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WRITING THE RESISTANCE ON THE EVE OF MARTYRDOM: RHETORICAL FEATURES IN HIBA ABŪ NADĀ'S LAST FACEBOOK POSTS (GAZA, 7-20 OCTOBER 2023)

Wartiman[1]*, **Mhd. Rizalman**[2], **Laurence Lingat Ramos**[3], **Mohammad Ridhan Alhafidz**[4], **Hajar Essamlali**[5]

[1] Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Padang, Indonesia
[2] Perkumpulan Pengkaji Bahasa dan Sastra Arab "Lisaniya Adabiya" "Lisaniya Adabiya", Padang, Indonesia
[3] Central Luzon State University, Nueva Ecija, Philippines
[4] International Islamic University Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan
[5] Hassan II University of Casablanca, Casablanca, Morocco

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ABSTRACT

During the final fourteen days of her life, Hiba Abū Nadā published 67 posts on her personal Facebook page from within the Gaza bombing zone, a corpus that closed on the day she was killed in an Israeli airstrike. Research on *balāghah* has so far concentrated on resistance literature composed at some remove from the events it depicts, leaving unexamined how the classical Arabic rhetorical system operates when produced in real time under genuine mortal threat. Addressing that gap, this qualitative descriptive-analytical study identifies the *balāghah* figures that predominate in Abū Nadā's posts, drawing on the classical framework of al-Jurjānī and Ibn al-Athīr to classify and decompose three figurative units: *isti'ārah* 'metaphor', *kināyah* 'metonymy', and *tashbīh* 'simile'. The analysis identified 39 figures: 20 *isti'ārah* (11 *tashrīḥiyyah*, 9 *makniyyah*), 9 *kināyah*, and 10 *tashbīh*. *Isti'ārah* predominates through a shift of *wahān* 'tenor' from the concrete to the existential domain; *tashbīh balīgh* prevails by collapsing comparative distance; and *kināyah*, although least frequent, proves the most argumentatively dense. These findings constitute early textual evidence of how Arabic *balāghah* functions when a trained writer confronts her own mortality in real time, extending the tradition of Palestinian resistance literature into a register that earlier generations, writing from exile, were never required to occupy.

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*Corresponding author. Email: wartiman@uinib.ac.id
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INTRODUCTION

In the fourteen days before an Israeli airstrike killed her in Khan Yunis on October 20, 2023, Hiba Kamāl Abū Nadā published sixty-seven posts on her personal Facebook page. By the time of her death, she was already a recognized presence in the contemporary Palestinian literary canon, known both as a novelist and a poet. Born in Mecca to a refugee family originally from Beit Jirja and raised in Gaza, she studied at the Islamic University of Gaza and at Al-Azhar University, two institutions that have long anchored Palestinian intellectual life under occupation and blockade (Nashef, 2022; Abu-Remaileh, 2021). Her body of work includes a novel, several poetry collections, and contributions to three anthologies of contemporary Palestinian literature (Holt, 2021; Abu-Remaileh, 2021). That novel, *Uksujīn laysa lil-mawtā* 'Oxygen Is Not for the Dead' (Abu Nada, 2017), took second place in the Sharjah Award for Arab Creativity and was republished by Dār Dīwān in 2021, while Huda Fakhreddine's English translations of her poetry (University of Pennsylvania) carried her writing to readers well beyond the Arabic-speaking world (Talukder & Ali, 2025; Herremans, 2026). That international reach matters for how her final Facebook posts should be read: she was already a writer fluent in the resources of her tradition, and she chose to draw on them in the days before her death.

That tradition reaches back decades. Palestinian resistance literature (*adab al-muqāwama* 'resistance literature') treats writing as a serious political and existential response to occupation, displacement, and destruction. Ghassān Kanafānī is usually credited with establishing the term in 1966. In the decades since, the tradition has grown into a literary genealogy carried through diaspora networks and resistance presses across the Arab world and beyond (Holt, 2021; Abu-Remaileh, 2021; Ben-Dror, 2016). Within this lineage, Maḥmūd Darwīsh, Samīḥ al-Qāsim, Tamīm al-Borghouti, and Fadwā Ṭūqān have received the most sustained scholarly attention, particularly for how their poetic language weaves together land, exile, and *sumūd* 'steadfastness' into a single rhetorical thread (Arsyad & Patah, 2025; Kassis, 2015; Hamamra, 2019; Sazzad, 2016; Shiddiq & Rofiuddin, 2024). This body of scholarship shows that the figures themselves do real argumentative work: they build identity and chip away at the legitimacy of the occupying narrative, instead of simply dressing up a political message in literary clothing. More recent scholarship has pushed the tradition further still, into prose fiction, questions of female subjectivity, and the growing body of English-language diasporic writing (AlAmmar, 2022; Istanbulli, 2024; Bernard, 2021), a widening of scope that raises a question this study returns to directly: what happens to that same rhetorical apparatus once it is deployed from inside the event itself, rather than reaching back at a remove?

Part of the answer lies in how deliberately these figures are usually chosen. Studies of language as an instrument of Palestinian national struggle have shown that rhetorical choices in resistance texts are rarely accidental (Qutami & Zahzah, 2020; Kassis, 2015; Ben-Dror, 2016), and ecocritical readings extend that point to the natural world: metaphors and *tashbīh* rooted in soil, trees, and water carry an ideological weight that goes beyond their surface aesthetics, encoding claims of right and attachment to land (Ahmed & Hashim, 2015; Talukder & Ali, 2025; Hamamra, 2019). Several scholars have traced *sumūd* back to Darwīsh's aesthetic and rhetorical choices as its animating principle, drawing a line between particular figurative techniques and the existential work those choices perform (Sazzad, 2015; 2016). A separate strand of scholarship turns to gender: Palestinian women writers have long had to negotiate the pull between

speaking for a collective and speaking as themselves (Istanbulli, 2024; Nashef, 2022; AlAmmar, 2022). Read together, these strands converge on a single point: a rhetorical figure in this corpus can never really be read apart from the historical, gendered, and existential conditions under which it was produced (Holt, 2021; Moore, 2021; Abu-Remaileh, 2021). That convergence is what motivates looking outward, beyond the Arabic tradition itself, to ask whether other literatures written under comparable duress confirm the same pattern.

Four bodies of scholarship outside the Arabic tradition speak to that question, each from a different angle. Holocaust testimonial poetry offers the clearest precedent: studies of Celan, Sachs, Primo Levi, and Edith Bruck have shown that extreme violence does not strip a writer of figurative resources so much as redirect them, with figuration becoming the chief means of approaching what direct language cannot hold (Remington, 2021; Toninato, 2025; Spicer, 2021). The theory of literary testimony adds a second, more pointed angle, and finds its most literal case in Abū Nadā herself, since her last post was written on the very day she died (Salgado, 2017; Caruth, 2017). A third line comes from research on writing produced under active siege: studies of German-Jewish wartime diaries show that the conditions of production leave a visible mark on style, with the resulting texts taking on a collective testimonial function well beyond their authors' individual circumstances (Augustyns, 2020). The fourth path, digital witnessing under war conditions, is the one closest methodologically to the present study. It runs from testimony recast as a digital artifact (Ibrahim, 2020) to Ukrainian Facebook diaries read through a media-studies lens that, notably, leaves their figurative dimension almost entirely unexamined (Kot et al., 2024; Boichak & Jackson, 2020).

Yet for all that has been written on Palestinian resistance literature, the gap is hard to miss once one starts looking for it. Very little scholarship has yet engaged directly with writing produced during the October 2023 war in Gaza; what exists tends to work within testimonial and postcolonial frameworks that foreground the political function of writing rather than its formal mechanics (Herremans, 2026; Holt, 2021; Nashef, 2022). Digital literature fares no better, despite the digital space having become the defining medium for contemporary Palestinian literary production (Abu-Remaileh, 2021; Qutami & Zahzah, 2020; Moore, 2021). Work on figurativity specifically has also stayed close to a canonical generation of writers who composed in exile or at some temporal remove from the threats they describe, so the conditions under which a text is actually produced have rarely been treated as something worth analyzing in their own right (AlAmmar, 2022; Cohen, 2022; Farah et al., 2025; Talukder & Ali, 2025; Daghamin, 2024). Hiba Abū Nadā's last sixty-seven Facebook posts sit squarely inside that blind spot. So far as I have been able to determine, no prior study has brought the technical apparatus of classical *balāghah* to bear on a corpus written under real-time, lethal threat. That absence is what this study sets out to address.

It is worth being precise about exactly where the gap lies, because Abū Nadā's corpus does not differ from the four bodies of scholarship just discussed in theme or language. The difference is structural, and it concerns a variable none of those four frameworks was built to handle: the conditions under which the text was produced. The Holocaust poets studied in that literature wrote after the fact, at a temporal remove that gave them room to shape their language in reflection rather than under live threat (Remington, 2021; Toninato, 2025). Literary testimony scholarship has extended its reach into non-Western traditions, but it still operates largely within psychoanalytic frameworks that leave the technical apparatus of Arabic *balāghah* largely untouched (Salgado, 2017; Caruth, 2017). The wartime diaries that scholarship usually turns to

were written privately, with no audience watching in real time, so their rhetorical texture has never had to be read against the kind of live publicity that surrounded Abū Nadā's posts (Augustyns, 2020). And the digital-witnessing literature, for all its attention to content, participation, and circulation, has not really stopped to ask why a writer facing imminent death would reach for *isti'ārah* instead of saying things plainly, or why she would keep reaching for *tashbīh* even as her physical world was being dismantled around her (Ibrahim, 2020; Kot et al., 2024; Boichak & Jackson, 2020). None of the four paths surveyed above has asked that question. This study takes it as its starting point (Herremans, 2026; Holt, 2021).

All of this leaves one main question to be asked: which *balāghah* figures — *isti'ārah*, *kināyah*, and *tashbīh* — are dominant in Hiba Abū Nadā's Facebook writings between October 7 and 20, 2023, and what are the distribution and technical characteristics of each? Answering it means holding together the technical precision of the classical *balāghah* apparatus with production conditions as extreme as any a literary corpus is likely to have been written under. Applying that framework to Abū Nadā's corpus should yield three things: an early technical description of *isti'ārah*, *kināyah*, and *tashbīh* in Arabic digital prose; a figural profile of a trained writer's output under real-time death threats; and evidence that the Arabic *balāghah* system has analytical reach beyond its traditional domain, opening a research agenda for *balāghah* applied to digital texts and conflict-zone literature.

METHOD

This study takes a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach to the meaning, function, and technical characteristics of the rhetorical figures in Hiba Abū Nadā's Facebook posts, read against the conditions under which they were produced. The descriptive side of the work lies in identifying and classifying the *balāghah* figures in the corpus; the analytical side lies in decomposing their formal components and interpreting the resulting rhetorical effects. Underlying both is an interpretive-hermeneutical stance: meaning is treated as something constructed through contextual reading, with each instance read against the historical conditions of its production rather than in isolation from them. The analysis, therefore, moves, in each case, from the explicit formal content of a figure to the implied rhetorical meaning it carries. The primary data are the sixty-seven Facebook posts Hiba Abū Nadā (https://web.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100002457890081#) wrote on her personal page between October 7 and 20, 2023, all public and voluntarily posted by the author for a general audience, which is why their use here does not require separate ethical approval. Working through that data took four distinct stages of collection.

The first was archiving the corpus: downloading all sixty-seven posts and assigning them chronological codes, P1 through P67, based on publication date, with metadata recorded for each post so the work could later be verified or replicated. The second was a holistic read-through, meant to get a feel for the corpus as a whole and confirm that the material eventually chosen for close analysis was actually representative of it, rather than an unrepresentative slice. The third stage moved into layered, annotated reading, identifying rhetorical features and sorting them into *isti'ārah*, *kināyah*, or *tashbīh*, determining the relevant subtype in each case and recording every coding decision so it could later be checked. The fourth and final stage of collection was narrowing the full set to a representative sample, using two criteria: how technically rich a given instance was when measured against al-Jurjānī's (al-Jurjānī,

1991, 2004) and Ibn al-Athīr's (Ibn al-Athīr, 1959) formal component definitions, and how clearly it illustrated the relationship between a figure and the context in which it was produced. That narrowing left four *isti'ārah*, three *kināyah*, and three *tashbīh* standing as the examples discussed in the Results section. Once that sample was settled, the actual work of analyzing it followed a separate set of stages.

That analysis ran through five stages, all of them grounded in the classical Arabic *balāghah* framework, with al-Jurjānī — *Asrār al-Balāgha* (al-Jurjānī, 1991) and *Dalā'il al-I'jāz* (al-Jurjānī, 2004) — and Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Mathal al-Sā'ir* (Ibn al-Athīr, 1959) as primary technical references for each unit's definitions and formal components. The first stage, classification verification, rechecked each data item against these sources' operational definitions to ensure consistency between classification labels and the *balāghah* tradition's definitive criteria. The second stage, formal component analysis (*takhrīj al-ṣuwar al-bayāniyyah* 'decomposition of figurative images'), decomposed each item into its explicit technical components: for *isti'ārah*, *musta'ār lahu*, *musta'ār minhu*, *jāmi'*, and *qarīna*; for *kināyah*, *malzūm*, *lāzim*, and subtype (*'an ṣifah* 'of attribute', *'an mawṣūf* 'of the described', or *'an nisbah* 'of relation'); for *tashbīh*, *mushabbah* 'the compared', *mushabbah bih* 'the object of comparison', *adāt al-tashbīh* 'the instrument of comparison', *wajh al-shabah* 'the ground of comparison', and subtype (*balīgh*, *mursal mufaṣṣal*, or *mursal mujmal*). The third stage then asked what these components actually do, how they shape meaning for the reader across cognitive, emotional, and ideological registers at once. That question of effect could not be answered from the components alone, though; it required situating each figure back in the moment it was written.

That situating occurred in the fourth stage, which explicitly tied each finding to its posting date and to whatever was unfolding on the ground that day. Context here is not treated as background scenery; it is built into the analysis as an active interpretive variable, one that helps determine why a particular figural choice carries the rhetorical weight it does. That move departs somewhat from convention within *balāghah* studies, where *qarīna* has conventionally been read as a property of the text itself, rather than of the lived situation the writer was actually in at the moment of writing. The fifth and final stage drew everything together: tracing recurring distributional and characteristic patterns across all three units to build a single figural profile of the corpus, one that captures both the mechanisms operating across the whole and the points where each unit pulls away from the other two. Reliability throughout rested on applying the primary sources' technical definitions consistently from one instance to the next, and every original Arabic citation appears here alongside its English translation, so that the correspondence between data and interpretation can be checked independently rather than taken on faith. The following section sets out what that analysis turned up.

RESULT

Working through Hiba Abū Nadā's sixty-seven Facebook posts in this way yielded thirty-nine balāghah figures, distributed unevenly across three rhetorical units: 20 isti'ārah (51.3%), 9 kināyah (23.1%), and 10 tashbīh (25.6%). *Isti'ārah* emerges as the dominant unit, split between eleven *tashrīḥiyyah* and nine *makniyyah* instances. Within *tashbīh*, the *balīgh* subtype accounts for half of all instances, indicating a clear preference for condensed comparative structures over more elaborated, particle-marked forms. *Kināyah*, though the least frequent, conveys the densest implied meaning per instance, reflecting its characteristic rhetorical economy. The complete distributional profile is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Distribution of Rhetorical Features in Hiba Abū Nadā's Facebook Posts

Figure	Subtype	Frequency	Percentage
Isti'ārah	*Tashrīḥiyyah*	11	28.2%
	Makniyyah	9	23.1%
Kināyah	*ʿAn ṣifah*	3	7.7%
	ʿAn nisbah	3	7.7%
	ʿAn mawṣūf	3	7.7%
Tashbīh	*Balīgh*	5	12.8%
	Mursal mufaṣṣal	3	7.7%
	Mursal mujmal	2	5.1%
Total		39	100%

Isti'ārah

Of the thirty-nine figures identified, twenty are *isti'ārah*, divided between the *tashrīḥiyyah* 'explicit' and *makniyyah* 'implicit' subtypes, with 11 and 9, respectively. Both subtypes operate in a consistent domain-shifting direction, with *wahān* drawn from concrete and recognizable realms (air, iron, trees, coffins, chariots, digital icons) to map conditions that resist direct expression, such as the breakdown of collective identity, mass death, and the survival of memory amid physical destruction. None of the figures in this set appears in isolation; each is anchored to a specific post and date, allowing the analysis below to read figural choice against the unfolding conditions of the corpus's production. The *isti'ārah* in this corpus thus functions as an epistemological mechanism rather than as a stylistic ornament, supplying a cognitive framework through which both the author and the reader may understand and articulate a reality that exceeds the capacity of direct statement. The four excerpts discussed below illustrate this mechanism across its two structural subtypes.

Excerpt 1 أجسادنا من هواء وذاكرتنا من حديد

Ajsādunā min hawāʾ wa-dhākiratunā min ḥadīd

'Our bodies are made of air, and our memories are made of iron.'

Excerpt 2 صفحاتنا الشخصية بيوت عزاء، خيام تأبين، جرائد نعي، ننتقل من صفحة إلى صفحة كأننا نمشي في ساحة جنائز متشعبة ومفتوحة على بعضها

Ṣafaḥātunā al-shakhṣiyyah buyūt ʿazāʾ, khiyam taʾbīn, jarāʾid naʿy, nantaqilu min ṣafḥah ilā ṣafḥah ka-annanā namshī fī sāḥat janāʾiz mutashaʿʿibah wa-maftūḥah ʿalā baʿḍihā

'Our personal pages are houses of condolence, tents of mourning, obituary newspapers; we move from page to page as though walking through a branching, open funeral square.'

Excerpt 1 is taken from post 46, uploaded on October 16, 2023. The excerpt contains two *tashrīḥiyyah aṣliyyah isti'ārah* working simultaneously and antithetically. In the first, *ajsādunā* 'our body' is *mustaʿār lahu* 'the borrower' and *hawāʾ* 'air' is *mustaʿār minhu* 'the source'; the borrowed components (*jāmiʿ* 'common ground') are formlessness, weightlessness, and inability to withstand impact. The *qarīna* 'contextual

marker' preventing a literal reading is physical impossibility, since a body cannot be made of air, directing the reader toward the figurative meaning: a body so exhausted it has become nearly immaterial. In the second, *mustaʿār lahu* is *dhākiratunā* 'our memory' and *mustaʿār minhu* is *ḥadīd* 'iron', borrowing permanence, resilience, and indestructibility. The two *isti'ārah* form a deliberate *ṭibāq* 'antithesis' between *hawāʾ* and *ḥadīd*, doubling the rhetorical effect: the more the body weakens, the more memory is claimed to be immortal. The pairing is a rhetorical act, not a stylistic ornament, asserting that what will be destroyed (the body) and what will not (memory, testimony) are fundamentally distinct.

Excerpt 2 is taken from post 12, uploaded on October 8, 2023, only the second day of the bombardment. The excerpt contains three consecutive *tashrīḥiyyah isti'ārah* that share one *mustaʿār lahu — ṣafaḥātunā al-shakhṣiyyah*, 'our personal pages' on Facebook. Still, each draws on a different *mustaʿār minhu*: *buyūt ʿazāʾ* 'funeral home', *khiyam taʾbīn* 'memorial tent', and *jarāʾid naʿy* 'obituary newspaper'. Each *mustaʿār minhu* maps the digital space onto a distinct register of public mourning. *Buyūt ʿazāʾ* marks a gathering place to mourn a known death; *khiyam taʾbīn* carries temporality, a space established specifically and temporarily to commemorate the fallen; *jarāʾid naʿy* signals public, written death-recording. The *qarīna* binding all three is a referential anomaly: a Facebook page is literally a digital interface, not a physical mourning space. Progressively, the three *mustaʿār minhu* trace a spatial movement from private (funeral home) to semi-public (memorial tent) to mass-public (newspaper), constructing collective grief as a phenomenon that expands outward without boundary, refusing to attach to a single designated mourner.

Excerpt 3 شجر العائلات يتساقط كاملاً لا أفراداً ولا فروعاً، تهوي الشجرة بكل من فيها

Shajar al-ʿāʾilāt yatasāqaṭu kāmilan lā afrādan wa-lā furūʿan, tahwī al-shajarah bi-kulli man fīhā

'The trees of families fall entirely—not as individuals, not as branches; the tree collapses with everyone in it.'

Excerpt 4 من الفسفور طعم البرتقال وألوان السحاب من الدخان

Min al-fisfūr ṭaʿm al-burtuqāl wa-alwān al-saḥāb min al-dukhān

'From the phosphorus—the taste of oranges, and the colors of clouds from the smoke.'

Excerpt 3 is taken from post 37, uploaded on October 12, 2023, containing an *isti'ārah tashrīḥiyyah* with *mustaʿār lahu al-ʿāʾilāt* 'families' and *mustaʿār minhu al-shajar* 'tree'. The borrowed components are properties of an organism that grows as a single, indivisible unit, in which the trunk, branches, and leaves cannot be separated from one another as living entities. The primary *qarīna*, social context, directs the reader to understand family destruction as the annihilation of an inseparable organic whole rather than the sum of its parts. This reading is reinforced by the negative clause *lā afrādan wa-lā furūʿan*, 'not as individuals, not as branches', which explicitly rejects two reductive readings: that only the individual (*afrād*) or only the branch (*furūʿ*) falls. The rhetorical force of this construction lies in its precision. What the text names is the elimination of entire families as living units, not merely the killing of persons, a reading that the *isti'ārah* structure extends to encompass the broader devastation in Gaza.

Excerpt 4 is taken from post 28, uploaded on October 11, 2023, which contains two *tashrīḥiyyah isti'ārah* that operate through synesthesia, or deliberate sensory-domain switching. In the first, *mustaʿār lahu* is *al-fisfūr* 'white phosphorus' (the incendiary weapon used in Gaza's bombing), and *mustaʿār minhu* is *ṭaʿm al-burtuqāl* 'orange flavor'; the borrowed component is a pleasant sensory property drawn from a domain diametrically opposite the weapon's destructive one. In the second, *mustaʿār lahu* is *al-dukhān* 'black smoke', and *mustaʿār minhu* is *al-wān al-saḥāb* 'cloud colors', borrowing a beautiful, natural visual attribute from the sky. A *qarīna* of epistemological contradiction binds both figures: phosphorus does not sensorily carry the taste of oranges, nor does war smoke possess beauty. The resulting synesthesia produces a moral inversion, redirecting the attributes of destructive objects toward the life-affirming. Written under active phosphorus bombardment, these *isti'ārah* function as a sustained act of rhetorical resistance against violence's claim on the reader's perceptual field. Where these figures work by shifting between domains, the second figurative unit in the corpus works by saying far less than it means.

Kināyah

The corpus contains nine *kināyah*, distributed into three subtypes: *kināyah ʿan ṣifah*, *ʿan nisbah*, and *ʿan mawṣūf*. Unlike *isti'ārah*, which operates through domain shifts, *kināyah* in Abū Nadā's writings operates through extreme linguistic economy: concise expressions, in some cases no more than seven Arabic words, carry layers of moral, political, and theological implication that no direct statement could sustain without dissipating its rhetorical force. This economy is itself notable given the corpus's production conditions, where the conditions available for rhetorical elaboration were severely constrained by the violence unfolding around the author. None of the *kināyah* in this corpus is ornamental; all serve an argumentative function, whether as a geopolitical critique of international institutions, as documentation of trauma beyond the capacity of numbers and facts, or as affirmations of relational bonds that death itself cannot sever. The three excerpts below illustrate how each subtype carries this density.

Excerpt 5 مات أطفال لم يستخدموا أسماءهم بعد

Māta aṭfāl lam yastaʿmilū asmāʾahum baʿd

'Children died who had not yet used their names.'

Excerpt 6 المدينة مقبرة مفتوحة ممتدة من عتبة الجامعة العربية حتى منبر الأمم المتحدة

Al-madīnah maqbarah maftūḥah mumtaddah min ʿatabat al-jāmiʿat al-ʿarabiyyah ḥattā minbar al-umam al-muttaḥidah

'The city is an open cemetery stretching from the doorstep of the Arab League to the podium of the United Nations.'

Excerpt 5 is taken from post 51, uploaded on October 17, 2023. This excerpt instantiates the *kināyah ʿan ṣifah*. The explicit content states that the children have died. At the same time, the implied meaning extends well beyond a confirmation of death: these children died before their names were ever used, before their identities were fully formed, before they were called and answered, before their names became part of others' memories. The *qarīna* that binds this *kināyah* is the phrase *lam yastaʿmilū* 'not

yet using', which describes names as a medium for social interaction, meaning the children died before their social lives could begin. At a deeper interpretive level, the *kināyah ʿan ṣifah* in Excerpt 5 implies that the deaths in Gaza eliminate the entire potential of human existence, not only individual lives. The excerpt is rhetorically powerful precisely through its restraint. No statistics, descriptions, or direct accusations appear, yet the implied reality is more devastating than any factual report.

Excerpt 6 is taken from post 37, uploaded on October 12, 2023, containing a *kināyah ʿan nisbah* that operates through *tawsīʿ al-kināyah* 'expansion of metonymy', expanding the figure's meaning via specified spatial boundaries. The *malzūm* 'the stated' is *al-madīnah maqbarah maftūḥah*, 'this city is an open cemetery', figuring Gaza as an unbounded space of mass death. The *lāzim*, 'the implied,' is a *nisbah*, 'attribution', to two institutions, the Arab League and the UN, positioned as the cemetery's coordinate boundaries. By marking *ʿatabat al-jāmiʿat al-ʿarabiyyah* 'the Arab League's threshold' and *minbar al-umam al-muttaḥidah* 'the UN's podium' as the cemetery's geographical limits, the text constructs these institutions as boundaries of powerlessness rather than protection. The binding *qarīna* is a geographical impossibility, since a cemetery cannot literally stretch from Cairo to New York. The choice of *ʿatabah* 'doorstep' and *minbar* 'podium' further positions Arab League representation at the threshold and UN representation at the merely rhetorical level, constructing both institutions' inefficacy as structural rather than incidental.

Excerpt 7 لم يكن أسبوعاً، كان يوماً طويلاً مقسَّماً إلى عشرات الشهداء

Lam yakun usbūʿan, kāna yawman ṭawīlan muqassaman ilā ʿasharāt al-shuhadāʾ

'It was not a week; it was one long day divided into dozens of martyrs.'

Excerpt 8 لسنا بالذاكرة بل بالخلود — سنحملهم في نعوشنا حين نموت

Lasnā bi-l-dhākirah bal bi-l-khulūd — sa-naḥmiluhum fī nuʿūshinā ḥīna namūt

'We are not bound by memory but by eternity — we will carry them in our coffins when we die.'

Excerpt 7 is taken from post 39, uploaded on October 13, 2023, containing a *kināyah ʿan nisbah* that enacts a deformation of temporal perception as its central rhetorical strategy. The *malzūm* rejects the chronological time unit through *lam yakun usbūʿan*, 'it was not a week', explicitly correcting the conventional measure of time. The *lāzim* lies in the ratio between trauma intensity and the collapse of time perception: a week that has elapsed chronologically can no longer register as such once the unit of measurement shifts from hours and days to the count of deaths (*ʿasharāt al-shuhadāʾ*). The binding *qarīna* is *muqassaman ilā ʿasharāt al-shuhadāʾ*, 'divided into tens of martyrs', where dividing time into units of death is an anomaly meaningful only where death is more real than hours. Technically, the *kināyah* operates through *badal al-maṭlūb* 'substitution of the requested', substituting the conventional time unit (*usbūʿ*/*yawm*) with the unit of death (*shuhadāʾ*), producing the implicit meaning that time in Gaza has lost its chronological reference and retains only a mortal one.

Excerpt 8, taken from Post 58 (18 October 2023), contains a *kināyah ʿan nisbah* that rejects the conventional logic of memory and replaces it with a claim of relational eternity. The *malzūm* of this excerpt is the statement that the fallen will be carried in the writer's own coffin when the living eventually die. The *lāzim* is an explicit rejection of memory as an adequate category for relating to the deceased. The *qarīna* binding this *kināyah* is the deliberate lexical contrast constructed between *al-dhākirah* 'memory' and *al-khulūd* 'eternity'. By stating "*lasnā bi-l-dhākirah bal bi-l-khulūd*," the writer asserts that the relationship with the fallen belongs to an existential register, that of eternal communion, rather than a merely psychological one of remembering. The closing phrase, "*sa-naḥmiluhum fī nuʿūshinā ḥīna namūt*," reinforces this *kināyah* through a concrete image: the same coffin that will one day carry the living already carries the dead, so that death reunites rather than severs the relationship. The third and final figurative unit in the corpus takes a different route still, building meaning through direct, often startling, comparison rather than through implication.

Tashbīh

Ten *tashbīh* are distributed across three subtypes: five *tashbīh balīgh*, three *tashbīh mursal mufaṣṣal*, and two *tashbīh mursal mujmal*. The dominance of *tashbīh balīgh* — which omits both *adāt al-tashbīh* 'the particle of comparison' and *wajh al-shabah* 'the ground of comparison' so that *mushabbah* and *mushabbah bih* become synonymous in the reader's mind, reflects a consistent technical choice: where the distance between lived reality and archetype has collapsed, the subtype that most eliminates comparative distance proves the most rhetorically fitting. This pattern distinguishes *tashbīh* from the other two units examined above, each of which operates through a distinct mechanism of figuration. Through these *tashbīh*, the texts do not merely compare what is experienced with what the reader already knows but fuse the two, collapsing the distance between them entirely, situating the events of October 2023 within a narrative that already carries a known meaning, precedent, and outcome. The three excerpts below illustrate this identification across its subtypes.

Excerpt 9 فرعون عاد كبر وصار نتنياهو وهامان صار بايدن

Firʿawn ʿāda kabara wa-ṣāra Natanyāhū wa-Hāmān ṣāra Bāydin

'Pharaoh grew up and became Netanyahu, and Haman became Biden.'

Excerpt 10 والصغار هنا نيامٌ كما نامَ الفراخُ بحضنِ عشّ

Wa-l-ṣighār hunā niyāmun kamā nāma al-firākhu bi-ḥuḍni ʿashsh

'And the little ones here sleep as chicks sleep nestled in the warmth of their nest.'

Excerpt 9 is taken from post 33, uploaded on October 11, 2023, and contains two *tashbīh balīgh* forming a structural *muqābala* 'antithetical parallelism'. In the first, *mushabbah* is Netanyahu, and *mushabbah bih* is Firʿawn; *wajh al-shabah* is left implicit, understood here as excessive oppression (*al-ṭughyān*) and the downfall it brings within the Qur'anic narrative. In the second, *mushabbah* is Biden, and *mushabbah bih* is Hāmān, Pharaoh's vizier in the exegetical tradition; the implied *wajh al-shabah* is complicity in

systemic wrongdoing as an enabler rather than a principal actor. The force of *tashbīh balīgh* lies in eliminating *adāt al-tashbīh*, rendering *mushabbah* and *mushabbah bih* nearly identical: Netanyahu is constructed as Pharaoh recurring, not merely resembling him (*ʿāda kabara*, 'returned and grew'), a phrase that introduces a historical-cycle dimension in which wrongdoing resurfaces across different faces. The Qur'anic intertextuality activated through both names carries the full narrative of their downfall, so that the reader brings to bear the known outcome of Pharaoh and Hāmān's story on the contemporary figures the text identifies as their counterparts.

Excerpt 10 is taken from post 28, uploaded on October 11, 2023, containing a *tashbīh mursal mufaṣṣal*: *mushabbah* is *al-ṣighār*, 'the little children of Gaza'; *adāt al-tashbīh* is *kamā*, 'like'; *mushabbah bih* is *al-fīrākhu fī ḥuḍn ʿashsh*, 'the chicks in the embrace of the nest'. The implied *wajh al-shabah* is sleeping in the warmth of an embrace: tenderness, vulnerability, complete trust in the sheltering environment. The excerpt's distinctive irony lies in the *mushabbah bih* itself: a nest offers minimal real protection, and chicks within it remain among the most predator-vulnerable creatures. The chosen *mushabbah bih* thus builds a double image of sleep: the visible warmth and tranquility, and the hidden vulnerability that nothing can shield. The *ism fāʿil* 'active participle' form *niyāmun*, 'in a state of sleep', marks this as an ongoing present-tense condition, positioning the excerpt as rhetorical documentation of children sleeping under continuous bombardment, recorded with technical precision by a writer who shares that same threat.

Excerpt 11 وليمة الموت الضخمة

Walīmat al-mawt al-ḍakhīmah

'The grand banquet of death.'

Excerpt 12 صورنا العائلية، كيس من الأشلاء، كومة من الرماد، خمس أكفان ملفوفة بجانب بعضها متفاوتة الحجم

Ṣuwarunā al-ʿāʾiliyyah, kīs min al-ashlāʾ, kawmah min al-ramād, khams akfān malfūfah bi-jānib baʿḍihā mutafāwitat al-ḥajm

'Our family photos: a bag of body parts, a heap of ashes, five shrouds wrapped side by side, varying in size.'

Excerpt 11 is taken from post 63, uploaded on October 19, 2023, the day before the author's death. It contains the most paradoxical *tashbīh balīgh* in the corpus, reflecting the condition of a writer who has moved beyond conventional emotional response. The *mushabbah* is *al-mawt al-jamāʿī* 'ongoing mass death', and *mushabbah bih* is *walīmah*, a large ceremonial banquet, an expression of communal celebration in Arab cultural tradition. *Wajh al-shabah* is left implicit: abundance served to many at once, the gathering of a community around a shared event, and a scale that exceeds ordinary occasions. The qualifier *al-ḍakhīmah* ('large', 'magnificent') intensifies the festive register, marking this as the most ceremonially significant kind of event. By equating mass death with a *walīmah ḍakhīmah*, the author executes a complete ironic inversion, employing a celebratory frame to describe destruction and producing a discomfort far deeper than any direct account. The juxtaposition of *walīmah* with *mawt* generates a *taḍādd* 'semantic antithesis' that fundamentally disrupts the reader's semantic expectations.

Excerpt 12, taken from Post 61 (19 October 2023), contains a *tashbīh mursal mufaṣṣal* with the most complete formal components and the sharpest ironic contrast found in the entire corpus. The *mushabbah* is *ṣuwarunā al-ʿāʾiliyyah* 'our family photographs', an object that in ordinary human experience holds memories of happiness, celebration, and togetherness. The *mushabbah bih* appears across three gradated elements: *kīs min al-ashlāʾ* 'a bag of body parts', *kawmah min al-ramād* 'a heap of ashes', and *khams akfān malfūfah bi-jānib baʿḍihā mutafāwitat al-ḥajm* 'five shrouds wrapped side by side, varying in size'. The *adāt al-tashbīh* is not explicitly present; the sentence instead employs an appositive (*badal*) structure in which the *mushabbah bih* directly substitutes for the *mushabbah*, technically approximating the effect of *tashbīh balīgh* despite its *mufaṣṣal* form, since the *wajh al-shabah* still comes through clearly: destruction stands in for the wholeness a family photograph is supposed to hold, and that destruction intensifies as the gradation moves from identifiable remains, to ash, to shrouds of uneven size. Like Excerpt 11, it was written on October 19, the day before the airstrike that killed her, among the last figures she committed to the page.

DISCUSSION

Stepping back from the individual excerpts, the overall picture is this. Across Hiba Abū Nadā's 67 Facebook posts from the last fourteen days of her life, the thirty-nine *balāghah* figures break down as twenty *isti'ārah*, nine *kināyah*, and ten *tashbīh*. *Isti'ārah* occupies the dominant position, with nearly equal distribution between the *tashrīḥiyyah* and *makniyyah* subtypes. Within *tashbīh*, the *balīgh* subtype dominates, a concentration that exceeds typical proportions documented in studies of comparable corpora. *Kināyah*, though the least frequent, presents the most layered *lāzim* in depth of implication. Thematically, the figures cluster around four semantic fields that recur throughout the corpus: Gaza figured as a moral agent, the digital space as a space of death, death itself as an active subject, and paradise as a continuation of Gaza rather than its opposite. There is also a temporal pattern worth noting: transcendental and eschatological figures become more frequent as the posts approach the author's death, while the geopolitical ones cluster earlier. This is not a matter of chance; it points to a writer whose rhetorical instincts kept functioning, and seemingly sharpening, under conditions that would seem to leave little room for craft at all. The question worth asking next is how that profile sits against what is already known about Palestinian resistance writing more broadly.

In several respects, it sits comfortably within that broader tradition. The ideological function rhetorical figures play here, as instruments for building identity rather than mere ornament, echoes what has already been documented for Maḥmūd Darwīsh, Samīḥ al-Qāsim, and Fadwā Ṭūqān (Kassis, 2015; Hamamra, 2019). The *isti'ārah* identified here turns Gaza from a passive object of tragedy into an active moral subject, a move that scholars have already traced in Darwīsh's writing on the relationship between poet and land (Talukder & Ali, 2025; Sazzad, 2016). A similar continuity shows up in the Qur'anic intertexts present as *wahān* in several *tashbīh balīgh* (Netanyahu read against Pharaoh, Biden against Hāmān), which works as a delegitimization strategy built from archetypes already familiar to the Arab resistance tradition, in step with resistance poetry written during earlier periods of active armed struggle (Ben-Dror, 2016; Kassis, 2015). And the prevalence of body, memory, and land figures fits a pattern noted by ecocritical scholars elsewhere: nature-rooted metaphor in Arabic poetry tends to carry ideological weight rather than serve as decoration (Ahmed & Hashim, 2015; Cohen, 2022). None of this is surprising on its own. Harder to find

precedent for is where the corpus pulls away from that tradition rather than continuing it.

The clearest departure concerns a cluster of figures with little precedent in the literature: *isti'ārah* operating on digital interfaces specifically (Facebook pages as *buyūt ʿazā'*, friend lists as coffins, digital icons as markers of powerlessness) which find no parallel in *balāghah* studies built around printed, editorially curated corpora (AlAmmar, 2022; Nashef, 2022). A second departure shows up in the *tashbīh* subtype. The dominance of *tashbīh balīgh* in this corpus far exceeds the proportion documented in studies of Darwīsh's poetry, where the subtypes are more evenly distributed (Hamamra, 2019). But the difference that matters most is methodological rather than distributional. Prior studies have analyzed figures that emerged at some temporal distance from the experience they describe; here, the figures emerge in the same moment as the experience itself, which means each figure's *qarīna* is linguistic and existential at once, tied directly to whatever was physically happening around the author as she wrote (Herremans, 2026; Holt, 2021). That same question, what happens when the gap between event and figuration closes entirely, turns out to connect this corpus to a body of scholarship well outside the Arabic tradition.

The clearest of those continuities is with Holocaust testimonial poetry, where extreme devastation seems not to weaken a trained writer's figurative capacity so much as concentrate and sharpen it (Remington, 2021; Toninato, 2025). The synesthetic *isti'ārah* identified here (turning the weapon's incendiary chemistry into citrus flavor, battlefield smoke into the color of clouds) follows a logic close to what scholars of Holocaust poetry have described in Celan's hermetic style: atrocity converted into images precisely because direct statement cannot hold it (Remington, 2021; Toninato, 2025). The testimonial function that witness literature has theorized shows up just as concretely in the *kināyah "māta aṭfāl lam yastaʿmilū asmā'ahum baʿd*," which carries a moral weight no plain statement about children's deaths could hold (Salgado, 2017; Caruth, 2017). And the real-time publicity that runs through Ukrainian digital war diaries is present here too: these posts read as though the author knew, the whole time, that an audience was watching as she wrote, which marks them off sharply from the privately written diaries that older scholarship usually takes as its baseline (Kot et al., 2024; Augustyns, 2020).

Set against the non-Arabic comparanda surveyed above, the corpus, though, pulls away from precedent in three respects. The most basic is temporal: the Holocaust poets in that literature wrote after the fact, at a remove that let their figures settle into something more consolidated, so what those studies analyze are choices made in reflection (Remington, 2021; Toninato, 2025). Here, by contrast, the figural choices were made under ongoing threat, by a writer who had no way of knowing whether she would live to finish what she was writing (Salgado, 2017). A second difference is methodological. Studies of Ukrainian digital war diaries work within a media-studies frame that tracks content, participation, and circulation, but rarely stops to look at the formal components of the figures themselves; this study reverses that priority and asks how, technically, the figures are saying it, not just what they say (Kot et al., 2024; Boichak & Jackson, 2020). The third difference is, in a sense, the reason for the other two: this study leans on classical Arabic *balāghah* as its primary analytical framework rather than psychoanalytic theory, trauma studies, or media studies.

The theoretical payoff comes in three parts. The most basic is simply empirical: it demonstrates that Arabic *balāghah*'s analytical reach extends further than its tradition is usually credited with. The conceptual system al-Jurjānī (al-Jurjānī, 1991, 2004) and

Ibn al-Athīr (Ibn al-Athīr, 1959) built centuries ago works productively on digital prose composed under conditions their original framework never anticipated, which says something about how durable the underlying figural mechanisms actually are, regardless of medium, genre, or how radically the production conditions have changed. A second contribution follows from the fourth stage of the analysis itself: treating "simultaneous production" as a genuine analytical variable in *balāghah* studies. The *qarīna* of a figure is linguistic, textual, and existential at once, with the unfolding reality around the author during writing forming part of the context that determines a figure's meaning, a dimension rarely articulated explicitly in the *balāghah* literature surveyed here. And third, the study builds something of a conceptual bridge between Arabic *balāghah* and the theory of literary testimony, bridging two traditions that have operated in productive but largely unconnected parallel: *balāghah* supplies the technical apparatus for showing how testimony actually gets constructed at the level of language, while testimony theory supplies the broader reason those construction choices matter at all, beyond mere style. Theoretical payoff is one thing, though; what the analysis is actually useful for, day to day, is another.

For Palestinian literary studies specifically, the analysis offered here is an early technical reading of the Abū Nadā corpus, and one that should open the door to work further, both on other aspects of the same posts and on comparative readings with other Gazan writers who died in the same weeks. For *balāghah* teaching, the corpus and the analysis built around it can serve as material showing students that the discipline still has purchase on contemporary texts, which matters for a generation that reads almost everything on a screen and can otherwise come to see classical Arabic rhetoric as belonging only to the past. And for the documentation of literary heritage more broadly, this kind of academic analysis matters with some urgency right now, since other Gazan writers who died in the same weeks left behind bodies of work that remain entirely unexamined. None of this is meant to substitute for the personal and communal ways this writing is already being remembered, but only to sit alongside that remembrance, offering whatever technical precision a close reading can add to it.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to find which *balāghah* figures — *isti'ārah*, *kināyah*, and *tashbīh* — predominate in Hiba Abū Nadā's 67 Facebook posts from October 7 to 20, 2023, and to describe their distribution and technical characteristics. Thirty-nine figures were identified across the corpus. *Isti'ārah* is the most frequent, with twenty instances divided between eleven *tashrīḥiyyah* and nine *makniyyah*, operating through a shift of *wahān* from the concrete and familiar to the existential realm that resists direct representation. *Kināyah* appears in nine instances across three subtypes — *ʿan ṣifah*, *ʿan nisbah*, and *ʿan mawṣūf* — and proves the most argumentatively dense, with each instance carrying multiple layers of *lāzim* functioning as geopolitical critique, trauma documentation, or theological statement. *Tashbīh* appears in ten instances, with *tashbīh balīgh* dominating, reflecting a consistent tendency to collapse comparative distance and fuse the experienced with an archetype already known to the reader. Overall, the figural profiles identified here attest that the Arabic *balāghah* system operated with high technical precision under extreme conditions, positioning this corpus as early textual evidence of how *balāghah* functions when a writer trained in it confronts her own mortality in real time.

This study has three limitations, each worth naming directly, as each also points to a piece of future work. The first is that this study asks a single question about the distribution and technical characteristics of *balāghah* figures. Two further dimensions sit right there in the data without being explored here: how figural choice shifts over the temporal arc as the author approaches death, and what specific existential work each figure is doing, either of which could easily stand as its own study. A second limitation is comparative: no systematic analysis is attempted here against the corpora of other Gazan writers who died in the same period, Refaat Alareer among them, and that comparison is really the only way to know whether the profile found here is idiosyncratic to Abū Nadā or reflects something more general about wartime literary production. Third, the study does not ask whether the translations through which most international readers actually encounter Abū Nadā's work preserve or quietly drop the technical components identified here, which is a real question given how few readers outside the Arabic-speaking world will ever meet these posts in the original.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author contributed to the research design, conceptual direction, and data analysis. The second author collected the research data and translated the article from its original language. The third, fourth, and fifth authors verified the accuracy of the Arabic-to-English translation, ensuring linguistic precision and conceptual fidelity of the research data.

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AUTHORS' SHORT BIODATA

Wartiman is a lecturer in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature, State Islamic University Imam Bonjol, Padang, Indonesia. His research covers Arabic linguistics, particularly balaghah and semantics. Email: wartiman@uinib.ac.id.

Mhd. Rizalman is a researcher at the Association of Researchers on Arabic Language and Literature "Lisaniya Adabiya" in Padang, Indonesia. His research covers Arabic linguistics, particularly semantics, pragmatics, and balaghah. Email: mhdrizalman@lisaniyaadabiya.id.

Laurence Lingat Ramos is a lecturer in the College of Arts and Social Sciences, Central Luzon State University, Nueva Ecija, Philippines. His research focuses on communication, development communication, communication for ASEAN, and journalism. Email: laurence.lingat@clsu.edu.ph.

Mohammad Ridhan Alhafidz is a master's student in the Study of Religions, Faculty of Islamic Studies, International Islamic University Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan. His research focuses on comparative religion. Email: 01152msudsrs25@student.iiu.edu.pk.

Hajar Essamlali is a bachelor's student in International and Political Studies, Faculty of Legal, Economic, and Social Sciences, Hassan II University of Casablanca, Casablanca, Morocco. Email: His research focuses on strategic issues in international politics. Email: hajaressamlali97@gmail.com.