

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the background of the problem, the research question, the theoretical framework, the hypothesis, the research purposes, the research methods, and the guideline of writing.

### A. Background

MER-C (Medical Emergency Rescue Committee) itself is a humanitarian, social organization engaged in medical emergencies that providing medical services for victims of war, violence due to conflicts, riots, extraordinary events, and natural disasters at home and abroad. This organization was initially formed by a group of students from the University of Indonesia who took the initiative to take medical action which supposed to help victims of conflict in Maluku, East Indonesia, in August 1999 and developed into a voluntary or activist organization that volunteered to help victims of war both in Indonesia and the world (MER-C, Sejarah Berdirinya MER-C, 2015). MER-C is an NGO based on Islam and has the principle of *rahmatan lil'aalamiin* which is expected to give mercy or help to all creatures, both individually and in groups regardless of background, religion, nationality, ethnicity, group, politics, but on the basis of urgency, that is help the most vulnerable people and the most neglected people. As a non-governmental organisation engaged in the health sector, MER-C provides human resources in voluntary activists and has many track records in contributing to conflict countries. MER-C's vision and mission in carrying out its humanitarian actions is a separated movement from the government so that it deserves to be called a Non-Governmental Organisation (MER-C, 2015).

MER-C is an Indonesian Non-governmental organization. Indonesia itself is one of the member countries of the United Nations that has voiced the issue of Palestinian independence in the international forum. There have been many

meetings that have been carried out by Indonesia in international forums in form of its support to Palestine, such as; Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and regular meetings of the Asian-African Conference. Indonesia also has succeeded in becoming a member of the UN Security Council which has made it more active in voicing the issue of peace, and this builds a positive image of Indonesia as a country that fights for world peace. Not only actively following the development of the conflict in Palestine, Indonesia also provides assistance to the people in Palestine and is active in raising the issue of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in international forums. In addition to the government movement, the Indonesian people, who are predominantly Muslim, support the government's activities. Furthermore, the support of the Indonesian people can be seen from the movements of cross-border community organizations and NGOs such as MER-C which distributes the aid of the Indonesian people to the Palestinian people in various donations, developments, and humanitarian activities.

Nevertheless, Indonesia's position which has always been active in supporting Palestine for years was shaken by the visit of a religious figure and adviser to the Indonesian president, Yahya Cholil Staquf to Israel. Yahya Staquf's visit to Israel was to fulfill an invitation as a speaker in a public lecture on The Israel Council on Foreign Relations held by the American Jewish Committee Global Forum. In fact, during the visit Israel still has the power to control the Palestinian territories, such as the establishment of illegal Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories and military attacks on Palestinian lands with the excuse of eradicating terrorism but in fact the victims are civilians. At the moment, the situation in Gaza, where over 120 Palestinians have been killed during protests along the Israeli border over the past two months.

The Non-governmental organization (NGO), The International-Palestine Children, said that during 2018 the Israeli military had massacred 25 Palestinian children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the press statement of the NGO, which advocates for Palestinian children's rights, it was stated

that of the total number of 25 children who were victims, 21 of them died in the Gaza Strip. According to the data stated by The United Nation's Independent Commission of Inquiry there were 189 Palestinian deaths, 183 deaths caused by Israeli Army ammunition fire during the Great March Return a peace protest from Palestinian towards Israel (Aliyev, 2018). Yahya's arrival in Israel drew criticism from both home and Palestinian Authority, where the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered his participation in these events sending a sense of disappointment to his country. These would affect not only the government image and efforts supporting Palestine which have been done for years, but also could be distracting and doubting the trust from Palestinian to Indonesian itself.

Seeing the role of MER-C that helping Palestine in previous years, it is not a new deal if MER-C would continue their support during what happened in 2018. Even though MER-C works separated from the government, but as an NGO, MER-C would directly interact with Palestinian through the realisation of their programs, and more or less could affect the image of their home country among the perspective of Palestinian.

## **B. Research Question**

According to the background above, this research is going to provide a study as a guideline to answer question; How does the role of MER-C (Medical Emergency Rescue-Committee) improve the image of Indonesia towards the conflict of Palestinian-Israeli in 2018-2020?

## **C. Theoretical Framework**

### ***Public Diplomacy***

Public diplomacy is an attempt to establish relations with non-state actors in the target country of public diplomacy and facilitate relations between non-state actors in the home and host countries. Public diplomacy is carried out with the involvement of all *stakeholders* other than state actors such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the private sector, *NGOs*, the media,

and also individuals in cooperative relationships. Jan Mellisen (2006) also defines public diplomacy as an attempt to influence other people or organizations outside their country in a *positive way* in order to change the person's *perspective* on a country (Mellisen, 2006).

In the era of globalization, when human relations are becoming increasingly complex, public opinion has a strong influence on a country's foreign policy. (Hermawan, 2007). Public diplomacy is carried out through exchanges between people and ideas to form long-term relations between countries, as well as acceptance of a country's culture, values, and policies. Interpersonal contacts, media involvement, community groups or institutions, and exchanges in education are various activities carried out within the scope of public diplomacy (Murrow, 2002). Meanwhile, Edward Murrow stated that there is a link between public diplomacy and the formation of a national image in which public diplomacy has a function as a shaper of that image. (Murrow, 2002)

In this context, national image is the perspective of countries in a certain region to countries that have influence, which then affects the process of communication and cooperation for the countries involved. Mark Leonard stated in his book *Public Diplomacy* that public diplomacy is a way of building relationships by understanding the needs, culture and domestic society; communicate views between countries involved; remove the existing misperceptions in the international community; and seek common ground between the two or more governments of the countries involved (Leonard, *Diplomacy by Other Means*, 2002).

This public participation is tied to the image of a country that carries out public diplomacy so that it examines various strategies to involve public activities

according to the wishes of the parties concerned, such as organizations or the state. In the implementation of this public diplomacy, there are various hierarchies and activities. The first stage is the stage where diplomacy is carried out with the most basic goal of increasing the acknowledgement about the existence of the home country. The expected result of this basic stage is to introduce the home country to the foreign public or the public in the host country.

*Second*, is the stage when the host country's publics have already known the existence of the home country. In this stage, the host country would give their appreciation towards the home country. Then, the home country would try to shape, form, and increase their positive image among the public in the host country. Furthermore, the host country would get the positive reaction and appreciation from the host country. The activities carried out in this stage are to create a positive perception or try to illustrate that the country concerned is important in the international world or in certain issues this country has advantages both in terms of capacity, capability and also the role it plays. Another thing that can be done is by showing himself as a "friend" who has the same views on certain issues (Leonard, *Diplomacy by Other Means*, 2002).

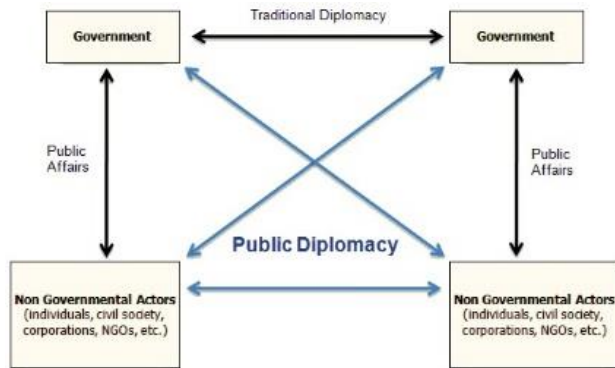
*Third*, after the people of other countries are well acquainted with and have a positive view, what is next is to create bonds with the people of other countries. Increasing this attachment in the sense that when the people of other countries already have a positive view, the closeness to that country becomes even more important. When the three stages have been passed, the last stage is the influencing stage. This stage is carried out in many ways, such as increasing cooperation in the field of education such as student and student exchanges, providing scholarships, joint research and so on. (Leonard, *Public Diplomacy*, 2002).

With harmonious relation between the government and the international community, it is hoped that the international community will have a more positive perception of certain countries. A positive image that is formed within a country can simplify and increase cooperation between countries. One of the prominent actions to improve the image of a country can also be found in humanitarian and disaster issues. A positive image will usually be subsequent to a donor country. The existence of world recognition of countries that have qualified capabilities in dealing with humanitarian problems and disasters will improve their bargaining position in influencing other countries. In this condition, humanitarian and disaster issues have the opportunity to become nation branding or image building needed in achieving the goals of foreign policy and diplomacy (Sinulingga, 2016).

Philip Fiske de Gouveia (2006) indicates several reasons for giving priority in the application of public diplomacy, namely; *first*, as a form of a country's commitment to a stable world situation and a peaceful multilateral world order. *Second*, helping in reducing the wrong stereotype of a country. *Third*, as a form of counter to the negative reporting of a country due to the domestic crisis (Gouveia, 2006). According to Mark Leonard, the development of public diplomacy is influenced by three things particularly; changes in international issues and agendas, the development of non-governmental actors, and the development of communication and information media (Leonard, Diplomacy by Other Means, 2002). Public diplomacy then entered the instrument of foreign policy and

became one of the government's priorities in international politics (Leonard, *Diplomacy by Other Means*, 2002).

Public diplomacy is not only carried out between the Indonesian government and the other's governments without comprising community presence. Public diplomacy is related to image improvement so that in obtaining success from diplomacy, it will not be



**Figure 1: Traditional Diplomacy vs Public Diplomacy Concept**

*Source: researchgate.net*

separated from policies involving intensive community components such as the involvement of non-governmental organizations to build the image of Indonesia. For this reason, in this study the author uses public diplomacy theory to point out the role of MER-C as an Indonesian Non-governmental Organization through their roles could improve the unclear image of Indonesia among the public of Palestinian that threw dissatisfaction after what happened during 2018 Yahya's Staqf visit.

### ***Image Theory***

Image Theory is a theory of strategic decision making that identifies the primary judgments guiding

international images, or stereotypes, and the selection of international policies. Image theorists suggest that ideas about other actors in world affairs are organized into group schemas, or images, with well-defined cognitive elements. These images are organized in a systematic way, comprised of cognitions and beliefs regarding the target nation's motives, leadership, and primary characteristics (Michele G. Alexander, 2005). Images, perceptions or stereotypes are significant in international relations as they "serve to justify a nation's desired reaction or treatment toward another nation." Image can be defined as the product of perception. In this sense, while concept of perception covers both the perceiving process and its result, image solely means the outcome of this process. Therefore, Image Theory is focused on outcome of perception. Fisher underlines the importance of images in the following way:

"It is fundamental that people, including those on one's own side of an issue, do not ordinarily react to an event or issue on the basis of the facts as might be empirically determined but on the basis of their images of the fact, on what they think or believe to have happened or to have been at stake. Thus, international relations evolve around interplay of images." (Fisher, 1997)

Robert Jervis argues that the image of a state can be a major factor in determining whether and how easily the state can reach its goal. He argues that a desired image can often be of greater use than a significant increment of military and economic power. (Jervis, 1970). In this sense, the purpose of diplomacy of any state is to construct desired image. And public diplomacy is image making within the target community. Diplomacy, public diplomacy, people to people relations are important tools



in making positive and desired image. Especially with the development of Internet networks, which can by-pass official sources of information, people to people relations gain greater importance. Now in the age of globalization the opinions of masses are becoming more and more important (Dinmuhammed, 2017).

### ***Non-Governmental Organisation***

The increasing transnational issues and disabilities of a country in solving its issues are among the reasons international organisations continue to develop rapidly in the 21st century. This development shows that international organisations have a strong enough influence in international relations through contributions to help the state solves a problem. In the last three decades, NGOs have grown in terms of the number, size, and variety of issues that concern them. The NGO concept has not been found as a definite form; due to that reason, and there are some different perspectives in its definition. However, in general, The United Nations defines NGOs as non-profit organisations and voluntary ones organised at the local, national or international level. Forced by a community with common interests, NGOs do various things humanitarian services and functions, bringing people's concerns to the government, monitoring policies, and encouraging political participation at the level community (Leverty, 2008). NGOs provide analysis and expertise as warning mechanisms start-up and help monitor and implement international agreements. Some of them are organised on specific issues such as human rights, environment, or health.

NGOs are not part of the government but are civil society elements that bridge the community and the government by taking concrete actions and are an independent social organisation. The UN defines NGOs as non-profit organisations and voluntary ones organised at the local, national or international level. Forced by a

community with common interests, NGOs do various things humanitarian services and functions, bring public concerns to the government, monitor policies, and encourage political participation at the level community. NGOs provide analysis and expertise as warning mechanisms start-up and help monitor and implement international agreements.

NGOs can also play a wider role through net working with fellow government actors in various countries, for example in conducting campaigns that can provide justice for the Palestinian people who are still under occupation. Due to the main activity, NGOs divided into operational and advocacy (Van, 1999). What is meant by operational is an NGO that provides critical services to 'who are needed.' In contrast, advocacy is an NGO that works as a representative of a society that does not have a voice or access to enjoy their interests. In carrying out advocacy practices, NGOs use various methods such as lobbying, act as expert experts and advisors, conduct research, monitor and expose other actors' actions, hold trials public, share information with the main constituents, and form an agenda or boycott (Hudson, 2001). Referred to the categories, MER-C seems to be a part of an operational NGO considering the medical emergency assistance that has been provided by them to the victims of conflicts country. However, it does not mean MER-C could not held several advocacy agenda in supporting Palestinian independence.

### ***Humanitarian Action***

Humanitarian Action is an activity carried out in situations where human aspects are threatened, such as natural disasters and disasters caused by humans themselves (war or conflict) and have the aim of saving lives. Reduce suffering and protect the dignity of human life. This action also facilitates the preparation of the parties in the event of a disaster or humanitarian crisis for the second time. Humanitarian action has four basic principles, namely humanitarianism which carried out purely to help and protect people from suffering, impartial (that this action is carried out without discrimination on any basis), neutrality and independence (that is separate from autonomy and independence, military, economic and political interests) (Good Humanitarian Donorship, 2003). These actions include the protection of civilians and soldiers who are no longer involved due to injuries, provision of food, sanitation water, shelter, health services and other guidance needed by the victims and to restore normal life functions them (Good Humanitarian Donorship, 2003).

Thus, the existence of this action is vital for the survival of the victims. The assistance they distribute is called Humanitarian Aids or humanitarian assistance, and is usually distributed by the government of a country, individuals, NGOs, multilateral organizations, domestic organizations and private companies (UN Humanitarian Agency, 2018). Meanwhile, humanitarian workers or also often referred to as aid workers or humanitarian aid workers is a member of the United Nations humanitarian agency, the humanitarian agency of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and NGOs with humanitarian goals. In international relations, this humanitarian action is generally interpreted as an intervention accomplished by a state against another country to protect the conflict country (when viewed in the context of the state). For example, in the case of humanitarian intervention in

Somalia in 1992, until Libya in 2011. According to the situation, humanitarian intervention is defined as interference by the state in the affairs of other countries to maintain its condition. In this case, humanitarian intervention is carried out on the basis of defending the existence of human rights. Human rights or carried out on the basis of promoting human rights.

However, earlier interventions tended to use military force on the grounds of promoting human rights. Meanwhile currently, the intervention used is no longer using military force, because the current issues are more likely to be natural disasters, health and environment, thus in practice it is more to provide health assistance, funds from outside parties to countries that have been affected by disaster. Therefore, by using this Humanitarian Action Theory, I would like to further explain on how the real action of Indonesian NGOs in this case is the Medical Emergency Rescue Committee (MER-C) in collaboration as a facilitator to provide assistance, especially medical assistance to help Palestine in the midst of its conflict with Israel.

#### **D. Hypothesis**

The roles of MER-C in improving the image of Indonesia towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in 2018-2020 could be seen through the optimalisation and full support of their programs, for both operational or advocacy aid. In addition, the development of MER-C as humanitarian NGOs has also become a medium for the realization of public and humanitarian diplomacy as expected in Indonesia's foreign policy. Thus, MER-C as Non-governmental actor actively support Palestine can improve the image of Indonesia in the eye of Palestinian after Yahya Staquf visited Israel in 2018.

## **E. Method of Research**

In providing and studying the issues in this research the author uses techniques to collecting the research data, as follows:

### **1. Library Research Method**

The technique to collecting the data by library studying, researching literature in the form of books, journals and papers related to the research.

### **2. Online Research**

The data collecting process by researching from official website that contains numbers of information regarding the study. In this study, the authors used a qualitative approach. This approach is a form of research that produces descriptive data regarding spoken and written words and behaviour that can be observed from the object of research (S.J. Taylor, 1998). The author uses also a descriptive analytical method to combined all of the data and by looking for the answer of the research, during the method the authors would process, analyse, research, and interpret the data which then arranged the discussion systematically so that problems can be well understood.

## **F. Scope of Research**

To limit the focus of the discussion in this study, the author provides the analysis of the way MER-C improves Indonesian image towards Palestinian-Israeli Conflict by explaining the list of MER-C contribution in supporting Palestine during 2018-2020 conflict. The author focused on the time limit from 2018 to 2020 because during the time the conflict of Palestinian-Israeli was intense.

## **G. Purpose of Research**

1. To discovering and describing the role of MER-C as Indonesian NGO in supporting Palestine;
2. To discovering and describing the Indonesian image in supporting Palestine;
3. To discovering and describing the role of MER-C in improving the image of Indonesia towards the conflict of Palestinian-Israeli 2018-2020.

## **H. The Outline**

### **Chapter I**

This chapter consist of Background, Research Question, Theoretical Framework, Hypothesis, and The Outline. In this introduction chapter the author describes briefly about the issues' background, the research question to answer, the theoretical framework as concepts guidelines in answering the research question, the hypothesis of study, method of research which contain the technique to collect data, and scope of research to limit the focus in this study.

### **Chapter II**

This chapter introduces MER-C (Medical Emergency Rescue Committee) as Non-Governmental Organisation, the background of the establishment, its vision and mission through their supports towards Palestine.

### **Chapter III**

The chapter provides further explanation regarding Indonesia's national interest, and its image. This chapter contains the steps of Indonesian government in supporting Palestine as goals of diplomatic interest and how the action done by Indonesian Authority formed the image of Indonesia among Palestinian Authority and people during the conflict 2018-2020.

#### Chapter IV

Describes the data regarding the role of MER-C that improves the image of Indonesia towards the conflict of Palestinian-Israeli in 2018-2021. This chapter unites the contribution and optimisation of MER-C through their program in supporting Palestine and how the supports could increase the image of Indonesia.

#### Chapter V

Contains the summaries or conclusions of the entire chapter that has been discussed.