiya portrays women as powerless victims, Al Jazeera provides space for women to speak as active subjects, while CNN Arabic presents their suffering collectively but often conceals the perpetrators through passive constructions. These findings highlight that the Palestine Israel conflict is not merely political or military but also a gendered media issue, where women are symbolized as powerless sufferers. Thus, media discourse plays a crucial role in shaping public awareness of justice and gender equality for Palestinian women.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis, Sara Mills, sexual violence, gender inequality, Palestine-Israel

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the media has a huge role in shaping public views (Hanief

& Ainani, 2024). The dispute between Israel and Palestine has not yet reached a settlement, even intensifying and attracting the attention of many

countries that observe the battles of both parties. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a continuation of a dispute that has lasted for more than seventy years (Ramadani et al., 2024). This dispute has caused suffering and tension between each side. It has also given rise to a range of social, religious, political and cultural issues that affect the lives of tens of millions of people in the region

The roots of this dispute can be traced back to the late 19th century, when Palestine came under British rule after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. This opened up opportunities for Jews to settle in the region. This opened up opportunities for Jews to migrate to the region (Salsabila et al., 2024). Therefore, this conflict originated from the ambition of the Jewish people to build a state in Palestine, which they considered as the “promised land” (Syam et al., 2024)

Referring to various sources since the beginning of the 20th century, the Palestinian territories have been the center of the dispute between the Palestinian Arabs and the Zionist Jews. This dispute not only reflects the local situation between Israel and Palestine, but also involves international interests, such as the United States, Iran, and a number of Arab countries (Emanuel Widayat & Anisa, 2024). When examined more deeply, this conflict is one of the deadliest disputes related to human values and attracts global attention. This dispute is not only bilateral, but also encompasses global issues such as identity, nationalism, and human rights (Aliya Nadita Ifara et al., 2024).

As the intensity of conflict increases, liberation from injustice and oppression becomes an important step in realizing social equality, especially for women. This struggle not only aims to improve the fate of individuals, but also to create a just and equal society for all, so that there is no more sexual violence experienced by Palestinian women (Purwanto, 2024).

Based on the acts of violence committed by Israel and the long-standing injustices

experienced by the Palestinian people (Smith et al., 2025), this study focuses solely on sexual violence and gender inequality against Palestinian women. In this context, women often experience gender inequality, such as marginalization, harassment, violence, and other forms of discrimination (Mauludina & Anshory, n.d.). As a result, acts of violence and oppression against women are often considered normal (Rijal & Nasir, 2024).

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Sexual violence is a violation of human rights, is degrading, and is a form of treatment that must be eliminated (Khoiriyah & Filasofa, 2024). Sexual harassment includes unwanted actions of a sexual nature, which cause discomfort, fear, or humiliation for the victim (Saefudin et al., 2023). According to (Kamalludin, 2024), violence against women often has a profound impact, both physically and mentally. The inability of victims to seek help or report violence, coupled with social stigma and cultural norms that blame victims, creates a cycle of violence that is difficult to break. Discussions about women are always closely related to issues of gender liberation and equality (Meivitasari & Widyatwati, 2023). Gender is a concept that refers to the social construction of the roles of men and women, which is often unfair. So that women are often considered weak and emotional (Muawanah, 2021).

In the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the media has a huge role in shaping public views (Hanief & Ainani, 2024). Therefore, this study uses Sara

Mills' feminist discourse approach to examine how Palestinian women are represented in Arab online media, such as Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera and CNN Arabic regarding crimes against women. The researcher's interest in choosing Palestinian women as the object of research is because the lives they experience during the war are often not represented in depth. Various previous studies have discussed the issue of violence against Palestinian women, especially in the context of political conflict, human rights violations, and media representation. Some studies have also highlighted how international and regional media frame Palestinian women as marginalized victims in conflict narratives. The fact that this issue has been widely researched shows that the issue of violence against Palestinian women is a rich, complex topic that continues to evolve with the dynamics of conflict and social change. However, the number of studies that have been conducted does not mean that this issue has been resolved or is no longer relevant to study. Instead, this condition requires a re-reading through a more critical and sensitive perspective on gender issues, one of which is through the feminist critical discourse analysis approach offered by Sara Mill. Therefore, the researcher is interested in choosing from the Al Arabiya website because the news channel presented by Al Arabiya has a different perspective from other news channels such as Al Jazeera, especially when involving Arab countries, Israel, and the United States. Al Arabiya tends to focus on its lighter coverage and can expand its audience with Arabic language that is easily understood by the audience. Meanwhile, Al Jazeera has news coverage that is rich in viewpoints and has an image as an independent and influential media in global dynamics, especially the Middle East. Then CNN Arabic media has a good news balance and a strong influence on public opinion (Tjoetra & Fahrimal, 2024).

Sara Mills' perspective discourse analysis emphasizes discourse related to feminism

because this approach focuses on how women are represented in texts (Muawanah, 2021). Sara Mills' critical discourse model specifically examines and explores neglected representations of women, as well as the factors underlying the emergence of forms of marginalization in these texts (Pratiwi et al., 2021a). Sara Mills' theory also examines how the positions of writers and readers play a role in a discourse (Sariasih et al., 2023). And how actors in news discourse appear as subjects when they are the perpetrators of actions, and as objects when they are the affected parties or the targets of actions (Wulandari & Surur, 2024).

This research aims to complement previous findings regarding Arab media coverage of cases of sexual violence and gender inequality. The focus of the research is on how Arab media interpret crimes against Palestinian women. As an extension of this focus, this study also aims to identify Sara Mills' feminist discourse that appears in the media coverage of Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera and CNN Arabic related to crimes against Palestinian women. This research was conducted by analyzing the position of writers and readers, as well as actors in the news discourse appearing as subjects and objects.

## 2. METHOD

This research uses a critical discourse analysis model with a qualitative descriptive method. This research is characterized by descriptive presentation of data through text, images or descriptions of words, not in the form of numbers (Sugiyono, 2010). The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from three Arabic online media, namely Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, and CNN Arabic. These three media were chosen because they actively report on social and political issues in the Middle East region, including cases of violence against Palestinian women. Each data is analyzed based on one news story that is relevant to the focus of the research.

In this study, ten data were collected from the three media. Each data is obtained from one news article that discusses the issue of violence against Palestinian women. Three data came from Al Arabiya media, all of which raised the topic of serious violations against Palestinian women by the Israeli army. Four other data were obtained from Al Jazeera; one of which highlighted the testimonies of Palestinian women regarding the difficult conditions they experienced. Meanwhile, the last three data were collected from CNN Arabic. Secondary data was obtained from various supporting literature, such as books, scientific journals, articles, and other documents related to feminism theory, Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis approach, as well as studies on media and women's representation, especially in conflict areas. This secondary data serves to strengthen the theoretical framework and support the interpretation of primary data.

In the validity of the data, the selection of discourse analysis theory is carried out in accordance with the focus of the research, and adjusted to the purpose of the analysis itself. The theory used is the discourse analysis approach according to Sara Mills, which emphasizes how women are positioned in the text through the relationship between the subject, object, reader and writer. Data collection is done by observing and recording parts of Arabic media that reflect the position between the subject, object, reader and writer based on Sara Mills' theoretical perspective.

Then at the stage of data analysis techniques this research takes the Miles and Huberman approach, with the first stage, namely, data reduction collecting 10 news text data findings from Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, and CNN Arabic related to sexual violence and gender inequality against Palestinian women. Then the important parts that contain representations of women, sexual violence, and language that contains elements of power or gender inequality. Second, the presentation of data is structured and

presented according to the concept in an easy-to-understand form so that when the reader sees the conclusion it is more precise and clear. Finally, drawing conclusions is done by taking an understanding of each quote between news stories and reviewing whether the conclusions are in accordance with the original data.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Sara Mills' discourse analysis approach, the main attention given to this research is how forms of inequality in the portrayal of women in the text (Putri et al., 2022), especially news texts. In this context, the application of Althusser's style developed by Sara Mills focuses more on how the text shapes and positions the actors (Pratiwi et al., 2021b) where one party can produce meaning and the other party becomes the object of interpretation. In addition, the position of the reader is also involved, with the news text understood as a product of interaction between the writer and the reader, reflecting the figure of the audience that the writer imagines when writing the news. The forms of sexual violence and gender inequality reflected in the media coverage of Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, and CNN Arabic are as follow:

#### Al Arabiya

##### Data (1)

In this study, the context of the news highlighting the grave violations against Palestinian women by Israeli citizen forces is found in the title of the news text:

عشرات المنظمات تطالب بتحقيقات دولية في جرائم ضد النساء الفلسطينيات

*Dozens of organizations are demanding an international investigation into crimes against Palestinian women.*

One of the sentences from this news article states:

الانتهاكات الجنسية الجسيمة التي تعرضت إليها النساء  
الفلسطينيات من قبل قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي

*Serious sexual violations experienced by  
Palestinian women by Israeli occupation forces.*

This discourse describes the specific conditions that led to sexual violence against Palestinian women by the Israeli military. These violations are also shown in the following news excerpt:

تواترت شهادات مفزعة عن الانتهاكات الجنسية الجسيمة التي تعرضت إليها النساء الفلسطينيات من قبل قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي داخل مجمع الشفاء الطبي بقطاع غزة. ووفقاً لشهود عيان، كانوا محاصرين بمحيط المجمع تم تعرية واغتصاب عدد من النساء داخل المستشفى بعد حصاره أمام أسرهن وتهديد الموجودين بقتلهم إذا أغمضوا أعينهم وتم قتل البعض بالإضافة الإطلاق الكلاب على جثث أخريات ونبشها. وتشير التقارير إلى من ١٥٠٠ فلسطينية كن ضحايا مذبحه المجمع بين أن أكثر شهيد وجريح ومفقود.

*There are horrifying testimonies of gross sexual violations inflicted on Palestinian women by Israeli occupation forces inside the Shifa Medical Complex in the Gaza Strip. According to eyewitnesses, they were surrounded around the compound. A number of women were stripped naked and raped inside the hospital after the hospital was cordoned off in front of their families, and those present were threatened with death if they closed their eyes, in addition to dogs being unleashed on others." Reports indicate that more than 1,500 Palestinian women were victims of the massacre, including martyrs, wounded and missing." This quote shows how women are the main victims of sexual violence committed by the occupation forces.*

This discourse shows that more than 1,500 Palestinian women were victims of the massacre, including the martyred, wounded and missing. The representation of women who are victims of sexual violence in this discourse displays a very clear gender inequality. Sexual violence in

conflict is portrayed as a form of intentional oppression, showing patriarchal actions in the context of war. In line with this, the inequality that occurs in power relations can also be a cause of violence (Aristi et al., 2021).

Using Sara Mills' discourse theory, which focuses on the issue of feminism (Sariasih et al., 2023), it can be analyzed that this violence against women is a product of unequal social construction. In the context of the discourse, the Israeli occupation forces are portrayed as subjects who have full power over acts of sexual violence, due to the position of power held by Israel. Palestinian women are positioned as objects (victims) who show helpless rights, are subjected to violence and oppression. The author positions herself as the one who voices the suffering of the victims. Meanwhile, the reader is placed in a public perception that raises empathy and has the potential to raise awareness of the importance of justice and protection for women in conflict.

## Data (2)

Continuous sexual slavery is also experienced by Palestinian women, who show very bad conditions due to torture, as expressed in the following quote:

وتابع الموقعون: "يأتي التصعيد استكمالاً لما بدأ عقب أحداث السابع من أكتوبر / تشرين الأول حيث اعتقلت العديد من النساء يصل عددهن لـ ٢٠٠ امرأة وفتاة في غزة، و ١٤٧ امرأة و ٢٤٥ طفلاً في الضفة الغربية وتم احتجازهن تعسفياً في ظروف شديدة السوء، وتمت تعريتهن وتصويرهن في أوضاع مشينة داخل أماكن الاحتجاز ونشر تلك الصور. كما انتشرت مقاطع مصورة إسرائيليون يلهون بملابس داخلية نسائية وجدوها داخل الجنود بعد احتلالها." منازل الفلسطينيين

*The signatories continued: "This escalation is a continuation of what began after the events of October 7, when many women, totaling 200 women and girls, were arrested in Gaza, and 147 women and 245 children in the West Bank. They were arbitrarily detained in very poor conditions, stripped naked, and photographed in humiliating positions inside detention facilities, and the*



*photos were made public. Video clips of Israeli soldiers playing with women's underwear that they found inside Palestinian homes after they were occupied were also circulated.*

Israel's tragic treatment of Palestinian women reflects gender inequality in detention. They were stripped naked and photographed in a very humiliating state, demonstrating the circumstances in which women are subjected to humiliation and their lack of dignity in the face of power. This treatment, particularly of women, shows that in many conflict situations, women are often subjected to greater violence and humiliation. According to (Pakpahan et al., 2025), one of the impacts of gender role issues in society is violence against women.

In this discourse, Israeli forces act as the subject that shows the power to control the body and dignity of Palestinian women, conducting arrests whenever they want, torture, and publication of humiliating photos. Meanwhile, Palestinian women and children must be the object of violence as clearly revealed by the news above, treated badly, stripped naked, and photographed in humiliating positions, so that their bodies are used to strengthen the power of the oppressor. The author also describes himself as a subject representing the victims of the abuse. Meanwhile, the reader is placed in the realm of the public who should have empathy for fellow humans on this earth.

### Data (3)

One of the same headlines as data 1 highlights the plight of women related to health issues, as seen in the following headline:

عشرات المنظمات تطالب بتحقيقات دولية في جرائم ضد النساء الفلسطينيات

*Dozens of organizations demand an international investigation into crimes against Palestinian women.*

From the title above, there is a discourse that reinforces this perspective, namely:

معاناة النساء منذ بداية الحرب من عدم توافر الفوط الصحية وأدوية ومستلزمات الصحة الإنجابية والجنسية لوقف نزيف الدورة الشهرية أو منع الحمل كذلك من ندرة المياه بسبب تدمير البنية التحتية

*Since the beginning of the war, women have suffered from a lack of sanitary pads, sexual and reproductive health medicines, and supplies to stop menstrual bleeding or prevent pregnancy, as well as water scarcity due to damaged infrastructure.*

In terms of health services, sensitivity to gender issues relies heavily on the ability and knowledge of health workers to recognize such issues (Çelik, 2009). However, in these extremely difficult conditions, health services face various limitations. Their work is often obstructed by Israeli soldiers, and it is not uncommon for health workers themselves to feel unsafe while carrying out their responsibilities. Gender inequalities in resources are also present in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Palestinian women suffer from resource rights due to lack of access to basic needs that are essential for reproductive and menstrual health. This shows how in war situations women's needs are often overlooked or not prioritized, which relates to inequalities in health care and existing infrastructure.

In analyzing the discourse using Sara Mills' theory, with Althusser's theoretical foundation we can see how women are positioned as subjects in the discourse (Harahap, 2024), portrayed as those who suffer from the effects of war, experiencing difficulties in accessing basic needs such as sanitary pads, reproductive health medicines, and equipment to treat menstrual bleeding or prevent pregnancy. The object in this discourse is the scarcity of these resources and the destruction of infrastructure that prevents women from fulfilling these needs. The author's position in this

discourse appears to be an empathetic party who wants to express the suffering of women who are neglected in war situations, and highlights the urgent need for attention to women's reproductive health.

On the other hand, the reader is addressed to the entire community to be more sensitive and aware of this injustice. In addition, readers are expected to be encouraged to fight for changes or better policies to solve the problem. Thus, this discourse not only presents women as marginalized objects of suffering, but also invites readers to reflect and act for the good of Palestinian women in this difficult situation.

## Al JAZEERA

### Data (1)

The next discourse comes from one of the Palestinian women who tells the difficult conditions she is experiencing to the Al Jazeera media, as expressed in the following headline:

محرومون من الطعام والشراب والمأوى... نازحون يتحدثون  
عن أوضاعهم الصعبة في مكان نزوحهم برفح

*Lacking food, water, and shelter, refugees tell of the difficult conditions they face in their camp in Rafah.*

An overview of the discourse or main issue can be seen clearly through the quote below, because the quote contains the core information conveyed as follows:

"من أوقالت أم صالح موسى من حي الزيتون "من أول الحرب طلعنا من كثر القذائف ونزحنا إلى المدارس في حي الزيتون، معاناة لا توصف لا أكل لا شرب لا نظافة، الحرب هذه إبادة رسمية، نتمنى الفرج"

*Umm Saleh Musa from the Zeitoun neighborhood said, "Since the beginning of the war, we fled from the many grenades and took refuge in schools in the Zeitoun neighborhood. The suffering we endured was indescribable,*

*without food, water, and hygiene. This war is official genocide. We hope for help."*

The statement expressed by Umm Saleh Musa above, gender inequality is implicitly reflected through women as the most vulnerable group to the impact of war, but often do not get equal protection or attention in policies and mainstream media coverage. Then, Umm Saleh revealed the tragic conditions experienced with her family fleeing from grenades, lack of food and water, and losing access to basic hygiene. This situation shows that women and children are often the most affected groups in situations of armed conflict, but are not prioritized in the process of humanitarian protection or post-conflict recovery.

Through Sara Mills' theoretical discourse analysis, which emphasizes the position of the subject, object, writer and reader, it can be seen in the quotation of Umm Saleh Musa's statement from the Zeitoun neighborhood which shows the power play (Helena & Azeharie, 2024). In the quote, Umm Saleh as a Palestinian woman who is a victim of war violence, is positioned as a subject who has the opportunity to speak. She is given space by the media to convey her experiences directly, without significantly changing the voice or point of view of the author or journalist. This shows a shift in media presentation, where women are no longer just objects of suffering who are portrayed passively, but rather appear as active witnesses who give voice to the harsh realities they experience.

In Umm Saleh Musa's statement, the author chooses a position to give a direct voice to Palestinian women suffering from the effects of war. By using direct quotes and strong words such as "indescribable suffering" and "official genocide," the author shows a clear stance in favor of the victims while criticizing those who commit violence. This position reflects the author's attempt to elevate the experiences of those who are often marginalized in official

narratives. On the other hand, readers are directed to feel empathy and sympathy through the personal stories, so that they are not only limited to being listeners, but are also expected to take a moral stance that cares about the situation. In this way, the text builds a strong connection between the victim's voice, the author's attitude, and the reader's position as a party with awareness of injustice. This approach is in line with Sara Mills' theory, which emphasizes the importance of giving space to marginalized groups and shaping the reader's position in discourse power relations.

### Data (2)

In the next discourse, a team from Al Jazeera accompanied a pregnant Palestinian woman to the hospital after she was attacked by Israeli soldiers, this statement was obtained from the news entitled:

الجزيرة مباشر ترافق فلسطينية حامل إلى المستشفى بعد اعتداء جنود الاحتلال عليها بالضرب

*Al Jazeera Mubasher accompanied a pregnant Palestinian woman to the hospital after she was attacked by Israeli occupation soldiers.*

The main information and theme of the title above can be clearly understood through the news excerpt below:

إنه تم ضربها على بطنها ما أدى إلى نزيف والشعور بالمغص جنينها طوال الليل، مشيرة إلى أنها شعرت بخوف على

*She said that she was hit in the stomach, which caused bleeding and cramping throughout the night, and she was worried about the fetus.*

The sentence "She said that she had been hit in the stomach, which caused bleeding and cramping all night, and she was worried about the fetus" can be analyzed using Sara Mills' theory to see how the position of the subject, object, and reader is shaped in this discourse.

In this sentence, the subject ("she") refers to a pregnant woman who is a victim of violence. Sara

Mills highlights two main ideas, namely subject and object (Mawarsih et al., 2025) that women in discourse are often positioned as the unheard party, which only experiences or feels violence. However, in this sentence women are given the voice "she says", which means that they are presented as subjects in the narrative, where they have personal experiences and voice their own suffering.

This is a form of resistance to the discourse that usually limits women, because women in this context are not only objects of suffering, but also living witnesses and speakers of the violence they experience. In this statement, the author clearly supports the victim by recounting her experience of pain and fear. Despite using the word "she" which creates distance, the author still shows the personal impact of violence, such as bleeding, cramps, and concerns about the fetus. The author wants to bring up the victim's story, which is often not heard in stories. By showing the victim as someone who suffers and is weak, the author invites readers to feel sympathy and think critically about the violence that occurs. This method is in accordance with Sara Mills' theory, which emphasizes the importance of giving voice to people who are often marginalized and questioning power in the story.

The reader in this sentence is positioned to all walks of life to feel empathy. Words like "bleeding", "cramping all night", and "worried about the fetus" create a strong emotional effect. Sara Mills mentions that language not only conveys information, but also organizes how readers should feel or respond. Here, the reader is directed to see humans as victims who suffer, not just the numbers of the conflict.

### Data (3)

Furthermore, in data 3 there is a woman who was killed by Israeli army troops, this is stated in the following title:

الاحتلال يصعد عدوانه ويقتل امرأتين وشابا بطولكرم والمسيرات لا تفارق سماء جنين



*The occupation increased its aggression, killing two women and a young man in Tulkarm, while drones did not leave the skies of Jenin.*

In addition to the title above, the discourse is also emphasized through the following quote:

وقتلّت قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي، اليوم الأحد، امرأتين فلسطين في مخيم نور شمس بطولكرم، إحداهما سندس شلبي (23 عاما) التي استشهدت مع جنينها، إذ كانت حاملا في شهر الثامن

*Today, Sunday, Israeli occupation forces killed two Palestinian women in Nur Shams camp in Tulkarm. One of them was 23-year-old Sondos Shalabi, who was killed along with her fetus, as she was eight months pregnant.*

The killing of Sondos Shalabi reveals the gender injustice experienced by women in conflict situations. As a woman and pregnant mother, Sondos experienced double oppression: a victim of military violence and at the same time a symbol of the female body that is less protected by the patriarchal and colonial system. This injustice is reflected in the way women's bodies are targeted, and how their narratives are limited in public discourse. Therefore, a gendered approach is important to uncover the hidden factors of violence and to fight for comprehensive justice for women in the conflict. While on the other hand, there is gender violence directed specifically at Palestinians. Based on an analysis using Sara Mills' critical discourse theory, the killing of Sondos Shalabi, a Palestinian woman who was eight months pregnant by Israeli occupation forces, illustrates how the use of language in texts can strengthen power relations. In the discourse, Sondos is positioned as a helpless object: a victim, a woman, and a mother, whose entire identity is placed in terms of suffering (Musdolifah et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, Israeli forces are presented as subjects who have full power over narratives and acts of violence. Sara Mills' theory also shows that the non-neutral position of the reader of this

text covertly shapes the reader's position of belief to feel empathy for the victims and acts of violence. Thus, this theory shows that language not only conveys facts, but also shapes political and moral consciousness. This kind of discourse needs to be analyzed seriously so that it does not only present information, but also becomes a forum for understanding inequality and fighting injustice hidden in the presentation of narratives.

#### Data (4)

In data 4, there is a spotlight on the role of journalists in exposing human rights violations in the Bab al-Amud region, which is illustrated by the following title:

ضربوها ونزعوا حجابها.. شاهد- صحفية فلسطينية توثق لحظة اعتداء جنود الاحتلال عليها بالقدس

*They beat her and tore off her hijab. Watch: A Palestinian journalist documents the moment Israeli soldiers attacked her in Jerusalem.*

The role of journalists in raising the issue of human rights violations in the Bab al-Amud area is also clearly illustrated by the following quote:

ونشرت عبد اللطيف في حسابها على إنستغرام صورا ومقاطع فيديو قصيرة صورتها بنفسها تظهر اعتداء جنود الاحتلال على عدد من الشبان الفلسطينيين في منطقة باب العمود بالقدس المحتلة، كما شاركت مقاطع فيديو تظهر قيام عد من الجنود بالهجوم عليها ودفعها ونزع حجابها أثناء حملها كاميرا والقيام بعملها الصحفي.

*Abdel Latif posted photos and a short video on his Instagram account that he shot himself, showing Israeli occupation soldiers attacking Palestinian youths in the Bab al-Amud neighborhood of occupied Jerusalem. She also shared a video of soldiers attacking her, pushing her, and removing her hijab while she was carrying a camera and doing her journalistic work.*

The discourse of power and gender representation became very clear in this incident.

On the one hand, there is Israeli political-military power that oppresses Palestinians, D, with symbols such as the hijab being targeted. According to Sara Mills, the discourse of violence against women is often more complex because it involves symbolic and cultural dimensions related to their bodies, identities and social roles. This shows how women's bodies become the center point for broader political, cultural, and gender domination.

In this analysis, the position as subject, object, writer, and reader plays a very important role in shaping the discourse of violence experienced by Abdel Latif. As a subject, Abdel Latif has the power (power of action) seen when he records, uploads photos, and shares videos of the incident, thus functioning as a journalist who exposes injustice. However, during the attack, Israeli soldiers reappeared as subjects who attacked, pushed, and even removed Abdel Latif's hijab. According to Sara Mills' theory, this shift in subject roles is important because it shows how Abdel Latif's role as an individual who initially had freedom of action was reclaimed by authoritarian power. Thus, previously adequate actions were disrupted by the Israeli army.

The position of the object in this event clearly falls on Abdel Latif who is the victim of physical violence. Her body is positioned as an object of power that can be treated at will by the soldiers, as seen from their actions of pulling, pushing, and removing her hijab. This act of removing the headscarf is not only a physical attack on women's bodies, but also an illustrative attack on Muslim women's identity, honor, and religion. In Mills' view, violence against women is often not only physical, but also symbolic, encompassing contempt for their social and cultural roles. Women's bodies, in this context, become spaces of political and cultural influence (Rahayu, 2025).

Meanwhile, the position of the reader in this discourse is very important. Readers are not only passive witnesses to the violence, but are also

directed to feel empathy and try to understand the power structure behind the event. By providing the context that Abdel Latif was a working journalist, and showing the original footage of the violence, the text tries to activate the reader to not only feel pity, but also to realize that this violence is part of a wider power structure, namely colonialism, military repression, and gender repression. In Sara Mills' analysis, this shows how discourse can move readers to question injustice and encourage them to not only identify with the victims personally, but also to question and critique larger structures of oppression.

## CNN ARABIC

### Data (1)

In CNN Arabic media, discourse does not only convey facts, but also shapes meaning through a certain point of view. This media determines who is featured as the main character (subject) and who is told (object) in the news, the reader and the writer. As an influential media in the Arab world, CNN Arabic shapes the way people perceive events through word choices and narratives that reflect important values, such as the following headline that highlights gender inequality and sexual violence against Palestinian women:

وأوضح التقرير: "بعد ستة أشهر من الحرب، قُتلت 10 آلاف امرأة فلسطينية في غزة، من بينهم ما يقدر بنحو أم، لُيترك 19 ألف طفل يتيمًا". وقال التقرير إن أكثر من مليون امرأة وفتاة فلسطينية في القطاع يواجهن "جوعًا كارثيًا"، مع عدم إمكانية الحصول تقريبًا على الغذاء أو مياه الشرب الآمنة أو المراحيض الصالحة للاستخدام أو المياه الجارية، مما يخلق مخاطر تهدد حياتهن.

*The report explains: "After six months of war, 10,000 Palestinian women in Gaza have been killed, including about 6,000 mothers, leaving 19,000 children orphaned." The report said that more than one million Palestinian women and girls in the Gaza Strip face "extremely severe hunger," with virtually no access to food, safe*

*drinking water, working toilets, or clean water, posing a life-threatening risk to them.*

In the report, Palestinian women are dominantly represented as objects of conflict and humanitarian crisis. The statement that “10,000 Palestinian women in Gaza have been killed, including around 6,000 mothers, leaving 19,000 children orphaned,” explicitly emphasizes the position of women as victims of physical and social violence. However, the use of passive voice such as “have been killed” removes the agent of violence so that the actual power structure behind this suffering is not apparent. This condition shows how the discourse silences the perpetrators and obscures responsibility in the context of conflict, so that women's suffering is portrayed as a phenomenon that just happens without a clear cause. This is in accordance with Sara Mills' approach, which highlights how subjects and objects in discourse are not neutral, and how agents of violence are often erased in order to maintain their power (Rahayu, 2025).

His is in line with Sara Mills' approach, which highlights how subjects and objects in discourse are not neutral, and how agents of violence are often erased to maintain their power (Rahayu, 2025).

The emphasis on “6,000 mothers” who were killed reinforces the gendered view that positions women based on their traditional social function as caregivers and childbirth. This representation of women through their birthing role reinforces the patriarchal view that limits women's position as active participants in conflict and socio-political processes. Thus, women are not only portrayed as victims, but also as figures whose value is measured by their ability to give birth and care for the next generation, rather than as individuals with voice and power. Mills' approach emphasizes that this kind of discourse reproduces gender inequality by limiting how women's position in the realm of non-response and inferiority (Trihandi et al., 2024).

In addition, writers who present data in a neutral and empathetic tone do not directly link women's suffering with perpetrators of violence, thus showing a position that tends to prioritize objectivity without assessing the structural context and power relations behind a problem. This position has the potential to maintain the current condition by portraying women as victims without voice and without agency. The reader who is presupposed in this report is also positioned as a sympathetic but passive observer, not invited to critical reflection or action on the power relations that cause gender injustice and violence. Therefore, this discourse tends to reinforce the power and inequality experienced by Palestinian women.

## **Data (2)**

In the narrative or discourse presented by the CNN Arabic news platform, such as the title included below, the function of discourse is not only direct information but also reflects certain perspectives, viewpoints, and values that the media wants to emphasize in the context of the events or issues discussed. CNN Arabic, as one of the international Arabic news media with a wide audience reach, has a significant influence in shaping public opinion, especially in the Middle East region and the Arab world in general. Therefore, the title contains the following statements and facts:

خبراء بالأم المتحدة يدعون لتحقيق مستقل في مزاعم قتل واغتصاب واعتداء جنسي على نساء وفتيات فلسطينيات

*UN experts are calling for an independent investigation into allegations of murder rape and sexual assault against Palestinian women and girls.*

The title above shows the highlighting of the issue of gender inequality and sexual violence against Palestinian women in the following quote:

وجاء في البيان: "ورد أن العديد من (النساء والفتيات الفلسطينيات) تعرضن لمعاملة غير إنسانية ومهينة، والحرمان من قوط الحيض، والغذاء والدواء، وتعرضن لضرب المبرح

The statement reads: "Many (Palestinian women and girls) were reportedly subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment, denied sanitary pads, food and medicine, and severely beaten."

According to various reports, Palestinian women and girls are often victims of various forms of inhumane treatment and degrading acts. In these situations, they are not only subjected to brutal physical violence, such as violent beatings, but are also exposed to conditions of inhumane treatment through the neglect of their basic needs.

Among the most glaring forms of mistreatment is the failure to meet essential needs such as sanitary pads, food, and medicine, which should be available to every individual in a humanitarian emergency. This practice not only directly impacts women's physical health, but also exacerbates the psychosocial trauma they experience, as their basic needs are ignored as a form of structural violence. The widely reported recurrence of this pattern of violence reflects gender-based oppression in conflict contexts, where women's bodies are used as arenas to display power and control.

In the discourse structure of the statement, the positions of subject, object and reader are shaped in ways that reflect particular power dynamics. The active subject, i.e. the party committing acts of violence against Palestinian women, is deliberately omitted from the sentence. With the use of passive forms such as "reportedly targeted" and no mention of the perpetrators, responsibility for the violence is blurred. This causes the focus of the discourse to shift entirely to the suffering of the victim, rather than on who caused the suffering. In the object position, Palestinian women and girls are passively positioned as recipients of acts of violence and inhumane treatment. They are portrayed as those who

experience injustice with no room to show agency or resistance.

In other words, these women's bodies and experiences are represented solely as fields of suffering, not as sources of strength. Such treatment cannot be viewed solely as individual incidents, but rather as part of a systemic tool of oppression that exacerbates the inequality and suffering of vulnerable groups in the context of the protracted conflict in Palestine. The lack of access to basic resources and health services adds to the complexity of their plight, demonstrating the close link between gender-based violence and broader forms of political and military violence. Drawing on Sara Mills' theory, the author sides with the victims (Palestinian women and girls), giving them space in the discourse as those who suffer. However, the author avoids mentioning the perpetrators directly, which could signal a politically cautious position. This creates a discourse that is empathetic towards women, but still limits direct resistance to power.

Meanwhile, the reader is assigned to all social circles, encouraged to feel sorry for the victim's plight, but not directed to question the power structures or perpetrators that cause the suffering. According to Sara Mills' discourse analysis perspective, this position shows how language not only describes reality, but also shapes certain patterns of acceptance in the mind of the reader, so that it does not become the norm.

According to Sara Mills' discourse analysis perspective, this position shows how language not only describes reality, but also shapes certain patterns of reception in the minds of readers, so that broader injustices can remain hidden behind seemingly neutral or merely informational narratives (Siagian et al., 2022).

### Data (3)

In the narrative presented by the CNN Arabic news platform, there is a discourse that shows gender inequality in the following title:



الأمم المتحدة: أكثر من 10 آلاف امرأة قُتلت في غزة منذ بدء الحرب

*PBB: More than 10,000 women have been killed in Gaza since the start of the war.*

Attention to the suffering of Palestinian women is shown through the title above, which will then be further analyzed using quotes in the following news content:

النساء اللاتي نجين من القصف يعانين يوميًا من الجوع والمرض والخوف المستمر. إن الحرب في غزة هي بلا شك حرب على النساء اللاتي يدفعن ثمنًا باهظًا لحرب ليست من "صنعهن".

*The women who survived the bombing suffer from hunger, disease, and constant fear on a daily basis. The war in Gaza is undoubtedly a war on women, who pay a heavy price for a war they did not make."*

In analyzing the quote using Sara Mills' theory, we can see that the discourse presented focuses on how women involved in conflict, especially in the context of war in Gaza, are often positioned as marginalized and neglected subjects (Ferdianyta & Surwati, 2024). Mills, in his discourse theory, emphasizes that every discourse not only reflects reality but also creates and reinforces beliefs that control social and political structures including in terms of gender inequality. They are portrayed as having no power over the course of events, as the war in Gaza is controlled by external forces such as the state or the military that do not involve women in policy-making at all.

In Sara Mills' theoretical framework, the subject position in this discourse is women who survived the war. They are not only victims of physical violence due to military conflict, but also victims of a larger social structure that does not pay attention to their welfare. Women in this discourse are positioned as recipients of violence; they must endure the suffering inflicted by the

war, without having the right to change their fate. In this case, women are not only physical objects in war, but also objects in a larger social system, where gender inequality leads to their inhibition in various aspects of life, including in the process of decision-making.

In this case, women are not only physical objects in war, but also objects in a larger social system, where gender inequality leads to their exclusion in various aspects of life, including in conflict-related decision-making processes and post-war recovery.

Meanwhile, the object in this discourse is war itself, which functions as a power structure that influences the course of conflict and determines who becomes a victim. War, as an object, is not only seen as a form of physical violence, but also as a symbol of larger inequalities in society, where women are always trapped in a patriarchal system that exacerbates their suffering. Although women are often not directly involved in warfare, they are nonetheless the objects of the social and political repercussions of the problem including the destruction of homes, loss of family members, starvation, and various forms of sexual violence that often occur in war situations. In this case, women are not only victims of physical violence, but are also marginalized within broader social structures, where they are often sidelined in terms of access to protection, assistance and justice.

According to Mills, this discourse also directly invites readers to look at the impact of war from a more perceptive and critical gender perspective. Readers who are exposed to this narrative are expected to understand that women are often doubly victimized in conflicts as they are not only subjected to physical violence, but also marginalized in the recovery process and social issues after the war. By emphasizing that "the war in Gaza is a war on women," this discourse highlights the fact that women are often not only involved in suffering from violence, but also in structural inequalities that exacerbate their conditions. Therefore, readers are invited to



question how existing social and political structures, such as gender inequality, play a major role in creating injustice in war and post-war. Readers are not only invited to see the suffering, but also to criticize the systems that allow these inequalities to continue.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis, there are 10 main findings in this study that contain elements of sexual violence and gender inequality in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through 3 online Arabic media namely Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera and CNN Arabic, it can be concluded that Palestinian women bear double suffering. They are not only direct victims of sexual violence, harassment, stripping, and sexual slavery carried out by the Israeli military, but also experience gender inequality through neglect of basic needs, such as access to reproductive health, menstrual hygiene, and humanitarian protection. In media discourse, Al Arabiya tends to present women as objects of suffering by emphasizing their violence and powerlessness. Meanwhile, Al Jazeera gives more space to Palestinian women as witnesses and subjects who voice direct experiences, thus showing a shift in representation that gives agency to victims. In contrast to both, CNN Arabic presents women's suffering collectively, but often uses passive sentences that obscure the perpetrators of violence, so that women's suffering seems to be present without a clear cause and can strengthen the continuation of power.

In addition, there are also signs of violence, such as the removal of headscarves from female journalists, which emphasizes that attacks are not only physical but also target identity, dignity, and religious symbols. The portrayal of women is still limited to images of mothers, caregivers and victims, which reinforces patriarchal images and diminishes their role in the public and political spheres. On the writers' side, some show partiality

by giving voice to victims, while others try to keep their distance for the sake of objectivity.

This affects the way readers are directed, with some discourses evoking empathy without encouraging critical reflection on the power structures that perpetuate gender injustice. Overall, this research confirms that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not only a political and military issue, but also a complex gender issue. Palestinian women experience multiple oppressions, both as direct victims of violence and as marginalized parties in media representations. Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis shows that the media plays an important role in shaping public perceptions of Palestinian women, as well as opening up opportunities to discuss gender inequality and show clearly who the perpetrators of violence are, so that the conversation in the public sphere is more open and truly in favor of victims.

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