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# Adaptation of muslim students at UPI to the boycott of Israeli products with halal certification: A study of MUI Fatwa No. 83 of 2023

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### **ABSTRACT**

Background: The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement has become one of the most widely discussed global phenomena, including in Indonesia. This movement emerged as a form of criticism against Israel's attacks on Gaza, Palestine. In response to the growing momentum of this boycott, the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI) issued a fatwa related to the issue. This fatwa, Number 83 of 2023, provides guidance for Muslims regarding the consumption of products associated with Israel. Methods: This study adopts a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection. A case study design was employed to explore and understand the unique characteristics of the phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context. The focus of the research is on Muslim students at the Indonesia University of Education (UPI), examining their responses and behaviors toward the MUI fatwa. Findings: The results of the interviews indicate that participants responded positively to the MUI fatwa. They actively supported the fatwa by boycotting Israeli products and replacing them with alternatives they perceived as safe and halal. In addition, they made efforts to raise awareness within their communities, encouraging others to also avoid products linked to Israel and to support the boycott movement. Conclusion: The research demonstrates a strong alignment between the MUI fatwa and the ethical and religious values of the participating Muslim students. Their active engagement in the boycott and their advocacy for social awareness reflect a growing sense of religious responsibility and solidarity with the Palestinian cause. The study contributes to a better understanding of how religious fatwas influence consumer behavior in the context of global political issues. Novelty/Originality of this article: This study provides original insights into the intersection between religious authority (MUI fatwa) and youth activism in Indonesia, particularly within the university context. It highlights how religious guidance can mobilize social and political actions such as consumer boycotts. The article also adds to the limited academic literature on the local impact of global movements like BDS from a qualitative, youth-based perspective.

**KEYWORDS**: boycott; Israel; Palestine.

## 1. Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most complex and prolonged issues in modern history. The conflict began when Israel claimed Palestine as the Promised Land—a term interpreted as the land promised by God to the people of Israel (Cahya, 2022). This conflict has persisted for decades, as both nations continue to assert their respective rights and demands, preventing any resolution from being reached. What initially began as a territorial dispute has escalated into acts of genocide, resulting in mass killings and the

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destruction of infrastructure. These actions have left deep psychological trauma among the Palestinian population (Siregar et al., 2024). The conflict reached a critical point when Israel launched an invasion of the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023. The invasion, which lasted for over five months, resulted in at least 31,645 deaths and 73,676 injuries.

Israel's invasion of the Gaza Strip has drawn condemnation from various parties, particularly Muslim-majority countries. The acts of genocide committed in Palestine have triggered a global mass movement aimed at opposing Israel's aggression toward the Palestinian people. Genocide is defined as an act committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. This form of international crime is strictly prohibited and involves targeting specific groups based on race, religion, nationality, or ethnicity, with the intention of eradicating them (Parthiana, 2003). One form of public resistance to these atrocities is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement, which focuses on boycotting products affiliated with Israel (Wibowo et al., 2024). The BDS Movement encourages governments, civil society, and institutions to engage in boycotts, divest from companies linked to Israel, and impose sanctions. Many countries—especially Muslim-majority nations—have actively promoted the boycott campaign. In Indonesia, for instance, the boycott of Israeli-affiliated products is seen as an expression of solidarity and has evolved into a broad social phenomenon.

A boycott is defined as an effort by one or more parties to achieve a specific goal by urging consumers to refrain from purchasing certain products in the marketplace (Friedman, 1985). The boycott movement has become a widespread topic of discussion and has evolved into a significant social phenomenon. While the act of boycotting pro-Zionist Jewish products is not a comprehensive solution to the broader conflict, it is viewed by many as a small but meaningful way to support fellow Muslims in Palestine (Trisnawati, 2024). In Indonesia, many people actively express their support for the boycott through social media and in everyday life. However, there remains considerable public uncertainty about the religious legality of participating in such boycotts. This is largely due to the practical challenges of avoiding Israeli-affiliated products, which are commonly used in daily life. Moreover, concerns have been raised about the potential economic impact on workers employed by companies producing these products, including fears of layoffs due to corporate losses (Tari, 2021). As a result, many Indonesians have looked to the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) for authoritative guidance and clarity on this issue.

Given the humanitarian crisis caused by the ongoing war between Israel and Palestine, Indonesia—as the country with the largest Muslim population—has naturally expressed empathy toward Palestine as a fellow Muslim nation. According to MUI Digital, the Indonesian Ulema Council/Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) issued a new fatwa, Number 83 of 2023, on November 8, 2023, affirming support for Palestine and declaring that it is forbidden (haram) for Muslims to support Israel. As explained by Yasir et al. (2024), the fatwa was issued in response to the escalating violence in Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip. The fatwa states that supporting the Palestinian struggle for independence and opposing Israeli aggression is a religious obligation, while supporting Israeli aggression against Palestine is strictly prohibited (Husna et al., 2023). In this context, MUI also urged the public to avoid buying and selling products affiliated with Israel. The boycott of Israeliaffiliated products is therefore viewed as a tangible effort by Muslims, especially in Indonesia, to help the Palestinian cause. According to Prof. Sudartono (March 10, 2024), such a boycott could reduce Israel's sales revenue, and through this economic pressure, Muslims may weaken Israel's capacity to carry out continued attacks against Palestine. MUI similarly recommended that Indonesians cease purchasing Israeli-affiliated products, as their profits are evidently channeled to support the Israeli state (Sugandi & Anggarini, 2024). Initially, many Indonesians were unaware of the global boycott movement against Israeli products known as BDS, or the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement. BDS is considered one of the most significant campaigns of "steadfast resistance" by many Palestinians against the colonization of their land and minds, demanding nothing less than self-determination, freedom, justice, and equality (Barghouti, 2011). Following the issuance of MUI's fatwa regarding the boycott of Israeli-affiliated products, Indonesians became

increasingly motivated to participate in and support the movement. Refusing to purchase and use products affiliated with Israel has become a form of protest related to humanitarian concerns, public policy issues, and ongoing conflicts involving Israel. The boycott movement has had tangible impacts, including declines in the stock values of international companies believed to be affiliated with Israel (Refendy, 2022). More than just a movement or campaign, this form of collective action has been shaped by public empathy—an emotional response that goes beyond feeling and leads to concrete action and speech (Nugraha & Apliliya, 2017). The empathy driving Indonesians to participate in the boycott has the potential to become a transformative movement if broadly adopted by the Muslim population across the country. Overall, the MUI fatwa has received strong public support, although it initially sparked significant debate (Wibowo et al., 2024). According to Good Stats, public approval of the fatwa stems primarily from solidarity with Palestinian victims (75%) and involvement in broader humanitarian concerns (56%). Additionally, 56% of respondents stated their support was a form of protest against Israeli military aggression and a means to weaken the economic and political foundations of the Israeli state.

Indonesia has implemented a halal certification system for circulating products to provide assurance to consumers that these products have undergone processes and contain ingredients in accordance with Islamic law. For Muslims, halal serves as a key standard in the consumption of various goods. The term halal itself comes from Arabic, meaning "permissible" or "not bound"—in other words, it refers to anything not prohibited by Islamic teachings. The use of halal products among Muslims is intended to ensure a quality of life that aligns with Islamic principles (Mashudi, 2015). However, recent debates surrounding the boycott movement—particularly between those who support it and those who oppose it—have influenced consumer decision-making when purchasing products. This debate underscores the complexity of aligning ethical, religious, and practical considerations. Nonetheless, the latest fatwa issued by MUI declares that consuming products affiliated with Israel is haram (forbidden), thereby reinforcing the religious obligation to avoid such products.

In relation to this emerging phenomenon, many Indonesians have begun to develop self-awareness regarding the importance of boycotting pro-Israel products on humanitarian grounds. Self-awareness is defined as an individual's ability to recognize their emotions, understand the reasons behind those feelings, and realize how their behavior affects others (Steven & Howard, cited in Sihaloho, 2019). Self-awareness influences the decision-making process by enabling individuals to comprehend their feelings and evaluate themselves according to their abilities and self-confidence (Yuliasari, 2020). Self-awareness impacts both physical and psychological processes through a reciprocal relationship with life goals, emotions, and cognitive functions (Solso, as cited in Maharani & Mustika, 2010). Similarly, regarding the boycott case, many people have come to understand that purchasing pro-Israel products indirectly diminishes their sense of humanity toward the situation in Palestine. Furthermore, as previously explained, the religious fatwa issued by Islamic scholars declaring the purchase of pro-Israel products as *haram* (forbidden) has significantly heightened self-awareness among Muslims and others worldwide.

However, in reality, many people—especially among Muslims themselves—continue to consume pro-Israel products, particularly those that have obtained halal certification for consumption or use. This raises questions about whether public awareness regarding the religious rulings and fatwas issued by Islamic scholars about the boycott movement has truly been implemented, or if it has largely been neglected.

Table 1. Previous Research

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No.	Research Title	Author	Conclusion	
1	Socio-religious behavior on consumption pattern during Israel and Palestine conflict in Muslim society	Airlangga et al. (2024)	The findings of this study reveal that the internalization of socio-religious values serves as a significant motivator for boycott actions. Moral	
			considerations strongly influence	

			how public opinion is formed and defended, contributing to varied responses within the community. Furthermore, the involvement of major powers within the country has played an important role in encouraging people to initiate and support the boycott movement. As a result, many individuals have altered their consumption patterns to avoid products associated with Israel. However, these moral deliberations have also deepened the divide in public opinion regarding support or opposition to
2	Social Movement: Action to Defend Palestine Boycott Israeli Products in Padang City 2017-2023	Sugandi & Anggraeni (2024)	the boycott campaign in Indonesia. In the city of Padang, West Sumatra, the social movement has manifested through the boycott of Israeli products and those affiliated with Israel. This movement represents an expression of solidarity in defending the Palestinian people and their independence. The impact of this social movement has been a decline in the consumption of products associated with Israel, including Starbucks-branded products in the city of Padang.
3	Muslim Consumer Behavior Towards Boycotting Israeli Products	Jaelani & Nursyifa (2024)	The research results indicate that the majority of students, approximately 76%, chose to boycott Israeli products as a form of solidarity with Palestine. The lowest indicator showed that only 26% of students received appreciation from their surroundings for supporting the pro-Israel product boycott campaign. In other words, students at FISIP Unida are actively involved in the boycott movement against Israeli products. Their dominant behavior reflects a high level of agreement with the MUI fatwa concerning the boycott of Israeli products.

Based on the previous research mentioned above, the novelty of this study lies in examining the level of self-awareness, specifically among Muslim students at the Indonesia University of Education, regarding the boycott of Israeli products with halal certification. From the background outlined by the researcher, the research problems can be formulated as follows: First, what is the response of Muslim students at UPI to the fatwa issued by MUI? Second, what behaviors do they exhibit following the issuance of the MUI fatwa concerning the boycott movement? Aligned with these questions, this study has two objectives: to understand the response of Muslim students at UPI to the MUI fatwa, and to identify the behaviors they demonstrate after the fatwa regarding the boycott movement. This research

is expected to provide various benefits both theoretically and practically. It is hoped that this study will serve as a source of knowledge and information for readers. Furthermore, it aims to educate readers about the ongoing phenomenon of the boycott movement.

### 2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach. According to Rahardjo (2012), qualitative research is a scientific activity aimed at systematically collecting data, then describing and interpreting data obtained from various sources. The method employed in this study is interviews. Soegiyono (2014) argues that interviews can serve as a tool for collecting data through one-way question-and-answer sessions conducted systematically based on the research objectives. The interviews will be conducted both offline and online via Zoom. An interview guide will be used as the instrument in this study. Instruments are supporting tools used alongside data collection methods and are related to the chosen methodology (Saleh, 2017). The research is conducted at the Indonesia University of Education (UPI) with Muslim student participants over a period of two weeks. The research object aims to understand the level of self-awareness, particularly among Muslim students at UPI, regarding the boycott of halal-certified Israeli products. The research subjects are selected using a snowball sampling technique.

This technique begins with a small number of participants who meet the research criteria. These participants are then asked to recommend other contacts who also fit the criteria and are potentially willing to participate. Those recommended contacts subsequently suggest further potential participants, and so on. Therefore, the researchers use their networks to establish initial relationships with the study participants (Parker et al., 2019). The students from UPI who will participate must first meet the criteria to be selected, namely that they are Muslim students at UPI. The type of research used is a case study. Rahardjo (2017) explains that a case study is a series of scientific activities carried out in a detailed, intensive, and in-depth manner regarding an event, activity, or program at the individual, group, institutional, or organizational level, with the aim of gaining comprehensive knowledge about it. Therefore, by employing a case study approach, it is expected that the unique characteristics of the event can be described and understood comprehensively and thoroughly (Hidayat, 2019). The data processing technique in this study uses data analysis conducted concurrently with the data collection process. The analysis follows an interactive model as outlined by Miles and Huberman (Saleh, 2017).

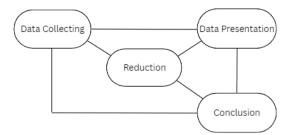


Fig. 1. Miles and Huberman Analysis Model (Miles et al., 2019)

### 3. Results and Discussion

# 3.1 Student response to the movement to boycott halal-certified Israeli products

The genocidal actions carried out by Israel against Palestine have been widely condemned by the public, including university students. This condemnation culminated in boycott movements as a symbol of humanity, which led to the issuance of an MUI fatwa prohibiting the purchase or consumption of Israeli products. This issue has sparked intense

debate, especially concerning Israeli products that carry halal certification. Below are the results of interviews with four Muslim students from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia regarding their responses to the boycott movement against halal-certified Israeli products.

The four participants, P1, P2, P3, and P4, are aware of what the boycott action entails and agree that it is a humanitarian effort to stop the genocide happening in Palestine. They are also familiar with the fatwa issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) that prohibits purchasing Israeli products, and all of them support this fatwa as a humanitarian stance. In fact, P1 emphasized that the fatwa is obligatory because all fatwas are based on the Qur'an and Hadith. Furthermore, three participants, P1, P2, and P4, stated that they continue to avoid consuming Israeli products even though some of these products are certified halal. They believe that as long as the products they use are affiliated with Israel, they can find and switch to alternatives that are not connected to Israel. Meanwhile, P3 mentioned that although they have boycotted several products, there are still some products for which they have not yet found suitable replacements, so they continue to use them. However, P3 is currently trying to find alternatives. Overall, all participants have their own motivations and reasons for boycotting Israeli products.

Their goals align with their hope to stop the genocide happening in Palestine. They hope that this boycott will have an impact on weakening the economy of companies affiliated with Israel. Additionally, all four participants felt that the boycott influenced their relationships with family and friends. P1 and P3 tend not to worry much about this. As they said, this is a humanitarian issue. As fellow human beings with conscience, it is only right to carry out this boycott in the name of humanity. Therefore, they don't mind if this causes strain in their relationships with friends or family when they promote the boycott of Israeli products. On the other hand, P2 and P4 tend to respect the decisions of their family and friends, even if those decisions differ from their own support of the boycott.

# 3.2 Student behavior towards the movement to boycott Israeli products with halal certification

The fatwa issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has encouraged people in Indonesia to actively participate in the boycott of products affiliated with Israel. The fatwa states that supporting Israel's aggression against Palestine is considered haram (forbidden). Therefore, MUI issued Fatwa Number 83 of 2023 concerning the legality of supporting the Palestinian struggle. This has naturally impacted behavioral changes, especially among students at the Indonesia Education University. All four respondents P1, P2, P3, and P4 said they have participated in the boycott movement. The factors influencing their participation include seeing it as a symbol of resistance against Israel and a form of humanitarian support for Palestine. Even P2 admitted to using the "No, Thanks" app, which can detect pro-Israel products, allowing users to choose alternatives that are not pro-Israel. Respondents shared various experiences after deciding to join the boycott of Israeli products. For example, P2 initially struggled to adapt to not using certain products but has since become accustomed to it. Meanwhile, P1, P3, and P4 felt comfortable participating in the boycott because they believe this decision helps Palestinians resist Israel's harsh treatment and, at the same time, supports the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). According to P2, this could affect personal identity since there are differences in beliefs regarding the boycott itself. However, fundamentally, everyone has the right to make their own decisions, including the decision to boycott products. Ultimately, it comes down to respecting one another's choices, as stated by P1 and P4. Regarding their experiences, P1 and P3 said they did not feel any significant impact after joining the boycott. However, P2 and P4 found it somewhat difficult to find and get used to using alternative products to avoid purchasing those affiliated with Israel. Nevertheless, all participants realized that many alternative products are available to replace those affiliated with Israel without compromising quality or their needs including halal products affiliated with Israel. Despite the difficulties, all participants expressed confidence in maintaining their commitment to boycotting Israeli products, even when tempted by products that are more easily accessible or better. However, P1 still struggles to boycott products for which there are no alternatives and is forced to continue

using them. Meanwhile, P3 said they will boycott Israeli products no matter what until Palestine gains independence. From a social perspective, all participants agreed that the boycott movement encourages deeper discussion and understanding of the ongoing conflict. However, P1 explained that they have to be selective about whom to discuss the issue with to avoid conflict because everyone has different opinions about the boycott. Meanwhile, P2 and P4 use this issue to discuss it with friends and family to raise their awareness of the situation. Overall, the participants felt that boycotting Israeli products helped them develop a sense of social responsibility and empathy toward the Palestinian people, as well as raise awareness about the consequences of continuing to consume those products.

The genocide carried out by Israel against Palestine shows no signs of stopping. The boycott movement is a humanitarian action that is currently being widely promoted all around the world. This action serves as a symbol of humanity to fight for the right to life for Palestine. In fact, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has issued a fatwa specifically prohibiting the people of Indonesia from buying and consuming Israeli products or those affiliated with Israel. After the fatwa was issued, many Indonesians simultaneously took part in the boycott movement, including university students. This movement is based on the self-awareness that each individual has developed. This is evident in the participants interviewed in this study. All four of them stated that they have learned about and agreed with the MUI fatwa regarding the prohibition of buying and consuming Israeli products. For them, this is a symbol of humanitarian support for Palestine. Three of the participants—P1, P2, and P4—firmly stopped consuming Israeli products even though those products are halal-certified. They said there are still other products that are not affiliated with Israel. P3 has made efforts to boycott several products but has not yet found replacements for some. Nevertheless, they are still actively trying to find alternative products.

The boycott movement is not carried out without reason. Each participant engages in the boycott with specific goals and hopes. All four share the mission that their boycott can impact the economy of companies affiliated with Israel, whether to stop their support for Israel or to disrupt their market presence. They also all hope that this boycott action can help free Palestine from the genocide carried out by Israel.

Unfortunately, many people in Indonesia are still unaware of and do not participate in the boycott. Two participants are not too concerned about how it affects their relationships, while the other two are still considering the reactions of their family or friends. As expressed by P2 and P4, both of whom have family or friends who have not joined the boycott. To avoid conflict and damaging their relationships, they decide to simply respect their loved ones' choices. For them, what matters is that they start with themselves. This differs from P1 and P3, who disapprove of their family or friends' decisions to continue consuming pro-Israel products. For them, everyone should be aware that this is a humanitarian issue and should be acted upon by fellow human beings with a conscience.

Based on the interview results regarding this response, it can be concluded that many people, including students, have become aware and have taken part in the boycott of pro-Israel products. They demonstrate a high level of self-awareness in this boycott, grounded in humanitarian principles. However, despite this, some of their acquaintances still consume Israeli products. This indicates that the self-awareness of some of their social circles tends to be low on this issue. When discussing their response to the MUI fatwa that prohibits people from consuming Israeli products, their reaction is very positive—they strongly agree with the fatwa.

The very positive response from the participants aligns with their behavior as they begin to adapt to the current situation. In accordance with the MUI fatwa about avoiding products affiliated with Israel, the participants have actively taken part in and voiced support for the boycott. Although at first they found it difficult to find substitute products due to the widespread presence of Israeli products in daily life, now all participants have become accustomed to it and feel comfortable and secure in their boycott because they

believe it helps Palestine and also supports the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia. All participants remain committed to this movement and will continue the boycott until Palestine is free. The boycott movement not only affects daily product use but also impacts society, especially the participants, on a social level. All participants consider that participating in the boycott helps them to develop and express a sense of social responsibility regarding the issue and to voice their concern for Palestine. They also feel that this action at least represents their criticism and anger toward the attacks launched by Israel on Palestine.

Despite the intensity of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the widespread boycott movement, not everyone is guaranteed to be aware of the issue. This concern is especially considered by participant P1 when discussing and addressing the issue with others in order to avoid conflict. According to P1, everyone has different thoughts and understandings, and they cannot force others to participate in the boycott. In contrast to P1, the other participants use this movement to continue discussing and educating the people around them—such as friends, family, and acquaintances—with the goal of raising awareness about the potential impact if they continue to consume products affiliated with Israel. Therefore, based on the overall research findings, it can be concluded that the response from the community, especially the participants, toward the fatwa issued by MUI is very positive. They clearly support the fatwa by actively voicing their stance and refraining from using Israeli products, replacing them with alternatives they consider safe and, of course, halal. Moreover, they also try to educate those around them to become more aware and willing to start avoiding products linked to Israel.

## 4. Conclusions

The heated issue of genocide carried out by Israel against Palestine has sparked various responses from around the world. These responses are not only verbal reactions but also include various forms of support, such as demonstrations occurring in many countries and one of them being the boycott movement known as Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS). Through this movement, Indonesia—with the largest Muslim population—plays a significant role in supporting the Palestinian people.

Through this study, we can see the strong enthusiasm of the Indonesian people to participate in the boycott of Israeli products. Therefore, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has clarified the legal stance in Indonesia by issuing a fatwa related to the boycott of Israeli products. Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that all participants have taken part in the boycott. This movement is driven by the participants' concern and the support they wish to provide to the Palestinian people. Although this is the case, it is certainly not as easy as imagined. Some participants initially found it quite difficult to find alternative products, but over time they became accustomed to it, also aided by new technologies such as applications that detect products affiliated with Israel. Meanwhile, others felt comfortable and safe participating in this movement as a form of humanitarian concern.

Although this issue remains a subject of debate, the respondents remain firm in their decisions and feel that every individual has the right to make their own choices. Moreover, the widespread discussion of this issue in society has increased awareness of social problems—especially global ones—and fostered more critical thinking. All participants also agree that participating in the boycott of these products can help develop a sense of social responsibility and awareness of the impact of their consumption.

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### **Author Contribution**

Conceptualization: E. D. P, S. D. A and S. N. A; Methodology: E. D. P; Formal Analysis: S. N. A; Investigation: S. D. A; Resources: S. D. A; Data Curation: S. N. A; Writing – Original Draft Preparation: E. D. P, S. D. A, and S. N. A; Writing – Review and Editing: E. D. P.

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