

INDONESIA'S DIPLOMACY STRATEGY TO PROMOTE PALESTINIAN INDEPENDENCE IN 2019-2024

Faathima^{1*}, Ali Musa Harahap², Alde Mulia Putra³, Fathan Fauzan Alhakim⁴

¹ Master of Human Sciences in Political Science, Abdulhamid Abusulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

^{2&3} Lecturer of UNIDA Gontor, Department of International Relations, Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia.

⁴ Department of International Relations, Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia.

Corresponding Email: faathima.f@live.iium.edu.my

Abstract

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This article discussed Indonesia's diplomatic strategy in voicing Palestinian independence between 2019 and 2024. The main focus of this study is to analyzed the steps taken by the Indonesian government, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels, as well as its active role in international forums such as the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. This study also explored the influence of domestic and global factors on Indonesia's foreign policy, including community solidarity and Indonesia's geopolitical position. Using a qualitative approach, this study aims to provide a comprehensive picture of Indonesia's diplomatic strategy and the challenges faced in promoting Palestinian rights. The results of this study show that Indonesia's diplomacy strategy to voice Palestinian independence is first with the strategy of public diplomacy, bilateral diplomacy, and multilateral diplomacy. With these various strategies, Indonesia shows that Indonesia always supports Palestinian independence.

Keywords: Strategy, Public Diplomacy, Free and Active Foreign Policy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has persisted for centuries, becoming increasingly complex following the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The intensification of this conflict reached its peak with the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. The occupation has led to significant human rights violations against the Palestinian people, such as restrictions on movement, detention without due process, and the construction of illegal settlements.¹ As the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, Indonesia holds a strong emotional and moral connection to the Palestinian issue. Support for Palestine has been an integral part of Indonesia's foreign policy since its independence. Indonesia has consistently advocated for the struggle for Palestinian independence and the rights of the Palestinian people in international forums, such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Despite various challenges, Indonesia's diplomacy for Palestine continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to peace and justice. Indonesia's active role in addressing the Palestinian issue not only reflects its solidarity with the Palestinian people but also enhances its standing on the global stage as a country that upholds the principles of humanity and international law.² The success of Indonesia's diplomatic efforts for Palestine will have a positive impact not only on the Palestinian people but also on Indonesia's reputation and influence in the international arena. There are several reasons why Indonesia fully supports Palestine. One of the primary reasons is Indonesia's historical experience as a nation that endured colonization. The bitterness, hardship, and suffering experienced during that time serve as a reminder for Indonesia of the injustices of colonialism.³ As a religious country, Indonesia adheres to the principle that all religions reject the violation of human rights by one nation against another. None of the major religions justify colonization. Jerusalem, as the sacred city for three major world religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—holds special significance.⁴

The strong relationship between Indonesia and Palestine is influenced by several factors, including theological considerations. Palestine holds significant historical and religious importance for Muslims worldwide, particularly due to the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

¹ Alatas, SH (1990).*The Voice of Indonesia: Domination and Democracy in the World Order*. London: Zed Books

²Hikam, MAS (2019). "Indonesia's Role in Promoting Human Rights." *Journal of Southeast Asian Affairs*, 36(2), 82-98.

³ Rizal Sukma, *Indonesia and the Muslim World: Islam and Secularism in the Foreign Policy of Indonesia*, (London: Routledge, 2003), hlm. 45

⁴ Sukma, Rizal. "The Evolution of Indonesia's Foreign Policy: An Indonesian View." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (1995): 237-252.

This historical and spiritual connection has strengthened the bond between the Indonesian and Palestinian people.⁵ It holds immense religious value as the location where Prophet Muhammad embarked on his Isra Mikraj journey. "Glory be to Allah, who led His servant one night from Al-Masjid-al-Haram to Al-Masjid al-Aqsa, which We have blessed around it, so that We may show him some of our signs (of greatness). Indeed, He is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (QS. Al-Isra: 1). Furthermore, the Al-Aqsa Mosque was the first Qibla (direction of prayer) for Muslims before it was later changed to the Kaaba. As narrated in a Hadith: "We prayed with the Prophet facing Baitul Maqdis for 17 months, then the Prophet changed the direction of the Qibla (to the Kaaba)" (HR. Bukhari and Muslim).

The Palestinian people are so close in spirit and so strong is the sense of brotherhood of the Palestinian people to the Indonesian nation. Not only theological and historical factors, but humanitarian factors are also the reasons why Indonesia has a close relationship with Palestine. Even often helping the Palestinian people in various forms. Because, there are no religious teachings or state constitutions that teach colonization, persecution, and murder of civilians. Therefore, let us help the Palestinian people by praying for the independence and welfare of Palestine, donating through official institutions recognized by the government, and supporting the diplomatic steps of the Indonesian government in realizing world peace. With this background in mind, it is important to further examine the challenges and impacts of Indonesian diplomacy for Palestine in the 2019-2024 period. This analysis provides in-depth insights into Indonesia's contribution to resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict and the important role of Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi in the process. In addition, this study also provides strategic recommendations for Indonesia to strengthen its role in supporting peace and justice in the Middle East in the future.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on document analysis and case studies. This approach allowed researchers to collect and analyze relevant secondary data, such as official reports, diplomatic statements, and journal articles, to comprehensively understand the role and effectiveness of Indonesian diplomacy regarding Palestine. Case studies were also employed to illustrate the implementation of Indonesian diplomacy in real-world situations.

This study aimed to investigate the role of Indonesian diplomacy in the context of its support for Palestine. The subject of the study was Indonesian diplomacy, which was analyzed in the context of its involvement in the Palestinian issue. The objects of the study included various countries and international organizations involved in the

⁵ Dewi Fortuna Anwar, *Indonesia's Strategic Culture: The Politics of Foreign Policy Decision Making*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1996), hlm. 72

Palestinian issue, with a focus on their perceptions and support for Palestine. For the research limitations, the analysis focused on the leadership period of Indonesia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Retno Marsudi, who served from 2014 to 2024. Thus, this study confined its analysis to her leadership period from 2019 to 2024.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The history of relations between Indonesia and Palestine is clear proof of Indonesia's diplomatic commitment to the principles of justice and the independence of oppressed peoples. Since the proclamation of Indonesian independence in 1945, Indonesia has shown strong support for Palestine, which has not achieved full independence due to the prolonged conflict with Israel. This relationship has deep roots and is based on the values of solidarity, humanity, and anti-colonialism that have been embraced by Indonesia since the struggle for independence.⁶ Based on the components of a free and active foreign policy, namely anti-colonialism and imperialism, Indonesia consistently supports the independence struggles of other nations that are still under colonialism in a fair and profitable manner.

Indonesia's support for the Palestinian struggle begins even before Indonesia's independence. In 1938, Indonesian youth organizations such as Jong Islamieten Bond showed their solidarity with Palestine by sending letters of support to the Palestinian people who face oppression from the British colonial government.⁷ As the nationalist movement in Indonesia grows stronger, support for Palestine becomes more apparent. After the proclamation of Indonesian independence on August 17, 1945, Indonesia's support for Palestine strengthened. This was marked by Indonesia's refusal to recognize Israel as an independent state when Israel declared its independence in 1948.

In 1974, Palestine obtained observer status at the United Nations (UN) thanks to strong support from OIC member countries, including Indonesia. The Indonesian government consistently supports all UN resolutions condemning Israeli aggression and calling for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.⁸ During this era, Indonesia was also actively involved in various international conferences discussing the

⁶Matondang, E. (2021). Projection of United States Foreign Policy in the Biden Administration Era and Its Implications for Indonesian Diplomacy. *Journal of Defense and National Defense*, 11(3), 119-137.

⁷Imaduddin, MH By: Muhammad Hanif Imaduddin ID: 20180510341 International Relations Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences.

⁸Alia, N., Zebua, KV, Simbolon, SD, Haliawan, PO, Noer, A., & Yuningsih, NY (2024). Comparative Study: Implementation of Indonesian and Kuwaiti Foreign Policies Regarding the Provision of Humanitarian Aid to the Palestine–Israel Polemic. *Journal of Government Studies: Journal of Government, Social and Politics*, 10(1), 236

Palestinian issue, including the Non-Aligned Summit, which also supported the Palestinian struggle. Although Soeharto is known for his pragmatic approach to foreign policy, the Palestinian issue remained one of the main agendas in Indonesia's foreign policy. This shows that support for Palestine is not only based on political considerations but also on moral principles that are firmly held.

In the era of President Abdurrahman Wahid, Indonesia continued to emphasize its support for Palestine by prioritizing dialogue and diplomacy as a way to resolve the conflict.⁹ During the era of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, support for Palestine was further enhanced through various multilateral diplomatic efforts. Indonesia was actively involved in the Middle East peace process, including supporting international initiatives to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2015, Indonesia hosted the International Conference to Support Palestine in Jakarta, which was attended by world leaders and international figures. In this conference, Indonesia reaffirmed its commitment to support the Palestinian struggle and called on the international community to take real action in supporting Palestinian independence.

In 2018, Indonesia and Turkey proposed a resolution at the UN General Assembly rejecting the United States' unilateral recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This resolution was supported by the majority of UN member states, demonstrating the success of Indonesian diplomacy in rallying international support for Palestine.¹⁰ Indonesia also supports Palestine's efforts to become a full member of the UN, although this effort still faces various challenges. The period 2019-2024 marks a critical phase in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict continues to simmer, fueled by increasingly complex political, religious, and territorial tensions.

The dynamics of the conflict between Israel and Palestine cover a wide range of aspects, from changes in government policy, and escalating violence, to the role of international actors that influence the course of the conflict.¹¹ One of the most important events that shaped the dynamics of the conflict in the early 2019-2024 period was the relocation of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem in 2018. The move symbolically recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital, which is highly controversial and seen as a major blow to peace efforts. The move has drawn strong reactions from Palestinians and other Arab and Muslim countries.¹² For Palestinians, East Jerusalem is the capital of their

⁹Rofiatul Nurhasanah, Indonesia's Involvement in the Peace Process of the Palestinian-Israel Conflict.*Nirwasita Journal* Vol.5 No.1March 2024, Pages: 44-57.

¹⁰Subarkah, AR, & Rachman, JB (2020). Destination branding Indonesia as a halal tourism destination.*Journal of Tourism: Destinations, Hospitality and Travel*,4(2), 84-97

¹¹Fatimah, R., & Hidayat, S. (2019). Perception of Indonesian Millennial Generation on the Palestine Issue. *Journal of Indonesian Social and Political Studies*, 5(1), 25-40.

¹²Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. (2019). Regulation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Number 3 of 2019 concerning General Guidelines for Foreign Relations

future state, and the unilateral recognition is seen as undermining the prospects for a long-sought two-state solution. In response, violence has escalated in Gaza and the West Bank, where large-scale protests have erupted and clashes with Israeli forces have escalated.¹³ This period was also marked by the normalization of diplomatic relations between Israel and several Arab countries, mediated by the United States through the Abraham Accords. In 2020, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco signed agreements to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

This agreement was a major breakthrough in Middle East diplomacy, but it also caused controversy. From the Palestinian perspective, the normalization was seen as a betrayal by Arab countries that had previously committed to not recognizing Israel until a just solution for Palestine was reached. This conflict has a significant impact on the stability of the Middle East region and the world. The feud between Israel and Palestine affects the relations of Arab countries with Israel, although some countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have normalized relations through the Abraham Accords. However, countries such as Iran, Syria, and Lebanon continue to view Israel as an enemy¹⁴. On the other hand, this conflict also affects global policies, especially in terms of diplomacy and humanitarian aid. Western countries, such as the United States, tend to support Israel, while many developing countries, including Indonesia, are pro-Palestine.

Indonesia's relationship with Palestine has been going on for a long time, based on solidarity, principles of justice, and support for Palestinian independence. Since the era of Soekarno, Indonesia has been one of the most vocal countries in supporting Palestine on the international stage. In the 2019-2024 period, under the leadership of Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, this relationship has been further strengthened through various diplomatic steps and humanitarian assistance.¹⁵ As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2019-2020 period, Indonesia uses this platform to strengthen the Palestinian position and advocate for a two-state solution. In addition, Indonesia also plays an important role in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

by Regional Governments. TEU Indonesia. Jakarta: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

¹³Arfino, B. (2020). Analysis of Islamic Factors in Indonesian Foreign Policy During the Administration of President Joko Widodo for the 2014-2019 Period (Bachelor's thesis, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, UIN Jakarta).

¹⁴Hanifah, Z., & Saputra, G. (2020). Indonesia's Solidarity with Palestine: Historical Perspective. *Journal of Indonesian History and Diplomacy Studies*, 7(2), 57-73.

¹⁵Ho, H. (2019). *Application of International Humanitarian Law in the Armed Conflict Between Palestine and Israel*. Law and Society.

Indonesia's involvement in these two organizations shows the consistency of Indonesia's foreign policy which continues to support Palestine, while also demonstrating Indonesia's commitment to rallying international support for Palestinian independence.¹⁶ In addition to diplomatic efforts, Indonesia also continues to strengthen relations with Palestine through humanitarian assistance and bilateral cooperation. During this period, Indonesia provided various forms of assistance to the Palestinian people facing difficult humanitarian situations, especially in Gaza which has been under prolonged blockade. The assistance provided included medical supplies, food, and other logistical assistance channeled through various international and national humanitarian agencies.¹⁷ The construction of the Indonesian Hospital in Gaza is an important symbol of this cooperation. The hospital is funded by donations from the Indonesian people and is one of the largest humanitarian projects carried out by Indonesia abroad.

Several major countries, such as the United States, which has strategic relations with Indonesia, often support Israeli policies. On the other hand, the normalization of relations between several Arab countries and Israel through the Abraham Accords shows that solidarity with Palestine in the Islamic world is no longer uniform¹⁸. The relationship between Indonesia and Palestine is not only limited to politics and humanitarian aid, but also includes social and cultural aspects. Palestine is often invited to participate in cultural and educational activities in Indonesia. Indonesia has the potential to play a bigger role in promoting peace between Israel and Palestine. As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has the legitimacy to be a neutral but firm mediator in supporting Palestinian rights. In addition, Indonesia can leverage international forums such as the G20 and ASEAN to mobilize global support for a two-state solution.¹⁹ At the domestic level, the government needs to strengthen cooperation with civil society organizations to ensure that humanitarian aid and solidarity campaigns for Palestine remain sustainable.

Free and active foreign policy is the main principle in Indonesian foreign policy as stated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution. Free means that Indonesia does not side with any particular bloc or power in international political affairs, thus maintaining

¹⁶Matondang, E. (2021). Projection of United States Foreign Policy in the Biden Administration Era and Its Implications for Indonesian Diplomacy. *Journal of Defense and National Defense*, 11(3), 119-137.

¹⁷Muchsin, MA (2015). Palestine and Israel: History, Conflict, and Future. *Miqot*

¹⁸Arifin, M., & Wahyuni, A. (2020). Opportunities and Challenges of Normalizing Indonesia-Israel Relations. *Journal of Indonesian Diplomatic Studies*, 15(2), 102-119.

¹⁹Fatimah, R., & Hidayat, S. (2019). Perception of Indonesian Millennial Generation towards Palestine Issue. *Journal of Indonesian Social and Political Studies*, 5(1), 25-40.

independence and freedom in determining its stance. Active means that Indonesia is not passive, but plays an active role in maintaining world peace, eliminating colonialism, and promoting justice and international cooperation. This principle reflects Indonesia's attitude as a country that wants to be constructively involved on the world stage, while still prioritizing its sovereignty and national interests. In Nicholas J.'s book entitled "Public Diplomacy: Lesson from the Past" states that an actor's efforts to manage the international environment by collecting and processing data about the public and their opinions abroad. Retno Marsudi brings strategies and also efforts to fight for Palestinian independence in international forums.

One of the major challenges in Indonesian diplomacy during this period is Israel's planned annexation of the West Bank and the expansion of illegal settlements in the region. In 2020, Israel under the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced plans to annex most of the Jordan Valley and settlements in the West Bank, a move that received widespread condemnation from the international community. Indonesia, through Retno Marsudi, became one of the most vocal countries in opposing this plan.²⁰ Indonesia firmly rejects the annexation and calls it a blatant violation of international law and UN Security Council Resolutions.²¹

In the Retno Marsudi era, Indonesian diplomacy also focused on garnering wider international support for the Palestinian struggle. Indonesia took an active role in various multilateral forums, including the UN, OIC, and the Non-Aligned Movement, to ensure that the Palestinian issue remained a top agenda in global diplomacy. One significant effort was when Indonesia became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2019-2020.²² One of the important achievements was the International Conference to Support Palestine held in Jakarta in 2020. In this conference, Indonesia reaffirmed its support for Palestine and called on the international community to take concrete steps in supporting Palestinian independence.²³ Indonesia's diplomacy towards Palestine in the Retno Marsudi era also includes aspects of humanitarian assistance and bilateral cooperation. The humanitarian situation in Palestine, especially in Gaza, continues to deteriorate due to the prolonged Israeli blockade, military attacks, and the COVID-19

²⁰Arfino, B. (2020). Analysis of Islamic Factors in Indonesian Foreign Policy During the Administration of President Joko Widodo for the 2014-2019 Period (Bachelor's thesis, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, UIN Jakarta).

²¹Subarkah, AR, & Rachman, JB (2020). Destination branding Indonesia as a halal tourism destination. *Journal of Tourism: Destinations, Hospitality and Travel*, 4(2), 84-97.

²²Bartlett, Kate. 2024. "South Africa Sues Israel at the International Court of Justice for Accusing Gaza of Genocide." Voaindonesia.Com. January 11, 2024.

²³PARLIAMENTARY.

pandemic. Realizing this, Indonesia has tried to provide real assistance to the Palestinian people, both through material assistance and diplomatic support.

One of the biggest challenges is the changing geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East, including the normalization of relations between Israel and several Arab countries through the Abraham Accords.²⁴ President Joko Widodo and Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi have actively made the Palestinian issue the main agenda in state visits to various countries, especially in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. One important step is strengthening cooperation with member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Indonesia also supports Palestine through economic empowerment efforts, one of which is by initiating bilateral trade cooperation. In the 2019-2024 period, Indonesia provides preferential access for Palestinian products to enter the Indonesian market. For example, superior Palestinian products, such as dates and olive oil, are given low import tax incentives. This step aims to support the economic growth of Palestine which has been severely impacted by the blockade and occupation. On the other hand, Indonesia invites friendly countries, including in the ASEAN region, to invest in Palestine. One of the main strategies in Indonesia's bilateral diplomacy for Palestine is to strengthen relations with Middle Eastern countries. This region has an important role in fighting for Palestinian independence due to its geographical proximity and cultural ties. Indonesia has close relations with countries such as Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, and Qatar, which have long been known to support Palestine.

Indonesia's Strategy in the Form of Multilateral Diplomacy

Indonesia has affirmed its commitment to support Palestinian independence through various international forums since the beginning of Indonesia's independence. As a country that bases its foreign policy on the principles of justice, human rights, and anti-colonialism, Indonesia has effectively utilized multilateral diplomacy to fight for the rights of the Palestinian people. This multilateral diplomacy has become one of the main pillars of Indonesia's foreign policy during the 2019–2024 period, especially in the United Nations (UN), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) forums.

During its time as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 2019–2020, Indonesia consistently placed the Palestinian issue as one of its top

²⁴Suryani, F. (2023). The Influence of Indonesian Multilateral Diplomacy on the Palestine-Israel Conflict. *Journal of Southeast Asian Security Studies*, 10(3), 221-237.

priorities.²⁵ In the 2019–2024 period, Indonesia also played an active role in drafting the OIC joint statement rejecting the “Deal of the Century,” a peace plan proposed by the United States that was considered detrimental to Palestine. Indonesia emphasized that only a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders and Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine could be accepted by the international community.²⁶ However, the veto pattern in the UN Security Council is often a major obstacle. For example, although Indonesia has succeeded in submitting several important resolutions supporting Palestine, most of them have stalled at the Security Council level due to vetoes from permanent countries that have strategic relations with Israel. At the OIC level, Indonesia plays a significant role in uniting Muslim countries. However, one of the main challenges is political fragmentation in the Islamic world, especially due to internal conflicts and geopolitical competition among OIC member countries.

In-depth analysis shows that Indonesia's multilateral diplomacy for Palestine during 2019–2024 reflects the strength of principle-based diplomacy. By focusing on the UN, OIC, and NAM, Indonesia has succeeded in keeping the Palestinian issue relevant amidst the changing dynamics of global politics. This effort demonstrates a commitment that is not only strategic but also moral in supporting Palestinian independence as an integral part of a just and peaceful global vision. The success of Indonesia's multilateral diplomacy is determined by its ability to navigate geopolitical challenges and manage fragmentation among friendly countries. In commemorating the Asia-Africa Conference, Indonesia encouraged a declaration of support for Palestine and strengthened the commitment of member countries to support the struggle of the Palestinian people in international forums.²⁷ Indonesia also uses multilateral platforms to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestine. One important initiative is coordination with UN agencies such as the Palestine Refugee Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). By partnering with other donor countries, Indonesia encourages international fundraising to support education, health, and basic infrastructure development.

IV. CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that the history of relations between Indonesia and Palestine is real evidence of Indonesia's diplomatic commitment to the principles of

²⁵Yuliawati, P., & Setiawan, R. (2018). The Influence of the Palestine-Israel Conflict on Indonesia's Relations with the United States. *Journal of International Relations and Indonesian Economics*, 8(4), 112-130.

²⁶Hanifah, Z., & Saputra, G. (2020). Indonesia's Solidarity with Palestine: Historical Perspective. *Journal of Indonesian History and Diplomacy Studies*, 7(2), 57-73.

²⁷Aditya, R., & Wibisono, T. (2022). Analysis of the Impact of Indonesian Diplomacy in the Israel-Palestine Conflict. *Nusantara Journal of International Relations*, 14(2), 101-120.

justice and the independence of oppressed nations. Since the proclamation of Indonesian independence in 1945, Indonesia has shown strong support for Palestine, which until now has not yet achieved independence. Indonesia's support for the Palestinian struggle began even before Indonesia's independence.

The result of this research, a free and active foreign policy is the main principle in Indonesian foreign policy as stated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. And also as stated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, namely "colonialism in the world must be abolished because it is not in accordance with humanity and justice". The statement above shows that Indonesia does not really support colonialism in the world. With that, Indonesia helps support Palestinian independence with various diplomatic strategies, namely public diplomacy using the media, then bilateral diplomacy strategies, namely Indonesia establishing relations with various neighboring countries to gain support for Palestine and finally, multilateral diplomacy strategies, namely Indonesia making efforts to support Palestinian independence in various international forums. With the various diplomatic strategies used by Indonesia for Palestine, it shows that Indonesia really upholds Palestinian independence.

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