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# The Phenomenon of *Julid Fi Sabilillah* on Instagram as a Form of Rejection of Israel's Genocide against Palestine: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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**ABSTRACT**

Julid Fi Sabilillah emerged as a response to the massive genocide by Israel that began on October 7, 2023. This research aims to unveil the phenomenon of Julid Fi Sabilillah on Instagram using a critical discourse analysis approach and to explain its role and influence regarding the genocide committed by Israel against Palestine. The methodology employed in this study is qualitative, utilizing Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model. The findings indicate that the phenomenon of Julid Fi Sabilillah on Instagram represents an effort by pro-Palestinian Indonesian citizens to resist Israel, triggered by the genocide that started on October 7, 2023. This is manifested through comments and posts laden with protests against Israel and calls for public participation. Julid Fi Sabilillah plays a role in undermining the morale of IDF (Israel Defense Forces) soldiers and countering their propaganda on social media, causing stress and disruption that leads them to lock and limit their Instagram accounts.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The number of internet users in Indonesia has risen to 221 million, according to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2024). This increase has been accompanied by the proliferation of various social media platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. The widespread use of social media has facilitated the rapid dissemination of information globally, including news regarding Israel's genocide against Palestine, which has intensified since 7 October 2023. According to the official Instagram account @aljazeeraenglish, between 7 October 2023 and 30 May 2024, the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli attacks reached 36,244, with 81,777 others injured. These figures are expected to rise due to the ongoing conflict between the two parties..

The devastating facts surrounding the genocide, which has claimed numerous lives, are readily accessible to Indonesian society through social media platforms, particularly Instagram. According to *We Are Social*, as cited by *databoks.katadata.co.*Indonesia ranks fourth globally in terms of the number of Instagram users. Instagram hosts a multitude of posts concerning the situation in Palestine, comprising photos, video reels, and Instagram stories shared directly by account holders. As a predominantly Muslim nation, Indonesia has responded to this situation with protests, including participating in pro-Palestine solidarity movements.

The diverse forms of protest from various groups in society indicate that Israel's actions against Palestine have exceeded acceptable boundaries and violated humanitarian laws. In response to these atrocities, a new phenomenon has emerged on social media, termed *Julid Fi Sabilillah*, as a form of protest and rejection of Israel. This phenomenon represents a movement by Indonesian netizens against Zionist oppression on social media, aimed at amplifying the narrative in favour of Palestine through various strategies to achieve an independent Palestine (Greschinov, 2024). These protests and criticisms are primarily directed at the social media accounts of Israeli entities.

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The *Julid Fi Sabilillah* movement first appeared in an Instagram post by @greschinov, calling on all Indonesians to join the struggle against Israel's genocide of Palestine. Indonesian netizens began to engage in this movement by posting offensive and critical comments on the accounts of Israeli entities. This activity disrupted the targeted accounts, prompting some to restrict access or lock their comment sections.

The virality of the *Julid Fi Sabilillah* phenomenon, as a form of Indonesian netizens' advocacy for Palestine on social media, builds on prior research. Isna et al. (2023) explored Indonesian netizens' efforts to combat Israel's genocide through declarative speech acts on Twitter. Their findings revealed that Indonesian netizens, through their discourses, offer an alternative approach to fostering global peace. In addition, Alakklouk & Gülnar (2023) in their research entitled The Impact of Citizen Journalism in News Coverage of The Israeli Attacks on Gaza revealed how the media was influential in the war between Palestine and Israel, this research inspired activists, journalists, and students to utilise social media as a new forum in fighting for Palestinian independence and overthrowing Israel's position in Palestine. Another study investigated the role of the Hassan Bin Tsabit Brigade in supporting Palestine on TikTok, noting that while *Julid Fi Sabilillah* was not explicitly addressed, it was part of broader forms of Indonesian netizens' support (Saputra, 2024).

Based on the aforementioned studies, a connection relevant to this research can be drawn, namely that social media can serve as a platform to support Palestine in resisting Israeli occupation. This study aims to explore the phenomenon of linguistic spaces within Instagram as a social media platform, particularly concerning the genocide perpetrated by Israel against Palestine, which has led to the emergence of the phenomenon known as *Julid Fi Sabilillah*. This phenomenon warrants investigation using a critical discourse analysis approach, examining discourse from textual and sociocultural dimensions. Critical discourse analysis posits that discourse is always intertwined with external factors that influence its meaning (Rohana & Syamsuddin, 2015). Language in media is not merely a reflection of reality but can also create reality through the discourse it presents (Haryatmoko, 2022). Furthermore, critical discourse analysis is uniquely suited to examining social issues related to power, dominance, hegemony, ideology, class, gender, race, discrimination, interests, reproduction, institutions, social structures, and social orders (Supriyadi, 2015).

In light of this, this research employs critical discourse analysis as a linguistic study aimed at addressing social issues concerning the Palestine-Israel conflict. The application of critical discourse analysis is essential as it fosters a critical paradigm among social media users, encouraging them to engage thoughtfully with phenomena occurring on social media platforms. Through textual (micro), discursive practice (meso), and sociocultural (macro) analyses, the phenomenon of *Julid Fi Sabilillah* on Instagram and its role and influence concerning Israel's genocide against Palestine will be examined.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research approach. According to Creswell, qualitative research seeks to understand the meanings individuals or groups attribute to social issues or problems they encounter (2014). It employs an inductive approach to comprehensively explore the experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of the subjects under investigation. The method utilized in this research is Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. The research stages include developing research instruments, collecting data, analyzing data using critical discourse analysis, and formulating conclusions.

The data sources for this research consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected using three techniques: documentation, interviews, and observation. Documentation involved analyzing comments by Indonesian netizens on the personal accounts of IDF (Israel Defense Forces) soldiers (@shmuel.assuline, @avi_markson, @dror_ben_harush_), the official IDF account (@idf), the official account of Israel (@stateofisrael), and the account of the Israeli Prime Minister (@b.netanyahu). A total of 153 comments were gathered. Additionally, documentation was conducted on 14 posts from the account of an initiator and commander of J*ulid Fi Sabilillah*, @greschinov. Comments and posts were collected between October 7, 2023, and May 30, 2024, using purposive sampling techniques. Interviews were conducted with two informants: the owner of the @greschinov account and Dr. Wahyu Gunawan, M.Si., a sociology expert. Observations were carried out on the accounts of commenting netizens and the @greschinov account. Secondary data were obtained through a literature review of relevant sources. To ensure data validity, the researchers employed prolonged observation, methodological triangulation, and member checking.

Data analysis followed the framework of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, which comprises three levels: micro, meso, and macro. At the micro level, the analysis focuses on the text, employing descriptive methods.

The text may include written content, speech, images, or combinations thereof. At the meso level, the focus shifts to discursive practices, encompassing the production, distribution, and consumption of texts, with interpretation as the analytical method. This stage explains the role and influence of *Julid Fi Sabilillah* concerning Israel's genocide against Palestine. At the macro level, the analysis targets social practices—situations, institutions, and societal structures—and uses explanation as the analytical method (Munfarida, 2014). The results of data analysis and conclusions are presented using informal methods, namely, in ordinary words rather than symbols or equations (Zaim, 2014).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data analysis was conducted using Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, which comprises three stages: text analysis (micro-level), discourse practice (meso-level), and sociocultural practice (macro-level).

### *3.1. The Phenomenon of Julid Fi Sabilillah from the Perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis*

#### *3.1.1. Text Analysis (Micro-Level)*

a. Comments by Indonesian Netizens

Netizens' comments were categorised based on their targets: IDF soldiers, Israel, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. The analysis revealed linguistic features, such as vocabulary choices, modal verbs, and imperative sentences, aimed at specific purposes.

1) Vocabulary Choices

Vocabulary choices were employed as a means of resistance by netizens against Israel. These choices have varied meanings but share a common goal: representing the IDF soldiers, Israel, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. The vocabulary used by netizens is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Vocabulary

| Vocabulary | Frequency | Example Clauses/Sentences |
|---|---|---|
| *Kalah* (defeated) | 5 | (1) *IDF **kalah** dari Hamas* (Hamas defeated IDF.) |
| *Negara numpang* (parasitic state) | 2 | (2) *Woi Israel numpang, bayar kontrakan woi, **negara numpang**, gak punya tanah air* (Hey Israel, you are just a **parasitic state**! Pay your rent, a country without its own homeland.) |
| Setanyahu | 9 | (3) Playing victim**, Netanyahu (**Netanyahu is playing the victim.**)** |

Table 1 highlights the dominant vocabulary choices for each netizen comment category. The IDF is most frequently represented using the word *kalah* (defeated), Israel with *negara numpang* (parasitic state), and the Israeli Prime Minister with *Setanyahu*. In Example (1), netizens used the term *kalah* (defeated), followed by Hamas, to indicate that the IDF is inferior to Hamas, a Palestinian freedom-fighting force. In Example (2), the phrase *negara numpang* refers to Israel, portraying it as a colonial state attempting to seize Palestinian land. In Example (3), the term *Setanyahu* replaces Netanyahu's name, implying a mocking tone.

2) Use of Modality

Modality was used in sentences that reflected netizens' attitudes towards events or realities. Modality is also linked to the authority of netizens (Fairclough, 1989).

**Table 2.** Modality

| Modality | Frequency | Example Clauses/Sentences |
|---|---|---|
| Will | 9 | (4) Your destruction **will** come, Israel, remember this! |
| *Harus* (must) | 1 | (5) *...manusia yang menjadi pendukungnya **harus** merasakan anak-anaknya dibom, ditembaki, dihilangkan anggota tubuh...* (...those supporting them **must** feel their children being bombed, shot, dismembered...) |
| Must | 1 | (6) Israel **must** be deleted from the earth. |

Table 2 shows the modalities used by netizens in their comments. The dominant modality, marked by the auxiliary verb 'will', indicates that netizens' statements often concern the future (Fairclough, 1995). In Example (4), the modality 'will' conveys the inevitability of IDF's downfall, viewed as a consequence of their actions against innocent people. Examples (5) and (6) use harus and 'must' to express netizens' condemnation of Israel, demanding sanctions such as bombings, shootings, mutilations, or even the erasure of the state itself.

3) Use of Imperative Sentences

An imperative sentence is a sentence that requires the interlocutor or other person to do something requested by the speaker (Astri et al., 2020). In this context, imperative sentences reflect netizens' attempts to influence others to adopt their ideology through calls to action, exhortations, or commands.

**Table 3.** Imperative Sentences

| Imperative Sentences |
|---|
| (7) Stop starving babies, Benjamin! |
| (8) Stop lying to your whole country |
| (9) *Hey….. @b.netanyahu cepat hentikan genosida,,,,, dan segera turun dari jabatanmu,,,,,,,* (Hey @b.netanyahu, put an end to the genocide and step down now!) |

Table 3 indicates that the primary target of netizens' imperative sentences was Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. This aligns with Netanyahu's authoritative role in shaping Israel's policies, including those on military aggression against Palestine. In Example (7), netizens urged Netanyahu to cease killing Palestinian babies with indiscriminate bombings. Example (8) demanded that Netanyahu stop deceiving his citizens. Example (9) pressed Netanyahu to end the genocide and step down from his position as Prime Minister.

b. Posts by @Greschinov

The posts by the account @greschinov were classified into four categories: *Julid Fi Sabilillah* calls and directives; posts related to Zionist and Israeli ideology; updates and diplomatic news; and educational posts about boycotting Israel-affiliated products. Similar to netizen comments, these posts were analyzed linguistically for vocabulary choices, modality use, and imperative constructions.

1) Vocabulary Choices

Table 4 summarizes the predominant vocabulary choices for each post category.

**Table 4.** Vocabulary

| Vocabulary | Frequency | Example Clauses/Sentences |
|---|---|---|
| *Perjuangan* (struggle) | 18 | (10) *Aktivitas Julid Fi Sabilillah yang beragam akan meningkatkan semangat dalam **perjuanga**n* (Diverse *Julid Fi Sabilillah* activities will boost the spirit of the **struggle**) |
| *Menuduh* (accuse) | 3 | (11) *Zionis sangat suka **menuduh** pihak lain melakukan kejahatan* (Zionists love **accusing** others of crimes) |
| *Gaslight* | 4 | (12) *Jangan mau di**gaslight** bahwa perjuangan hanya sekadar angkat senjata* (Do not be **gaslit** into thinking the struggle is merely about taking up arms) |
| *Posisi Israel sulit* (Israel's position is even more difficult) | 2 | (13) *Sebab jika bukti-bukti kejahatan Israel yang terbaru ini tersebar ke masyarakat dunia, artinya Israel tidak patuh terhadap putusan pengadilan dan akan membuat **posisi Israel makin sulit lagi*** (If evidence of Israel's recent crimes spreads to the global community, it will mean that Israel is not adhering to the court's ruling, which will make its **position even more difficul**t.) |

In Example (10), Greschinov employs the term *perjuangan* to indoctrinate the public, portraying *Julid Fi Sabilillah* as a humanitarian struggle that must be continued. In Example (11), Greschinov utilizes the word *menuduh*, referring to Zionists, which carries a negative connotation as it implies making unsubstantiated claims. In Example (12), Greschinov adopts gaslight, directed at groups opposing the boycott. The term gaslight is an English expression referring to psychological manipulation, where an individual is made to question their memory, perception, or sanity (Sweet, 2019). In Example (13), Greschinov's vocabulary choice, *posisi Israel sulit*, serves to inform the public that, despite the significant number of Palestinian casualties due to Israel's genocide, Israel's international position is becoming increasingly challenging.

2) Use of Modality

Table 5 highlights the modalities employed by netizens in their comments. The dominant modality is indicated by the adverb *perlu* (necessary), directed at Indonesian netizens.

**Table 5.** Modality

| Modality | Frequency | Example Clauses/Sentences |
|---|---|---|
| *Perlu* (necessary) | 3 | (14) *Ada hal-hal penting yang **perlu** kita perhatikan menjadi panduan julid kita di bulan ini*. (There are **necessary** aspects we need to consider as guidance for our *Julid* this month.) |
| *Harus* (must) | 3 | (15) *Dalam sebulan ini kita **harus** lebih sering share berbagai kejahatan Israel yang terbaru.* (This month, we **must** share various recent crimes committed by Israel more frequently.) |

| Modality | Frequency | Example Clauses/Sentences |
|---|---|---|
| *Wajib* (obligatory) | 1 | (16) *Mereka bekerja sama dengan Israel secara intensif dan **wajib** diboikot total* (They are collaborating intensively with Israel and are **obligatory** to be boycotted.) |

In Example (14), Greschinov uses the modal adverb *perlu*, suggesting. In this context, Greschinov urges Indonesian netizens, as activists of Julid Fi Sabilillah, to consider the movement's guidelines. In Example (15), Greschinov employs *harus* to issue an imperative command to netizen activists of *Julid Fi Sabilillah*, urging them to continue their advocacy. In Example (16), *wajib* is used to emphasize the call for netizens to participate in the boycott.

3) Use of Imperative Sentences

Table 6 indicates that imperative sentences are most commonly found in posts categorized as calls to action and directives for *Julid Fi Sabilillah*. This prevalence stems from the nature of the posts, which aim to instruct netizens on how to engage in *Julid Fi Sabilillah* activities.

**Table 6.** Imperative Sentences

| Imperative Sentences |
|---|
| (17) *Posting berbagai kejahatan Israel di media sosial kita.* (Post various Israeli crimes on our social media.) |
| (18) *Komentar mengenai bukti-bukti kejahatan Israel di akun-akun internasional.* (Comment on evidence of Israeli crimes on international accounts.) |
| (19) *Rujak akun-akun Israel dan propagandanya di media sosial* (Attack Israeli accounts and their propaganda on social media.) |

Data (17), (18), and (19) are imperative sentences directed at netizen activists of *Julid Fi Sabilillah*. These sentences contain specific directives from Greschinov, intended as guidance for participating in *Julid Fi Sabilillah* during what he refers to as a "serangan umum".

### *3.1.2. Analysis of Discourse Practice (Meso)*

Greschinov, an Indonesian Muslim and polyglot proficient in English, French, Italian, Dutch, and Esperanto, also works as a language educator. On November 16, 2023, he posted a tweet on his X account (formerly Twitter) with a screenshot showing Israeli soldiers sharing celebratory photos from their assignments on Instagram. This tweet acted as a catalyst for the emergence of the *Julid Fi Sabilillah* movement on social media, including Instagram. Following this tweet, Greschinov was recognized by netizens as the initiator and commander of the Julid Fi Sabilillah movement. At the time of posting, his X account had a substantial following of around 165,000. Greschinov frequently shared his perspectives on trending topics, and the issue of Israeli genocide against Palestinians was part of his advocacy. He extended this advocacy to his Instagram account (@greschinov), which initially had fewer followers than X but has now grown to approximately 100,000. His posts were persuasive, encouraging followers to support Palestine by any means necessary.

This study also examines other text producers who contributed to the research, including netizen accounts participating in the *Julid Fi Sabilillah* movement targeting IDF accounts, Israeli accounts, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Through observations of 153 Indonesian netizen accounts engaging with Julid Fi Sabilillah, it was concluded that some accounts frequently posted news about Palestinian issues, prompting comments defending Palestine on IDF accounts. Based on their usernames, these accounts included both male and female users. The commenting patterns revealed strong support for Palestine and condemnation of Israeli crimes. Comments posted on Israeli military accounts have impacted their social media activity, causing discomfort and pressure. Some Israeli soldiers even expressed their discomfort and pressure through their accounts.

### *3.1.3. Sociocultural Analysis (Macro)*

The third dimension of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is the sociocultural practice. This analysis considers the broader social context beyond media, acknowledging that all texts and discourses are influenced by economic, political, social, and cultural factors. Social practices are examined across situational, institutional, and social contexts (Caesareka & Nugroho, 2020). This research involved interviews with discourse producers and sociological experts, as well as observations of social media, to obtain reliable data.

a. Situational Context

Situational context shows that discourse is produced in response to specific circumstances. Discourse is viewed as an action in reaction to a particular social situation (Yuhandra et al., 2024). The *Julid Fi Sabilillah* phenomenon on social media, especially Instagram, is rooted in the dire situation in Palestine. HAMAS acted decisively after decades

of Israeli occupation, prompting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to declare war following the events of October 7, 2023. As of the writing of this article, Israel continues to launch attacks.

b. Institutional Context

The institutional context considers how an institution or organization influences the production of discourse. This institution could be the discourse producer itself or an external body affecting the discourse's formation (Cintya et al., 2022). In this case, Greschinov collaborated with Renebook to publish the book *Julid Fi Sabilillah*, *Gerakan Netizen di Jagat Maya Melawan Penjajahan Israel atas Palestina* to broaden the movement.

c. Social Context

This section examines the societal conditions and realities beyond the media. Fairclough (Samsuri et al., 2022) states that social aspects encompass macro-level systems such as political, economic, or socio-cultural frameworks. Interviews with Dr. Wahyu Gunawan, M.Si, a sociology expert, reveal that historically, Indonesian society has maintained a strong connection with Palestine, supporting its struggle for independence. Additionally, as a predominantly Muslim nation, defending Palestine, which includes the Al-Aqsa Mosque, resonates as an act of faith.

### *3.2. The Role and Influence of Julid Fi Sabilillah on Instagram Regarding Israeli Genocide in Palestine*

Following the critical discourse analysis phase through literature review, interviews, and observations on social media, the role and influence of *Julid Fi Sabilillah* can be understood based on the discursive practices outlined previously

#### *3.2.1. The Role of Julid Fi Sabilillah*

In general terms, the concept of "role" refers to a dynamic aspect of one's position or status. Alternatively, "role" can be defined as the set of behaviors expected of an individual or their position by others. A role holds significance when connected to others, social communities, or political contexts (Tindangen, 2020). The following are the general roles of the *Julid Fi Sabilillah* movement:

a. Undermining the Mental State of Israel

A post by @greschinov on December 2, 2023, titled *Serangan Umum* indicates that one of the goals of *Julid Fi Sabilillah* is to undermine the mental resilience of Israeli soldiers in conducting their assaults against Palestine. Additionally, comments made by netizens directed at IDF soldiers use sarcastic language intended to disturb them.

b. Advancing the Pro-Palestinian Narrative and Countering Israeli Propaganda

The emergence of the *Julid Fi Sabilillah* movement on social media is driven by the extensive Israeli propaganda aimed at fostering public opinion that Israel is not an occupying force. Consequently, the movement seeks to strengthen the pro-Palestinian narrative on social media to support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state free from social injustice, discrimination, and other forms of suffering (Greschinov, 2024).

#### *3.2.2. The Influence of Julid Fi Sabilillah*

Influence is defined as a reciprocal relationship or a causal connection between what affects and what is affected (Cahyono, 2016). The identification of the influence of *Julid Fi Sabilillah* based on observational data and critical examination of IDF soldiers' accounts targeted by the movement is as follows:

a. IDF Soldiers Lock Their Instagram Profiles and Restrict Comments

According to *Julid Fi Sabilillah* by Greschinov, one IDF Instagram account, @yoyodarp, reported feeling disturbed by the barrage of negative comments from netizens, leading the account holder to restrict and lock their profile. Despite the account being locked, many netizens continued to attack using mentions and tags.

b. IDF Soldiers Experience Stress and Disturbance

Erlangga Greschinov, the initiator of *Julid Fi Sabilillah*, stated in his book that to disrupt the mental state of IDF soldiers, Indonesian netizens, through the *Julid Fi Sabilillah* movement, attempted to attack IDF accounts so that when soldiers relaxed with their devices, they would be met with negative online comments and insults. Indications of disturbance are evident, as seen in the Instagram account @yaelderii, which expressed frustration in an Instagram story and admitted being disturbed by negative comments from Indonesian netizens.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the comprehensive results of the analysis, the phenomenon of *Julid Fi Sabilillah* on Instagram represents an act of resistance by pro-Palestinian Indonesians against Israel, driven by the Israeli genocide since October 7, 2023. This resistance manifests in comments and posts that protest Israel and seek public participation. *Julid Fi Sabilillah* is represented through word choice, modality use, and imperative sentences. Textual analysis revealed linguistic

features such as vocabulary choice, modality use, and imperative constructions that indicate Indonesian netizens' resistance toward Israel. Through discourse practice analysis, it was found that the discourse producer, Greschinov, is an Indonesian Muslim and an advocate for the Palestinian cause, while netizens identify themselves as pro-Palestinian through their accounts. Sociocultural analysis revealed that *Julid Fi Sabilillah* is rooted in the context of the Israeli genocide against Palestine, supported by Indonesia's close social ties with Palestine, shared majority religious beliefs, and changes in the forms of social movement participation. *Julid Fi Sabilillah* plays a role in weakening the mental state of Israeli soldiers and countering propaganda on social media, which has influenced IDF accounts to lock and restrict their comment sections, signifying their stress and disturbance.

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