



## **Viral Humanitarian Imagery: The Impact of #AllEyesonRafah on Global Social Media Dynamics**

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### A B S T R A C T

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This study examines the impact of viral humanitarian imagery, focusing on the AI-generated image campaign with the hashtag #AllEyesonRafah on global social media dynamics. It explores how the imagery influences public awareness and encourages responses to humanitarian issues in Rafah, Palestine. The study aims to identify a pattern linking social media use to social mobilization driven by humanitarian imagery. Data were collected through analysis of digital content posted by public figures and humanitarian organizations, employing a qualitative approach informed by relevant communication theories. Primary sources included posts by public figures such as Bella Hadid, Ariana Grande, and Paramore, which significantly increased engagement. The analysis integrates three theories:

Mark Granovetter's Social Network Theory to examine the viral spread of AI-generated imagery on platforms like X, Instagram, and TikTok; Stuart Hall's Representation Theory to analyze global public interpretations of these images; and Marshall McLuhan's "Medium is the Message" Theory to assess how social media platforms and visual formats shape perception of the Rafah crisis. Findings indicate that viral humanitarian imagery not only raises awareness but also drives tangible global audiences. The study confirms social media's role as an agent of social change, with its novelty lying in the detailed explanation of emotions in visual communication. The limitations of this study include the focus on one aspect of social media and the lack of longitudinal analysis, while suggestions for further research include a broader exploration of audience interactions and offline dimensions of similar phenomena.

## Introduction

The social phenomenon sparked by the digital campaign "All Eyes on Rafah," driven by the hashtag #AllEyesonRafah, is the focus of this study, highlighting the pivotal role of artificial intelligence (AI) in creating and disseminating content to raise global awareness of the humanitarian crisis in Rafah, Palestine. In May 2024, the #AllEyesOnRafah campaign gained prominence as a collective response to the worsening humanitarian situation in Rafah, Gaza, amid the Israeli occupation. The campaign is characterized by the widespread sharing of humanitarian imagery—including videos, photographs, and animations—much of which has been generated using AI technology. This content has marked a significant shift in how information about armed conflict is disseminated and consumed in the digital sphere. Unlike earlier eras dominated by mainstream media, individuals and non-state actors now act as both producers and distributors of information, reaching global audiences directly. In this context, AI-generated media serves not only as a tool for sharing (Ara et al., 2024; Dunnell et al., 2024; Feher, 2024; He & Fang, 2024; Li, n.d.; Lu et al., 2023; Wasielewski, 2024), but also as a medium that fosters global connection among individuals.

Advances in digital technology have expanded communication reach (Haleem et al., 2022; Jahid et al., 2022; Narvaez Rojas et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022), influencing patterns of societal interaction and mobilization worldwide (Amelia & Balqis, 2023; Esau et al., 2024; Junaedi et al., 2023; Peña & Gold, 2023; Rodriguez-Lopez et al., 2021). Activists, social workers, and other stakeholders now collaborated via social media platforms (Anam & Masuwd, 2025; Etter & Albu, 2021; Hutchinson, 2021; La Rose & Detlor, 2021; Luhuringbudi et al., 2019; Mirbabaie et al., 2021; Sanders & Scanlon, 2021; Setiawan et al., 2023), reshaping the discourse on humanitarianism in conflict zones (Chouliaraki & Vestergaard, 2021; Griffin, 2023; Hamilton, 2022; Lewis, 2023; Srai et al., 2023; Walsh & Hill, 2023). This evolution has created a dynamic “global social media ecosystem” (Fraccastoro et al., 2021; Grewal et al., 2022; Lacarcel & Huete, 2023; F. L. F. Lee et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022) where information spreads rapidly, generates momentum, and drives impact. Research exploring these patterns is essential for understanding the interplay between digital media and public responses to humanitarian issues. Within this framework, it is crucial to examine the role of this humanitarian imagery as a medium for shaping public understanding in a meaningful and impactful way.

Several studies have explored the relationship between humanitarian imagery (S. Y. Lee et al., 2024; Ongenaert, Joye, & Ihlen, 2023; Ongenaert, Joye, & Machin, 2023), digital media (Grewal et al., 2022), and public responses (Frijns et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2022; Lawrence & Hylton, 2022; Martikainen & Hakoköngäs, 2023). However, a gap persists in the literature, necessitating a comprehensive analysis of how AI-generated content influences global perceptions and public interaction patterns. Existing research often focuses on “one-way communication,” overlooking the dynamic, networked nature of digital engagement. Additionally, the lack of integration of communication theories and visual studies in the humanitarian context limits a broader understanding of the media’s role in shaping narratives.

The #AllEyesOnRafah campaign leveraged AI-generated content not only as a documentation tool but also as a catalyst for a transnational solidarity movement rooted in humanitarian values. However, the production and distribution of AI-generated imagery raise ethical concerns, including the potential marginalization of human creators, manipulation of representations of Rafah residents’ suffering, and the risk of distorting Palestinian realities for political or propagandistic purposes.

This research addresses these gaps through a thematic, rigorous, and impactful analysis of humanitarian imagery on social media, emphasizing its role in shaping digital discourse. It aims to balance the transformative potential of AI-driven digital advocacy with a critical examination of its structural and ethical challenges. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, this study integrates Stuart Hall's Representation Theory, Marshall McLuhan's "The Medium is the Message," and Mark Granovetter's Social Network Theory to provide a critical, holistic analysis of the virality of humanitarian imagery in the digital era. By examining this shift, this research seeks to enhance understanding of humanitarian communication in the digital spaces.

While AI is increasingly prevalent in digital content production, research on its role in catalyzing mass social movements through humanitarian imagery remains limited. Prior cases, such as the use of deepfakes in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election, highlight the potential for information manipulation. In contrast, #AllEyesOnRafah represents a rare instance of AI being used for humanitarian advocacy, prioritizing the documentation of Palestinian civilians suffering and fostering transnational solidarity. Unlike politically or commercially motivated cases, this campaign leverages AI to legitimize victim narratives, enhance public participation, and expand campaign reach in areas with restricted access to information. This study offers a novel contribution by exploring AI's potential as a humanitarian advocacy tool within the digital media ecosystem.

This research evaluates the impact of the AI-generated #AllEyesonRafah campaign on the global perception of humanitarian issues in Rafah. It aims to map the campaign's key elements, assess its influence on social interactions and information mobilization on digital platforms, and answer the central question: "How do AI-generated images shape global communication dynamics and narratives?" By applying social network theory, representation, and medium-as-message concepts, the study provides thematic and impactful insights into these dynamics, identifying factors that drive the effectiveness of the digital advocacy campaigns.

The main argument is that viral humanitarian imagery, particularly from the #AllEyesonRafah campaign, has the power to reshape public perspectives on humanitarian issues and drive broader social mobilization. The effectiveness of image dissemination depends on the quality and context of presentation, which influence social media users' engagement and reactions. Strategic use of digital platforms has evaluated humanitarian issues in global discussion agendas. Thus,

this study explores how technology, social interaction, and visual representation converge to create shape meaning in the era of digital communication. Through a long-term analysis of the campaign's impact, it aims to develop new models for understanding effective social diplomacy and provide thematic, memorable, and impactful insights into digital advocacy and its influence on public responses to humanitarian issues.

## **Research Methods and Theory Approach**

The material object of this research is the impact of the digital campaign titled “All Eyes on Rafah” generated by artificial intelligence, where this phenomenon is closely related to the dynamics of global social media, Islamic communication, and sustainable development goals. The selection of this object stems from its relevance to contemporary interactions among technology, humanitarian advocacy, and public response. The object of study centers on the visual analysis of representations of humanity, manifested through viral images on digital media. These “viral images of humanity” serve as formal objects while embodying narratives produced and disseminated by various actors on social media platforms. Through this methodological approach, this research investigates both the material impact of the campaign and its contribution to global understanding of humanitarian issues in Rafah, Palestine. By evaluating content and interactions, this study highlights nuances of visual representations enabled by AI.

The research adopts a qualitative-descriptive design to facilitate a thematic and in-depth exploration of the campaign's phenomena and dynamics. This approach focuses on netizen responses, emphasizing visual and verbal narratives on online news websites and social media platforms, especially Instagram, and the resulting social mobilization. Data collection involves gathering information from relevant digital sources and identifying recurring trends in user interactions on social media, contextualized within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. This design enables a diverse and comprehensive picture of the campaign's impact on public perception.

The primary data source is metadata from global netizen responses to the humanitarian crisis in Rafah, focusing on the massacre of Palestinians by Israel, which has drawn worldwide attention. Public response data is analyzed to understand the psychological and social impact of images disseminated

through digital media. Research subjects include individuals from Indonesia and other countries, such as Meisya Siregar, Bebi Romeo, Oki Setiana Dewi, Rosie O'Donnell, Melissa Barrera, the American rock band Paramore, Pedro Pascal, Bella Hadid, Ariana Grande, Nicola Coughlan, Jenna Ortega, Kehlani, and Mark Ruffalo. News agencies analyzed include The Guardian, BBC, The Washington Post, CNN, Al Jazeera, Der Spiegel, Le Monde, India.com, and Arab News, representing perspectives from Arab-Islamic countries, South Asia, and the West. Data collected from social platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook (with a focus on Instagram), capturing comments, support, and emotional responses. The selection process included both visual representations and accompanying texts to provide a thematic and comprehensive perspective on public reactions. By focusing on these responses, this study aims to present a holistic view of how global audiences perceive and receive humanitarian imagery, with direct social media interactions serving as a key source for exploring impacts.

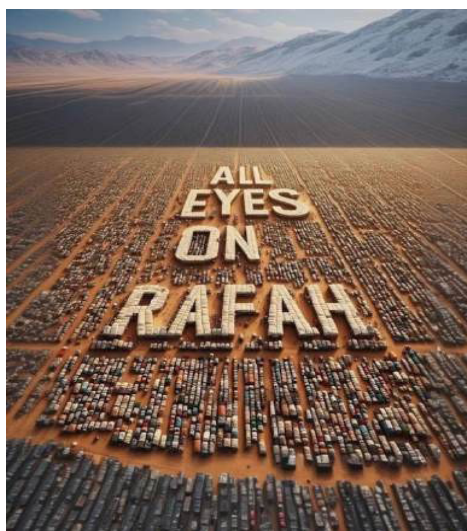


Figure 1. Viral Humanitarian Imagery related to Hashtag #AllEyesonRafah

Two data collection techniques are employed: digital observation and literature review. Digital observation involves analyzing content directly related to the AI-generated “All Eyes on Rafah” image (Donahoe et al., 2023; Graben et al., 2022; Hsiao et al., 2022; Killen et al., 2022; Ng et al., 2025), of the campaign, focusing on humanitarianism, media, and Islamic communication. Subjects were selected based on four criteria: a) Digital Activism: Active engagement with Palestinian issue during the #AllEyesOnRafah campaign period from January

to April of 2024; b) Number of Followers (Reach): A minimum average of one million followers to ensure significant campaign reach; c) Use of AI Imagery: Engagement with or reaction to AI-generated or viral visuals; d) Cultural and geopolitical significance: Representation of diverse backgrounds from Indonesia, the United States, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East to reflect global response dynamics. News agencies were selected based on editorial independence, global reach, and ideological framing of the Palestinian issue, with purposive sampling ensuring active coverage of Rafah and Gaza conflicts across diverse geopolitical perspectives. The data selection process was rigorous to ensure high-quality information, supporting a thematic and impactful analysis.


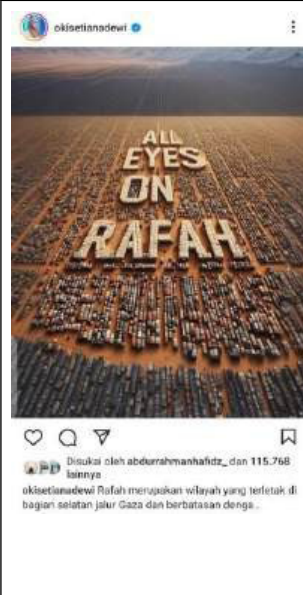

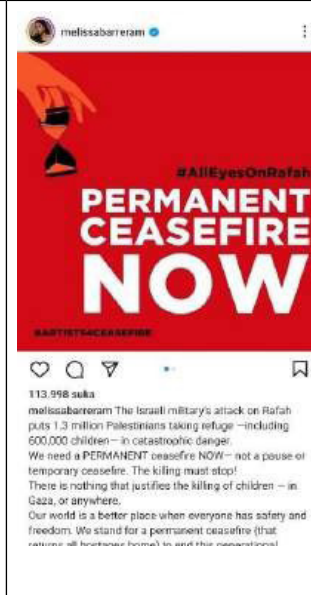
Data analysis is conducted in three stages, utilizing key theories to explore various dimensions of the research. First, Mark Granovetter's Social Network Theory analyzes patterns of relationships and interconnections in digital social networks, examining information dissemination through strong and weak ties and the dynamics of social mobilization (Ferrary & Granovetter, 2017; Granovetter, 1976, 1990, 1992, 2018, 2023; Granovetter et al., 2000). Second, Stuart Hall's Representation Theory investigates the construction of meaning in visual representation, focusing on production, meaning exchange, and their role in shaping humanitarian narratives (Hall, 1989, 1997, 2006, 2020). Third, Marshall McLuhan's "The Medium is the Message" Theory underscores the role of digital media as an agent of meaning formation, where platforms shape social experiences (McLuhan, 2017, 2019). Through this rigorous textual and contextual analysis, the study aims to produce thematic, high-quality, and impactful conclusions about the influence of digital campaigns on global social dynamics.

### **Viral Humanitarian Imagery through Social Network**

Analysis using Mark Granovetter's Social Network Theory reveals the dissemination pattern of viral humanitarian imagery in the "All Eyes on Rafah" campaign by identifying key "nodes" or users involved. Public figures, such as Meisya Siregar and Bebi Romeo, generated significant engagement on Instagram, with posts garnering 32,865 and 115,768 likes, respectively, alongside comments encouraging public involvement in humanitarian issues. Phrases like "Make it trending!!!" and "Rafah is not okay!" were pivotal in raising awareness and

driving social mobilization. By mapping the connection between users, the analysis highlights the role of strong and weak ties in optimizing message spread. This mapping demonstrates the moral impetus behind platform interactions, contributing to both information dissemination and global solidarity focused on the humanitarian crisis in Rafah.

Table 1. The humanitarian campaigning medium of social media

Meisya Siregar and Bebi Romeo	Oki Setiana Dewi	Rosie O'Donnell	Melissa Barrera
			








The application of Social Network Theory also involves tracking the “image transmission path” and measuring the speed and reach of information dissemination. For instance, Rosie O’Donnell, posting on May 27, 2024, received 17,409 likes and 1,115 comments, reflecting public concerns about the “dual standards” in addressing the Rafah crisis through a fact-based, emotionally urgent narrative. Data cache analysis identified key actors in the dissemination network, providing insights into their influence on visibility and audience response. The rapid speed of imagery underscores the critical role of public figures in stimulating social connections and reaching a broader audience. This method offers a precise understanding of the impact of viral humanitarian images in global digital communication.

The structural influence within the network was evaluated by calculating the “centrality” of each node to determine its role in information dissemination. Data from Meissa Barrera’s post in late May 2024, which received 113,998 likes, emphasized the need for a permanent ceasefire and highlighted the emergency situation faced by Rafah residents. Intermediary nodes acted as bridges, expanding the reach of global solidarity. Notably, the analysis of weak ties—often overlooked—revealed a significant role in amplifying news and drawing attention to humanitarian issues. High-quality data enabled this study to clarify the mechanism through which social media mobilizes support for urgent issues. Through this comprehensive analysis, the research demonstrates that viral humanitarian images significantly influence social dynamics and foster collective action.

#### Viral Humanitarian Imagery through Representation

Analysis using Stuart Hall’s Representation Theory examines the semiotic elements of the #AllEyesonRafah imagery to uncover the messages conveyed. Visual codes and symbols—such as flags, images of suffering individuals, and emotional texts—not only depict Rafah’s conditions amid Israeli attack but also serve as a tool to construct a humanitarian narrative. The relationship between “signifiers” (e.g., images of injured children) and “signifieds” (e.g., meanings of humanity and solidarity) reveals a powerful force in capturing international attention. Data from leading news sources, including The Guardian, BBC, and Al Jazeera, indicate that these visual presentations create an emotional context that conveys the urgency of the crisis. This approach enables the audience not only to see but to feel the conflict’s impact, prompting action. Through this analysis, the images emerge as urgent advocacy tools, encouraging individuals and organizations to address the humanitarian crisis in Rafah caused by Israeli attacks.

Table 2. The humanitarian campaigning medium of online news

The Guardian	BBC	The Washington Post
<p><a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/30/all-eyes-on-rafah-how-ai-generated-image-spread">https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/30/all-eyes-on-rafah-how-ai-generated-image-spread</a></p> <h3>'All eyes on Rafah': how AI-generated image swept across social media</h3> <p>Celebrity posts of graphic following IDF strike help make it among most-shared content of Israel-Gaza war</p>  <p>Palstinians in Rafah flee with their belongings on Wednesday. Photograph: Bashar Taleb/AFP</p>	<p><a href="https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68111111">https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68111111</a></p> <h3>All Eyes on Rafah: The post that's been shared by more than 47m people</h3> 	<p><a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/05/29/all-eyes-on-rafah-missing-ai-image/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/05/29/all-eyes-on-rafah-missing-ai-image/</a></p> <h3>An image calling for 'All Eyes on Rafah' is going viral. But it seems AI-generated.</h3> <p>What does "All Eyes on Rafah" mean? The phrase is seen on a likely AI-generated image depicting a tent camp in Rafah, Gaza, and went viral after an Israeli strike.</p> <p><i>The Jennifer Heng and Sarah Edwards</i> May 29, 2024 at 12:40 p.m. EDT</p> 
CNN	Aljazeera	Der Spiegel
<p><a href="https://edition.cnn.com/2024/05/30/world/all-eyes-on-rafah-image-ai-cnn/index.html">https://edition.cnn.com/2024/05/30/world/all-eyes-on-rafah-image-ai-cnn/index.html</a></p> <h3>The new global trade map has Oman as its center</h3> <p><b>LEARN MORE</b></p> <h3>How a likely AI-generated image of Gaza took over the internet</h3> <p>By Leah Remick, CNN Published 2024 May 30, 2024</p>  <p>AI-GENERATED IMAGE</p>	<p><a href="https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newstfeed/2024/5/29/all-eyes-on-rafah-ai-image-g">https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newstfeed/2024/5/29/all-eyes-on-rafah-ai-image-g</a></p> <h3>'All eyes on Rafah' AI-image goes viral on social media</h3> <p>This AI-generated image with the phrase #AllEyesOnRafah has gone viral on social media, even among celebrities who haven't seemed to mention Gaza before. It's drawing attention to Israel's brutal assault on Palestinians there.</p> <p>29 May 2024</p>	<p><a href="https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/medien/virales-#All-Eyes-On-Rafah-Bild-a-023a25-9693-495-a-">https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/medien/virales-#All-Eyes-On-Rafah-Bild-a-023a25-9693-495-a-</a></p> <h3>Kitsch-Krieg</h3> <p>Von <i>Matern von Boeselager</i></p> <p>Grausame Bilder aus Gaza gibt es genug. Trotzdem manifestiert sich eine neue Welle der Solidarität ausgerechnet an einem Retortenbild. Woher kommt der Drang, sogar Krieg und Massaker zu verkitschen?</p> <p>30.05.2024, 14.41 Uhr • aus DER SPIEGEL 23/2024</p>
Le Monde	India.com	Arab News
<p><a href="https://www.lemonde.fr/en/article/2024/05/31/this-is-not-rafah-image-shared-more-than-47-million-times-raises-questions">https://www.lemonde.fr/en/article/2024/05/31/this-is-not-rafah-image-shared-more-than-47-million-times-raises-questions</a></p> <h3>'This is not Rafah': Image shared more than 47 million times raises questions</h3> <p>An image supposed to represent a camp for displaced people in Rafah, likely generated by AI, is circulating widely on social media. Le Monde spoke with digital media expert Laurence Allard to understand why it took off.</p> <p>Interview by Louise Mohammadi Published on May 31, 2024, at 9:57 am (Paris) • 2 min read • <a href="#">Lire en français</a></p> 	<p><a href="https://www.india.com/news/world/all-eyes-on-rafah-image-goes-viral-shared-over-44-million-times-online">https://www.india.com/news/world/all-eyes-on-rafah-image-goes-viral-shared-over-44-million-times-online</a></p> <h3>'All Eyes On Rafah' Image Goes Viral, Shared Over 44 Million Times Online</h3> <p>The saying "All eyes on Rafah" has become a popular thread across numerous platforms, especially on X and Instagram. Know details here.</p> <p>Updated May 30, 2024 8:52 AM IST By Sumitran Dhanraj</p> 	<p><a href="https://www.arabnews.com/node/2520951/jl">https://www.arabnews.com/node/2520951/jl</a></p> <h3>WAR ON GAZA</h3> <h3>Now all eyes are on Rafah and Washington</h3> 

Contextualizing image representation is crucial for understanding the socio-political factors behind the production and dissemination. This analysis explores the power dynamics and interests shaping these images. For instance, CNN and Der Spiegel often provide a broader narrative of the Palestine-Israel conflict, highlighting both its brutality and the need for a peaceful solution. In contrast, Al Jazeera and Arab News emphasize the Palestinian perspective, framing them as victims while revealing power dynamics in media representation. The social-political context thus shapes how audiences perceive events and influences the global narrative. This study asserts that representation is never neutral; it is a construct tied to broader power dynamics, necessitating careful analysis of publicly presented images.

Finally, evaluating the reception and reinterpretation of these images across cultural contexts reveals variations in meaning based on audience background. Analysis of meaning transformations during dissemination shows that humanitarian images undergo negotiation among diverse social groups. Data from The Washington Post and Le Monde highlight varied responses, with some audiences expressing profound empathy and others adopting skepticism. These interpretations reflect engagement in international humanitarian dialogue, shaped by differing values and collective experiences. This process fosters thematic discussion on social responsibility and political engagement regarding the Rafah crisis. The study demonstrates that viral humanitarian images serve not only as an advocacy tool but also as a medium for intercultural communication and meaning negotiation.

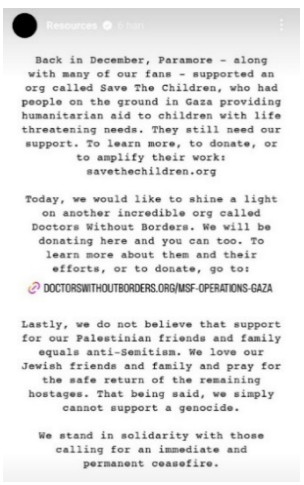
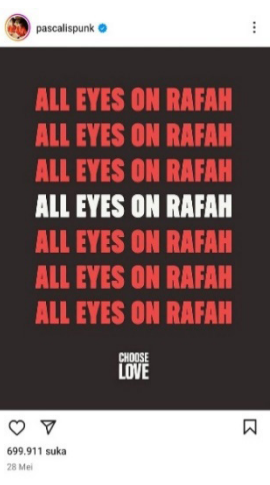



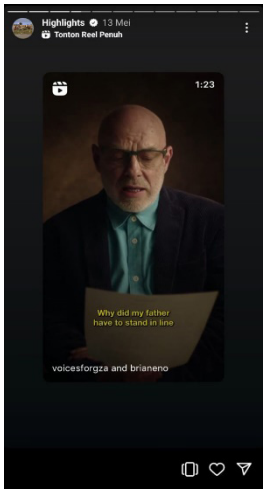
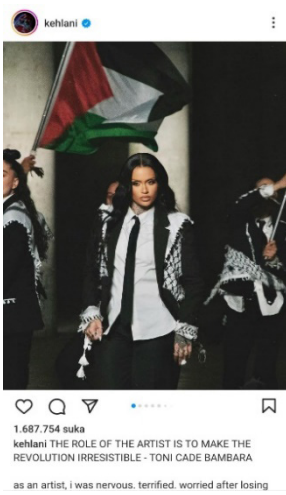

### **Viral Humanitarian Imagery through Medium is the Message**

Analysis using Marshall McLuhan's "The Medium is the Message" theory highlights the unique characteristics of social media platforms that drive the dissemination of viral humanitarian imagery. Postings of public figures, such as Paramore's support for Save The Children and Doctors Without Borders, demonstrate how platforms' technological affordances, like sharing, liking, and commenting, enable direct audience engagement with humanitarian narratives and provide access to broader contextual information. Pedro Pascal's repeated use of "All Eyes on Rafah" in AI-generated images creates a cycle of repetition that amplifies the Message and enhances visibility. Similarly, Bella Hadid's posts reflecting Rafah's

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urgent situation foster emotional connections to the visuals of human suffering, underscoring the role of interface design in shaping narratives. These interactions support the argument that social media’s design and functionality significantly influence how messages are constructed and received.

Table 3. Public reaction to the Rafah catastrophe

Paramore, American Rock Band	Pedro Pascal	Bella Hadid	Ariana Grande
			
Nicola Coughlan	Jenna Ortega	Kehlani	Mark Ruffalo
			

The analysis of communication transformation reveals shifts in interaction patterns within social media, where messages about the Rafah crisis are constructed and shared in real time. For example, Ariana Grande’s open letter to President Joe Biden urging a ceasefire and Nicola Coughlan’s post highlighting the threat of an

Israeli military invasion in Rafah amplified the campaign's Message. Grande's post garnered 329 comments, sparking dialogue among followers. Jenna Ortega's post added a personal narrative, questioning systemic issues in a broader context. These interactions illustrate how social media shapes collective mindset and responses, directly impacting public understanding and emotional connection to the crisis.

The reconfiguration of social experience is evident in how media platforms shape the perception and collective consciousness of the Rafah crisis amid Israeli military attacks. Kehlani's Instagram post, which has 1,687,754 likes, demonstrates the significant traction humanitarian content can achieve through digital media. With over 17,287 comments calling for a ceasefire, Mark Ruffalo's post engaged new audiences. The medium's impact on global solidarity is clear as messages transcend local boundaries, fostering contextual awareness across diverse cultural groups. McLuhan's theory elucidates how social media serves not only as an information channel but also as a catalyst for social change and global awareness. This transformation of consciousness is crucial for building solidarity on humanitarian issues, particularly in Rafah, enabling unprecedented public mobilization.

### **The Role of Viral Humanitarian Imagery in Building Global Awareness and Solidarity through Social Media**

The results of this study provide thematic, memorable, and impactful insights and awareness about the impact of the viral humanitarian image through the #AllEyesonRafah campaign on the dynamics of global social media. Through the application of various analytical theories such as Social Network Theory, Representation Theory, and Medium is the Message, every aspect of the dissemination and reception of this image is carefully explored. The findings reveal that audience engagement through digital platforms not only serves as an information channel but also as a significant means of social mobilization. For example, the connectedness between social media users, both through strong and weak ties, is evident in the high level of interaction generated by public figures and influencers. In addition, the visual elements used in this campaign successfully touched the emotions and awareness of the public, while encouraging them to respond to the humanitarian issues faced by the people of Rafah, Palestine. This research paper describes the complex process by which the humanitarian image

becomes a mediator between individuals and the wider social reality. Therefore, it can be concluded that the viral humanitarian image plays a significant role in shaping a complex narrative that creates global awareness and solidarity.

The interpretation of the results of this study reflects that the process of spreading viral humanitarian images on social media, especially Instagram, requires a thematic and in-depth understanding of the social and technological contexts behind it. This study confirms that effective information dissemination depends not only on how much the image is viewed, but also on the meaning contained in each visual that is shared. For example, posts from Bella Hadid and Ariana Grande have revealed that personal experience and emotional closeness can increase the resonance of the Message conveyed. By utilizing the unique characteristics of social media platforms such as Instagram, individuals can become agents of change that encourage attention to humanitarian issues. This process involves readers not only as consumers of information but also as actors who actively participate in creating a shared narrative. This interpretation also includes the creation of collective awareness that can lead to real actions from individuals and groups. Therefore, the results of this study declare the vital importance of analyzing and understanding the factors that influence how humanitarian images are received and acted upon by the wider community.

The contextualization of the results of this study can be understood by referring to the theories that have been put forward previously. Social Network Theory by Mark Granovetter explains that digital social networks are able to drive the dynamics of influence and social mobilization that are crucial in the dissemination of information (Ferrary & Granovetter, 2017; Granovetter, 1976, 1990, 1992, 2018, 2023; Granovetter et al., 2000). The findings of this study prove that strong ties between users, such as support from public figures, can accelerate the spread of the expected human image. In addition, Representation Theory by Stuart Hall reveals the process of constructing meaning in images, where visual elements function to build a resonant humanitarian narrative (Hall, 1989, 1997, 2006, 2020). The Medium is the Message theory by Marshall McLuhan highlights the development of dynamic social media platforms as agents that shape social experiences, thus influencing the way the public views existing issues (McLuhan, 2017, 2019). From the results of digital observation and analysis, it can be seen that the three theories interact in a complex manner, while forming a framework

that allows readers to realize and understand broader social realities through humanitarian images. This overall analysis describes the interrelated logic between these factors, while emphasizing how they shape significant public responses to humanitarian issues in Rafah.

The implications of this study suggest that changes in how people use and respond to social media can have a more fundamental impact on humanitarian advocacy efforts. It found that with increased audience engagement, there is potential to mobilize collective action on a more national and even global scale. For example, acts of solidarity that emerged from trends such as the hashtag #AllEyesonRafah sparked a casuistic and memorable global awareness of the conditions in Rafah. This study also suggests that humanitarian organizations need to adopt more effective communication strategies while leveraging social media to reach and engage audiences in more personal and emotional ways. The implementation of new technologies that support digital interactions can increase the visibility of humanitarian campaigns and encourage greater engagement. In terms of dedication, the results of this study can be a basis for policymakers and practitioners to formulate policies that are more responsive to the dynamics of changing communication in the digital era. Therefore, the use of viral humanitarian images can be a strategic tool in building global solidarity.

In comparing the findings of this study with the results of previous studies, there is consistency in the importance of social media (Ara et al., 2024; Dunnell et al., 2024; Feher, 2024; He & Fang, 2024; Li, n.d.; Lu et al., 2023; Wasielewski, 2024) as a humanitarian advocacy tool (Haleem et al., 2022; Jahid et al., 2022; Narvaez Rojas et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). Previous relevant studies show how social media can change communication patterns and social mobilization (Amelia & Balqis, 2023; Esau et al., 2024; Junaedi et al., 2023; Peña & Gold, 2023; Rodriguez-Lopez et al., 2021), while supporting the finding that connectedness between users plays an active role in the dissemination of information (Etter & Albu, 2021; Hutchinson, 2021; La Rose & Detlor, 2021; Mirbabaie et al., 2021; Sanders & Scanlon, 2021). In this context, this research paper strengthens the argument that viral humanitarian images (Chouliaraki & Vestergaard, 2021; Griffin, 2023; Hamilton, 2022; Lewis, 2023; Srai et al., 2023; Walsh & Hill, 2023) have great potential to change public perception (S. Y. Lee et al., 2024; Ongenaert, Joye, & Ihlen, 2023; Ongenaert, Joye, & Machin, 2023) and create collective

consciousness (Frijns et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2022; Lawrence & Hylton, 2022; Martikainen & Hakoköngäs, 2023). However, this research also reveals more relevant and contextual aspects in visual and emotional aspects, which were previously lacking in other studies. For example, some relevant previous studies emphasize the technical aspects of message delivery (Grewal et al., 2022), while this research paper touches on the emotional experience dimension generated from the shared images. Therefore, this finding provides a new contribution to the existing literature, while also confirming that understanding social media influence must include both emotional and visual narrative dimensions to reach audiences effectively.

From the results of this study, several strategic steps are proposed that can be taken by policymakers and humanitarian organizations to maximize the impact of viral humanitarian images. First, it is important to design campaigns that make optimal use of social media, taking into account the characteristics of each platform in presenting interesting and emotionally arousing content. Second, organizations can collaborate with influencers and public figures who have influence to expand the reach of humanitarian messages and create stronger solidarity networks. Third, efforts should be made to build partnerships with social media platforms in order to increase the visibility of content that focuses on humanitarian issues, while ensuring that the voices of marginalized communities are not ignored. Fourth, training for members of the organization in the techniques of creating interesting and informative digital content is also an important step to maximize the impact of the Message. Finally, evaluating the impact of each campaign that is run is very important to continue to improve the strategies carried out, so that the public response to humanitarian issues can be improved. Therefore, this action plan aims to integrate research results into real practices that can contribute to the desired social change.

## Closing

One of the key findings of this study is the significant role of public figures in amplifying humanitarian messages on social media, as revealed through content analysis. While viral humanitarian imagery drives public awareness, the involvement of figures like Bella Hadid and Ariana Grande has a greater impact than anticipated. The study demonstrates that repeated messages across social

media platforms create a resonance effect, reshaping public understanding of the conflict in Rafah. The hashtag #AllEyesonRafah has forged a narrative that transcends geographical boundaries, bringing a global audience closer to an urgent humanitarian issue. The findings highlight that emotions evoked by visual content not only raise awareness but also spur tangible action. These results indicate that viral humanitarian imagery is both informational and mobilizing, introducing a new dynamic in public perceptions of humanitarian crises.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in identifying novel aspects of social media dynamics and humanitarian imagery. By integrating Social Network, Representation, and Medium is the Message, the study offers a comprehensive perspective on digital information dissemination. First, it reveals a unique interaction between visual narratives and audience responses, with the potential to influence public policy and social advocacy. Second, it demonstrates that social media functions not only as a transmission channel but also as a creator of meaning, challenging traditional views of digital communication. Third, it underscores the critical role of emotions in visual communication, an area often underexplored in prior studies. These contributions enrich communication science and provide new insights into the media's influence on social consciousness.

Despite these insights, the study acknowledges limitations that may affect the generalizability of its findings. First, its focus on social media responses overlooks offline dimensions of social movements that may also shape impact. Second, relying on a few public figures may introduce bias, as diverse audience perceptions are not fully considered. Third, the single-point in time analysis does not capture temporal changes in public perceptions of the Rafah conflict. Future research should adopt a longitudinal approach to track evolving public responses alongside media developments. Additionally, exploring comparative impacts across different media types and different cultural contexts could enhance understanding of global humanitarian communication effectiveness.

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