

Indonesia's Humanitarian Diplomacy in Jordan: The Role of the Indonesian Embassy in Amman in Facilitating Aid for Palestinian Refugees

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Abstract

This study examines the role of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI) in Amman, Jordan, as an implementing actor of Indonesia's humanitarian diplomacy following the escalation of the Gaza conflict in October 2023. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research analyzes how the Indonesian Embassy in Amman transformed from a bureaucratic facilitator into a humanitarian broker within a multinational aid ecosystem. Utilizing the framework of Constructivism by Alexander Wendt, this study argues that the successful distribution of 32 container trucks of aid, achieved through the coordination among the Nusantara Palestina Center (NPC), BAZNAS, the National Agency for Disaster Countermeasure (BNPB), and the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO), is a concrete implementation of the national identity and normative solidarity that constructs Indonesia's foreign policy interests and behavior. Distinct from the Realist approach, which assumes states act purely out of material calculations, this study finds that national identity directly dictates the operational decisions of diplomats on the ground. The post-October 7 conditions fundamentally altered the operational architecture of humanitarian aid, and the Embassy tactically adapted through the physical presence of its Political Attaché as a field monitor at critical border crossing points to fulfill this state identity mandate amidst high risks.

Keywords: humanitarian diplomacy, Indonesian Embassy in Amman, Palestine, constructivism, Indonesian foreign policy.

Introduction

The humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, which escalated drastically post-October 7, 2023, has subjected the international community to a profound and unavoidable moral and institutional test. Massive military offensives have resulted in over 73,058 fatalities and the catastrophic destruction of civilian infrastructure (UNRWA, 2026). The total blockade and severe conflict escalation compel nations with global humanitarian commitments to go beyond normative statements of solidarity through rhetoric, demanding measurable, tactical, and impactful diplomatic actions on the ground. In an international political landscape often dominated by narrow material interest calculations, this phenomenon triggers a theoretical need to examine how a middle power operationalizes its humanitarian diplomacy capacities in regions experiencing extreme security volatility (Karim, 2018).

The humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, which escalated drastically post-October 7, 2023, has subjected the international community to a profound and unavoidable moral and institutional test. Massive military offensives have resulted in over 34,000 fatalities and the catastrophic destruction of civilian infrastructure (UNRWA, 2024). The total blockade and severe conflict escalation compel nations with global humanitarian commitments to go beyond normative statements of solidarity through rhetoric, demanding measurable, tactical, and impactful diplomatic actions on the ground. In an international political landscape often dominated by narrow material interest calculations, this phenomenon triggers a theoretical need to examine how a middle power operationalizes its humanitarian diplomacy capacities in regions experiencing extreme security volatility (Karim, 2018).

For Indonesia, the response to the Palestinian crisis is not merely a reactive or ad hoc foreign policy decision. It is the logical continuation of a historical and ideological commitment deeply rooted since the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung. During that momentum, President Soekarno asserted the solidarity of colonized nations as the primary pillar of a just world order. This historical trajectory established an enduring normative framework that guides Indonesian foreign policy. Since then, Indonesia's support for Palestinian independence has remained a steadfast constant in its independent and active (*bebas aktif*) foreign policy. This identity is not merely a domestic political preference but a fundamental pillar of Indonesia's standing in the international community.

The consistency of this support, despite the internal shifts in government administrations, reflects a deep-seated national identity. This identity is inherently tied to the struggle against colonialism and the commitment to universal human rights, principles that Indonesia championed during the Cold War era. However, the paramount challenge currently lies in bridging the vast geographical distance and penetrating strict logistical blockades. The logistical complexity of delivering aid to a besieged territory is unprecedented, requiring not only political will but also a sophisticated diplomatic-logistical infrastructure.

The context of Jordan as a transit and host country for Palestinian refugees renders it an irreplaceable strategic node in the international humanitarian aid architecture. With a registered Palestinian refugee population reaching 2.4 million (UNRWA, 2023), Jordan bears a highly disproportionate humanitarian and sociopolitical burden. The presence of the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO), a non-profit royal institution holding the sole authority for aid distribution coordination, makes Amman the strategic gateway for any aid attempting to penetrate the corridors toward Gaza and the West Bank. Consequently, the successful penetration of international aid, including from Indonesia, heavily relies on the extent to which diplomatic actors on the ground can navigate the regulations and security dynamics within the Amman-to-border corridor.

In this complex context, the Indonesian Embassy (KBRI) in Amman is not merely a conventional diplomatic or administrative outpost. It functions as the state's vanguard antenna, ensuring that Indonesia's political commitment and solidarity toward Palestine materialize into tangible, coordinated, verified, and effectively distributed aid. The Embassy

serves as the essential bridge between the high-level policy declarations in Jakarta and the harsh realities of the humanitarian corridor in the Middle East.

The research gap identified in this study lies in the scarcity of literature specifically analyzing the role of embassies as field-level operational actors in humanitarian diplomacy, particularly in high-dimensional conflict contexts. While macro-level studies provide insights into the general stance of Indonesia, they often overlook the micro-level operational maneuvers conducted by embassy staff. This paper seeks to bridge this gap through a case study analysis focusing on the Indonesian Embassy in Amman as the primary unit of analysis. By positioning the Embassy as the unit of analysis, this research argues that Indonesia's humanitarian diplomacy toward Palestine is a dynamic diplomatic practice representing the direct manifestation of national identity construction. Through its role, the Embassy demonstrates that an embassy is not merely an administrative institution but a field actor that translates state identity and values into concrete actions during a crisis.

Addressing this gap, this research posits two primary questions. First, how does Indonesia's national identity construct the role and operational decisions of the Embassy in Amman amidst the crisis? Second, how did the Embassy adapt and transform from a mere bureaucratic facilitator into a field humanitarian broker in channeling aid to Gaza post-October 7, 2023?

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach utilizing an intrinsic case study design. The selection of the Indonesian Embassy in Amman as the unit of analysis is based on a strategic rationale. Jordan stands as the most critical logistical corridor following the total closure of the Rafah crossing. This logistical bottleneck makes the Embassy in Amman the most decisive frontline diplomatic actor for the success of Indonesia's humanitarian diplomacy on the ground.

Primary data were obtained through two key in-depth interviews. The first interview was conducted in November 2024 with the Political Attaché of the Embassy in Amman. This interview was exhaustive, lasting several hours, and delved deep into the nuances of bureaucratic negotiations, the psychological and tactical shifts in field standard operating procedures (SOPs), and the actor's interpretation of their diplomatic duties during the heat of the crisis. To further strengthen the strategic context of this research, a second interview was conducted in late February 2026 with the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Indonesia to Jordan; Mr Ade Padmo Sarwono. This interview provided a top-level strategic perspective on how the Embassy manages its mandate in an environment of extreme volatility.

Secondary data were gathered from an extensive review of official Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents, reports from UNRWA, and media releases regarding the aid distribution coordination among the Nusantara Palestina Center (NPC), BAZNAS, and BNPB. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques grounded in Wendt's

Constructivism framework. We systematically coded the empirical data related to logistics and negotiations. We did not merely categorize these as administrative activities; rather, we interpreted them as the operational manifestation of the Indonesian state's identity. This thematic approach allowed us to see how the identity constructed in Jakarta was projected into the complex, often chaotic, international arena of the Middle East.

Overview of Policy and Strategic Context

Indonesia's foreign policy, based on the independent and active (*bebas aktif*) principle, has provided significant space for the government to take firm moral stances on global issues without being entrapped in specific power blocs. This principle, formulated in the early days of independence, continues to be the bedrock of the country's international engagements. In the context of the Palestinian crisis, this principle is translated into three interrelated operational objectives. First, foreign policy aims to alleviate the humanitarian burden on Palestinian civilians affected by the armed conflict. Second, it functions to maintain Indonesia's moral legitimacy in international forums as a consistent, democratic Muslim-majority nation. Third, this step is taken to strengthen Indonesia's diplomatic bargaining position in pushing for a ceasefire and a two-state solution.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kemlu RI), through its Ministerial Regulations and the 2020–2024 Strategic Plan, explicitly lists support for Palestinian independence as a foreign policy priority. This is not merely normative political rhetoric; it carries tangible budgetary implications, specific diplomatic assignments, and concrete institutional coordination mandates. Therefore, the entire Indonesian diplomatic apparatus is obligated to mobilize its functional resources to achieve these strategic targets.

Jordan's geographical proximity, directly bordering the West Bank and accessible via the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge crossing, makes it an irreplaceable transit route for humanitarian aid. When the Rafah crossing from Egypt experiences total closure or capacity restrictions due to military operations, the Jordanian crossing becomes the most reliable primary alternative route. This condition positions the JHCO—which coordinates directly with Israeli authorities to permit aid entry—as a gatekeeper that cannot be bypassed by anyone intending to channel aid to Palestine. The complexity of this relationship requires the Embassy in Amman to maintain a high level of diplomatic finesse, balancing its humanitarian goals with the rigid realities of the Jordanian-Israeli security arrangements.

Forms and Instruments of Diplomacy

The humanitarian diplomacy practiced by Indonesia in the Gaza crisis possesses distinct characteristics differentiating it from conventional diplomacy. This track does not aim to open direct political negotiation channels between states; rather, it utilizes diplomatic instruments—embassies, diplomatic privileges, political attachés, and bilateral networks—to facilitate the flow of humanitarian resources through bureaucratic and security barriers.

In this operation, Indonesia delivered a comprehensive package encompassing essential food supplies, medicines, emergency medical equipment, and sanitation needs. Airborne delivery via Indonesian Air Force aircraft symbolizes a direct state presence, while ground distribution via 32 Nusantara Palestina Center (NPC) container trucks demonstrates robust, long-range logistical capacity. The sheer logistical magnitude of sending 32 trucks across international borders amidst an active conflict zone is a testament to the organizational capability and the firm commitment of the Indonesian government.

One of the most crucial innovations in this aid operation is the utilization of the Track 1.5 diplomacy model, which leverages non-state actors within a government-managed coordination ecosystem. The BNPB acts as the national disaster management authority, standardizing and certifying the aid's viability. The Air Force provides strategic military air transport capabilities. Concurrently, Nusantara Palestina Center (NPC) and BAZNAS, representing civil society entities with extensive fundraising networks, fulfill the resource mobilization role – a feat impossible to achieve exclusively and instantaneously by the state. This model reflects the understanding that in contemporary humanitarian diplomacy, state sovereignty is not weakened by the involvement of non-state actors; instead, it is reinforced (amplified sovereignty). A state capable of synergistically and effectively orchestrating a multi-stakeholder network wields far greater diplomatic capacity than a state relying solely on its own bureaucratic apparatus. The third dimension of Indonesia's diplomacy in this context is public diplomacy, which consciously constructs a positive narrative regarding Indonesia's international identity. Every documented and published aid delivery contributes directly to the formation of this image, intended not only to secure recognition in multilateral forums but also to preserve political support stability at the domestic level.

The Role of the Indonesian Embassy as a Humanitarian Broker

Under normal conditions prior to the October 2023 escalation, the Embassy's functional role in humanitarian affairs tended to be facilitative and administrative. However, post-October 7, the intensity, complexity, and operational risks increased dramatically, compelling the Embassy to evolve into a humanitarian broker. As a humanitarian broker, the Embassy executes functions encompassing three primary dimensions. The connectivity function involves bridging Indonesian donor institutions (Nusantara Palestina Center, BAZNAS, and BNPB) with the JHCO, the primary distribution gateway on the Jordanian side. While non-governmental entities like the Nusantara Palestina Center (NPC) play a vital role in initiating and financing the aid, the Embassy serves as the essential bridge that validates these efforts in the eyes of the Jordanian government.

The personal negotiations initiated by the Nusantara Palestina Center are critical, yet it is the institutional weight of the Embassy that ensures these negotiations bear fruit. The Political Attaché's presence during these sessions provides a form of diplomatic guarantee that the aid is both official and legitimate, which in turn makes the JHCO officials more forthcoming and flexible. The negotiation function involves advocating Indonesia's interests in the cargo permit and certification application processes. Lastly, the verification function

ensures that all dispatched aid commodities genuinely reach the designated distribution points. The Political Attaché conducted tactical field coordination, ensuring that aid trucks were not stalled by multi-layered administrative procedures, and negotiated directly with border officials to overcome sudden logistical bottlenecks that would have paralyzed a less experienced mission.

Logistics as an Instrument of State Power

The operational anatomy of aid involved four integrated stages: public mobilization, state legitimization, projection of military power via Air Force aircraft, and ground distribution via 32 Nusantara Palestina Center (NPC) container trucks. This process faced dense bureaucratic and security hurdles. The operation faced immense logistical challenges, particularly regarding the unpredictable border management policies. Entry points such as the Alenby Bridge or Zikim crossing were subject to the arbitrary and sudden opening and closure policies enforced by the Zionist authorities. These erratic regulations often left Indonesian aid trucks stranded for days without clear information, significantly hindering the flow of essential goods (Oxfam, 2024; UN OCHA, 2024).

Furthermore, even when the trucks successfully entered the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank, the security situation remained dire. Convoys were frequently harassed or obstructed by groups of Zionist settlers, who often created spontaneous blockades targeting humanitarian aid vehicles, a reality that added a layer of physical danger to the logistics mission (B'Tselem, 2024). In this volatile environment, the Embassy developed standardized document templates synchronized with Jordanian law to accelerate clearance. The Political Attaché was compelled to be physically present in volatile border inspection areas to ensure the smooth execution of every stage of humanitarian logistical distribution, often working under the constant threat of these external actors.

Comparative Analysis and Theoretical Reflection

The operational shifts experienced by the Embassy post-October 7 were structural and fundamental. When analyzed through the lens of Alexander Wendt's Constructivism, it becomes clear that this behavior cannot be understood solely through rational-material calculations. The Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Jordan stated in a late February 2026 interview that the Indonesian Embassy in Amman will always strive to be a facilitator of humanitarian aid for Palestine because it is indeed their main duty as Indonesia's representative in Jordan, naturally requiring mature coordination to ensure optimal results. This statement confirms that the diplomats internalized Indonesia's identity as a defender of humanity.

The actions of the Embassy were not driven by material interests, but by the logic of appropriateness, acting because that is how a state like Indonesia ought to act. This identity awareness provides the rationality for diplomats to willingly confront border authorities and assume field risks. Unlike the Realist view, which would predict that a state avoids risks

where there is no clear material gain, Constructivism allows us to see how the "cost" of the risk is eclipsed by the "value" of maintaining the state's identity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Indonesia's humanitarian diplomacy post-October 7, 2023, has experienced a qualitative leap strongly driven by the construction of national identity. The depth of the Gaza crisis transformed the posture of the Embassy in Amman from an administrative facilitator into a frontline humanitarian broker. This success validates Wendt's Constructivism postulate: that the identity and solidarity values believed by a state can dictate the operational behavior of its diplomats.

To strengthen Indonesia's future humanitarian diplomacy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must urgently codify standardized protocols regarding the humanitarian brokering function so that embassies in transit countries can adapt institutionally without awaiting ad hoc instructions. Furthermore, there is a need to enhance functional training curricula for diplomats, specifically concerning field crisis management and macro-logistical negotiation, as field role demands now far exceed conventional diplomatic desk affairs. Finally, the multi-actor collaborative model synergizing military and government power with the flexibility of civil society fund mobilization must be permanently institutionalized as the blueprint for Indonesia's crisis diplomacy. Ultimately, the actions taken by the Indonesian Embassy in Amman affirm a new paradigm in International Relations studies, where diplomatic capability is tested on the dusty border roads of Jordan rather than just behind the desks of sterile assembly halls.

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