

Key Takeaways

Building Bridges: Indonesia and Ireland Perspectives on the War in Gaza

Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia (FPCI) and the Embassy of Ireland in Indonesia held a virtual public discussion titled 'Building Bridges: Indonesia and Ireland Perspectives on the War in Gaza' on 4th April 2024.

(Rewatch via bit.ly/PDBBIrelandIndonesia)

The panelists included:

[Barry Colfer, M.Phil, Ph.D.](#), Director of Research at the Institute of International & European Affairs (IIEA)

[Broto Wardoyo, Ph.D.](#), Lecturer at the University of Indonesia

[Nostalgawan Wahyudhi, M.A.](#), Researcher on Political Islam in the Middle East, Research Center for Politics, Indonesia Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)

Moderated by

Dr. Dino Patti Djalal, Founder and Chairman of the Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia

Irish Government representation and diplomatic relations (H.E. Pádraig Francis)

Ireland has maintained diplomatic contact with the Israeli government. For decades, not just since October 2023, the government has spoken frankly to the Israeli government and the Israeli people about the right of the state to exist, but the government feels strongly about in particular the treatment of Palestinians. Even worse, there has been increasing hunger and starvation, positioning Gaza on the brink of famine. And the word famine resonates very strongly with Irish people. So we have been consistently calling for a ceasefire. In the immediate terms, that was to protect the welfare of people in Gaza, prevent injury and death, but now there is a very strong added element which is wanting to allow food and humanitarian access. This conflict is an issue that historically has been very important to a long series of the Irish governments and will continue to be so since there is a very broad consensus across the political and social systems in Ireland.

Key Takeaways

1. Ireland's distinctive support for Palestine, within the Western world, stems from its historical background as both a former colony and a Western European nation. This solidarity is fortified by Ireland's steadfast commitment to military neutral since World War II, coupled with its non-membership in NATO. This neutrality underscores Ireland's stance on global conflicts, including the Israel-Palestine conflict, reflecting its dedication to peace, independence, and diplomatic integrity.
2. European countries, including France and Germany, have recently intensified their focus on the Gaza conflict during a two-day European Council meeting. This

heightened political attention, highlights Europe's growing concern over conflicts in the Middle East, particularly Gaza, mirroring a shifting trend in public opinion across the continent, akin to Ireland's stance on these issues.

3. The disparity in global responses to conflicts like Ukraine underscores a double standard and political divide between the West and other regions. European proximity and cultural ties prompted a more organized EU response, contrasting with past failures such as the Yugoslav conflict, where US-led NATO intervention was required. This highlights the need for equitable responses regardless of geography or political alliances.
4. Indonesia's support for Palestine is deeply rooted in its status as the largest Muslim-majority country, but it extends beyond religious boundaries to encompass a significant portion of the population, including non-Muslims. This broad support reflects a growing awareness among Indonesian youth that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict transcends religious lines and is primarily a struggle between elites rather than a religious issue.
5. Given Indonesia's stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict, realistically, direct intervention may be limited. However, prioritizing intensive engagement, not necessarily formal diplomatic relations, with Israel could be a constructive approach. Strengthening communication channels with Israeli authorities would facilitate effective humanitarian aid delivery to Gaza, aligning with Indonesia's commitment to supporting Palestinian welfare. It's crucial to approach the conflict from a humanitarian perspective, transcending religious considerations to broaden initiatives and foster comprehensive solutions.
6. In January of this year, 71% of people in Ireland agreed that Palestinian people are subjected to apartheid by Israel. The plight of starvation and famine in Gaza has resonated deeply with the Irish, who draw parallels with their own history, particularly the Great Famine. Recently, Irish artists rallied behind a boycott of the South by Southwest Music Festival in the US due to its ties to US armed forces and arms sales to Israel, reflecting Ireland's strong stance on Palestinian rights and humanitarian concerns.
7. Crafting the optimal framework for a two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict demands both resources and unwavering commitment. However, a significant challenge arises: while some countries possess the necessary resources, they lack the commitment to prioritize this issue. Conversely, nations with the requisite commitment often face resource constraints. Addressing this challenge necessitates collaboration among multiple countries willing to dedicate both resources and commitment to the resolution of this longstanding conflict.
8. In navigating the complexities of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the role of the mediator remains unclear. The US is overstretched with domestic politics and may not be seen as impartial due to its close ties to one party which will disqualify it from the role. The Arab League and GCC seem pragmatic with other regional issues, while Ireland's affiliation with one party may limit its mediation potential. The EU emerges as a

potential mediator, as indicated by recent discussions among European leaders, including Macron and Scholz. However, the situation is fluid, and the definitive mediator remains undetermined.

9. The concept of the Abrahamic accord aims to unite humanity beyond religious divides. Rising anti-semitism and Islamophobia are countered by a shift towards rational discourse, especially among Indonesia's younger generation, who view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a political issue rather than a religious one. This perspective fosters hope for improved interreligious relations amidst global tensions.

I. Everlasting Support To Palestine From Ireland and Indonesia

“Ireland’s support to the Palestinian stems from a combination of factors, including Ireland’s historical experience, political advocacy and agency, humanitarian activities, and sense of social solidarity.” - **Barry Colfer**

“Ireland’s support for Palestine has been firm since Frank Aiken (Former Irish Foreign Minister) described the plight of the Palestinian refugees as the main and the most pressing objective of Ireland’s Middle East policy in 1969 and the endorsement of the establishment of a Palestinian state by Ireland, which was the first EEC member state to do so in 1980. This support was also advocated by the Irish parliament, both upper and lower house, the opposition, until the Prime Minister recently, Leo Varadkar.” - **Barry Colfer**

“I see organizations and our foreign minister leading with several partnerships from OIC member countries to make a lobbying approach to major power and it should be expanded.” - **Nostalgawan Wahyudhi**

“Other than through colonial lens, support for the Palestinians is also occurring at the grassroots level because Israel is using starvation as a weapon of war through a political dimension. Meanwhile, the Great Famine that happened in Ireland has a pivotal role in shaping modern Ireland, meaning it still influences Ireland in general until this day. For this particular reason, the people of Ireland maintain their strong support for Palestine. In January of this year, 71% of people in Ireland agree that Palestinian people live under a system of apartheid implemented against them by Israel.” - **Barry Colfer**

“When we talk about Palestinian issues in Indonesia, we tend to consider this from religious connection, which means we are talking about the Muslim Brotherhood that we have with the Palestinian people. But if we use this kind of perspective in supporting Palestinians, we have to realize that 15 to 20% of the Indonesian population are non-Muslim and most of them are also in support of Palestinian independence. We need to have a solid idea of what basis we are supporting Palestine and its independence. So, for example, we will not have any internal debate on religious institutions. We can also enlarge our support for government activities. Those are the 2 important issues when we talk about this conflict.” - **Broto Wardoyo**

“We must provide immediate assistance to help those suffering from critical health conditions and lack of medical supplies and medications. And it is imperative to us that we can work dramatically to ensure that. We need to force the full opening of the border of Rafah immediately and allow the delivery of human humanitarian aid on a large scale because we have seen that the people of Gaza have limited access to food.” - **Nostalgawan Wahyudhi**

“This is important to answer that the delivery of humans to Gaza is not a tag. Prioritizing the safety of medical personnel is also important. During their work in Gaza, we have to collaborate with our parties to find a lasting solution to this and for the long term.” - **Nostalgawan Wahyudhi**

II. Distinct Response to Gaza and Ukraine Conflict

“The sheer proximity influenced European Countries to act on the Ukrainian conflict. Ukraine shares a direct border with European countries. They speak the Slavic language and they are spread throughout Europe so that conflict both physical but also political and social was closer to home. This explains why the EU's response to the conflict in Ukraine was more organized and coordinated. The closer you go to the Russian border and the conflict with Ukraine. The more serious that conflict is perceived, which is why it is more central to the public discourse. The response from the EU to Ukraine is rather new, reflecting how the EU failed to organize a coordinated response to Yugoslavia's conflict. It was NATO, a US-led mission under the presidency of Bill Clinton, that brought the end of that terrible conflict through intervention.” - **Barry Colfer**

“Israel is a liberal country in the Middle East and has strong bonds of family, society, politics, and kinships with European countries. This is why European responses are perceived to be slow and not progressive. The same people who had these bonds are the ones who need to speak up, especially to the Israeli, that this conflict has crossed the line and needs to be ended immediately.” - **Barry Colfer**

“Realistically, Indonesia does not have any role in the future of conflict. Intensive contact, not necessarily a diplomatic relationship with Israel, would be one of the major things to do. If Indonesia wants to do more than what we have done in the past, we need to find a way to at least engage in intensive contact with them. Because the problem with humanitarian aid is not the amount of aid that we have, but how to make sure that we can deliver them to Gaza” - **Broto Wardoyo**

III. Two-State Solution as Both Solution and Complication

“There is an overstretch of the US domestic political context which wouldn't allow it to be in the middle of this conflict. Also, the US would not be an honest broker in this conflict given its close association with one of the parties, which I think would disqualify them from carrying the water.” - **Barry Colfer**

“The two-state solution needs a mediator, the one who carries the water, to mediate between the Palestinian and Israeli, and Indonesia, which strongly supports the two-state solution, could take part in approaching great powers and international institutions. OIC has sent their foreign ministers to lobby major powers, and these initiatives should be expanded. Indonesia

initiative could be started through ASEAN, which has been silent on the Gaza conflict.” - **Nostalgawan Wahyudhi**

“The Good Friday Agreement, a peace treaty which established a durable peace in Northern Ireland from the conflict waged there, is achievable through multi-party talks. All different parties were represented and mediated by people from around the world, namely America, Europe, and Africa. But the key ingredient was political leadership from within the communities. You can have all the mediators that you want, but what you really need is talent, commitment, sympathy, and intelligence from political leaders within Palestine and Israel. This is the right question to ask rather than who can mediate because you can't mediate unless you have that local leadership.” - **Barry Colfer**

“The secret sauce to the Good Friday Agreement, which sustains in Northern Ireland notwithstanding its many faults, is that people in that country, people in that region, people in the north of Ireland. Can identify as Irish, as British, as both, or as neither. So this idea of statehood. Ireland is and I am fundamentally attached to the idea of a two state solution. But this should not be without imagination.” - **Barry Colfer**

“I would like to think that the EU should be the one who carries the water, since Palestine and Israel are essentially in the EU's region. What I regret to say is I think it will be difficult for consensus to break out, given what I said about the different affinities and attachments between European countries in the Middle East.” - **Barry Colfer**

“Who will carry the water? I think we still need to address the elephant in the room. When you talk about finding a solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it takes both resources and commitment. The problem with resources is that only a handful of countries have it. And with the commitment, the Indonesian public is always eager for Indonesia to play a role in this conflict resolution. The Indonesian government keeps saying that we will do our best, but I do not really understand whether we in Indonesia realize the complexity of a two-state solution. As far as I am concerned, I never heard that our government works in detail about a two-state solution. So it is only a political campaign that we give to our people. It is only a political slogan.” - **Broto Wardoyo**

“This two-state solution is very different from what Norway has done in the past. They really consider what is the best possible scheme for a two-state solution and they propose it with the support of the US. There is something that we are lacking now. We do not have the resources, and countries with resources do not have the commitment. So, I do not think it is a task for certain countries. It is a task for multiple countries that would willingly spare the resources and commit to these issues.” - **Broto Wardoyo**

IV. Regionalism's Pivotal Role To Ease This Crisis

“It will be difficult for consensus to break out in the EU, so I point towards entities like the GCC and regional players in the Middle East since they have the regional context and regional knowledge to mediate some kind of future for this terrible conflict.” - **Barry Colfer**

“Indonesia as a country can support major powers, US, Russia, and China, through international institutions like the United Nations. We can share political initiatives to be

implemented and realized in Palestine. As our part in the nation, we have a strong commitment and responsibility because Palestinians are participating in the Asia Africa Conference, and the country is not independent yet. - **Nostalgawan Wahyudhi**

“Actually, a lot of regional powers such as the European Union, African Union, and even the Union of South American nations get more massive politically after this political upward trend. I think we can sit together in the United Nations as part of the resolution to the conflict, involving Palestinian Hamas and also Israel. Restoration to make a peace in one side and the other side, we actually see what roles ASEAN, as a fruitful representative of the institution in Southeast Asia, can play.” - **Nostalgawan Wahyudhi**

“These two countries should accept the proposal, but Israel and Hamas are never accepted. This makes us very hard to impose this kind of solution in this part of the conflict, since Israel and Hamas do not accept this.” - **Nostalgawan Wahyudhi**

V. The West and the UN Resolution

“14 countries approved the resolution and only the US still abstains from this condition, but what the US does in this situation is very interesting. This is for the first time In my opinion, since the US has abstained from the solution. I think this is a good few points that we can take into account. The US is starting to look at points, like neighboring nations, and there is a perception and common understanding that the US has a tendency to be a full supporter of any UN resolutions.” - **Nostalgawan Wahyudhi**

“Ireland has been committed and actively supporting a two-state solution since 1980, but it has just happened today. There are two reasons for this. First, little Ireland with 5 million people. Even within the EU context, a small player needs to move forward with friends. There needs to be a block of countries to move together to have any real influence. Second, it has something to do with the capability of the Palestinians to fulfill statehood, such as governing its people, establishing territory, and being recognized by other countries.” - **Barry Colfer**

“If we look into the conflict itself, It seems that the Israeli government will not comply with any resolution calling for a ceasefire and stopping the hostilities in Gaza. That is for sure.” - **Broto Wardoyo**

“Ireland has been one of the most prominent countries advocating Palestine, and this is special because Ireland is a Western country and other Western countries are doing the opposite. Generally, this phenomenon is seen through the postcolonial lens and Ireland is unusual in being a Western European country that is also a former colony. It shapes Ireland's perspective toward Palestine.” - **Barry Colfer**

“Indonesia may focus on pushing urgent humanitarian intervention in Gaza as a sort of agenda after the adoption of Resolutions 2728. Our focus is on achieving a ceasefire and ending the conflict, but this is also crucial to address the urgent need of the Palestinian population in Gaza, particularly a huge number of refugees in Rafah.” - **Nostalgawan Wahyudhi**