



The League of Parliamentarians for Al Quds (LP4Q)

Why Indonesia Can't Normalize Relations with Israel?

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Assalaamu'alaikum Warahmatullaahi Wabarakaatuh,

Good Afternoon,

I wish all blessed with good health and safety.

I am honored to be part of this timely webinar hosted by the League of Parliamentarians for Al Quds (LP4Q). I offer my sincerest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this occasion. I thank you especially for your hard work, as we are facing one of the most difficult times due to the Covid-19 outbreak that has exhausted both mental and physical resources globally. In the face of these troubling times, the League of Parliamentarians for Al Quds has shown a doubled effort in ensuring the cause of Palestine is highlighted on a global platform. We will not let Israel exploit the current situation by continuing their illegal measures against Palestine. Therefore, it is very important to consistently voice out our unwavering support for the Palestine cause by taking effective steps towards the right direction.



Before proceeding with the topic “Why my country, Indonesia, cannot normalize relations with Israel?”, allow me to reaffirm that to stand with Palestine is to stand with humanity. It is not a debate of Arabs versus Jews or Islam versus Judaism. Such a perspective is totally mistaken. We are talking about the lands of the Palestinian people that were stolen by Israel for more than seven decades. It is not a conflict between two equal sides. It is an occupation by a powerful military state, armed and supported by the West, against impoverished, stateless and displaced people.

For over seventy years, Israel has subjected Palestinians to systematic human rights abuses, severe discrimination, and deadly military force. Palestinians have been forced to leave their homeland with neither hope nor future. Many of them are being brought up in refugee camps, in chronic poverty, and denied the right to return to their family homes. In addition, over a million Palestinians suffer from discrimination over access to public services, land and employment. Furthermore, Israel’s siege of Gaza has condemned its 1.9 million inhabitants to a life of poverty and psychological violence. The construction of the apartheid wall, the military closure of the Jordan Valley, and the annexation of East Jerusalem create an irreversible reality of permanent occupation. In short, the catastrophe that Palestinian people face - is one of the most shameful global injustices of our modern time. Palestine is the only country in the world to have remained colonized.

Indonesia’s unceasing support for Palestine –the parliament, the government, and its people– has never changed, and will never change. Our constitution explicitly stipulates that “independence is the inalienable right of all nations. Therefore, all colonialism must be abolished in this world as it is not in conformity with humanity and justice.” In that line, Indonesia was one of the Co-Organizers of the Asian-African Conference (the



Bandung Conference) in April 1955 that gathered representatives from twenty-nine governments of Asian and African nations. The core principles of the Bandung Conference were inter-alia political self-determination and non-aggression. In other words, the Bandung conference was a historical moment which was viewed as a milestone for many Asian-African countries to obtain their independence. Palestine remains as the only participant of the 1955 Bandung Conference who has not reached independence. Hence, Indonesia bears moral responsibility to ensure the independence of the Palestinian people. To quote one of our founding fathers, Soekarno, "As long as the freedom of Palestine is yet to be returned to the Palestinians, Indonesia will forever stand in defiance against the occupation by Israel."

Indonesia has taken firm measures in support of Palestine both verbally and through actions. To mention a few of Indonesia's most recent efforts:

1. In June 2020, Indonesia, along with Tunisia and South Africa, initiated a ministerial-level UN Security Council meeting to discuss Israel's annexation plan over the West Bank. Indonesian Mission called the international community to oppose Israel's plan as it violates the international laws and threatens the future of the Palestinian people.
2. Indonesia's unquestionable support was strongly reflected during its non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council (UNSC) for the 2019-2020 period, particularly during its UNSC chairmanship in May, 2019.
3. On 13th of March 2016, the Government of Indonesia inaugurated Indonesia's first Honorary Consul to the Palestine.
4. In March 2016, Indonesia hosted the Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Palestine that adopted an important point to



heighten the pressure on Israel with respect to the future of the State of Palestine.

5. Providing financial assistance and capacity building programs for Palestine including the establishment of the Indonesia Hospital in the Gaza Strip. Last July, Indonesia donated Rp36.5 billion (US\$2.58 million) in humanitarian aid for Palestinian refugees. Of the total, US\$1 million was channeled through UNRWA, and US\$500 thousand through ICRC. Over more than a decade, Indonesia has spent US\$8 million on over 170 training programs for more than two thousand Palestinians.
6. Implementing a tax-free policy for Palestinian products, such as dates and olive oils, in order to support the Palestinian economy.

Meanwhile Indonesian parliament has been playing contributive roles in support of Palestine inter-alia:

1. Taking the initiative to adopt a joint statement signed by over 200 parliamentarians from 34 countries. It was launched on the occasion of International Day of Parliamentarism on June 30, 2020. The statement expresses the firm condemnation and rejection of the Israeli annexation as a flagrant violation of international law and the global rules-based order.
2. Regularly establishing parliamentary friendship groups with the Palestine Parliament.
3. Highlighting the Palestinian cause in regional and global parliamentary forums. In addition to that, also holding various forums that specifically focus on Palestine issues. Indonesian Parliament joined to co-sponsor the 138th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Resolution (Geneva, 27 March 2018) on “The



Consequences of the US declaration on Jerusalem and the rights of the Palestinian people in Jerusalem in the light of the UN Charter and resolutions,” which was successfully adopted by consensus. Further, at the 4th APA General Assembly held in Bandung, 8-10 December 2009, Indonesia Parliament succeeded in convincing APA members to adopt the resolution 'Human Rights Violations in Palestine and War Crimes by the Zionist Regime in Gaza.

4. During the Indonesian Parliament presidency of Parliamentary Union of OIC Countries (PUIC) in 2012, the Speaker of the Indonesia Parliament at that time was the only PUIC President who had visited the besieged Gaza Strip.
5. Based on the Indonesian Parliament’s proposal, in 2012, the Parliamentary Union of OIC Countries (PUIC) decided to appoint the Committee on Palestine as one of the PUIC’s standing committees.

It is important to note remarkable roles played by Indonesian civil societies (non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support Palestinian people. Indonesian Non-Governmental Organization, Medical Emergency Rescue Committee (MER-C), for instance, started to build an Indonesian Hospital in Gaza Strip in early 2013. The total donation from Indonesians for this hospital was 30.7 billion IDR (US\$2.1 million). Other Indonesian NGOs (such as Sahabat Al-Aqsa, ACT, PKPU) has been following suit.

To sum up, Indonesia pledges its unequivocal support for Palestine today and beyond. The struggle of Palestine has been at the very heart of Indonesia's foreign policy. Accordingly, the Palestinian cause is ever-present in all aspects of Indonesian diplomacy.

For more than seven decades, the developments of the Palestinian cause have been not fair for the Palestinian people. The global community has failed to end the conflict and provide a win-win solution. Instead, the Palestine situation continues to worsen,



particularly due to the recent proposals presented by the US which fully ignore the Palestinian aspiration. Most recently, the US government, under Donald Trump's leadership, has been encouraging Arab nations to embrace ties with Israel. The UAE, along with Bahrain, have inked a normalization agreement titled the Abraham Accords at the White House in September. Subsequently, Sudan struck a similar deal in October, followed by Morocco a few days ago. Israel looks to cunningly take advantage of the global circumstance as a distraction to undermine the political standing of Palestine.

The Israeli effort to extend its political recognition from Muslim countries will continue to increase. Supported by the US, its biggest ally, Israel moves forward on seeking ways and means for normalization. Muslim countries must remain on high alert. Indonesia, both the world's most populous Muslim nation and the largest Muslim representative, has been a long-time target for Israel in terms of receiving the normalization. Recently, the US International Development Finance Corp offered an aid of up to US\$2 billion in exchange for Indonesia's agreement to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Indonesia without a doubt has rejected such an offer. Indonesia does not make the economic reason as a consideration to normalize with Israel and sacrifice its identity as an anti-colonial nation which is enshrined in our very Constitution. Undeniably, Israel is a colonizer and they have occupied the lands and the people of Palestine for a long time. Therefore, normalizing Israel would be a flagrant constitutional violation. Furthermore, Indonesia takes the view that the normalization of Israel would only politically benefit Israel instead of Palestine. It would also be perceived as a landslide victory for Israel and a further setback for Palestine. In fact, such a move does not coincide with Israeli goodwill to reassume the halted peace process based on international parameters.



For this reason, I am particularly concerned over the many Arab states' adoption to normalize their relations with Israel, all the while Israel exercises blatant violations without any punishment imposed. The illegal Israeli settlements that have distorted the Palestinian landscape both demographically and socially, have devastated the lives of Palestinians for more than 7 decades, this pain continues today and will keep continuing until the global community rectifies the situation. Normalizing Israel will dampen the hopes of achieving a two-state solution based on "the 1967 borders" which agrees on a viable and sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as the capital. I am worried that the growing movement of Israel normalization will cause allies to accept the state of Palestine in the mind, yet not in the physical reality.

For Indonesia, the most urgent task is to find the most effective way to provide robust political support for Palestine instead of normalizing Israel. This stance will not recede whatever will be. A hope for an independent, democratic, sovereign and viable State of Palestine must be maintained.

In my opinion, we should consider following these steps in terms of supporting Palestine politically:

1. Scaling up on Palestinian statehood recognition. Every moment, channel, track, forum and any possible opportunity should be seized to echo Palestinian statehood recognition. There are a few countries that have not given the recognition. However, most of the world's nations stand with Palestine. Now, the urgent need is to unite these nations with joint actions against Israeli intractability.



2. Upgrading and improving bilateral relations with Palestine in term of politics, socials, cultures, and economics. It could be further channelled through governments, parliaments, businesses, academics, people, and NGOs.
3. Preserving and maintaining the Palestinian cause as both regional and global concerns. Although the Covid-19 pandemic currently persists, the Palestinian issue should not be left behind.
4. Isolating Israel from any interaction among nations, especially related to economic activities through the campaign to Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS). Importantly, I emphasise that these actions are not motivated by anti-semitism. It is an act of retaliation and condemnation towards the illegal Israel occupation of Palestine, and therefore, it is a deserved response to Israel's stubbornness. It is a fight for justice and humanity.
5. Demanding fair and impartial settlements for Palestine-Israel conflict in accordance with rules-based order. The UN seems powerless when forcing Israel to comply with even the most standard international parameters. Our big global homework is to make the UN more democratic and accommodative.

In the near future, it will be quite a relief because Donald Trump's regime is coming to an end. His unconditional support to Israel has consigned the Palestinian people with little to no hope, no land, no state, and no future. However, his destructive policies will be difficult to reverse and will continue to inflict damage and suffering. Now, we expect his successor, Joe Biden, to make better decisions than his predecessor.

To conclude, allow me to call on Palestinian factions to reassume their attempts for frank reconciliation. The Palestinian reconciliation is the of the utmost importance for



many reasons particularly to preserve the hope for the creation of a sovereign, independent, viable, and democratic State of Palestine with Al Quds (Jerusalem) as its eternal capital. The disintegration among Palestinian factions will only work in Israel's favour. We need to believe that the Palestinian unity is the single largest source of force to overcome the arrogance and conceitedness of Israel.

I thank you.