

BETWEEN TRANSNATIONAL COMMITMENT AND DOMESTIC AMBIGUITY: THE EVOLUTION OF MUHAMMADIYAH'S HUMANITARIANISM FOR PALESTINE

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Master's Study Program of Islamic Studies at the
Faculty of Islamic Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of**

Master of Arts (M.A.)



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UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

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The ongoing conflict in Palestine is one of the most prolonged conflicts in the modern world. Many parties are concerned about this issue, including Muhammadiyah, an Islamic organisation in Indonesia. This organisation's support for Palestine has been relatively consistent, from the beginning of the conflict in the mid-20th century to the present day. This research aims to answer how Muhammadiyah's support has evolved and what historical dynamics have shaped the evolution of Muhammadiyah's support from its founding to the present day, using a historical analysis, media reports, and organizational documents to delve into the evolution of Muhammadiyah's support over time. This paper argues that before the 2000s, support for Palestine was dominated by the figures of two Muhammadiyah elites: Abdul Kahar Muzakkir and Lukman Harun. These two figures consistently dominated Muhammadiyah discourse on Palestine. Meanwhile, after the 2000s, when Lazismu was established in 2002, followed by various bureaus within Muhammadiyah, such as MDMC (Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center), LHKI (*Lembaga Hubungan dan Kerjasama Internasional*, Council of International Relations and Cooperation), and Muhammadiyah Aid, the role of figures began to fade and was replaced by institutional roles. However, during that era, Muhammadiyah also faced a dilemma, as its credibility domestically began to be questioned, while it remained consistent in foreign affairs. Based on Robert D. Sack's territoriality theory, Muhammadiyah distinguishes between transnational activism and domestic politics, navigating both with selective moral engagement. The organisation consistently supported Palestine as a symbolic "safe space" for its struggle. Conversely, it viewed domestic politics as "high-risk territories" controlled by the state. Therefore, the organisation chose to accept the state's "subjugation". If Muhammadiyah were to take a critical stance domestically, including rejecting the coal mining offer, the organisation feared political backlash.

Keywords: *Muhammadiyah, Palestine, Faith-based organisation, civil society*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country, consisting 87.2% of its population Muslim.¹ Based on the organisational affiliation, the majority of the Muslim population in Indonesia falls into two prominent organisations, namely Muhammadiyah, founded in 1912, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), founded in 1926. Both organisations have existed long before Indonesia's independence with commitment to provide provide direction, guidance, and services in religious, social, educational, and even political life for Muslim in Indonesia.

After a long time being a reference for the society in terms of religious support, both organisations were considered to have deviated from their roles and functions as Muslim organisations. In the middle of 2024, the two organisations accepted the government's offer to operate coal mining concessions. Joko Widodo, the President of Indonesia at that time, gave mining concessions to Islamic organisations because he received many complaints from *pesantren* and religious figures for not being inclusive and supportive economically to Muslim organisations. The official acceptance of this offer took place in May 2024 for NU and July 2024 for Muhammadiyah, a few months after the presidential election in February 2024, which Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka won. Joko Widodo is suspected of being behind the victory of this pair, especially because the vice president-elect, Gibran, is his own son.²

Many observers, including WALHI, the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI), the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), Gusdurian,³ Aisyiyah,⁴ JATAM,⁵ and numerous others perceived this step as a form of state co-optation of civil society groups. They perceived that the administration aimed at curbing their critical voices.⁶ More

¹ Badan Pusat Statistik, "Penduduk Menurut Kelompok Umur dan Agama yang Dianut, di INDONESIA - Dataset - Sensus Penduduk 2010 - Badan Pusat Statistik," 2010, <http://sensus.bps.go.id/topik/tabular/sp2010/11>.

² Riri Rahayu, "Alasan di Balik Keputusan Jokowi Memberi Izin Tambang untuk Ormas Keagamaan | tempo.co," Tempo, July 27, 2024, <https://www.tempo.co/ekonomi/alasan-di-balik-keputusan-jokowi-memberi-izin-tambang-untuk-ormas-keagamaan-36146>.

³ NU-affiliated NGO, inspired by the values of pluralism, democracy, and humanity promoted by Indonesia's fourth president, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur).

⁴ An autonomous women's organisation under Muhammadiyah.

⁵ A civil society network focused on social justice and environmental advocacy related to Indonesia's mining industry.

⁶ CNA, "Ketika Ormas Agama Tergiur Tambang, Kritik Dan Dampak Lingkungan Pun Diabaikan," CNA.Id: Berita Indonesia, Asia Dan Dunia, 2024, <https://www.cna.id/indonesia/muhammadiyah-nu-ormas-tambang-19451>.

concerningly, it is feared that the state may now steer religious organisations.⁷ The concessions are also perceived by many observers as a political reward granted by the government to NU and Muhammadiyah, both of which endorsed the Prabowo-Gibran ticket during the early 2024 presidential election, a pair closely associated with the outgoing Jokowi administration.⁸ There is also concern that the government may use these religious organisations to defend its interests against local communities, which are frequently harmed by coal mining activities. Public scepticism is further fueled by the perception that Muhammadiyah and NU lack the technical resources and institutional capacity to manage coal mining operations effectively.⁹

In this regard, the majority of Muhammadiyah elites argue that managing coal mining is considered a way to fight for social justice, if the focus is on ensuring the benefits are for community interests.¹⁰ However, this reason is questionable, especially given the potential for conflicts of interest between religious institutions and the larger society. Therefore, the decision to receive the “gift” from the Joko Widodo administration has triggered massive resistance and led to a significant decline in public trust to Muhammadiyah at the grassroots level.¹¹

Amid these broader critiques, particularly on Muhammadiyah, the organisation's position on humanitarian issues remains consistent. Through Lazismu, MDMC, PKU

⁷ Pinter Politik, “Rahasia Besar Jatah Tambang NU-Muhammadiyah?,” <https://www.pinterpolitik.com/>, June 5, 2024, <https://www.pinterpolitik.com/in-depth/rahasia-besar-jatah-tambang-nu-muhammadiyah/>.

⁸ Ahmad Thovan Sugandi, “Gus Ipul: Salahnya Apa Kami Mengelola Tambang?,” 2024, <https://news.detik.com/x/detail/spotlight/20240613/Gus-Ipul-Salahnya-Apa-Kami-Mengelola-Tambang/>.

⁹ Andi Adam Faturahman, “NU dan Muhammadiyah Terima Izin Tambang Ormas, Pegiat Singgung Soal Kemaslahatan | tempo.co,” Tempo, July 29, 2024, <https://www.tempo.co/politik/nu-dan-muhammadiyah-terima-izin-tambang-ormas-pegiat-singgung-soal-kemaslahatan-35557>; Kakak Indra Purnama, “Muhammadiyah Akhirnya Terima Izin Tambang, Ini 6 Ormas Keagamaan yang Menolak | tempo.co,” Tempo, July 26, 2024, <https://www.tempo.co/politik/muhammadiyah-akhirnya-terima-izin-tambang-ini-6-ormas-keagamaan-yang-menolak-36304>; Devi Setya, “Aisyiyah Tolak Izin Tambang: Tanpa Menambang, Muhammadiyah Mampu,” *detikhikmah*, 2024, <https://www.detik.com/hikmah/khazanah/d-7459179/aisyiyah-tolak-izin-tambang-tanpa-menambang-muhammadiyah-mampu>; “Ketika Ormas Agama Tergiur Tambang, Kritik Dan Dampak Lingkungan Pun Diabaikan.”

¹⁰ Edo Segara Gustanto, “Ormas Keagamaan Kelola Tambang, Antara Faedah dan Mudharat,” *kumparan*, 2024, <https://kumparan.com/edo-segara-1631670379140068854/ormas-keagamaan-kelola-tambang-antara-faedah-dan-mudharat-23EEw5FaFwg>.

¹¹ Agiel Laksamana Putra and Aula Rahma, “Kecewa Muhammadiyah Terima Tambang, Banyak Warga Muhammadiyah Pilih Logout,” *Kader Hijau Muhammadiyah*, n.d., accessed July 11, 2025, <https://kaderhijaumu.id/2024/08/10/kecewa-muhammadiyah-terima-tambang-warga-muhammadiyah-pilih-logout/>.

(*Penolong Kesengsaraan Umum*, the Council of Public Relief Service), and various other bureaus, humanitarian issues remain central to Muhammadiyah. For example, in 2023, Lazismu's aid distribution in one year reached Rp. 398,877,151,702, while in 2022 it reached Rp. 324,645,891,489,-. This amount of donation was distributed to disaster victims in the form of offering free medical services, distributing food supplies and masks, and providing psychosocial support. This support also expanded not only in a national level, but also international, such as providing support for the Palestinian cause.

Muhammadiyah's support for the Palestinian cause illustrates the organisation's consistency toward humanitarian efforts on an international level. This organisation has donated hundreds of billions of rupiah since the mid-20th century. This raises a puzzle, why does Muhammadiyah's commitment to justice and equality seem to erode in domestic politics but persist in transnational issues such as the Palestinian cause? With the case of receiving the mining concession from the government seems to support this puzzle. Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah's role in upholding public moral engagement and fostering transnational solidarity, particularly through its support for Palestine, has enabled the organisation to sustain its humanitarian efforts without provoking repression from domestic political interests.

The public perception and ethical implications of supporting Palestine and accepting mining concessions contrast sharply. While seemingly different, the two can be compared as part of Muhammadiyah's strategy to position itself and carry out its mission amidst global and domestic dynamics. Support for Palestine is Muhammadiyah's effort to assert its moral and humanitarian role on the global stage, successfully building positive credibility. Meanwhile, accepting mining concessions is a domestic political-economic decision that has generated controversy and questioned the organization's consistency in siding with the people and the environment. The emphasis is on how Muhammadiyah positions itself on the domestic and global stage and how it exercises its moral authority. The article seeks to answer the question: How has Muhammadiyah's support evolved over time, and what historical dynamics have shaped the evolution of Muhammadiyah's support from its founding to the present day? This research employs a historical analysis approach to delve into the evolution of Muhammadiyah's support over time. Existing studies tend to provide fragmented insights, focusing on specific periods and

particular cases.¹² Consequently, no coherent analysis connects Muhammadiyah's attitudes and actions from its inception to the present day. Literature concerning Muhammadiyah's humanitarian actors, such as Kahar Muzakir, Lukman Harun, and Sudibyo Markus, remains scarce. Furthermore, the forms of support and types of aid provided are underexplored.

Moreover, the forms of support and aid provided by Muhammadiyah have been underexplored. Hilman Latief and Haedar Nashir, for instance, delved into Muhammadiyah humanitarian action in Palestine from 2000 to 2020. Amal and Olifiani delved into the same issue from 2020 to 2024. This paper will analyze historical documents and relevant events using media analysis research to address the longstanding support from the early era of Muhammadiyah until the present day. The data sources include institutional reports, Muhammadiyah congresses reports, Suara Muhammadiyah publications, media reports, interviews, and biographical accounts of prominent figures.

This study implements the theory of territoriality from Robert D. Sack (1986) to examine the evolution of Muhammadiyah's support upon Palestinian cause, which this study refers as the support that is controllable in the context of "moral territory". Control, according to Sack is not only physical territory but also, more importantly, encompasses symbolic and moral space. In this context, this study argues that Palestine issue becomes a "moral territory" for Muhammadiyah to claim it as a space to assert its ethical identity and religious position, without entering the high-risk, state-controlled domestic "political territory." Territoriality allows Muhammadiyah to distinguish between politically safe transnational activism and stressful domestic advocacy and utilizes this spatial delimitation to maintain legitimacy and moral capital in the public eye.¹³

After the introduction, this article will be followed by a literature review explaining the philanthropic movement of civil society in the Muslim world, specifically in the

¹² See H. Latief and Haedar Nashir, "Local Dynamics and Global Engagements of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Contemporary Indonesia: The Case of Muhammadiyah (2000-2020)," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 39 (2020): 290–309, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103420910514>; Rahmawati Husein et al., "Humanitarian Diplomacy in Action: Examining Muhammadiyah as a Model for Faith-Based Organizational Engagement," *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional* 13, no. 1 (2024): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.18196/jhi.v13i1.19673>; Moh Talabul Amal and Laras Putri Olifiani, "Peran Ormas Muhammadiyah Sebagai Faith-Based Organization Dalam Memberikan Respons Kemanusiaan Terhadap Rakyat Palestina," *Jurnal ICMES* 7, no. 2 (2023): 2, <https://doi.org/10.35748/jurnalicmes.v7i2.176>.

¹³ Robert D. Sack, "Human Territoriality: A Theory," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 73, no. 1 (1983): 55–74, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1983.tb01396.x>.

Palestinian context. Following the literature review, the author will discuss the ideological basis of Muhammadiyah, which underpins the philanthropic endeavours within the organisation. This is followed by a discussion of the pre- and post-Lazismu eras, which have marked the evolution of Muhammadiyah's philanthropic style. The final session will discuss Muhammadiyah's dilemma in viewing domestic conditions as "high-risk territory."

Previous Studies on Islamic Humanitarianism in Southeast Asia and Beyond: A Literature Review

This literature review will examine previous studies on the role of civil society in Muslim countries, especially those that focus on international humanitarian issues, specifically humanitarian issues in Palestine. The literature studied is not only in Indonesia but also in other Muslim-majority countries.

In Turkey, NGOs play an essential role in organizing the wave of refugees from Syria and helping oppressed Palestinians. Bülent Aras (2017) said several civil groups in Turkey were critical for providing Uganda's basic health and education services. This assistance often comes more from donations from the Turkish community than from the government.¹⁴ Sunata and Tosun's (2019) research explains that NGOs in the country provide basic needs, create new social spaces, and build cross-border solidarity for Syrian refugees.¹⁵

Meanwhile, Büke Boşnak (2023) critically analyzes how the state delegates responsibility to civil society through subsidiarity. Although subsidiarity is considered to strengthen local actors normatively, the author highlights that in practice, subsidiarity is often a way for the state to delegate responsibility to NGOs without providing adequate structural support. In this case, NGOs operate in an ambiguous position: they are both "props" of the system and under pressure to conform to state discourse.¹⁶ Another problem was noted by Natasha Hall and Will Todman (2021), who found that the Bashar Assad

¹⁴ Bülent Aras, "Medical Humanitarianism of Turkey's NGOS: A 'Turkish Way?,'" *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 42, no. 4 (2017): 183–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375418754404>.

¹⁵ Ulaş Sunata and Salih Tosun, "Assessing the Civil Society's Role in Refugee Integration in Turkey: NGO-R as a New Typology," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 32, no. 4 (2019): 683–703, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fey047>.

¹⁶ Büke Boşnak, "Politics of Subsidiarity in Refugee Reception: The Case of Civil Society in Turkey," in *Politics of Subsidiarity in Refugee Reception* (Routledge, 2023).

government in Syria, which had just fallen in February 2025, restricted and diverted humanitarian aid to the interests of its regime.¹⁷

In other Middle Eastern countries, Mehari Fisseha (2018) found the same thing, that civil society groups in the region became key actors in helping to organise the wave of refugees caused by domestic conflicts after the Arab Spring. These local NGOs could even provide services before international aid was fully involved.¹⁸ In Syria and South Sudan, Thomas Kirk *et al.* (2025) saw how perceptions of “foreigners” and local power relations greatly influenced the provision of aid and services. In many cases, the interests of local actors, such as traditional leaders and armed groups, overlapped with the interests of international NGOs.¹⁹ The same thing happened in Afghanistan, considering that in the 1970s the country continued to be a battlefield, inviting more than 200 NGOs to help the people there.²⁰

In terms of aid to Palestine, several studies describe this aid in its negative aspects. For example, Anne Le More (2008 & 2005) explains how much international aid actually falls into the hands of Israel and is then used to strengthen its expansionist mission by building illegal settlements in the West Bank. In fact, the basic needs of Palestinians are Israel's responsibility, so if the aid is targeted correctly by providing for the needs of Palestinians, it can be considered as paying the bill that Israel should pay.²¹ The same thing was confirmed by Raed Awashreh (2020), who said that several international NGOs funded by the West support Israel's political agenda and depoliticise the Palestinian population.²² Nemer Badwan and Mohammed Atta (2021) also criticised international aid to Palestine,

¹⁷ Natasha Hall and Will Todman, *Lessons Learned from a Decade of Humanitarian Operations in Syria*, April 22, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/lessons-learned-decade-humanitarian-operations-syria>.

¹⁸ Mehari Fisseha, “The Roles of the Civil Society and International Humanitarian Organisations in Managing Refugees Crisis in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region,” *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge (ISSN 2499-930X)* 3, no. 1 (2018): 1, <https://www.mediterraneanknowledge.org/publications/index.php/journal/article/view/102>.

¹⁹ Tom Kirk *et al.*, “Humanitarian Protection Activities and the Safety of Strangers in the DRC, Syria and South Sudan,” *Global Policy* 16, no. 1 (2025): 69–85, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.13378>.

²⁰ Helga Baitenmann, “NGOs and the Afghan War: The Politicisation of Humanitarian Aid,” *Third World Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1990): 62–85.

²¹ Anne Le More, *International Assistance to the Palestinians after Oslo*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203928332>; Anne Le More, “Killing with Kindness: Funding the Demise of a Palestinian State,” *International Affairs* 81, no. 5 (2005): 981–99, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2005.00498.x>.

²² Raed Awashreh, “Palestinian Perspectives on Foreign Aid,” *International Journal of Research - GRANTHAALAYAH* 8, no. 6 (2020): 236–51, <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v8.i6.2020.539>.

among other things, because most aid is given to the humanitarian and social sectors, not the productive sector, and structural changes are absent in the beneficiary economy.²³

One of the most prominent and well-known actions carried out by NGOs about Palestine is BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions). The BDS campaign was officially launched in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian social groups. They advocated for the execution of "non-violent punitive measures" to persuade Israel to cease the occupation and colonisation of all Arab territories and dismantle the separation wall; acknowledge the inherent rights of Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to complete equality; and uphold, safeguard, and advance the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as outlined in UN resolution 194.²⁴

BDS is considered a turning point in the development of global solidarity with Palestine. It effectively combines the rhetoric of human rights with more general political frameworks that oppose racism and colonialism. Because of its intersectional strategy, which combines three main concerns: the right of return for Palestinian refugees, the systematic discrimination against Arab Israeli citizens, and the continuous military occupation of Palestinian territories, BDS has gained support from a wide range of international constituencies.²⁵

Following the Oslo Accords, many Palestinian NGOs shifted from grassroots mass movements to professionalized institutions detached from their constituencies. This transformation was driven by the influx of international funding that prioritized measurable outcomes and development goals over political engagement. The Palestinian Authority (PA) viewed NGOs as competitors for political legitimacy and control over foreign aid. Their relationship was marked by the PA's attempts to co-opt, regulate, or discredit NGOs by creating networks of "loyalist" NGOs, sudden audits, and media campaigns. However, the NGOs failed to establish a strong political opposition. They were unable to challenge

²³ Nemer Badwan and Mohammed Atta, "The Impact of Foreign Aid on Economic Growth in Palestine: An Empirical Evidence," *Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting*, April 27, 2021, 99–114, <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajea/2021/v21i530384>.

²⁴ Philip Marfleet, "Palestine: Boycott, Localism, and Global Activism," in *Boycotts Past and Present*, ed. David Feldman (Springer International Publishing, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94872-0_14.

²⁵ Lori Allen, "What's in a Link?: Transnational Solidarities across Palestine and Their Intersectional Possibilities," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (2018): 111–33, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-4282064>.

the “Arafatization” of Palestinian politics or to resist the ongoing expansion of Israeli control.²⁶

In Southeast Asia, NGOs play a crucial role in the two Muslim-majority countries: Malaysia and Indonesia. The participation of NGOs in resolving the Palestinian issue has significantly enhanced the communication channels between Malaysia and Palestine. These channels have favourably impacted the bilateral relations between the two political entities through engagement, negotiation, and soft diplomacy. The collaboration and cooperation of NGOs and the Malaysian Government have been essential in cultivating amicable relations between Malaysia and Palestine and shaping foreign policy.²⁷

In Indonesia, several studies have explained the aid provided by civil society groups to Palestine. Dwi Ardiyanti *et al.* (2023) state that NU, through its prominent figure Gus Dur,²⁸ employed cultural and diplomatic approaches to support Palestine, while Muhammadiyah adopted a philanthropic approach by distributing various forms of aid.²⁹ Moh. Talabul Amal and Laras Putri Olifiani (2023) discuss Muhammadiyah's aid to Palestine. The findings of Amal and Olifiani's article are that there are four roles played by Muhammadiyah, namely (1) collecting funds, (2) donating funds, (3) developing the view that defending Palestine is part of Islamic activism, and (4) advocating for Palestinian independence and increasing Indonesian public awareness of this issue.³⁰

²⁶ Rema Hammami, “Palestinian NGOs Since Oslo: From NGO Politics to Social Movements?,” *Middle East Report*, no. 214 (2000): 16–48, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1520188>.

²⁷ Atika Shafinaz Nazri and Ikhrum Ridzuan, “The Contribution of NGOs in Strengthening Malaysia-Palestine Relation,” *UMRAN - Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* 12, no. 1 (February 28, 2025): 75–89, <https://doi.org/10.11113/umran2025.12n1.709>; Adlin Shaimi Baharom and Siti Nur Maisarah Mohd Zarawi, “Penglibatan Organisasi Bukan Kerajaan (NGO) Dalam Bantuan Kemanusiaan Ke Palestin (Aman Palestin Berhad): Involvement of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) In Humanitarian Aid to Palestine (Aman Palestin Berhad),” *Al-Muqaddimah: Online Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 9, no. 2 (2021): 30–42, <https://doi.org/10.22452/muqaddimah.vol9no2.3>; Asmady Idris, “Malaysian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Humanitarian Issues in Gaza, Palestine,” *International Journal of West Asian Studies* 4 (2012): 49–78, <https://doi.org/10.5895/ijwas.2012.04>.

²⁸ Abdurrahman Wahid, widely known as Gus Dur, served as Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama from 1984 to 1999 and was the fourth President of Indonesia from 1999 to 2001.

²⁹ Dwi Ardiyanti *et al.*, “Covid 19 Tragedy as a Momentum for Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah to Support Palestine : A Coxian Perspective,” *East Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 2, no. 11 (2023): 19, <https://doi.org/10.55927/eajmr.v2i11.6787>.

³⁰ Moh Talabul Amal and Laras Putri Olifiani, “Peran Ormas Muhammadiyah Sebagai Faith-Based Organisation Dalam Memberikan Respons Kemanusiaan Terhadap Rakyat Palestina,” *Jurnal ICMES* 7, no. 2 (December 30, 2023): 201–20, <https://doi.org/10.35748/jurnalicmes.v7i2.176>.

Muhammad Abdi Ridha, Ibdalsyah, and Qurroh Ayuniyyah (2022), in their research, examined the value of assistance provided by Baznas RI, a zakat institution owned by the Indonesian government, to Palestine throughout 2018-2021.³¹ Meanwhile, Fanesa Angeli and Ali Maksum (2025) studied three universities in Indonesia that provide scholarships to Palestinian and Afghan refugees in Indonesia. The three campuses are Pelita Harapan University (UPH) in Jakarta, Riau Islamic University (UIR) in Pekanbaru, and Raja Ali Haji Maritime University (UMRAH) in the Riau Islands.³²

In her article, Yuniva Tri Lestari (2025) examines the strategies of five Islamic philanthropic organisations in Indonesia (Qudwah Indonesia, Human Initiative, Rumah Zakat, Dompot Dhuafa, and DT Peduli) to collect donations for Palestine after the events of October 7, 2023. She argues that every institution has its crowdfunding strategy.³³ Nadila, Ahmad Syaripudin, and A. Havariah (2023) conducted similar research. They used an Islamic law perspective to examine the system of distributing zakat to Palestine by one of the Islamic philanthropic institutions in Makassar.³⁴ Meanwhile, Zein Muhammad Fachri and Soya Sobaya (2024) examined why people in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, donate to Palestine. Their findings were that donations to Palestine were based on three factors: altruism, awareness of charity, and income.³⁵

The above researchers approach the Palestinian aid phenomenon by explaining that various civil groups actively engage with Palestine through philanthropy, advocacy, and diplomacy. They emphasise the positive contributions. The aid varies, from fundraising, scholarships, providing medicine, and lobbying governments.

³¹ Muhammad Abdi Ridha et al., “Analisis Nilai Kontribusi Bantuan Kemanusiaan Palestina Badan Amil Zakat Nasional (BAZNAS) Tahun 2018-2021,” *AL-MUZARA’AH* 10, no. 2 (2022): 2, <https://doi.org/10.29244/jam.10.2.169-184>.

³² Fanesa Angeli and Ali Maksum, “Business for Peace in Indonesia: University Scholarships for Afghan and Palestinian Refugees and Their Role in Community Development,” *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research* 15, no. 2 (2025): 2, <https://doi.org/10.17583/remie.16284>.

³³ Yuniva Tri Lestari, “Donation Campaign Strategies of Five Islamic Philanthropic Organisations (Qudwah Indonesia, Human Initiative, Rumah Zakat, Dompot Dhuafa, DT Peduli) in Fundraising for the Palestinian Humanitarian Tragedy During October-November 2023,” *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Sains* 6, no. 2 (February 27, 2025): 444–60, <https://doi.org/10.59141/jiss.v6i2.1611>.

³⁴ Nadila Nadila et al., “Sistem Penyaluran Zakat Mal Ke Palestina Di Wahdah Inspirasi Zakat Makassar Perspektif Hukum Islam,” *AL-QIBLAH: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Bahasa Arab* 2, no. 1 (2023): 20–38, <https://doi.org/10.36701/qiblah.v2i1.865>.

³⁵ Zein Muhammad Fachri and Soya Sobaya, “Factors That Influence the Interest in Giving Zakat to Palestine Case Study of People in Yogyakarta,” *Journal of Contemporary Applied Islamic Philanthropy* 2, no. 2 (2024): 2, <https://doi.org/10.62265/jcaip.v2i2.84>.

However, no study has critically highlighted the contradiction between foreign activism, in this case solidarity for Palestine, and a pragmatic attitude in domestic politics. The comprehensive study that systematically traces Muhammadiyah's support for Palestine is also unexplored. Existing studies tend to provide fragmented insights, focusing on specific periods and particular cases. Literature concerning Muhammadiyah's humanitarian actors, such as Kahar Muzakir, Lukman Harun, and Sudibyo Markus, remains scarce. Furthermore, the forms of support and types of aid provided are underexplored. In light of this, the author aims to construct a comprehensive chronology, making this article the first to explain Muhammadiyah's support for Palestine chronologically from its establishment in 1912.

Moral Territoriality: A Theoretical Framework

The hypothesis that Muhammadiyah chooses to help Palestine rather than strengthen its role in domestic politics is understandable because it represents a claim to a transnational symbolic-moral territory, when viewed through Robert D. Sack's territoriality theory. Control over this transnational symbolic-moral territory allows Muhammadiyah to build its identity and legitimacy as a global ethical actor. On the other hand, Muhammadiyah does not claim the domestic political sphere as its space for struggle; domestically, Muhammadiyah is more active in education and humanitarian issues. Therefore, territoriality within Muhammadiyah does not necessarily translate into domestic politics.

Territoriality is a social strategy for influencing people and relationships through control over territory, both physical and symbolic. Support for the Palestinian cause is used by Muhammadiyah to assert its ethical position, while engaging in more confrontational domestic politics is discouraged because the state controls the territory. Thus, the Palestinian issue becomes a form of politically safe and symbolically powerful territoriality.³⁶

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

***Al-Maun* and Humanitarian Conception in Muhammadiyah**

³⁶ Sack, "Human Territoriality."

In Indonesia, many NGOs focus on the Palestinian cause. However, Muhammadiyah, one of the religious-based organisations, has a significant influence. Since its establishment by Ahmad Dahlan in 1918, Muhammadiyah has demonstrated a strong commitment to social empowerment. The organisation is built upon three pillars: healing, schooling, and feeding. These principles are reflected in efforts to heal by establishing hospitals, to educate by founding schools, and to promote welfare by developing various social institutions. These three pillars have underpinned Muhammadiyah's movement from its inception. The founding of Muhammadiyah was inspired by the message of Surah Al-Ma'un, which emphasizes the importance of empowering the community and supporting the vulnerable.³⁷

Only two years after its founding, Muhammadiyah established a specialized body dedicated to managing health services: *Penolong Kesengsaraan Umum* (PKU, Helpers of Public Distress). This institution was founded alongside other bodies concerned with education, religious dissemination (tabligh), and publication.³⁸ Amelia Fauzia's research shows that PKU inclusively conducted humanitarian activities, without discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, or social group. This principle was considered progressive at the time, especially given that most religious philanthropy during the colonial era tended to be exclusive.³⁹

Muhammadiyah, since the beginning, has adopted two fundamental principles: *tajdid* (renewal) and *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). *Tajdid* and *ijtihad* represent an effort to renew or modernize Islamic values to adapt to modern life's demands, to derive new Islamic rulings where no clear precedent exists, and to break the intellectual stagnation that had long affected the Muslim world. At the time, Ahmad Dahlan believed that intellectual activity in the Muslim world had come to a halt and no longer flourished as it did during the Islamic golden age. One indication of this intellectual decline, in his view, was the widespread backwardness, rigidity, poverty, and lack of education among Muslims. Thus,

³⁷ Syamsul Arifin et al., "The Idea of Progress: Meaning and Implications of Islam Berkemajuan in Muhammadiyah," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 60, no. 2 (2022): 2, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2022.602.547-584>.

³⁸ Syuja, *Islam Berkemajuan: Kisah Perjuangan K.H. Ahmad Dahlan dan Muhammadiyah Masa Awal* (Al-Wasat Publishing House, 2009).

³⁹ Amelia Fauzia, "Penolong Kesengsaraan Umum: The Charitable Activism of Muhammadiyah during the Colonial Period," *South East Asia Research* 25, no. 4 (2017): 379–94; Amelia Fauzia, *Faith and the State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia* (BRILL, 2013).

the spirit of social empowerment has remained strong from the early years of the organisation's foundation to the present day.⁴⁰

In defining Muhammadiyah, some scholars argued that Muhammadiyah is a "Moderate Salafism" (*salafiya al-washatiyya*) which differs from the Salafi movements initiated by Ibn Taymiyyah, Abdul Wahhab, and Muhammad Abduh.⁴¹ Howard M. Federspiel has labeled Muhammadiyah "an orthodox Islamic movement," a word that other academics don't use very often.⁴² Mitsuo Nakamura also says that Muhammadiyah is a "orthodox Islam in the form of a reformist movement."⁴³

In Muhammadiyah, idea of Islamic reform was translated into, one of many, humanitarian efforts. At the 1953 Muhammadiyah Mukhtamar, the organisation called upon all Muslims in Indonesia to support the independence struggles of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, and condemned the French colonial administration in these three countries. During the 1971 Mukhtamar, appeals for aid were extended not only to Palestine but also to Pakistan and the Philippines.⁴⁴

In 2002, Muhammadiyah established Lazismu, a specialized body tasked with collecting donations and alms, and using those funds to empower societies in six sectors: social affairs, religiosity (*dakwah*), education, economy, health, and ecology. Lazismu was founded to ensure that Muhammadiyah's longstanding work in promoting human development, alleviating poverty, and advancing social justice would become more focused and systematically organised.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Khozin Khozin and Pardin Lasaksi, "The Historicity of Muhammadiyah: The Idea of Founding Muhammadiyah - Literature Analysis," *West Science Social and Humanities Studies* 2, no. 01 (2024): 01, <https://doi.org/10.58812/wsshs.v2i01.616>.

⁴¹ Latief and Nashir, "Local Dynamics and Global Engagements of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Contemporary Indonesia."

⁴² Howard M. Federpiel, *The Muhammadiyah: A Study of an Orthodox Islamic Movement in Indonesia*, Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, October 1970, <https://hdl.handle.net/1813/53500>.

⁴³ Mitsuo Nakamura, *The Crescent Arises over the Banyan Tree: A Study of the Muhammadiyah Movement in a Central Javanese Town* (Gadjah Mada University Press, 2011); Latief and Nashir, "Local Dynamics and Global Engagements of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Contemporary Indonesia."

⁴⁴ Mh. Djaldan Badawi, *95 Tahun Langkah Perjuangan Muhammadiyah: Himpunan Keputusan Mukhtamar* (Lembaga Pustaka dan Informasi Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2007).

⁴⁵ Zakiyuddin Baidhaw, "Lazismu and Remaking the Muhammadiyah's New Way of Philanthropy," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 53, no. 2 (2015): 387, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2015.532.387-412>.

Another institution established by Muhammadiyah that should be mentioned here is the MDMC. MDMC was founded in 2007 following the 2004 Aceh tsunami and the 5.9 magnitude earthquake in Yogyakarta in 2006. Over time, MDMC has assisted communities affected by disasters and developed a comprehensive disaster mitigation system and a volunteer network aligned with international standards. The establishment of MDMC marked a critical shift from charity-based relief to professional humanitarian standards.⁴⁶

The establishment of these institutions was followed by formulating a cosmopolitan idea of Islam, which benefits the entire universe and serves as an umbrella for all nations, races, ethnicities, and cultures. This formulation was officially endorsed at the 2010 Muktamar in Yogyakarta, where Muhammadiyah launched its *Centennial Statement of Muhammadiyah in the Second Century*. At that Muktamar, Muhammadiyah was precisely 98 years old. This document established Muhammadiyah as a bridge for building inter-civilizational dialogue, recognizing that a new world order necessitates cross-national cooperation and dialogue.⁴⁷

This idea was further developed at the 2015 Muktamar in Makassar. During this congress, Muhammadiyah formulated a document addressing universal humanitarian issues. This document included Muhammadiyah's support for climate change mitigation projects, the protection of minority groups, the alleviation of refugee problems, the cessation of human trafficking, and the protection of migrant workers. In the context of refugees, Muhammadiyah urged international organizations to take swift action to ensure that states provide refugee services and protection. Muhammadiyah advocated for regulations guaranteeing the fulfillment of refugees' rights and protection, thereby freeing

⁴⁶ Zakiyuddin Baidhaw, "The Role of Faith-Based Organisation in Coping with Disaster Management and Mitigation: Muhammadiyah's Experience," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 9 (2015): 167–94, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2015.9.2.167-194>; Muchammad Ichsan and Nanik Prasetyoningsih, "The Involvement of Community Organisations in Disaster Management in Indonesia: A Study on the Role of Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center," in *Proceedings of The 6th International Conference on Research in Social Sciences* (The 6th International Conference on Research in Social Sciences, Global Ks, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.33422/6th.rssconf.2022.10.013>; Muchammad Ichsan, "Disaster Management In Indonesia: Muhammadiyah's Strategy And Contribution In 2010-2020," in *Proceedings of The 4th International Conference on Research in Social Sciences and Humanities* (4th International Conference on Research in Social Sciences and Humanities, GLOBALKS, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.33422/4th.icrsh.2021.10.230>.

⁴⁷ Latief and Nashir, "Local Dynamics and Global Engagements of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Contemporary Indonesia."

them from exploitation and human slavery. Furthermore, it emphasized the need for strict sanctions against governments violating human rights and engaging in human trafficking.⁴⁸

This is further strengthened by Muhammadiyah's understanding of *mustad'afin*, which was effectively implemented by Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah, by establishing schools, hospitals, and orphanages. Although the term "theology of *mustad'afin*" is rarely explicitly mentioned, its spirit largely permeates the foundational principles of the Muhammadiyah movement. This theology originated from Ahmad Dahlan's interpretation of Surah Al-Ma'un. In 1927, Mas Mansoer, Muhammadiyah's Consul from Surabaya, proposed the formation of a Council for Religious Opinion and Tajdid. He envisioned this council resolving issues of narrow-mindedness and *takfiri* traditions, thereby liberating Muhammadiyah from the hegemony of Wahhabi-Salafi ideology. This council became the precursor to the development of the theology of *mustad'afin*, which M. Amien Rais continued at the 1995 Muktamar in Aceh. At that time, Rais introduced the concept of "social *tawhid*," an Islamic understanding emphasizing socio-communal aspects. At the 2005 Muktamar in Malang, Muhadjir Effendy, a member of the Muhammadiyah Central Board, incorporated the theology of liberation by reconstructing the meaning of orphans, shifting it from a deterministic status to a condition of internal and external oppression. The establishment of the Maarif Institute by Ahmad Syafii Maarif and the Young Muhammadiyah Intellectual Network (JIMM) by Muslim Abdurrahman are also believed to be manifestations of this *mustad'afin* theology.⁴⁹

Based on these documents and developments, Muhammadiyah's social and humanitarian efforts expanded beyond its traditional areas of influence within Indonesia, reaching international contexts as well. This global engagement has led several scholars to describe Muhammadiyah as a faith-based humanitarian organisation with a significant international role.⁵⁰ The organisation participates in global forums and networks through three primary modes: partnerships with international organisations (e.g., WHO), active involvement in global platforms (such as the World Conference on Religion for Peace,

⁴⁸ Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, *Tanfidz Keputusan Muktamar Muhammadiyah Ke-47* (Gramasurya, 2015).

⁴⁹ Sokhi Huda, "Teologi Mustad'afin Di Indonesia: Kajian Atas Teologi Muhammadiyah," *Tsaqafah* 7, no. 2 (2011): 345, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v7i2.8>.

⁵⁰ Rahmawati Husein, Bachtiar Dwi Kurniawan, and Nawang Kurniawati, "Humanitarian Diplomacy in Action: Examining Muhammadiyah as a Model for Faith-Based Organisational Engagement," *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional* 13, no. 1 (June 3, 2024): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.18196/jhi.v13i1.19673>.

ASEAN, and the United Nations), and the implementation of international humanitarian missions in countries such as Palestine, Myanmar, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Kenya.⁵¹ As Muhammadiyah does not hold formal political power, it pursues a soft diplomacy strategy, relying on moral credibility and social networks. Through this approach, the organisation has carried out humanitarian work in many countries.⁵²

Nowadays, Muhammadiyah is the biggest modernist Islamist community in Indonesia. This organisation has around 30 branches abroad, including in Australia, Asia, Europe, and the US. The organisation has around 172 universities in Indonesia, 1.904 elementary schools, 1.128 junior high schools, 1.294 senior high schools, 440 Islamic boarding schools, 122 hospitals, and 1.012 orphanages.⁵³ Although reliable data has never been available, the Ministry of Religious Affairs claims that Muhammadiyah has around 60 million members.⁵⁴

One of Muhammadiyah's most significant milestones was the establishment of Lazismu in 2002. This institution marked a new chapter in Muhammadiyah's philanthropic activities. Previously, Muhammadiyah donations to Palestine were coordinated directly by the Central Board of Muhammadiyah, not through a special body tasked explicitly with executing related programs. After Lazismu's emergence, this institution collected and distributed funds on a massive and well-documented scale. In this article, I want to divide the discussion into pre-Lazismu and post-Lazismu periods.

⁵¹ Latief and Nashir, "Local Dynamics and Global Engagements of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Contemporary Indonesia."

⁵² Putri Shafarina Thahir, "Muhammadiyah Goes International? Challenges and Opportunities," *Jurnal Muhammadiyah Studies* 9, no. 1 (September 3, 2024): 47–67, <https://doi.org/10.22219/jms.v9i1.36120>; Baidhawiy, "The Role of Faith-Based Organisation in Coping with Disaster Management and Mitigation."

⁵³ Tim Redaksi, "Mempersiapkan Pendidikan Muhammadiyah yang Unggul dan Berkemajuan," *Muhammadiyah*, June 2, 2024, <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2024/06/mempersiapkan-pendidikan-muhammadiyah-yang-unggul-dan-berkemajuan/>; Ilham, "Jumlah Pesantren Muhammadiyah Terus Bertambah, LP2 PP Muhammadiyah Targetkan Cetak 1000 Ustaz," *Muhammadiyah*, July 9, 2023, <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2023/07/jumlah-pesantren-muhammadiyah-terus-bertambah-lp2-pp-muhammadiyah-targetkan-cetak-1000-ustaz/>; Afandi, "Setiap Tahun, Muhammadiyah Alokasikan Rp 1,6 T untuk Kebutuhan Anak Yatim dan Duafa," *Muhammadiyah*, December 12, 2023, <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2023/12/setiap-tahun-muhammadiyah-alokasikan-rp-16-t-untuk-kebutuhan-anak-yatim-dan-duafa/>.

⁵⁴ Muhammad Reza Ilham Taufani, "Organisasi Islam Terbesar RI, NU apa Muhammadiyah?," *CNBC Indonesia*, accessed May 6, 2025, <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/research/20240403160423-128-528006/organisasi-islam-terbesar-ri-nu-apa-muhammadiyah>; Syamsul Dwi Maarif, "Daftar Organisasi Islam di Indonesia dan Sejarah Singkatnya," *tirto.id*, 2025, <https://tirto.id/daftar-organisasi-islam-di-indonesia-dan-sejarah-singkatnya-gYah>; Khafid Sirotudin, "ORMAS, OMS Dan LS," *Suara Muhammadiyah*, November 10, 2023, <https://www.suaramuhammadiyah.id/read/ormas-oms-dan-ls>.

Two Important Periodical Activism: Pre-Lazismu

Pre-Lazismu era refers to the era when Muhammadiyah's support for Palestine was dominated by certain figures. Muhammadiyah did not place significant focus on the Palestinian issue. Although the work of certain figures were continued to be significant in the post-Lazismu era, Muhammadiyah started to collaborate with three of its bureaus—Lazismu, MDMC, and LHKI (*Lembaga Hubungan dan Kerjasama Internasional* or Institute for International Relations and Cooperation)—to oversee Muhammadiyah's support for Palestine. In this era, the role of personalities also began to be replaced by the role of institutions. Before the establishment of Lazismu, the roles of Abdul Kahar Muzakkir and Lukman Harun were prominent.

In the early days of Muhammadiyah's first conception, its primary focus was on healing, schooling, and feeding. The issues it addressed were highly localised, particularly the problems of poverty and underdevelopment in Yogyakarta. Muhammadiyah was established to address local Muslim communities' socio-cultural and intellectual decline. As the movement expanded, so did the range of issues it engaged with, including international concerns such as the conflicts in Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir, the Iraq War, and most notably, Palestine.

The discourse on Palestine has been present within Muhammadiyah since the 1960s. Kahar Muzakkir was an early figure who paid serious attention to global issues, particularly the conflict in Palestine. Nevertheless, although he had attended the Islamic World Congress since 1931, the Palestinian issue only became a topic of discussion at a Muhammadiyah congress during the 37th *Muktamar* in 1969. *Muktamar* is the highest deliberative forum in Muhammadiyah, where all issues considered vital to the organisation are discussed. Initially, this gathering was held annually and was called the "Annual Meeting" (*Rapat Tahunan*) from its inception until 1925. The term later changed to "Congress" (*Kongres*) from 1926 to 1941. Subsequently, the term was changed to "*Muktamar*" and was held every three years. In 1985, the frequency was changed to every five years, a practice that continues today.

The 37th *Muktamar* in 1969 urged the newly elected Central Board to issue a statement expressing concern and condemning Israeli aggression against Palestine and other Arab territories. The *Muktamar* also called upon Muhammadiyah members and Indonesian

Muslims to assist and support the Palestinian and Arab people in liberating the regions occupied by Israel. Furthermore, it urged the Indonesia administration to be more active and provide concrete assistance to the Palestinian cause.

Recommendations from the *Muktamar* in the form of such urgings and condemnations consistently appeared in every congress from 1969 until the 45th Muktamar in 2005. Although the wording varied, the main idea was always the same: supporting Palestinian independence and condemning Israeli atrocities. These calls were addressed to the Indonesian Government, Middle Eastern countries, and the international community. It was only at the 46th Muktamar in 2010, the 47th in 2015, and the 48th in 2022 that this narrative was no longer included in the official Muktamar documents.⁵⁵

1. Abdul Kahar Muzakkir

Muhammadiyah's earliest engagement with the Palestinian issue can be traced through two prominent figures, Abdul Kahar Muzakkir and Lukman Harun. Muzakkir was a diplomat, academic, politician, and Muhammadiyah activist raised in Yogyakarta. His father, Haji Muzakir, was a close friend of Ahmad Dahlan, who had once married Haji Muzakir's sister.⁵⁶ In Muhammadiyah, Kahar Muzakkir served as a member of the Central Board for three consecutive terms from 1950 to 1962. At the 34th Congress in 1959, he received the second-highest number of votes, after Hamka. He was absent from the Central Board from 1962 to 1968, then rejoined at the 37th Congress in 1968 and was re-elected at the 38th Congress in 1971.

Muzakkir's role in Muhammadiyah was quite prominent. He served as a member of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah for four consecutive periods, from 1950 to 1962. After an absence from that position between 1962 and 1968, he rejoined as a member from 1968 until he died in 1973.⁵⁷

In Desember 1931, Muzakir led the Southeast Asian delegation at the Islamic World Congress⁵⁸ in Jerusalem. He was joined by Abubakar Al-Asy'ari from Malaysia. The

⁵⁵ Badawi, *95 Tahun Langkah Perjuangan Muhammadiyah: Himpunan Keputusan Muktamar*.

⁵⁶ Mitsuo Nakamura, "Prof. H. Abdul Kahar Muzakkir and The Development of Islamic Reformist Movement in Indonesia," *Afkaruna* 15, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.18196/AIJIS.2019.0103.203-225>.

⁵⁷ Badawi, *95 Tahun Langkah Perjuangan Muhammadiyah: Himpunan Keputusan Muktamar*.

⁵⁸ The term "Islamic World Congress" is somewhat problematic, as scholars use different names to refer to the event. Svetlana Kirillina, for instance, uses "Congress of the Islamic World" to

congress reaffirmed the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque (including the Buraq Wall) and the significance of Palestine for all Muslims. It outlined plans to establish an Islamic land company to prevent Zionists from purchasing land in Palestine and issued strong condemnations of Western imperialism in Muslim-majority countries. Moreover, Abdul Kahar Muzakkir was appointed the congress secretary, a position he used strategically to advocate for Indonesia's cause within the broader Islamic world.⁵⁹ This is where he developed a close relationship with the Grand Mufti of Palestine, Sheikh Amin al-Husayni. In the following year, the Islamic World Congress branch of Eastern India⁶⁰ held a similar congress in Malang, East Java. Kahar Muzakkir also attended the event. At that time, the chairman of MAIHS was Mas Mansur, who would later serve as the Chairman of Muhammadiyah's Central Board from 1937 to 1942.⁶¹

In 1937, Muzakkir carried a mandate from 34 organisations in Indonesia, including Muhammadiyah, to the Bloudan Conference in Syria, which focused on the liberation of Palestine. The conference was convened by Sheikh Amin Al-Husaini in response to the Peel Partition Plan, primarily because the plan proposed that Palestine would fall under the rule of Transjordan, controlled by King Abdullah. Conversely, Husaini sought to be the sole leader of Palestine, aiming to consolidate support from various nations, especially within the Arab world, to pressure Britain into granting full independence to Palestine.

However, Elie Kedourie's records indicate no Indonesian participants in the conference. Kedourie noted that all attendees were delegates from Arab countries, including Syria (160 participants), Palestine (128), Lebanon (65), Trans-Jordan (30), Iraq

describe the first Islamic general meeting in Mecca in 1926. Bashir Ahmad Ansari, a Malaysian scholar, uses "Islamic Conference" and "Islamic World Conference" interchangeably. In different articles, Weldon C. Matthews and Elie Kedourie refer to the second congress in Jerusalem in 1931 as the "Islamic Congress." In both Arabic and Indonesian, all of these terms are translated as *Motamar Alam Al Islami*. The Indonesian branch of this organisation is called *Motamar Alam Al Islami far 'u Al Hindi As Syarqiyyah* (The Islamic World Congress of East Indies). Before independence, Indonesia was called the East Indies or the Dutch East Indies. The first congress was held in Mecca in 1926, followed by Jerusalem in 1931, and then in Karachi in 1949 and 1951 respectively. In 1969, the creation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) shifted the role previously held by *Motamar Alam Islami*. However, for the sake of simplicity, this paper adopts the term *Islamic World Congress*.

⁵⁹ Afandi, "The 1931 World Islamic Congress: Muhammadiyah's Stand against Colonialism and Zionism," Ideology, *Muhammadiyah Official Website - English Version*, November 10, 2023, <https://en.muhammadiyah.or.id/the-1931-world-islamic-congress-muhammadiyahs-stand-against-colonialism-and-zionism/>.

⁶⁰ The branch is called MAIHS (*Motamar Alam Al Islami far 'u Al Hindi As Syarqiyyah*) as mentioned in the previous footnote.

⁶¹ Ahmad Mu'arif, "Jejak Diplomasi Muhammadiyah untuk Palestina," *Suara Muhammadiyah*, no. 21/108 (November 2023): 10–11, PT Syarikat Cahaya Media.

(12), Egypt (6), and Saudi Arabia (1).⁶² Kahar Muzakkir's presence at Bloudan was documented by Muarif in an article published in *Suara Muhammadiyah*. Nevertheless, the veracity of this claim requires further review and clarification.⁶³

In March 1970, the World Islamic Scholars Conference was held at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Kahar Muzakkir represented the Indonesian government and various Islamic organisations in Indonesia, undertaking a diplomatic mission. His mission aimed to strengthen support for Palestinian independence and advocate for the liberation of other Arab nations still under colonial rule.⁶⁴ During that visit, Kahar Muzakkir also visited the battlefield in Jordan and met with the PLO Leader, Yasser Arafat. Arafat specifically requested support from the Indonesian people through Muzakkir.⁶⁵

2. Lukman Harun

Lukman Harun (d. 1999) was a Muhammadiyah activist who also focused on the Palestinian issue. He served as a Muhammadiyah Central Board member from the 39th Congress in 1974 until he died in 1999, completing four terms. Although he was not elected to the Central Board at the 42nd Congress in 1990, he was re-elected at the 43rd Congress in 1995. He was also secretary-general of ACRP (Asian Conference on Religion and Peace) and WCRP (World Conference on Religion and Peace).⁶⁶

In 1969, while in his 30s, he met with Amin Al Husaini in Beirut and Yasser Arafat in Amman. Arafat invited him to visit front-line battle camps. This encounter left such a profound impression on Arafat that he wrote a special article for Harun when the latter passed away in 1999. Upon returning from his visit to the Middle East, Harun delivered an oration at the "Grand Rally of Muslim Solidarity to Condemn Israeli Atrocities" in Jakarta, alongside other prominent figures such as Hamka, Moh. Hatta, and A.H. Nasution.⁶⁷

⁶² Elie Kedourie, "The Bludan Congress on Palestine, September 1937," *Middle Eastern Studies* 17, no. 1 (1981): 107–25.

⁶³ Ahmad Mu'arif, "Abdul Kahar Muzakkir dan Diplomasi Muhammadiyah untuk Palestina," *Suara Muhammadiyah*, October 20, 2023, <https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/read/abdul-kahar-muzakkir-dan-diplomasi-muhammadiyah-untuk-palestina>.

⁶⁴ Mu'arif, "Abdul Kahar Muzakkir dan Diplomasi Muhammadiyah untuk Palestina."

⁶⁵ Abadi SM, "Prof. Kahar 4 Setengah Bulan Di Luar Negeri: Ketemu Pemimpin-Pemimpin Geriljawan Arab Dan Kundjungi Front Jordania," *Suara Muhammadiyah*, July 1970.

⁶⁶ Ali Alatas, "Bagaikan Duta Besar Keliling," in *Lukman Harun Dalam Lintasan Sejarah Dan Politik* (Yayasan Lukman Harun, 2000).

⁶⁷ Mahmud Budi Setiawan, "Lukman Harun, Muhammadiyah dan Palestina," *Hidayatullah.com*, January 9, 2024, <https://hidayatullah.com/kajian/sejarah/2024/01/09/265750/lukman-harun-muhammadiyah-dan-palestina.html>.

In 1973, the Yom Kippur War occurred between an Arab coalition led by Egypt and Israel. The Arab coalition suffered another defeat after previous losses in the wars of 1967 and 1948. Following the 1973 war, Lukman Harun and several other figures established the "Committee to Aid the Liberation of Palestine and Al-Aqsa Mosque." Harun served as vice-chairman at its founding, while the chairman was Sutjipto Judidardji, the former Chief of the Indonesian National Police.⁶⁸

The organisation aimed to assist and alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. One of its programs involved conducting a blood drive, with the collected blood sent to Palestine. This drive was carried out in collaboration with the Jakarta Islamic Hospital and the Indonesian Red Cross in Jakarta, collecting 50 litres of blood. Harun also handed over aid amounting to 2.5 million rupiah (equivalent to approximately 375 million rupiah today) and 20 crates (900 kg) of tea. Furthermore, donations were provided in medicine, medical equipment, coffee, and two ambulances designated for the PLO and Syria.⁶⁹

In the Muhammadiyah context, while Harun served on its central board, the Islamic organisation sent aid almost annually to Palestinian refugees through UNRWA. This assistance typically ranged from 500 to 1,000 US dollars.⁷⁰ Additionally, Muhammadiyah contributed to the operational funds of the Palestinian Embassy in Jakarta, particularly to cover its electricity and water bills.⁷¹

During the Lukman Harun era, Muhammadiyah donations began to flow to Palestine, unlike the Muzakir era, which focused solely on diplomacy. As a Muhammadiyah diplomat, Harun encouraged the organisation to assist Palestine through diplomacy and economic means. At that time, the Palestinian cause was primarily championed by these two prominent figures, while institutionally, Muhammadiyah paid relatively little attention to the issue. Although the word "Palestine" did appear at almost every *Muktamar*, it was limited to recommendations that lacked significant power.

⁶⁸ Setiawan, "Lukman Harun, Muhammadiyah dan Palestina"; Fatmah Ayudhia Amani, "Lukman Harun, Tokoh Muhammadiyah, Sang Pejuang Kemerdekaan Palestina," Artikel, *Adara Relief International*, May 23, 2023, <https://adararelief.com/lukman-harun-tokoh-muhammadiyah-sang-pejuang-kemerdekaan-palestina/>.

⁶⁹ Amani, "Lukman Harun, Tokoh Muhammadiyah, Sang Pejuang Kemerdekaan Palestina."

⁷⁰ Amani, "Lukman Harun, Tokoh Muhammadiyah, Sang Pejuang Kemerdekaan Palestina."

⁷¹ Afandi, "Totalitas Mendukung, Muhammadiyah Pernah Tanggung Biaya Operasional Kedutaan Palestina," *Muhammadiyah*, May 30, 2021, <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2021/05/totalitas-mendukung-muhammadiyah-pernah-tanggung-biaya-operasional-kedutaan-palestina/>.

In these documents, Muhammadiyah condemned Israel's violence and land grabbing in Palestine. Muhammadiyah also urged the international community to pay greater attention to the plight of the Palestinian people. However, these recommendations received little attention from Israel and the international community.⁷²

Post-Lazismu: Institutionalising Aid

In the next era, diplomatic endeavours were represented by LHKI, while sending aid was represented by Lazismu. The two bodies formed a coordinating institution called Muhammadiyah Aid. LHKI became the leading sector of Muhammadiyah Aid, while Lazismu and MDMC became members.

Initially, the establishment of Lazismu, MDMC, and LHKI was unrelated to the Palestinian issue. Lazismu, for example, was founded due to two factors. First, the widespread weakness of social justice systems, high rates of poverty, and a low human development index in Indonesia. Second, Indonesia's substantial *zakat* (alm) potential has not been managed and utilised appropriately, professionally, and optimally, thus perpetuating the problems above. Lazismu was established as a *modern management institution* that could enable *zakat* to become part of the solution to the community's ever-growing social problems.⁷³

MDMC was also founded in response to two major disasters that shocked Indonesians in the early 2000s: the 2004 Aceh tsunami and the 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake. Prior to this, there was the term *Trisula Muhammadiyah*, or Muhammadiyah's three main focuses: healing, schooling, and feeding. Following these two disasters and the founding of Lazismu, Hajriyanto Y. Thohari, Chairman of Muhammadiyah Central Board, popularised the new *Trisula Muhammadiyah*: MDMC for disaster management, MPM (Community Empowerment Council) for community empowerment, and Lazismu for community fund management. However, the establishment of Lazismu and MDMC significantly accelerated Muhammadiyah's efforts to maximise support for Palestine.⁷⁴

⁷² Badawi, *95 Tahun Langkah Perjuangan Muhammadiyah: Himpunan Keputusan Mukhtamar*.

⁷³ Afandi, "Mengenal Lazismu, Lembaga Filantropi Teraudit, Transparan dan Profesional," *Muhammadiyah*, July 6, 2022, <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2022/07/mengenal-lazismu-lembaga-filantropi-teraudit-transparan-dan-profesional/>.

⁷⁴ "Mengenal Lazismu, Lembaga Filantropi Teraudit, Transparan dan Profesional."

Muhammadiyah Aid originated as a program by the Central Board of Muhammadiyah for dispatching international aid. Initially, this body was designated as an *ad hoc* body, and later transitioned into a coordinating institution among various bureaus within Muhammadiyah, with LHKI as its leading sector. Initially, Muhammadiyah Aid focused on emergency response during natural or humanitarian disasters. Its focus has since shifted towards development, extending its work beyond emergencies. Meanwhile, MDMC was founded in 2007. The Central Board of Muhammadiyah formally designated it as the institution responsible for coordinating Muhammadiyah's resources in disaster management activities following the 2010 *Muktamar*.⁷⁵

Following the establishment of Lazismu, MDMC, and Muhammadiyah Aid, the organisation's provision of foreign aid became more structured. Assistance is categorised into three types: short-term, medium-term, and long-term. In its short-term programs, aid is converted into emergency supplies such as medicine and food. Lazismu annually provides canned food processed from *qurban* (ritual animal sacrifice) meat. The medium-term program involves providing full scholarships for undergraduate (S1), master's (S2), and doctoral (S3) studies to Palestinian students, both at the Islamic University of Gaza and at Muhammadiyah-owned universities in Indonesia. The long-term objective is to contribute to efforts for a permanent resolution to the conflict.⁷⁶

In May 2025, Muhammadiyah dispatched 1,350 aid packages to Palestine, totalling USD 100,000. These consisted of 800 *iftar* (break-fast) packages, 300 Eid al-Fitr gift packages, 150 clothing packages, and 100 cash assistance packages. In February of the same year, Muhammadiyah distributed 22 tons of fresh vegetables, 50 tents, 480 warm clothing packages, 980 hygiene kits, 2,000 *iftar* packages, one water filtration plant, 1,980 blanket packages, and one portable toilet unit.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Interview with Arif Nur Kholis, General Secretary of the Central Board of MDMC.

⁷⁶ Yusuf, "Sejak Puluhan Tahun Lalu, Muhammadiyah Telah Kirim Bantuan ke Palestina," *Lazismu*, May 5, 2025, <https://lazismu.org/2025/05/05/sejak-puluhan-tahun-lalu-muhammadiyah-telah-kirim-bantuan-ke-palestina/>; Afandi, "Tembus 23 M, Ke Mana Larinya Donasi Palestina Lazismu? Ini Jawabannya," *Muhammadiyah*, May 30, 2021, <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2021/05/tembus-23-m-ke-mana-larinya-donasi-palestina-lazismu-ini-jawabannya/>.

⁷⁷ Lazismu, "Program Muhammadiyah Aid Lazismu Salurkan 1350 Paket Bantuan untuk Palestina," *Lazismu*, May 5, 2025, <https://lazismu.org/2025/05/05/program-muhammadiyah-aid-lazismu-salurkan-1350-paket-bantuan-untuk-palestina/>.

In the preceding year, aid was supplied in the form of clean water: 70,000 litres in Gaza, 50,000 litres in Deir al-Balah, and 39,000 litres in Khan Yunis. Medical equipment included two defibrillators and one diathermy (ultrasonic therapy) machine. Pharmaceutical aid comprised 16,000 units of Wideprex, 9,640 units of Corvizim, 350 units of Metronidazole, and 5,017 units of Sunnyfungal. Furthermore, assistance included 90 food and clothing packages, 15,235 hot meal packages for *iftar*, 2,850 logistics packages containing RendangMu (canned rendang), water, and blankets, as well as 200 packages of chicken meat for refugees in Khan Yunis, Gaza. Rendangmu is the food from *qurban* meat in Indonesia that is preserved in cans as rendang. This food can be consumed all year round, making it suitable for distribution to conflict areas.⁷⁸

This year, eight students and academics from Palestine visited Muhammadiyah campuses in Indonesia. They are Yahya Saleem, pursuing a bachelor's program in Mechanical Engineering at Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta; Marah Muqbil, pursuing a master's program in English Language Education at Prof. Hamka University; Mahmoud A. M. Bolad, pursuing a master's program in English Language Education at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta; and Sameh H. H. Fuqaha, pursuing a master's program in Civil Engineering at Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta. Meanwhile, four academics—Dr. Salem M. A. Salem, Dr. Mohammed Saleh, Dr. Issam Ayyash, and Dr. Ayman Aldirawi—participated in various summer course programs. Dr. Salem joined the Indonesian Language and Culture program at Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya; Dr. Saleh joined the Accounting and Finance program at Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta; Dr. Ayyash participated in the International Training for Young Islamic Economic Leaders at Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta; and Dr. Aldirawi took part in the Small-Medium Enterprises program, also at Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta. In addition to Muhammadiyah's top universities in Java, Muhammadiyah campuses outside Java also accept students from Palestine. Eight Palestinian students are studying at the Muhammadiyah University of North Maluku. Seven of them are studying informatics engineering, while one is studying English.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Lazismu Jawa Barat, "Lazismu Distribusikan Air Bersih Untuk Warga Palestina," *Lazismu Jawa Barat*, June 13, 2024, <https://www.lazismujawabarat.org/lazismu-distribusikan-air-bersih-untuk-warga-palestina/>; Lazismu, *Roadmap Penyaluran Bantuan LAZISMU ke Gaza Palestina Sepanjang 2023 dan 2024*, 2024, <https://info.lazismujatim.org/roadmap-penyalaran-bantuan-lazismu-ke-gaza-palestina-sepanjang-2023-dan-2024/>.

⁷⁹ Faujia, "UMMU Sambut Mahasiswa Palestina Menuju Kampus Berkelas Dunia," *Suara Muhammadiyah*, September 30, 2024, <https://www.suaramuhammadiyah.id/read/ummu-sambut-mahasiswa-palestina-menuju-kampus-berkelas-dunia>.

The same year, Muhammadiyah also launched a peacebuilding program in the West Bank, Palestine. The program, titled "Multicultural Dialogue and Capacity Building for Palestine: Peace Building Lab, Being a Change Agent," aimed to strengthen the resilience of civilian victims of war. They were trained to develop resilience in the face of challenging conditions. They were also trained in agricultural practices and small business development, enabling them to survive the ongoing conflict. This program was funded and designed by Muhammadiyah Aid, with local partners such as The Witness Center for Citizen Rights and Social Development, Al Quds University, and the Holy Land Trust. The organisation also operates two schools for refugees in Beirut, Lebanon. These home-based schools are funded by Muhammadiyah, and Beirut refugee volunteers handle daily operations.⁸⁰

In 2023, following the conflict that erupted on October 7th, Muhammadiyah sent aid valued at IDR 13 billion, which included 2,400 cans of Rendangmu and 600 family kits containing blankets, towels, and undergarments. This assistance also included food baskets with non-perishable canned items such as tea, rice, sugar, beans, and oil. Before the October 7th conflict, Muhammadiyah had already distributed basic food aid as part of its Ramadan program to 1,425 Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip and 1,811 families in the West Bank.⁸¹

In November, one month after the October 7th conflict, MDMC had prepared a team to be sent to become humanitarian volunteers in Gaza. The organisation had stated its readiness to send 33 professional medical personnel to the Gaza Strip through the collaboration of the Indonesian Humanitarian Alliance (IHA). In the IHA press conference at the Muhammadiyah Central Dakwah Building in Jakarta in late 2023, a member of the MDMC PP Muhammadiyah Emergency Medical Team (EMT), Dr. Tri Yunanto Arliono, Sp.EM., KDM, said that the 33 professional medical personnel had complied with the World Health Organisation's emergency medical response standards and were administratively ready. However, due to unfavorable conditions, the Indonesian

⁸⁰ Interview with Syafiq A. Mughni, Chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Board.

⁸¹ Lazismu, "Bantuan Rendangmu Untuk Rakyat Palestina," *Lazismu*, November 1, 2023, <https://lazismu.org/2023/11/01/bantuan-rendangmu-untuk-rakyat-palestina/>.

government and the authorities in Gaza and Egypt did not issue permits. Therefore, the team's departure was canceled.⁸²

In addition, in early 2024, MDMC sent five people, including Naibul Umam, Tri Yunanto Arliono, Wahyu Pristiawan, Huda Khairun Nahar, and Gunawan Hidayat, to open an emergency hospital at the Rafah border. The team coordinated with relevant parties such as the WHO, the Indonesian Red Cross, and others. Unfortunately, after seeing the terrible conditions in Rafah, establishing a hospital was deemed impossible.⁸³

At the same time, the Muhammadiyah campus in Perlis, Malaysia, also offered full scholarships to Palestinian students. On April 11, 2023, the Palestinian Ambassador for Malaysia, Walid Abu Ali, visited Muhammadiyah University of Malaysia to accept a scholarship offer for Palestinian students.

In 2022, during Ramadan 1443 H, Muhammadiyah distributed humanitarian funds for Palestine to 166 families in the Gaza Strip. Additionally, Muhammadiyah provided Short Course scholarships to 31 Palestinian students to study at various Muhammadiyah universities in Indonesia, including Muhammadiyah University of Jakarta, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, Muhammadiyah University of Malang, Muhammadiyah University of Makassar, Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo, Ahmad Dahlan University, Prof Hamka University, and others. In addition to short courses, some students also pursue master's degrees.

The first Palestinian student to come to Indonesia through a Muhammadiyah scholarship was Fathi Sulaiman A. Alrawagh. He arrived on March 22, 2022, pursuing a master's degree in civil engineering at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. Following Alrawagh, Dr. Arafat Ali Nassar, an academic from the University College of Science and Technology in Khan Yunis, Gaza, came to Muhammadiyah University of Makassar on a scholarship. He attended an "Islamic Pawning" summer course there and delivered several lectures in the Faculty of Economics. That same year, Almutasimbilla J.R. Shnewra, a student from Gaza, began her master's degree in Islamic Education Management at

⁸² Natsir Amir, *MDMC Siap Berangkat Ke Palestina, Tunggu Lampu Hijau Kemenlu*, November 3, 2023, <https://monitorday.com/mdmc-siap-berangkat-ke-palestina-tunggu-lampu-hijau-kemenlu/>.

⁸³ Tvmu, "PP Muhammadiyah Lepas Lima Orang Advance Team Untuk Buka Rumah Sakit Darurat Di Gaza - tvMu - Cerdas Mencerahkan," TVMuhammadiyah, January 25, 2024, <https://tvmu.tv/pp-muhammadiyah-lepas-lima-orang-advance-team-untuk-buka-rumah-sakit-darurat-di-gaza>.

Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo on a full scholarship from Lazismu East Java. While in Sidoarjo, she actively participated in preaching activities with Lazismu. He graduated in September 2024.⁸⁴

In 2021, Muhammadiyah distributed Eid al-Adha *qurban* aid, which was received by 90 Palestinian refugee families in Jordan and 10 *qurban* goats for 60 Palestinian families in Jerusalem. The organisation also delivered 695 basic necessity packages to the residents of Gaza, 600 packages of emergency aid in two Gaza-based hospitals, renovated the Muhammadiyah II building used by Palestinian refugees in Shatila, Beirut, Lebanon, donated one ambulance to a hospital in Gaza, and renovated four mosques in Gaza. In education, Muhammadiyah awarded scholarships to 40 students at the Islamic University of Gaza.

In 2020, Muhammadiyah distributed 64 basic food packages to 64 residents in Jerusalem and 64 in Gaza, and purchased a house to establish the Nihayatul Husna Madrasah for refugees in Beirut, Lebanon. Assistance also included the provision of prosthetic legs for victims and routine healthcare services.

Based on the above data, Muhammadiyah appears to be quite serious in supporting Palestinian independence and assisting conflict victims, particularly among the civilian population. This support has continued simultaneously since before Israel declared its independence in 1948, beginning with Kahar Muzakir's active diplomatic engagement in the Middle East. The project was then carried forward by Harun in the 1980s and continues today in an era where Muhammadiyah's institutions have consolidated well. In the post-Lazismu era, the distribution of donations no longer occurs only in response to outbreaks of conflict in Gaza—such as in /2023, 2021, 2014, and 2012—but takes place regularly each year through various aid initiatives.

Table 1.1 Muhammadiyah's donation for Palestine

Year	Program	Partner	Type of Aid	Number of Beneficiaries

⁸⁴ *Pemuda Gaza Palestina Lulus Magister Di Sidoarjo, Alhamdulillah*, directed by LAZISMU Jawa Timur, 2024, 01:44, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EpFMnP418I>.

2018	Scholarship for Gaza Students	IЕСP	Scholarship	7
2019	Food donation	-	Food	1000
	<i>Qurban</i> for Gaza	-	Food	350
	Aid for a Gaza hospital	MUI	Building development	1
	Food donation for Gaza	IESCO	Food	1000
2020	Food donation for Gaza	IESCO	Food	64
	Food donation for Jerusalem	WCAS	Food	64
	House purchasing for refugees school in Beirut	Indonesian Embassy in Lebanon	Building development	500
	<i>Qurban</i> for Gaza and West Bank	Muhammadiyah Special Branch of Jordan	Food	500
2021	Scholarships for Islamic University of Gaza students	IESCO	Scholarship	40
	<i>Qurban</i> for refugees	Muhammadiyah Special Branch of Jordan	Food	1000
	<i>Qurban</i> for Jerusalem	AWC (Women's Center Althouri Silwan)	Food	300
	Four mosques renovation	PWH (Palestinian Welfare House)	Building renovation	4
	Food donation for Gazans	PWH	Food	1000
	Medical emergency aid for Gazans	PWH	Drugs	1000
2022	Muhammadiyah 1 School building renovation	Indonesian Embassy in Lebanon	Building renovation	50

	Ambulance donation	-	Ambulance	-
	Muhammadiyah 2 School building renovation	-	Building renovation	50
	Humanitarian donation	PWH	Food	1000
	Scholarships for Gazans	IESCO	Scholarship	
	Ramadan humanitarian donation	IESCO	Food	500
	Muhammadiyah's building purchase for refugees in Lebanon	-	Purchasing a building	3000
	Scholarships for Palestinians to study in Indonesia	-	Scholarship	30
	Ramadan humanitarian donation	IESCO	Food	1000
2023	Ramadan humanitarian donation	Takween for Development	Food	1000
	Ramadan project in Al Quds	AWC	Food	1000
	Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr project	Wafaa Microfinance and Capacity Building	Food	250
	Community empowerment	Wafaa	Empowerment	250
	Medical assistance	GDD (Gazze Destek Association)	Drugs	1000
	Family kit donation	-	Family kit	2000
	Convoy Aid for Gaza	GDD	Drugs and medical equipment	5000
	Medical assistance	GDD	Drugs	5000
	Medical assistance	Takween	Drugs	5000

	Muhammadiyah Aid Workshop		Event	20
2024	Medical equipment assistance	Red Cross Palestine	Medical equipment	1000
	Logistical support	Muhammadiyah Special Branch of Egypt	Food, clothes, and medical equipment	1000
	Food assistance	Wafaa	Food	2925
	Food assistance	Takween	Food	3910
	Food assistance	GDD	Food	8000
	Water assistance in Gaza	GDD	Clean water	3000
	Cash donation for the orphanage in Gaza	GDD	Cash	500
	Multicultural Dialogue and Capacity Building for Palestine	-	Empowerment	100
	<i>Qurban</i> for Gazans	Muhammadiyah Special Branch of Jordan	Food	500
	Muhammadiyah Scholarship for Palestinians to study in Indonesia	-	Scholarship	20
	Medical equipment donation	Palestine Red Crescent Society	Medical equipment	1000
	Joint Action for Palestine	POROZ Indonesia	Food	5000
	Logistical donation	FOZ Indonesia	Food	1000
	The Right to Education for Gazans Children	Hayat Youlu	School	45
	Winter coat donation	GDD	Clothes	500
	Health care assistance	Amna Care Fund	Healthcare service	40

	Workshop for capacity building	-	Capacity building	20
	Muhammadiyah Scholarship for Palestinians to study in Indonesia	-	Scholarship	37
	Ramadan for Refugees	Muhammadiyah Special Branch of Jordan	Ramadan gifts	100
	Ramadan for Refugees	Muhammadiyah Special Branch of Egypt	Ramadan gifts	71
	Ramadan Iftar Meals Program	Witness Syahid	Food	850
	Ramadan Iftar Meals Program	Takween	Food	1250
	Quran Memorization Circle in the Gaza Strip	GDD	Alquran	100
	Food donation	Hayat Youlu	Food	1000
	<i>Qurban</i>	Muhammadiyah Special Branch of Jordan	Food	150

In this era, despite the strong institutionalization of roles previously held by individuals, some key figures remain instrumental in advancing the Palestinian struggle. Among them are Sudibyo Markus and Sudarnoto Abdul Hakim, both prominent Muhammadiyah elites.

Markus is a pioneer of international humanitarian movements within Muhammadiyah. In 1998, he joined the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) in Geneva, and several other international organizations. In 2006, he co-founded the Humanitarian Forum International in London, and two years later, he established the Humanitarian Forum Indonesia. While serving as a

member of the Muhammadiyah Central Board from 2005 to 2010, he consistently sought avenues for Muhammadiyah's aid to reach Gaza, even amidst conflict.⁸⁵

One of Markus's most significant achievements was successfully facilitating the entry of a Muhammadiyah volunteer team through the Erez crossing in northern Gaza. The team traveled from Jordan to Israel, and then was escorted by Israeli authorities from Israel into northern Gaza. This success was attributed to his recognized international reputation and integrity among political actors in the Middle East.⁸⁶

Sudarnoto, as the vice-chairman of the Council for International Relations and Cooperation of the Muhammadiyah Central Board, is one of Muhammadiyah's most active elites in the campaign for Palestinian independence. Within the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), he also chairs the foreign relations and international cooperation division. His advocacy for the Palestinian issue extends beyond Muhammadiyah and MUI, as he is also known to have close ties with Persis activists, allowing him to leverage multiple organizational channels.⁸⁷

The Dilemma of Domestic Politics

However, while all Muhammadiyah members in Indonesia may agree on the consistent support for Palestine, this consensus does not extend to domestic politics. In the national political context, some Muhammadiyah members have expressed disappointment with the organisation's political stance, which is seen as failing to represent the people properly. This internal discontent shows that Muhammadiyah's political orientation is not monolithic. In addition to some bureaus within Muhammadiyah criticizing its political decisions, particularly regarding the issue of mining concessions, civil society groups outside the organisation have also criticized Muhammadiyah. These critiques begin from the perception that Muhammadiyah has submitted to state political power and is being instrumentalised to legitimise various state policies that are detrimental to the public.

⁸⁵ Fauzan Anwar Sandiah, "Sudibyo Markus, Sang Mediator Konflik Internasional," *Inspiring, IBTimes.ID*, December 10, 2020, <https://ibtimes.id/sudibyo-markus-sang-mediator-konflik-internasional/>.

⁸⁶ Sudibyo Markus, "Makan Bubur Panas dan Mission Impossible ke Jalur Gaza," *Republika Online*, July 26, 2019, <https://republika.co.id/share/pv8gyo385>.

⁸⁷ Hani Fatunnisa, "Mengenal Sudarnoto Abdul Hakim Lewat Jejak Aktivisme Politik Islam dan Kemanusiaan," *Rmol.id*, accessed July 25, 2025, <https://rmol.id/nusantara/read/2023/11/29/599249/mengenal-sudarnoto-abdul-hakim-lewat-jejak-aktivisme-politik-islam-dan-kemanusiaan>.

In 2024, the Indonesian administration made a controversial step by giving mining concessions to religious-based mass organisations. This was formalised by Government Regulation No. 25/2024, which amended a previous regulation (No. 96/2021) on mineral and coal mining. One key change was the inclusion of Article 83A, which allows mass organisations to manage Special Mining Business Permit Areas (WIUPK). Nahdlatul Ulama was the first to accept the offer. Muhammadiyah, after some deliberation, followed not long after. The area designated for Muhammadiyah is reportedly a former mining site previously operated by Adaro Group in South Kalimantan. In response to criticism, Muhammadiyah's central leadership outlined seven key reasons for accepting the permit, marking the organisation's first venture into a high-risk industry like mining.

First, Muhammadiyah framed its decision within Islamic principles, emphasising that natural resources are divine from God. As khalifah, humans should responsibly manage nature for material and spiritual well-being. They cited their organisational statutes, which encourage efforts toward public welfare, including through economic and environmental development.

Second, Muhammadiyah invoked Article 33 of Indonesia's 1945 Constitution, which points out that control of natural resources in the hands of the state should be used for the greatest good of the people. The government's offer was seen as a recognition of Muhammadiyah's long-standing contributions to national development and an opportunity to strengthen economic independence.

Third, the 47th Muktamar in 2015 mandated the organisation to enlarge its dakwah efforts into the economic sector alongside education, healthcare, and social services. In 2017, Muhammadiyah produced guidelines to expand its business enterprises, including those operating in industries like tourism and services.

Fourth, Muhammadiyah committed to involving high-standard professionals from within its elites and the local communities in managing the mining operations. Muhammadiyah would also collaborate with their campuses to ensure the project supports academic development, particularly in mining-related fields.

Fifth, the organisation emphasized that it would only partner with firms that demonstrate high standards of integrity and also a strong commitment to empowering the community and Muhammadiyah's mission. Mutually beneficial agreements would govern these partnerships.

Sixth, Muhammadiyah stressed that its engagement in the mining sector is not open-ended. The project will be periodically evaluated in terms of its impact. If environmental or social harm outweighs the benefits, the organisation is prepared to return the concession to the government.

Seventh, Muhammadiyah intends to be a pioneer in a mining model centered on public welfare rather than merely economic advantages. Revenue will be reinvested into educational programs, research, religious outreach, and social services, as Muhammadiyah has been doing. The broader goal is to turn the mining operation into a platform that empowers communities and promotes environmental responsibility.

To oversee this initiative, Muhammadiyah appointed one of its senior leaders, Muhadjir Effendi, to lead the mining task force. He noted that professional contractors would be involved due to the organisation's limited experience in extractive industries. Muhammadiyah has focused on education, health, and social development for over a century—areas far removed from the high-risk mining world. The task force includes prominent Muhammadiyah figures such as Haji Anwar Abbas, Hilman Latif, Agung Danarto, Ahmad Dalan Rais, Bambang Setiaji, Arief Budimanta, Nurul Yamin, and M. Azrul Tanjung, with Muhammad Sayuti serving as secretary.⁸⁸

In a mini-survey conducted by *Kader Hijau Muhammadiyah* (Green Cadres of Muhammadiyah), 93% of Muhammadiyah members disagreed with the organisation's decision to manage coal mining operations. Most respondents argued that Muhammadiyah is already financially strong and that its philanthropic and educational institutions have significantly impacted public welfare. They believed that Muhammadiyah's Islamic progressive values would continue to thrive without relying on extractive industries.

⁸⁸ CNBC Indonesia, "9 Alasan Muhammadiyah Ambil 'Jatah' Tambang dari Jokowi," CNBC Indonesia, July 29, 2024, <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20240729080049-4-558303/9-alasan-muhammadiyah-ambil-jatah-tambang-dari-jokowi>.

On the other hand, 7% of respondents supported Muhammadiyah's acceptance of the offer. Their rationale was pragmatic: if Muhammadiyah does not accept the concession, the mines could fall into the hands of those who would exploit them irresponsibly. When asked about Muhammadiyah's capacity to manage a mining operation, 65% of respondents showed doubt, mainly due to the organisation's lack of experience in the extractive industry. However, 35% of respondents held a more optimistic opinion. They argue that Muhammadiyah has access to qualified human resources, particularly from its universities that have mining-related programs. A small number even hoped Muhammadiyah could pioneer environmentally sustainable mining.

However, environmental concerns remained prominent. More than half of the respondents feared that Muhammadiyah, as an Islamic organisation, might ironically become complicit in environmental destruction, which goes against Islamic principles. They argued that all mining processes are inherently damaging, from exploration and exploitation to the abandoned pits left behind after operations cease.

Another 28% expressed concern about the corruption often associated with the mining industry. They believed the sector is riddled with mafias and systemic corruption that harm the state and society. Additionally, 9% raised the issue of land dispossession, noting that mining operations in Indonesia have frequently displaced local communities and violated their rights to land and livelihood.

Perhaps the most striking finding was that 45% of respondents would consider leaving Muhammadiyah if the organisation officially accepted the government's mining permit. This sentiment was also expressed through a symbolic protest during the Tanwir Assembly (Sidang Tanwir), where Muhammadiyah elites on a national and provincial level meet to consider whether to accept or reject the mining offer. Outside the venue, demonstrators burned their Muhammadiyah membership cards as an act of public dissent.⁸⁹

Meanwhile, within the Muhammadiyah Central Board itself, three internal councils issued official statements warning of the dangers of mining: the Council for Law and Human Rights (Majelis Hukum dan HAM), the Institute for Wisdom and Public Policy (Lembaga Hikmah dan Kebijakan Publik), and the Council for Tarjih and Tajdid (Majelis

⁸⁹ Putra and Rahma, "Kecewa Muhammadiyah Terima Tambang, Banyak Warga Muhammadiyah Pilih Logout."

Tarjih dan Tajdid). For instance, the Council for Tarjih dan Tajdid, responsible for producing Muhammadiyah's religious ideas, issued a Fatwa on Mining Management and the Urgency of a Just Energy Transition on July 9, 2024.

In the *fatwa*, the council argued that coal mining industries that are excessive, exploitative, and ignore environmental and community rights are forbidden and contrary to Islamic principles. Those responsible are obligated to carry out environmental reclamation and restoration. Failure to do so, the fatwa asserts, categorises them as *mufsidūna fī al-ard*, corruptors of the earth. The fatwa also urged the government to demonstrate genuine political will by developing strategies for a just energy transition that ensures fairness regarding economic, social, gender, and environmental dimensions. In addition, the fatwa encouraged the society to adopt eco-conscious and energy-efficient lifestyles as part of a broader effort toward renewable energy use. The Council for Law and Human Rights and the Institute for Wisdom and Public Policy raised similar concerns, although framed from legal and political perspectives. Nonetheless, the core message of all three bodies remained the same.

Therefore, resistance also emerged within Muhammadiyah, such as from *Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah DI Yogyakarta* (Yogyakarta Muhammadiyah Student Association), the Central Board of Aisyiyah, and *Pemuda Muhammadiyah Trenggalek* (Muhammadiyah Youth of Trenggalek). This resistance not only emerged from environmental destruction caused by mining but also from concerns about Muhammadiyah being co-opted by the state, preventing it from remaining independent and critical of the government. For example, Hasnan Bachtiar, a member of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Cadre Education Council, wrote that the government's granting of mining permits to religious organisations could be politically interpreted as an operation of subjugation. With the various facilities provided and the ease of access to economic resources, there are various possibilities where civil society could be prevented from being critical of the government. In a dynamic political climate determined mainly by a complex combination of politics and business, the granting of mining permits likely constitutes a process of co-opting civil society, which could disrupt the function of checks and balances. Ultimately, this hinders substantial democratization.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Hasnan Bachtiar, "Muhammadiyah, Tambang, dan Demokratisasi," Kompas.id, August 10, 2024, <https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2024/08/08/muhammadiyah-tambang-demokratisasi>.

Several observers, such as Asrinaldi, a political analyst from Andalas University, have also questioned Muhammadiyah's critical stance after receiving a mining concession. According to him, Muhammadiyah must prove that this "gift" does not erode its critical attitude toward the government.

Pinter Politik, an independent media in Indonesia, also highlighted this polemic. The media argued that granting mining concessions to religious organisations can serve as a political tool. The organisations are vulnerable to becoming political buffers or instruments to legitimise various state policies. There is also a risk that religious organisations will become political hostages used to generate electoral support for certain groups. The media further emphasized how these mining concessions could serve as a means of political transaction, where political support is exchanged for free access to natural resources.⁹¹

CONCLUSION

This research has traced the historical journey of Muhammadiyah's support for the Palestinian struggle, from the diplomacy of early figures such as Abdul Kahar Muzakkir and Lukman Harun, to the strengthening of institutional support through Lazismu, MDMC, and Muhammadiyah Aid in the post-2000s era. The findings demonstrate that Muhammadiyah's transnational solidarity is not incidental or reactive, but rather a growing and ongoing commitment, one that serves both religious and political functions. Through various forms of humanitarian assistance, scholarship programs, and diplomatic advocacy, Palestine has become not merely a geopolitical issue, but a moral domain in which Muhammadiyah constructs and affirms its ethical identity.

However, this symbolic clarity contrasts with Muhammadiyah's ambiguous position in domestic politics, particularly regarding the government's granting of a coal mining permit in 2024. Although Muhammadiyah framed the mining permit's acceptance as an effort to achieve social justice and economic independence, waves of internal resistance and external criticism revealed the tension between normative commitment and the organisation's pragmatic calculations. The Muhammadiyah leadership's silence or compromise regarding ecological damage and the potential for co-optation of power

⁹¹ Politik, "Rahasia Besar Jatah Tambang NU-Muhammadiyah?"

indicates the limited space for civil society autonomy in a state-dominated political landscape.

Using Robert D. Sack's theory of territoriality, this study argues that Muhammadiyah strategically distinguishes between domestic political space and transnational moral space. In this case, Palestine serves as a politically secure yet ethically strong symbolic territory, allowing Muhammadiyah to maintain its moral credibility with the public without having to directly confront state power. Conversely, domestic issues—especially those intersecting with power and economic interests—are addressed with caution. This pattern of moral selectivity reflects a broader dynamic in the practice of Islamic humanitarianism, where transnational solidarity often supersedes political critique at the national level.

Thus, this study contributes to a more critical understanding of Islamic civil society in Indonesia. It challenges the assumption that faith-based humanitarian movements are always progressive and oppositional. Instead, this study shows how actors like Muhammadiyah navigate the complexities of legitimacy, power relations, and symbolic capital—by building moral authority at the global level, while negotiating strategic compromises at the national level.

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