

A YEAR OF ISRAEL'S ZIONIST ATTACK ON PALESTINE (OCTOBER 7, 2023-OCTOBER 7, 2024): THE ROLE OF GLOBAL PEACE MISSION (GPM) MALAYSIA AS A HUMANITARIAN NGO

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Abstract

The ongoing conflict in Palestine continues unabated. In fact, the holy land faced escalating pressure as the Israeli Zionist army launched a devastating attack on October 7, 2023, which persists to this day. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, the death toll for this war has reached a staggering at least 41,000 individuals, with 69 percent of them being women and children. Witnessing the deteriorating situation, Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia, a humanitarian organization was mobilized to provide urgent assistance to the affected Palestinians. However, amidst their efforts, they encountered various challenges. Consequently, a qualitative study incorporating content analysis and historical methods was conducted to examine the role of GPM as a humanitarian organization and the challenges encountered during the relief mission. The findings revealed that GPM is a dedicated non-governmental organization that actively supports the Palestinian populace by addressing their immediate requirements, encompassing clothing, sustenance, medication, baby needs, and hygiene kits.

Keywords: *Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia, Palestine, challenges, roles*

Introduction

October 7, 2024, marks one year since the Israeli Zionist assault carried out under the operation named Iron Sword which saw a massive massacre of Palestinians. This attack was claimed by Israeli as a form of response to the Operation al-Aqsa Storms launched by the *Harakatul Muqawamah al-Islamiyah Party* (HAMAS) on October 7, 2023.

However, viewing this scenario from the historical perspective, it can be analysed that the HAMAS attack is a form of self-defense and uprising against the Zionist brutality that has been happening for the past 76 years. In fact, this attack clearly proves the greed of those who wants to establish and realize the theology of Zion Movement "Judenstaat"¹.

This is supported by the data obtained from the Palestinian Ministry of Health, Palestine Red Crescent Society and Israel Army that the number of Palestinian deaths is at least 41,000 lives compared to the number of deaths in Israel only amounting to

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at least 1,139 lives.² Hundreds of buildings were also destroyed including hospitals and clinics. This destruction can be seen through the timeline of the Operation Iron Swords from October 7, 2023 until October 7, 2024.

This study will divide the Iron Swords Series into two periods: Firstly, The Pre-Operation Iron Swords, and Secondly, During The Operation Iron Swords.

The Pre-Operation Iron Swords

In early September 2023, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) carried out an attack on Palestinian demonstrators who were celebrating a historic day in conjunction with the IDF withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in September 2005. The attack took place on September 13 by targeting a group of demonstrators which resulted in 5 people died and 10 people were injured. In addition, the IDF launched a missile attack on a Palestinian military post, and the attack also resulted in injuries to many civilians, including children.³

The cruel attack continued with the actions of IDF demolished several Palestinian houses in the West Bank, claiming that they did not have a valid building permit from the Israeli authorities. As a result, the residents of the house had to agree to demolish it for fear of being compound, and indirectly caused them to lose their homes.

In addition, the source of livelihood for Palestinian people was also severely affected when the buildings that were built had to be demolished for the same reason that there was no valid permit (illegal). In fact, on September 15, 2023, during the celebration of the Jewish New Year known as "Rosh Hashanah" many routes were closed, and the IDF prevented any movement in and out of Palestinian workers around Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. The closure of this road simultaneously affects thousands of Palestinian workers from working and affected their source of income.

Tensions escalated on September 24, 2023, when the IDF launched an attack on the Palestinian refugee camp, Nur Shams located in the West Bank. This attack destroyed homes and at least 2 people were killed. The report of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) states that all these attacks led to an increase in the death toll of Palestinians for the year 2023 with a total of 212 lives compared to 2022 with the death of only 181 lives.

Accordingly, the increase of number has led to the rise of the Palestinian people and HAMAS. Therefore, HAMAS launched the Operation al-Aqsa Storm. Immediately, the IDF responded by launching Operation Iron Sword, and a series of uncontrolled IDF attacks began.

¹ AJLABS, "Israel-Gaza war in maps and charts: Live tracker," website *Al-Jazeera*, accessed on September 19, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

² Feller, Yaniv. "An Island Named Zion: The Political Theology of Theodor Herzl." *Political Theology* (2024), 3.

³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Protection of Civilians Report | 5-18 September 2023," website *OCHA*, accessed on September 19, 2024, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/5-18-september-2023>

The Operation Iron Swords

Operation Iron Sword began immediately after the counterattack by HAMAS fighters on October 7, 2023. The attack targeted two things, which were on infrastructure in Gaza and HAMAS. Describing HAMAS as an “animal”, the Israeli were determined to kill all members of HAMAS in this operation without exception. Not only that, the prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, has also said that the attack on Gaza will be on a larger scale and the impression that their attack will change the world of the Middle East. As a result, throughout this operation, the destruction in the land of Gaza was devastating and even more tragic than Nakbah 1.0 event in 1948.

The narrative of the attack begins with the IDF giving evacuation orders to the Palestinian people for fear that the attack will worsen and may threaten the Palestinians lives. Nevertheless, the world sees that the IDF action is just a form of agenda that they plan to threaten the Palestinian people so that they can easily seize the Gaza region. However, the IDF erred in their own strategy when they failed to evict the Palestinians, then the IDF resorted to violence, and this led to destruction on all fronts.

This can be seen through Operation Iron Swords, from October 2023, which witnessed various destruction caused by air and ground attacks that began in the Northern part of Gaza. The IDF attack resulted in at least 7,028 deaths, and 2,913 of them were children, and 133 of them were infants and 482 were children aged 1-3 years.⁴

The situation worsens when all the victims was not provided with shelter and did not receive immediate treatment, especially the Palestinians who live in refugee camps, one of the largest camps in Gaza, the Jabalia Camp, which houses a total of 116,000 Palestinians who are registered under the United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees (UNCHR).⁵ It is difficult for them to get further treatment when almost the entire hospital along Gaza has been destroyed. The one that was able to survive at that time was Shifa Hospital, its distance from Jabalia Camp is around 7.4 km.

However, due to the high traffic of receiving patients, many attack victims are unable to receive treatment. This is because the reception of the number of patients at that time was around 5,000 people, and this figure was multiplied by the normal number of around 700 patients only.⁶ The situation became more worrying when the Shifa Hospital began to be surrounded by IDF, and they forced all hospital staff and patients be immediately evacuated from the hospital. This situation lasted until the

⁴ Mohammed Haddad, Mohammed Hussein and Konstantinos Antonopoulos, “Know their names: The thousands of Palestinians killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza,” website *Al-Jazeera*, accessed on September 19, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/11/1/know-their-names-palestinians-killed-in-israeli-attacks-on-gaza>

⁵ Mohammed al-Masri, “Israel targets Gaza’s Jabalia refugee camp for second time in two days,” website *Al-Jazeera*, accessed on September 19, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2023/11/1/photos-dozens-killed-in-another-strike-on-jabalia-refugee-camp-in-gaza>

⁶ United Nation, “Israel-Palestine: Gaza death toll passes 5,000 with no ceasefire in sight,” website *UN News*, accessed on September 19, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142687>

end of March 2024 when the hospital was bombed by IDF, and this situation resulted in many casualties including nurses.⁷

This war continues until it descends to the southern part starting with the province of Deir Balah, then Khan Younis to Rafah. As of March 2024, the destruction along the territory and Gaza as a whole is estimated at 54.6 percent⁸, and by one year of the IDF operation, the destruction increased to 92 percent. The total for this damage is contributed by damage to medical facilities by 84 percent. Other than that, at least 42 people died, and as many as 90 percent of the 2.3 million people were forced to move. Hundreds of thousands were forced to live in tents with no electricity, no food and drink supplies.⁹

The above scenario carries out various responses from the global community. Some countries supported the Zionist actions, and some countries condemn them. However, the sad part is that most Arab countries are more passive on this issue, and the Arab League, which should play an important role in helping Palestine as a member league, yet they fail to ease the situation and express a firm stance on the brutality of Zionist Israel. As a result, the live of 2.3 million Palestinians continues to be marginalized.

This is different from the stance taken by some of the member Asian countries (ASEAN), one of them is Malaysia which strongly condemns the brutality of the Zionist Israel. This narrative can be seen through the response of all levels of society, whether from the government or the people from various religious backgrounds, creeds, and races. Among the groups that are proactive and committed in this issue are non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and one of them is the Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia.

Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia in Helping Issue Palestine

The initial movement to establish Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia took place on 26 September 2001 before it was registered under the Legal Affairs Division (BHEUU) of the Prime Minister's Office on 29 September 2009. This establishment was an immediate response to the humanitarian conflict that occurred in Afghanistan in 2001. After that, GPM began to be active and committed to humanitarian work involving domestic and foreign countries regardless of race and religion. To date, GPM has successfully helped more than 20 countries, including Palestine.

GPM's initial efforts in the Palestinian issue began in 2006 following the Israeli Zionist attack on Gaza that year which resulted in the loss of thousands of lives. This follows the Palestinian political tension at the time which saw their main enemy, the HAMAS Party, win the general election held that year by defeating its closest

⁷Anadolu Agency, "Israel's destruction of Gaza's al-Shifa Hospital," website *Al-Jazeera*, accessed on September 19, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2024/4/1/the-destruction-of-gazas-al-shifa-hospital>

⁸Holail, Shima, Tamer Saleh, Xiongwu Xiao, Jing Xiao, Gui-Song Xia, Zhenfeng Shao, Mi Wang, Jianya Gong, and Deren Li. "Time-series satellite remote sensing reveals gradually increasing war damage in the Gaza Strip." *National Science Review* 11. 9 (2024), 11.

⁹"A year of Israel's devastating war on Gaza," *Al-Jazeera*, accessed on September 19, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2024/10/7/a-year-of-israels-devastating-war-on-gaza>

challenger, the *Harakah Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini Party* (FATAH). Following the escalating situation in Gaza, GPM immediately send a total of 4 volunteers there.¹⁰

Since then, GPM has been one of the most committed NGOs in fighting the Palestinian issue. For more than two decades since its establishment, GPM now acts as a stakeholder in the issue of this community. Various initiatives are mobilized at every level, whether at the central government or at the social level together with NGO partners. One of the efforts that was set in motion was the establishment of the MyAqsa Defenders movement in 2021 which brought together more than 18 local NGOs to fight for the live of the Palestinian people. This follows Israel's brutal attack on Palestine while Muslims were celebrating the month of Ramadan that year.

Many more efforts and campaigns were mobilized, and despite these efforts, GPM faced several challenges that had to be overcome in order to help the victims of the conflict who are in such need at the moment.

GPM Role and Type of Assistance

The tragic attack that sparks on 7th of October 2023 has led to many bloodsheds and tears of losing the loved ones. In the one-year conflict, the Palestinians have suffered the cruellest attacks and displacement. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, the ongoing conflict have resulted to the death of more than 41,000 Palestinians including women and children.¹¹ The needs to provide humanitarian assistance have increased day by day to support the Palestinians. In response to this needs, Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia, a local humanitarian non-governmental organization (NGO) in Malaysia has sought to send their appeal for humanitarian aids.

Founded in 2001, GPM has been involved in providing and assisting humanitarian efforts to the people affected by war and disaster.¹² Through 23 years of its establishment, GPM has extended its support to 26 countries including Palestine. In 2021, the Palestinian uprising known as Unity Intifada has resulted to a major outbreak of violence.¹³ With the growing number of injuries and people in need, GPM has established one of its core projects, Malaysia for Palestine (MFP). MFP aims to provide urgent assistance to the Palestinians including food, hygiene kits and monetary assistance.¹⁴ In extending its urgency for assistance in Palestine, MFP office was built in Gaza with a manager to support its operation. Since then, MFP, a project by GPM has grown in offering mobile-aid truck, chicken farm and education for the Palestinian children.

¹⁰ "Israel patut diheret ke ICC," *Berita Harian*, August 3, 2006.

¹¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian Situation Update #227 Gaza Strip," website *OCHA*, accessed on September 22, 2024, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/humanitarian-situation-update-227-gaza-strip>

¹² "Who We Are," *Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia*, accessed on September 22, 2024, <https://gpm.com.my/>

¹³ Tatour, Lana. "The "Unity Intifada" and 48 Palestinians: Between the liberal and the decolonial." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 50.4 (2021), 88.

¹⁴ Nik Muhammad Nik Ismail (Head of Department, Humanitarian Affairs, Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia), in an interview with the author, September 22, 2024.

As the conflict of 7th October 2023 arose, GPM together with MFP has launched the *Taufan al-Aqsa* campaign to assist the Palestinians affected by the conflict. This campaign aims to provide aid such as medical assistance, food and shelter to be channel immediately to the victims in Gaza.¹⁵ However, the operation of sending aids were facing several challenges due to Israel controlling over the borders. As the war in Gaza escalated, Malaysia under the leadership of Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim has demonstrated a strong commitment for the Palestinians.¹⁶ In supporting this effort, GPM has joined hands with several organisations in Malaysia and initiated a special force in sending aids to Palestine knowingly the Ops Ihsan.

In collaboration with Ops Ihsan and the Egyptian Red Crescent Society (RCS), GPM has sent 100,000 food baskets to Gaza to help the Palestinians amidst the intense war. The aids sent was delivered in phases where the first phase includes 20,000 food baskets consisting of food necessities including flour, olive oil, sugar, lentils, tea and tomato paste.¹⁷ As the borders were controlled by Israel, all the items were handed over to RCS as the sole implementing agency to channel aids through the Rafah border.¹⁸ Other than in kind items, GPM also stood out advocating for the Palestinians in Gaza. In being a platform for advocating, GPM has arranged several events including flashmob and seminar to explain about the situation in Palestine. GPM has also joined hands in holding a solidarity gathering for the Palestinians where the Prime Minister has delivered a special speech and more than 20,000 people flocked the Axiata Arena.¹⁹

Common Challenges

While the demand of providing needs to Gaza increased by day, however throughout this one year of war, delivering the aids are very challenging. With the intense humanitarian disaster, it is estimated that almost half million of the people are at risk of starvation and the entire population are exposed to disease. 50,000 children between the age of 6-59 months are requiring immediate treatment for malnutrition²⁰. Therefore, in this study, it has been identified that there are several common challenges in delivering aids to Gaza.

¹⁵ "GPM Malaysia Launches Fund for Palestine," *Bernama*, accessed on September 22, [https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2233998#:~:text=KUALA%20LUMPUR%2C%20Oct%2011%20\(Bernama,violence%20in%20the%20Gaza%20Strip](https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2233998#:~:text=KUALA%20LUMPUR%2C%20Oct%2011%20(Bernama,violence%20in%20the%20Gaza%20Strip).

¹⁶ "Global Peace Malaysia give full support to Anwar's Palestinian efforts," *FocusM*, accessed on September 22, 2024, <https://focusmalaysia.my/global-peace-malaysia-give-full-support-to-anwars-palestinian-efforts/>

¹⁷ Hidayah Tanzizi, "Ops Ihsan: 100,000 bakul makanan dihantar ke Gaza," website *MyMetro*, accessed on September 22, 2024, <https://www.hmetro.com.my/mutakhir/2024/01/1052104/ops-ihsan-100000-bakul-makanan-dihantar-ke-gaza>

¹⁸ "GPM Malaysia Launches Fund for Palestine," *Bernama*, [https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2233998#:~:text=KUALA%20LUMPUR%2C%20Oct%2011%20\(Bernama,violence%20in%20the%20Gaza%20Strip](https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2233998#:~:text=KUALA%20LUMPUR%2C%20Oct%2011%20(Bernama,violence%20in%20the%20Gaza%20Strip).

¹⁹ "Malaysians flock to Axiata Arena to show solidarity with Palestine," *Malaymail*, accessed on September 22, <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/10/24/malaysians-flock-to-axiata-arena-to-show-solidarity-with-palestine/98173>

²⁰ "Israel's siege now blocks 83% of food aid reaching Gaza, new data reveals," website *Norwegian Refugee Council*, accessed on September 22, 2024, <http://surl.li/efpjvp>

Entry Blockage

As Gaza was controlled by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), the borders were also under the possession of Israeli. Based on UN report, around 500 trucks would enter Gaza with needed supplies and around 100 of these trucks are delivering aids.²¹ However, the number of trucks entering are insufficient to provide the needed supply in Gaza. The trucks entering Gaza will also went through several layers of inspection which remains slow and unpredictable.²²

This situation has resulted in critical needs of daily supplies including medicals and essential materials. Therefore, based on Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia data, the situation of transporting the aids to Gaza has become one of the major challenges. According to GPM General Manager in Gaza, the blockade of borders from the Israeli have made the Palestinians endured a limited access to clean water and food, medical supplies and pervasive fear.²³ According to a report by UNICEF, once the aids enter Gaza, the distribution process are also very challenging. The heavy bombardments and unstable infrastructure have made the process of storing and distributing aids very difficult.²⁴

Communications Challenges

As the situation in Gaza worsen, the cutting off electricity and telecommunications has made it challenging for Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia to communicate with the Palestinians. According to GPM General Manager in Gaza, the supply of necessities including water and electricity have been severely disrupted making it harder for them to communicate with the outside world.²⁵ In addition, GPM headquarters are also facing challenges with this situation as the supply from Malaysia are upon the data received from Gaza.

With limited communications with GPM General Manager in Gaza, it has been challenging to provide with inclusive information to the Malaysia citizen. Without reliable communication, GPM find it challenging to report the situation accurately, track where aid is most urgently needed and ensure that resources are distributed efficiently. International agencies, on the other hand, face difficulties in monitoring the impact of their efforts, adjusting to new challenges, and providing timely support. This breakdown in communication exacerbates delays and

²¹ "How is aid being delivered to Gaza?," *PLAN*, accessed on September 22, <https://plan-international.org/case-studies/how-aid-being-delivered-gaza/>

²² "3 major obstacles to delivering aid in Gaza Children in the Gaza Strip are in desperate need of support. But serious access challenges remain," *UNICEF*, accessed on September 22, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/stories/3-major-obstacles-delivering-aid-gaza>

²³ Nik Muhammad Nik Ismail (Head of Department, Humanitarian Affairs, Global Peace Mission (GPM)Malaysia), in an interview with the author, September 22, 2024.

²⁴ "3 major obstacles to delivering aid in Gaza Children in the Gaza Strip are in desperate need of support. But serious access challenges remain," *UNICEF*, <https://www.unicef.org/stories/3-major-obstacles-delivering-aid-gaza>

²⁵ Bernama, "Malaysian peace coordinator in Gaza says hundreds of thousands displaced by Israeli air strikes, pleads for aid," website *Malaymail*, accessed on September 22, 2024, https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/10/12/malaysian-peace-coordinator-in-gaza-says-hundreds-of-thousands-displaced-by-israeli-air-strikes-pleads-for-aid/95777#google_vignette

inefficiencies in delivering essential supplies and medical aid to those affected, ultimately reducing the overall effectiveness of the humanitarian response in Gaza.

Conclusion

In the face of these challenges, Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia has maintained its commitment to its mission. One of the organization's key strengths is its ability to engage the international community, creating awareness campaigns that resonate globally. GPM works to educate people about the realities on the ground in Palestine, often highlighting the humanitarian crisis through social media, partnerships with other NGOs, and advocacy efforts at international forums. By doing so, they foster global solidarity and encourage action, bringing attention to the human suffering and injustices faced by Palestinians.

Moreover, GPM's role goes beyond immediate humanitarian relief. They are also deeply involved in advocating for long-term, sustainable solutions to the Palestinian crisis. This involves pushing for international dialogue, supporting peace initiatives, and urging global leaders to address the root causes of the conflict. GPM emphasizes that while humanitarian aid is critical, it must be accompanied by efforts to seek a lasting peace based on justice and human rights.

In conclusion, GPM plays a multifaceted role in supporting Palestine. They are not only providers of crucial humanitarian aid but also advocates for political change and justice. The challenges they face political complexities, funding difficulties, and logistical barriers are significant, but through perseverance and global cooperation, GPM continues to make meaningful contributions. Their efforts have a lasting impact, not just in alleviating suffering, but in striving towards a future where Palestinians can live in dignity and peace.

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