

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Jerusalem, located in Palestine, is a city of great significance to Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Its historical and spiritual background has made it a place of pilgrimage for followers of the three Abrahamic religions. Property rights for each of these religions have created significant disputes and garnered global attention to date (Rahmawati et al., 2023).

But the beginning of the Israeli colonization of Palestine came after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, when Palestine, originally part of the Ottoman Empire, came under British rule. Britain, with the support of a Jewish armament formula, made a promise to establish a Jewish homeland in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. Jews seek to establish a national home in Palestine because they consider it to be the Promised Land mentioned in the Old Testament Bible, and Jewish belief is that Jerusalem should be the capital of Israel. The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 was a worsening of the situation (Nurjannah & Fakhruddin, 2019).

Palestinians continue to struggle for their homeland from the Jewish recognition of the Promised Land. Moreover, Palestine, where the majority of the population is Muslim, where the land of Palestine is a historical place and a place of great importance for Muslims occurred. Because the Al-Aqsa Mosque, also known as Baitul Maqdis, is located in Palestine, it serves as the first Qibla for Muslims as well as the transit location where Prophet Muhammad SAW before carried out the Miraj. The Palestinian people fought for their religion and nation, but their struggle was consistently overpowered by Israel due to the support and weapons assistance provided by the United States as a superpower (Rahmawati et al., 2023).

Finally, HAMAS which is an abbreviation of Harakat Al Mukawamah Al Islamiyah, which means the Islamic resistance movement which was founded in 1987 by Sheikh Ahmed Yasin, who was a Palestinian imam and activist who was inspired by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, suddenly launched its action by attacking Israel to seizereturn to the land of Palestine. Thousands of rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel in a surprise attack by the Hamas militant group on Saturday (7/10/2023) morning (KOMPAS.com).

What about Muslims who are unable to directly participate in the defense of the historic and important land of Palestine. Palestinians are bravely defending their homeland at the risk of their lives, enduring indiscriminate bombardment by the Israeli Zionist forces. This brutal targeting by Israel's indiscriminate Zionists made children, women, young and old easy targets. Whereas Allah's Messenger said, "You see the believers as regards their being merciful among themselves and showing love among themselves and being kind, resembling one body, so that, if any part of the body is not well then the whole body shares the sleeplessness (insomnia) and fever with it." (Sahih al-Bukhari 6011).

When counterattacked by Hamas fighting for Palestinian land, The Israeli Zionists, with the help of their allies, are spreading information in the digital media by claiming that HAMAS is a terrorist organization. Hamas – or in some cases its military wing, the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades – has been designated a terrorist group by Israel, the United States, the European Union and Britain, among other countries. (BBC News Indonesia, 13 October 2023). Even though Israel was the first to attack indiscriminately and in violation of many of the International Humanitarian Laws (IHL). Like a strict bull, Israel destroys all objects it considers dangerous because it is considered a haven for the Hamas group. Hospitals and places of worship did not escape their attacks. The homes of countless civilians have been destroyed (SINDONEWS.COM).

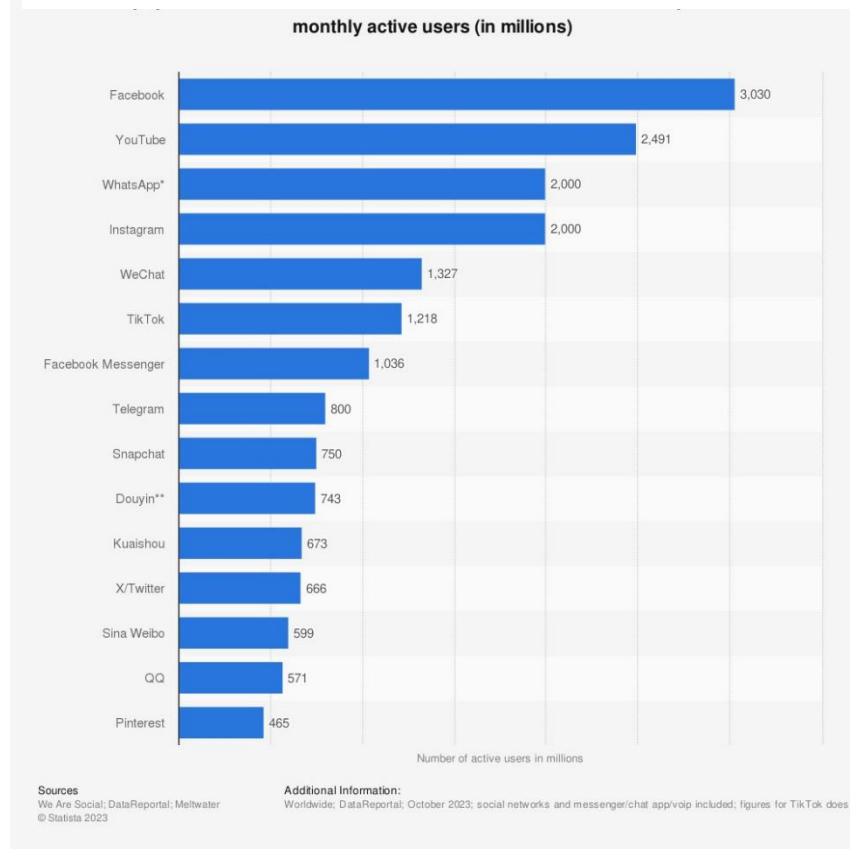
The role of digital communication platforms is very important in the exercise of power and control. This platform has become an important tool for disseminating information and manipulating public discourse with the development of digital technology (Shola & Victor, 2023). They incessantly spread information and propaganda narratives through digital media to manipulate and control, while hiding the fact that Israel has violated IHL. It is not unusual for people, including Muslims, to express ambivalence and even pro-Zionist tendencies.

Muslims who have not been able to participate directly in defending the land of Palestine, the best thing that can be done is to participate in the war of ideas and information warfare through digital platforms. Writing, narrative and content are all weapons in supporting and helping the Palestinian people. It should be noted that in recent years, the use of digital instruments to obtain information has increased and at the same time, the public has become more educated and engaged (Conroy-Krutz & Kone, 2020). The presence of digital social networks has also helped this type of campaign or promotion to position itself in society by giving a positive influence on their attitude (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Campaigns that used to be traditional are now mostly digital, and digital is becoming the battleground for competition (Rosyad, 2021: 271-272). Social media is very influential on social behavior and religious behavior because social or digital media has the nature of networks that are impartial to a particular group, interactive in which individuals can participate. (Abdullah, 2021: 115).

However, those who hold a very large share are Islamic organizations and mosques which are the center of Muslim civilization. Mosques have an important role to play in the success of the mass movement (Khoir, 2022). They should have courageously spoken these truths and countered the propaganda spread by the Zionists and their allies, arguments are countered with arguments, writings are responded to with writings, and so on, serving as an initial impetus in the movement to support Palestine for other Muslim communities. To accomplish this goal, it is

necessary to create messages that are informative, instructive, and persuasive, and that empower the audience to take action (Van Steenburg & Spears, 2022). Specifically on Instagram which will be the focus of research, from Statista, Global Social Networks Ranked by Number of Users in October 2023, Instagram is the fourth leading social media (after Facebook, YouTube and Whatsapp) worldwide with 2,000 million active users.

Figure 1. 1 Most Popular Social Media in 2023



Source: Statista, Global Social Networks Ranked

Instagram is an appropriate platform to launch a campaign for Palestine and against propaganda. The platform enables users to interact with people worldwide through various features, including likes, comments, direct messages, and hashtags. Instagram users can tag any image with

hashtags, allowing cross-referencing content by topic or theme (Jokar et al., 2023). Moreover, the account already has a lot of followers and is blue ticked. Because accounts with a blue tick symbol are usually given to public figures. This symbol is a sign that the account is authentic and owned by its owner who is quite famous in social media, commonly known as "Influencers". On the Instagram account they have a lot of followers and can influence others through posts, with a high level of engagement (Mutmainah et al., 2022). Thus, it is very important for the accounts of Islamic activists and organizations and others who already have a blue ticked symbol to take their role in the defense of Palestine.

Real Masjid, one of Yogyakarta's mosques, manages three Instagram accounts, each with a specific function. The primary account, @muslimunited.official is the main account of Real Masjid, @realmasjid.info specifically posts information related to mosques and religious studies of Real Masjid, and @marbotpride specifically shares posts related to marbots of Real Masjid.

From the three accounts based on preliminary pre-research studies conducted on the Real Masjid account, it can be seen that the Real Masjid Instagram account, namely @muslimunited.official is a blue ticked account, On this main account, Real Masjid shows their support for Palestine by changing their profile picture to the Palestinian flag and adding the phrase "We stand with Palestine" to their Instagram bio, and active in sharing Palestinian-Israeli related content in feeds, reels and instastories in the form of photos, videos and audio visuals. From October 9 to October 25, Real Masjid posted 79 posts related to Palestine-Israel. Compared to 5 other large blue-ticked mosques such as Jogokaryan Mosque Yogyakarta with @masjidjogokariyan username found 58 feed posts, Sunda Kelapa Grand Mosque with @masjidagungsundakelapa username found 9 feed posts, Salman Mosque ITB with username @salmanitb only found 5 feed posts, Istiqlal Mosque with username @masjidistiqlal.official which found no posts related to Palestine-Israel at all.

Real Masjid continues to echo its support for Palestine, although it is not uncommon for such posts to be deleted by Instagram who consider it to have violated guidelines. Until November 12, it was no longer a post, but the main Real Masjid account, namely @muslimunited.official, was finally banned by Instagram. Currently, Real Masjid switches the function of the main account using its second account, @realmasjid.info.

Other mosque accounts that have been ticked should also contribute to voicing support for Palestine. Like the Real Masjid which really uses Instagram social media in voicing its support. Real Masjid actively shares information, content and others that can open the eyes of people who are still gray to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, raise awareness among Muslims who are still indifferent to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and especially in combating propaganda information intensified by Zionists and their allies.

This research focuses on the Real Masjid Instagram account, formerly known as @realmasjid.info and now renamed as @realmasjid.official. The account serves as a platform to raise awareness and support for Palestine by providing informative content on the current situation. The aim is to encourage individuals to voice their support for Palestine. Therefore, the researchers will conduct a visual semiotic analysis of the Real Masjid Instagram account to express their support for Palestine.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background above, several problems can be identified as follows:

- 1.2.1. Lack of awareness exists regarding the social media accounts of prominent mosques that have been verified and are providing support to Palestine through digital means. In contrast to Real Masjid, they are leveraging Instagram to take part in the defense of Palestine.
- 1.2.2. Real Masjid continues to campaign for support for Palestine with its various content in realizing that Real Masjid really stands with

Palestine in its expression in the Instagram bio "We Stand With Palestine", even though their main account is banned.

Analysis of the Real Masjid campaign model in voicing support for Palestine is important to open the views of Muslims and others on the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

1.3. Problem Statement

- 1.3.1. How is the visual semiotics analysis of Real Masjid digital campaign in voicing support for Palestine?
- 1.3.2. How Real Masjid digital campaign model in voicing support for Palestine?

1.4. Research Purposes

- 1.4.1. Knowing how to analyze the visual semiotics of the Real Masjid digital campaign in voicing support for Palestine.
- 1.4.2. Describing the Real Masjid digital campaign model in voicing support for Palestine.

1.5. Benefits of research

1.5.1. Theoretical Benefits

It is hoped that this research can provide a model of Palestinian campaigns and the like in the digital age that can be carried out by mosques, activists and others. In addition, this research can also be used as a learning process for public relations in delivering effective information and how to manage social media accounts, especially Instagram.

1.5.2. Policy Benefits

It is hoped that this will provide insight into formulating more effective digital campaign guidelines and policies in support of Palestine.

1.5.3. Practical Benefits

From this research, it is expected to provide an overview of the Palestine campaign model in the digital era that can be done by mosques.

1.6. Research limitations

The author restricts the scope of the research to precisely define the focus of the research conducted, in terms of the formulation of the problem researched. Therefore, the author limits research related to the Real Masjid digital campaign in voicing support for Palestine by only focusing on visual content that includes 5 aspects, namely illustrations, layouts, typography, colors and logos on Real Masjid Instagram content with the username @realmasjid.official, and this research covers the Real Masjid campaign period, which is from October 7, 2023 to December 19, 2023.

This period was chosen because Hamas began the offensive on October 7 and Real Masjid began to post Palestinian-related content on its main account, but because its main account, @muslimunited.official, was banned on the 37th day, this made this account switch to a second account precisely on November 13. This makes researchers want to examine the visual semiotic analysis of content on the Real Masjid account, namely @realmasjid.official in the span of time from before the main account was banned and after the main account was banned and moved to the second account, so that the total is 74 days.