

De-constructing Al-Qassam Brigades Visual Discourse on October 7, 2023: A Case of Two Military Operation Films

MALAK SALLOUM*
Lebanese University, Lebanon

ABSTRACT

This research explores the visual discourse of the military wing of Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) Ezzeddeen Al-Qassam Brigades, on October 7, 2023. It analyses and decodes the embedded signs and symbols of two edited military operations films; which they published on their Telegram channel. Drawing on this aim, the main question is: How is the visual discourse of Al-Qassam conveyed in the military operation films issued on the day of Tufan Al-Aqsa (Al-Aqsa Flood) Operation against the Israeli army? This research is significant because it delves to the unaddressed side of such pivotal event. The strategy used in this paper is qualitative research strategy and the design adopted is a case study. This research employs a social semiotic analysis on the purposive samples selected. The social semiotic approach draws on Roland Barthes's foundational concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth. The text Speech Act Theory is applied to derive illocutionary, locutionary and perlocutionary acts to understand the way of their employment. Ultimately, this research identifies and interprets the embedded signs and their representations, and hence the discourse that the military wing of Hamas seeks to reinforce and to advance its communication, political, and military objectives.

Keywords: *Al-Qassam Brigades, Israeli army, visual representations, military operations films, semiotic analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

The studies of pivotal historical events, political groups, and liberation movements have long been intertwined with media and communication studies in which they delve deeply into the nature of these actors and their communicative strategies, whether directed toward their popular base, adversaries, or the international community (El Zein, 2015). This type of studies is also applied on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where media and visual representations are central to the process of self-representation, despite the diversity of the means employed (Mosheer, 2020).

In this vein, the military wings of Palestinian organisations film their military operations. On one hand, these videos constitute an alternative battlefield; on the other, they function as a distinct form of discourse (El Zein, 2015); that can be deconstructed and interpreted through the lens of semiotic analysis.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

a. Hamas and the Media

In tracking the history of media outlets of militant organizations in the Middle East, it can be observed that it has a structural connection with the history of the emergence of the Palestinian Guerrilla movements that faced the Israeli army since these military wings recognised the significance of propaganda in their struggle (El Zein, 2015). For militant groups, propaganda is thus a tool to construct a favourable narrative, recruit and mobilize supporters,

*Corresponding author: Malakrsalloum@gmail.com

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justify actions, demoralize adversaries, maintain unity among members and allies, and instill fear and uncertainty as a part of psychological operations (Pape & Elgohari, 2023). Historically, the conflict between Al-Qassam Brigades and the Israeli army was not confined to the military battlefield alone, because Al-Qassam Brigades paid early attention to develop and allocate resources necessary to produce powerful and strategic media messages (Dalu & Al-Qara, 2022).

As a Palestinian movement has a military wing, Hamas employs a communications strategy through various mainstream media outlets, social media platforms, and mobile applications (Amer, 2024). For example, it operates Al-Aqsa TV (launched in 2003) and it has launched several social media campaigns. The Arabic newspaper Palestine is the largest daily newspaper in circulation in Gaza Strip, and its content amplifies Hamas's political messages (Doulah & Geiger, 2023). On social media, before being blocked, Hamas had official accounts on X (formerly Twitter) (@HamasInfo and @HamasInfoEn) and they aimed to reinforce its narrative and to falsify the Israeli accusations.

Historically Al-Qassam Brigades' media apparatus employed numerous communication tools and techniques starting with rudimentary methods such as graffiti, wall magazines, loudspeakers, and printed statements. Eventually, Hamas started using cyberspace and modern technologies in filming and editing (Dalu & Al-Qara, 2022). The role of Al-Qassam Brigades military media unit has been demonstrated significantly during times of conflict and Israeli regular attacks on the Gaza Strip. During 2008-2009 Israeli war on Gaza Strip, a parallel virtual war between the Israeli army and Hamas occurred (Zhang, 2017). Hamas also utilised social media platforms, mainly X (formerly Twitter), by launching a hashtag, QassamCount, to report "where Hamas rockets landed, when they landed, and what type of rocket was used" (Zeitsoff, 2011, p. 943).

On 2014, during the Israeli war on Gaza Strip, Hamas used hacking tactics to communicate with Israeli soldiers, breaching the broadcasts of several Israeli media outlets to deliver psychological warfare messages to the public. It also took control of Facebook pages belonged to Israeli companies and used them to post warning messages and it operated several accounts on X (formerly Twitter) to provide up-to-date news about the Palestinian casualties and news about launching rockets against Israel (El Zein & Abusalem, 2015). Promotional video clips (audio-visual productions) by Al-Qassam are also significant in the war against the Israeli army, which seem to be a replication of Hezbollah's media experience in producing propaganda video clips targeting the Israelis in the context of psychological warfare (El Zein, 2015). To demoralize the Israeli spirit, the military media unit of Qassam provided the combatants with brand new cameras fixed on their shoulders and heads to film their military actions to document them and extract suitable videos for online broadcasting after editing (Doulah & Geiger, 2023). Ezzeddeen Al-Qassam Brigades, also employed social media to circulate videos and songs in Hebrew. In 2017, Hamas broadcasted "Zionists, you will perish in Gaza" on YouTube which included an animated music video embedded with threats against the Israeli army (Doulah & Geiger, 2023).

b. Weaponization of Telegram

The operation on October 7, 2023 Hamas marked a critical transformation in the digital media landscape of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because Telegram emerged as a pivotal tool in shaping the psychological and informational dimensions of the confrontation. Contrary to previous escalations where Telegram usage merely spiked, this platform became central to the dissemination of real-time visuals and messaging (Loucaides, 2023).

In the light of being suspended on social media platforms, Al-Qassam's telegram channel was the main source from which they published their early military statements on Al-Aqsa flood operation whether textual or visual content that were military operation films, posters, Mohammed Deif speech, photos of Israeli damages.

c. *Literature Gap*

The aim is addressed by the following research question RQ1: How is the visual discourse of Al-Qassam is conveyed in their military operations films issued on their telegram channel on the day of Tufan Al-Aqsa (Al-Aqsa Flood) Operation against the Israeli army. In reviewing the media discourse of Hamas and its military wing, researchers have investigated their traditional media platforms, media productions, and political communication strategies. However, studies focusing specifically on Al-Qassam's military films and visual discourse remain scarce. Dalu and Al-Qara (2022) explored Al-Qassam's media discourse using media discourse analysis, but limited the analysis to the textual structure of military statements published on their official website. The main academic attention toward military films has instead been directed at videos produced by Hezbollah's military wing, rather than Al-Qassam (El Zein, 2015).

A review of related studies before the events of October 7, 2023 reveals that they can be categorized into three primary areas. The first focuses on the analysis of tweets, the second explores the iconography of the Palestinian nation, and the third addresses journalistic photography (semiotics of news images). Zhang (2017) analysed and categorized tweets from Hamas's official account (@hamainfo) and images from Gaza Now (@gazapal). The same author delved in the sides of political marketing. Texts from official account emphasizes diplomacy, while the second account focuses civilian life and loss tragedies, often using emotional imagery (Zhang, 2017). In a similar context, Amer (2024) applied a social semiotic approach to tweets from the Shehab News Agency and the associated hashtags. He emphasized that X (formerly Twitter) representations tend to frame the conflict as a political dispute between Hamas and Israel, rather than as a broader issue of occupation. Further comprehensive studies have examined the Palestinian semiotic landscape by analysing posters that depict conditions of exile, dispossession, and national identity (Mosheer, 2020).

Despite this growing body of research, there is dearth of studies that used semiotic methods to analyse Al-Qassam military operation films after October 7, 2023. Notably, there are studies analysed Hamas propaganda post-October 7, 2023 to identify the techniques used to impact the international public opinion and to legitimize their military operations against the Israeli army (Pape & Elgohari, 2023). In a similar context, Septiyani (2024) conducted a semiotic analysis of major international media (BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, and The New York Times), revealing that Western outlets often framed Israel as defending itself against Hamas "aggression", whereas Al Jazeera emphasized Palestinian humanitarian suffering. The study highlights the power of selective framing to shape public perception. Other studies have traced shifts in global public opinion and narrative formation by analysing online discourse on platforms such as X, Reddit, and Telegram (Antonakaki & Ioannidis, 2025), using volume, sentiment, and Bert topic analysis. On the other hand, Abd al-Hay (2023) argues that Israel has lost the media war during the Al-Aqsa Flood, noting that the credibility of Israel's portrayal of Arabs as terrorists has significantly declined due to the increasing visibility of civilian casualties.

There are four studies relevant but they fall outside this topic's scope. Setiawan et al. (2024) studied *Republika* newspaper's coverage of Palestine, using framing analysis and interviews to show how media ownership shifted framing from political elites to civil-society support. On the other hand, Awais et al. (2022) explored Israeli Digital Diplomacy by analysing Arabic-language Facebook (Meta) pages, showing how official pages use human-interest and conflict frames to normalize the occupation. The third study by Juneidi et al. (2021) tracked Hollywood's representation of Palestinian characters post-Second Intifada and 9/11, linking stereotype formation to industry and political contexts. The final study applied Barthesian semiology to Philippine horror films to read gendered myth and ideology across micro, meso, and macro levels (Gamayo et al., 2024).

These academic works advance knowledge on news framing, state social media outreach, cinema representations, and Barthesians semiology. Yet no study examines the military communication of Palestinian movements. In a nutshell, unlike other studies, this research will specifically analyse military operation videos released on the day of the al-Aqsa Flood (October 7, 2023) by Al-Qassam Brigades. Its primary platform of analysis is Telegram due to its role in disseminating unfiltered content.

METHODOLOGY

This project employs a qualitative strategy because it involves words rather than quantification when collecting and analysing data since its epistemology is interpretivism and the ontology is constructionism. Interpretivism, which contrasts positivism, requires the social scientist to explain the social phenomenon including the discourse. Constructionism states that social phenomena and their meanings are dependent on the context and external factors (Clark et al., 2021). A case study design is adopted in this research because this study is based on detailed and intensive analysis of a single case from a single environment (Clark et al., 2021), and the data will be gleaned from Al-Qassam channel on Telegram (two military operation videos).

The method adopted in the research is social semiotic analysis. It utilizes Roland Barthes's foundational concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth (Barthes, 1972). Roland Barthes's visual semiotics treats images as signs that operate on two levels. At the first level, an image seems to denote describing "what is there" though in practice this "non-coded" layer is never entirely free of coding. At the second level, which it is the connotative level, the cultural codes attach values and associations to what it can be seen. When these meanings are organized as a second-order semiological system that naturalize historical concepts, they function as myth (Barthes, 1972).

For textual analysis, Speech Act theory is applied to deconstruct the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act. Speech Act theory is developed by philosophers J.L. Austin and later refined by John Searle, views utterances as having a function or purpose beyond their literal meaning. This theory reframes language as action rather than mere description. It argues that in uttering a sentence the speaker performs an illocutionary act of having a certain force, which is different from the locutionary act of uttering the sentence, which is to have a meaning, and also from the perlocutionary act performed by uttering the sentence, which is to achieve certain effects. The illocutionary acts are classified into five types, i.e., verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives (Reiland, 2024; Sbisà, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Samples

The data analysed in this study consist of two military edited operation films that document coordinated, multi-pronged incursions involving missile attacks and aerial infiltration. These videos, as it will be shown in Table 1, were published on the official Telegram channel of the Al-Qassam Brigades on October The first video (41 seconds), shows preparations by Hamas paragliders from the Falcon Squadron, Air Force of the Al-Qassam Brigades. It depicts their take-off, border crossing, descent using motorized paragliders onto an open sandy terrain, and eventual movement toward concrete structures, finally attacking the site.

Table1: Video metadata and scene analysis: Al-Qassam brigades footage

Field	Video 1	Video 2
Title	<i>Fasil Saqr bil-nass</i>	<i>Rajum</i>
Duration	41 seconds	1:05
Source	Al-Qassam Brigades Telegram (Posted: 7 October 7, 2023)	Al-Qassam Brigades Telegram (Posted: 7 October 7, 2023)
Caption	"Exclusive scenes of the 'Falcon Squadron,' one of the military units that took part in Operation #AlAqsaFlood inside our occupied lands."	"Scenes of the short-range 'Rujum' rocket system, 114 mm caliber, used in preparatory fire..."
Description	Described by Al Jazeera (2023) as a training simulation, not confirmed combat.	Showcases 114 mm rocket system; includes outro and logo.
Total Scenes	40	32
Phases	1. Preparations (Dawn): 0:01–0:13 2. Take-off (Golden Hour): 0:14–0:23 3. Approach (Morning Light): 0:24–0:28 4. Attack & Clearing (Inside): 0:29–0:35 5. Quranic Verse: 0:36–0:40	1. Preparations & Commands: 0:01–0:10 2. Ammunition Loading: 0:11–0:30 3. Missile Launch (Morning Light): 0:31–0:52

a. Analysis of Aerial Infiltration

Phase 1:

1. Men in the Sun

a- At the denotative level, the footage starts with an establishing scene of two silhouetted men with camouflaged headwear. One of the men, is holding an umbrella/canopy and the second one is holding a Backpack Paramotor Engine. The two parts of the paramotor are not yet attached, and the camera catches them walking forward at dawn on what seems to be a sandy field or terrain with distant greenery in the background.

On the connotative level, the camouflaged headwear and the antenna device connote military identity, especially belonging to the Resistance or guerrilla movement, which suggests boldness and courage. The umbrella resembles an activity related to flying, connoting freedom, and the sun indicates the beginning of a new day (dawn).

At the level of the myth, the two men are freedom fighters, part of the land they're walking on. The sunrise here is a new emancipatory beginning for these paragliders, as they're moving forward, they're moving toward the future too. The technical detachments of the

canopy's part resemble the need for integration, and signifies the concept of "Complexity in Simplicity".



Figure 1: Men in the sun

2- The Logo

This close-up scene shows a fabric patch on a fighter's sleeve, with the logo of Falcon Squadron, Air Force of the Al-Qassam Brigades; the military unit of the fighters.

Delving into the image's details, they denote: a shoulder patch placed onto a dark uniform sleeve. The patch contains a graphic emblem: a falcon with wings spread upward, clutching on an arrow between two domes. Above the bird, an arrow points upward. The design includes Arabic script encircling the emblem. Hanging from the neck of the black and white falcon is what looks like a Palestinian "Keffiyeh".

At connotative level, the falcon holds rich symbolism and a high status in Arab and Islamic history and in many ancient civilizations. It is defined as "the bird used for hunting" and among the Arabs, its epithet is Abu Shuja ("Father of Bravery"), and it is known as "the free bird" (El Zahi, 2024).

The Falcon connotes elevation, transcendence, strength, precision, and courage, and is commonly linked to power, authority, influence, glory, wisdom, and foresight. The two domes (from right to left) represent the dome of Al-Qibly Mosque and The Dome of the rock in Al-Aqsa Mosque located in the occupied Palestinian capital Al-Quds, while the whole architectural structure represents Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The falcon takes off and lands on his owner's hand the falcon in the logo clutches into the arrow (symbol of weapon and preciseness) that links the two domes. Another arrow points upward (symbolically toward the sky). His wings spread, signifying authority, power and freedom, and the Black and White Keffiyeh identifies him as a "Palestinian Falcon".

At the level of myth, fighters affiliated with this military unit are portrayed as carrying the falcon's qualities, like precision, courage, and noble heritage. Al-Aqsa Mosque becomes the compass of their struggle and cause. Meanwhile, the Israeli adversary is cast as the "prey" one they can seize from high altitude with accuracy and skill. This imagery expresses a myth of deep rootedness in Palestinian land and geography, a claim of moral and religious superiority, and a pressing drive to gain their freedom through force. In sum, Al-Qassam paragliders symbolize the balance between earth and sky, horizontal and the vertical, and between elevation and depth.



Figure 2: The logo

3- One United Cell

This aerial footage demonstrates, a fighter bundling a collapsed blue and white parachute, 3 groups of fighters adjusting the paramotors of one another, and several fighters (in military uniforms with green headbands) grouped, gesturing and preparing equipment. The overall number of participants is 13, four seem to be preparing to take off. There are two types of paramotors, Single seater (Solo) and two-seater (3 wheeled) paramotor.

In general, the work clusters and movement vectors denote, unity, collective coordination, and role differentiation. The environment (described in appendix) denotes a training area, where laid-out wings show imminence of flight: readiness and competence.

As for technical details, the single seat (solo) trike is more dynamic in landing, while the double seat demonstrates that each person has a different military role in this process of flight and attack.

The scene is recorded through drone camera to maximize image efficiency. The footage promotes a narrative of disciplined, modernized Resistance working as a one cell to achieve a specific goal. The use of two types of paramotor promotes a sophisticated military plan and a deep understanding of the battlefield requirements.



Figure 3: One united cell

Phase 2:

1- Fly with us

In one of the very engaging scenes, two masked paragliders with camouflaged eyes are flying in the sky. The fighter in the back is holding the canopy lines, wearing headphones, while the one seated in front is carrying a weapon.

Both are flying parallel to a concrete wall resembling the separation barrier between Gaza Strip and the Israeli settlements. In the background behind them, three other paragliders are visible flying in the air. The camera appears to be mounted on part of the canopy. Both fighters are active actors, they connote aerodynamic flying, and the selfie style shot adds a human nature in contrast to the Israeli rigid concrete wall. Paragliders flying in the background connotes the future, but in overall the image connects the two paragliders to the one in the background. The aimed weapon symbolizes taking control. At the level of myth, the two pilots resemble the present and the others represent the free future, while the wall turns into a part of the occupational past.



Figure 4: Fly with us

2- Paragliders Crossing into the Israeli Settlements

In an extreme aerial wide shot, a long concrete barrier spans the foreground; several paragliders cross the mid-sky over semi-arid terrain. They overcome the concrete wall; sea is seen on the horizon.

At the denotive level, the image simply is meant to demonstrate the scenery of Gazan paragliders crossing the so-called “smart wall” between Gaza Strip and Israeli settlements, which is a multi-layered “enhanced security barrier system completed in late 2021” (The Associated Press, 2021).

At the connotative level, it can be argued that this act suggests innovation, military superiority, invincibility, self-confidence, power over enemy’s fortified lines, and boldness.

At the myth level, Al-Qassam paragliders naturalize the idea of crossing borders, and the smart wall is recoded from sovereign technology into a mere backdrop. While the fighters flying in the simplest ways turn into a symbol of invincibility, the wall proves that Israeli technological superiority is permeable in presence of will.

The high flight symbolizes a rightful return and the reclaiming of land, turning the enemy’s watchful gaze upside down. Freedom in the air contrasts with confinement on the ground, making a sign of justice and historical correction.



Figure 5: Paragliders crossing into the Israeli Settlements

Phase 3:

1- Now, Observe our Courage

The canopy carrying two pilots is descending on a sandy military mock area, and the pilot seated in the front is aiming his rifle toward a block with tower, harsh backlight. A Star of David (painted) and an Israeli flag appear gradually on the tower.

An Over the shoulder shot and foregrounded gun create immediacy, and the converging lines work like arrows that guide our eyes to the tower and make the approach feel planned and inevitable, the two-person setup (pilot + shooter) signals training and role split (which it was previously detected through the type of Paramotor used). The backlight turns the rider into a partial silhouette to stress anonymity. the flag and Star of David clearly mark the tower as the Israeli target space.

At the level of myth, together, flight skill, a clean approach vector, and explicit enemy symbols build a story of disciplined, purposeful incursion that overcomes barriers. It builds a myth of fighters that own both: ideological and military foresight. As for the environment, the warm backlight softens the violence and reframes it as calm control—so a tactical descent reads as an inevitable mission.



Figure 6: Now, observe our courage

2- The Weapon is the Actor

From a first-person view, the barrel leads the frame as the camera slides past a sandy space, a strong backlight with lens flare in foreground. The shot appears to be from a weapon-mounted action camera (POV), and the compositional weight (centre, POV) is given to the weapon, making it the scene's dominant element

The foregrounded, centred weapon signals imminent force and tactical focus. Moreover, the two stone edges act as leading lines that pull the eye toward the target, and moving forward implies advance and intent. In the Palestinian national imagination, weapon is not merely an instrument of combat; it functions as a sign mobilized across speech, posters, and song to index dignity, agency, and a claimed right to self-defence.

In the mythical interpretation, the hero (fighter) and his rifle become one entity. His value is evaluated based on how effectively he uses the weapon. Thus, it reflects the enduring myth of the Palestinian fighter and his deep, almost inseparable bond with his weapon.



Figure 7: The weapon is the actor

3- Incursion

Fighters rush a concrete building and storm into it as smoke blooms; two Stars of David painted on the walls.

At the denotative level, it can be observed clearly that the militants are storming into a block structure while white smoke spreads across the simulation area, and a camera tripod can be seen. Connotatively, the diagonal run, low postures, and curling smoke work as vectors of attack, giving the moment urgency and direction.

The stencilled Stars of David code the space as symbolically as “enemy” territory. The medium-long framing keeps the viewer at a tactical distance to differentiate the roles of individuals (breacher, cover, entry). The presence of tripod can be understood that these scenes are parts of training area not a live combat scene.

The representations are combined together to form a greater narrative at the mythical level: the scene transforms a realistic breach drill into a symbol of breaking into and controlling the opponent's space. Smoke dramatizes power and inevitability in addition to concealing movement.

The designated walls serve as more than just an index: they support the favoured interpretation that this is a morally upright, purposeful invasion. A simple rush on a concrete block thus it turns into a story of legitimate advance and territorial defeat.



Figure 8: Incursion

Phase 4:

1- The Fighter Enters into the Concrete Block

The backlit fighter enters into the concrete block. Through dense smoke, the camera looks down over a rifle at a mock model of an Israeli soldier on the floor (Scene linked to incursion figure). A verse of the Quran, as shown in Figure 9, appears on the fighter's back, centred in the image with graphic fire flares.

قَالَ رَجُلَانِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمَا ادْخُلُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الْبَابَ
فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمُوهُ فَإِنَّكُمْ غَالِبُونَ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(5:23) Two men of those who feared, upon both of whom Allah had bestowed a favor, said: "Enter upon them by the gate, for when you have entered it you shall surely be victorious, and on Allah you should rely if you are believers."

Figure 9: Surah Al-Ma'idah (5: 23)

The context of the verse 23 from Surah Al-Ma'idah clearly shows that the fear means fear of Allah; there were people who feared Allah and avoided disobedience of Allah and His prophet; and these two men belonged to that group; that is why they said what they said. Moreover, they had a distinction among that group that Allah had bestowed His favour upon them, it has been earlier mentioned in this book that when "favour" comes in the Qur'an without any condition, it denotes divine *wilayah* (friendship); so, the two men were among the true believers. This in itself indicates that the above-mentioned fear refers to fear of Allah, because the true believers are not afraid of anything, they fear only Allah (Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2023a, p. 106-107).

In the phrase: "those who feared" object of the verb "feared" is omitted because it is understood from the phrase: "upon both of whom Allah had bestowed a favour" since they were not afraid of the strong race. The term 'Gate' in "Enter upon them by the gate" may refer to the first town of that strong race, reportedly, it was called Ariha. Or it may refer to the gate of the town, "for when you have entered it you shall surely be victorious" (ibid).

Applying Speech Act Theory

- Locutionary Act

The two men's literal statement, "Enter upon them by the gate, for when you have entered it, it you shall surely be victorious", is the locutionary act. This is a straightforward command to enter the city confident about the promise of victory. The words literally describe a physical action (entering a gate) and link it to a future outcome (victory).

- Illocutionary Act

The illocutionary act is the intended purpose of the statement. The two men are not providing geographic directions or military commands, they are urging the Children of Israel to take a particular, brave action, and their statement functions as a powerful hortatory and advisory speech act. Because it promises a future outcome (victory) that is dependent on their action, this act also serves as a commissive speech act. It's an act of inspiration and persuasion meant to overcome people's inaction and fear. The purpose of the illocutionary force is to motivate bravery and faith.

- Perlocutionary Act

The perlocutionary act is the effect the utterance has on the audience. Convincing the Children of Israel to overcome their fear and charge through the gate was the intended perlocutionary effect. By instilling courage, faith, and a willingness to fight, the two men hoped to transform their people's behaviour from one of fearful hesitation to one of decisive action. The intended perlocutionary act is described in the verse as resulting in victory, which would be the ultimate successful outcome.

- Barthesian Analysis

Placing the verse above the image of the fighter storming the enemy's gate (concrete block) creates a mythical connection, as the fighter becomes the one who obeys the command of the two righteous men of the Children of Israel. By storming the gate, it means that the fighter has demonstrated sufficient courage to attack the "mighty ones" confident in Allah's promise of victory. Thus, this use is a form of historical and religious projection, portraying Al-Qassam fighters as an instrument of Allah Almighty to fight the oppressors.

On the other hand, Al-Qassam intends to say to the Israelis that their claim of being the ancestors of Children of Israel is false, and that "we are the true ones whom we follow Moses commands not you".



Figure 10: Verse of Quran

b. Analysis of "Rujom"

Phase 1:

1- Sons of Earth

The footage shows six Qassam fighters, camouflaged, standing in a row beside rocket launchers, with their full bodies visible. The camera is positioned at a low angle point in the grass, with sun flares in background. Compositionally, the depth of field emphasizes the foreground (blurred grass), middle ground (fighters), and background (warm sunrise + Palestinian flag).

At the connotative level, the slight blur triggers anonymity, turning individuals into fighters under one collective identity. Meanwhile, the camera, placed from the grass (ground) and the horizon, suggests homeland and rootedness. This can be linked to the Palestinian flag that frames the national identity and the political background of the fighters (struggle). Moreover, the Dutch angle creates a sense of imminent danger, charged unease, anxiety, paranoia, or a sense of the unknown (Gichuki, 2025).

This image creates a myth of the sacred trio: The Palestinian nation, the land, and the gun (rocket launcher), the sons of earth are preparing at early sunrise to attack their enemies. The heavy coding in the footages, transcends the political context of the event, and turns it into a noble purified act. In sum, this reinforces the act of Resistance as sacred, inevitable, and invincible.



Figure 11: Sons of Earth

2- Coordination Centre

A fighter from Al-Qassam Brigades can be recognized by his green headband, the unit's slogan, and a small Palestinian flag badge on his sleeve, as he talks on the phone while holding a pen. Four boxes of ammunition make up a table for him. He seems blended into the whole setting, because of the camouflage and the nearby olive tree (all green). The grass and branches in the foreground are meant to block parts of the view, giving him a hidden, observational vantage point. A part of a Palestinian flag is seen on the right side of the frame.

The obstructed view connotes secrecy, ambush, and operational readiness rather than spectacle. The fighter's movements of writing and talking, connotes command centre and coordination. While the olive tree connotes belonging and rootedness, the four ammunition boxes used as a table symbolize militarized lifeworld and careful scene planning.

Olive trees and orange orchards figure extensively in Palestinian visual representations. These appeal to an imagining of Palestine as a "Paradise Lost". These images document life before the events of the 1948 Nakba, as the memory of Palestine is that of a

place full of life, colour, prosperity and happiness. The olive tree commonly symbolizes Palestinian rootedness in the land and Palestinians' refusal to have their political and cultural identity erased. The olive tree has always been used as a potent form of nationalist expression (Mosheer, 2020, p. 16). One essential thing to notice is the Quranic Verses 82 and 83 of Surah Hud written on the top of the table.

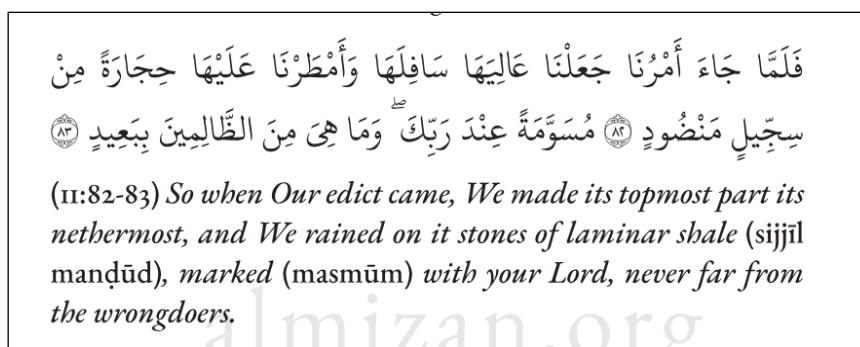


Figure 12: Surah Hud (11: 82-83)

The three occurrences of 'it' (a feminine singular pronoun) in the verse refer to the people of Lot's land, town, or territory, as is indicated by the context. The adjective Sijjil is synonymous with *Sijjin* that means 'fired' and it also means the stones mixed with clay. This word comes from the Arabic root *Sijil* which it denotes 'inscription' and others have said that it is derived from the verb *asjalat* which it denotes 'sent' (Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2023b, p. 178).

However, it appears that the original meaning of all these explanations is the Arabicized Persian combination of 'stones and clay'. The term 'book' is also derived from it, as they used to write on clay-fired tablets, then the semantic range of this word expanded to mean any sort of inscription, even if it is made on paper. The meaning of 'sent' is derived from this as well (ibid).

Mandud ('layered') means to be arranged and ordered, while *masmūm* ('marked') means to identified by a mark or symbol. Therefore, the meaning of the two verses connotes that Allah ordered the angels to execute His punishment. The divine order is 'Be', as referred to His command when He wills something, is to say to it 'Be'. As a result, Allah made the high points of their land and their cities their lowest points by overturning them, and by raining down upon them stones of baked clays, and hence none of them will miss their target (ibid).

Applying Speech Act Theory:

- Locutionary Act

The two Quranic verses are a descriptive utterance denoting a series of actions. They say that after a "command" (divine order) was issued, the city was inverted and then a rain of stones occurred. The act is to describe a past event and its physical consequences.

- Illocutionary Act

The verses serve as a declarative speech act. In this context the divine statement is not a description but a declaration of the consequences of disobeying Allah's path. It's a statement of divine power, authority, and justice. The divine statement is not merely a description but a declaration of a past judgment and its execution. It is a statement of divine power, authority, and justice. The illocutionary force is to establish a historical truth and to serve as a warning and a testament to Allah's ultimate power over the errant.

- Perlocutionary Act

The perlocutionary effect of this verse is to instil a sense of awe, fear, respect for Allah's power, and to give moral lessons. It is meant to deter disbelief and immorality by illustrating the severe consequences of defying divine commands. On the other hand, the verse aims to motivate believers to maintain their faith and righteousness, and to warn disbelievers of the inevitability of divine punishment.

- Barthesian Myth

In general, the writing of a sacred religious text on a military equipment is a way to moralize force and violence. In analysing the meaning of Quranic verses and the whole scene, projections can be detected as follows,

- (1) Al-Qassam fighter in the coordination centre becomes a transmitter of the high; command, and the decision to attack the Israeli army becomes legitimate;
- (2) Al-Qassam fighters turn into the doers of Allah's command;
- (3) The rockets and missiles are the rain of the stones;
- (4) Israelis are the immoral demons;
- (5) Attacking the Israeli army can be considered a moral and religious punishment.

In a nutshell, the writing of Quranic verses on ammunition boxes turns military action into a moral duty. The verses connote that the order comes from Allah, passed down through commanders to fighters, and thus the firing of rockets becomes the modern echo of "stones of baked clay".

In this frame, the Israeli army is casted as the wrongdoer, and the striking portrayed as a just punishment rather than a military tactical choice. The effect is powerful: faith, nation, and arms are combined.



Figure 13: Coordination centre

Phase 2:

1- As a beehive

The footage opens in the midground where a fighter carries a missile and moves toward the rocket launcher to position it. With a swift shift, the camera refocuses on the foreground, showing another fighter adjusting and aiming the launcher. At the left edge of the frame, part of the Palestinian flag is visible. In total, seven fighters appear in the scene, preparing and coordinating with the energy and order of a beehive.

The repetition of identical launchers in a scaled way connotes strategic and organized planning, and finalizing preparations. While the dynamic movement of the fighters, each one doing his duty inserting missiles, connotes discipline and readiness. A Fighter in the foreground is seen in a crouched posture from the back while; those seen in full bodies are fully camouflaged united under the banner of Palestine.

The fighter's fluent movements connote physical strength and military training. The scene shifts focus from one fighter to another, yet portray them as a single entity (hive with a clear goal). The repetition of identical launchers and synchronized, task-bound bodies integrate work + discipline + nation into a single natural unit.

Beneath the edge of the flag, the fighters do not appear as individuals making individual decisions, but as cells in a righteous collective. The camera's focus from the stand to the target presents a smooth sequence of roles, so that action becomes a virtue and logistics become destiny. By aestheticizing the system (parallel pipes, identical positions, smooth movements), the image tames violence: the process of arming the launchers appears as a normal and necessary action for a healthy body, rather than an incidental and controversial one. The unit is functioning like a beehive, not only through their movement, but also by considering defense and attack as an instinctive and collective duty imposed by a higher goal. All of this scenery imposes collective moral action inviting viewers to accept this equation as common sense and granting them political correctness.



Figure 14: As a beehive

Phase 3:

1- Missiles are birds too

The camera remains steady, directed toward the blue sky as rockets break through, leaving trails of fire and smoke. Birds intersect the frame, moving against the line of fire, while blurred trees can be seen at lower edge.

The image represents an organized purposeful launch: two clean diagonal exhaust lines act as strong vectors to demonstrate that an action is taking place, with their parallelism suggesting precision and discipline (salvo rather than chaos). The scene is framed against a wide blue sky with no ground or targets. The whole scenery becomes a sanitized heavenly skywriting. The birds that cross the sky serve as witnesses and normalizers. They give the scene scale and a calm counterpoint that makes it seem like the act "belongs" to the sky (divine) as much as to the battlefield. Finally, the white vapor on blue is a sign of purity and an index of fire. This serves as a common way to show that Al-Qassam's launching of missiles is clean, controlled, and morally right. At the mythical level, and based on what was analysed previously

(Quranic verse, synchronized launchers, elegant rockets serve as a sacred purified tool that belongs to a noble cause and land.



Figure 15: Missiles are birds too

CONCLUSION

This research analysed two videos filmed by Al-Qassam Brigades during Tufan Al-Aqsa Operation on October 7, 2023 using a semiotic method. Drawing on Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis and applying Speech Act Theory, this research elucidates how the technical capabilities and ideological cause merged in the videos to construct a narrative about the military capabilities of the Squadron unit. In this vein, the videos aimed to be aesthetically justified since the footages appeared deliberately structured and meticulously edited. Symbolically, the acts of Al-Qassam Brigades in the videos intended to affirm its identity as a group of freedom fighters who are pursuing their noble cause against the Israeli Occupation. In this context, Al-Qassam Brigades moralized the acts of its fighters ethically and religiously and demonized their adversary – the Israeli army.

The two videos reflected Al-Qassam Brigades' power in terms of unity, military advancement and the personal strength of their fighters. Footage repeatedly intended to remind the viewers that Al-Qassam Brigades' war is for a sacred cause to reclaim the Palestinian occupied territories. As the two videos reflected fighters' belief in Allah, they also intended to add a touch of holiness around Al-Qassam fighters and every singular act, either by a religious symbol (stencilling a Quranic verse) or by national ones (Palestinian Flag, Palestinian badge, green headband). This visual representation is not just in-group message, but rather it is a message related to the future of the Palestinian people and their collective identity.

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BIODATA

Malak Salloum is a postgraduate research candidate, Faculty of Information, Lebanese University. She holds BA in Radio & Television from Al Maaref University, Lebanon and BA in Journalism and Communication Sciences from Lebanese University. Email: Malakrsalloum@gmail.com

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