

# MILITARY ACTIVISM IN MALAYSIA AND ITS BOYCOTT TOWARDS MCDONALD'S MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDY OF PALESTINE-ISRAEL CONFLICT

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## Abstract

The debate over whether the conflict between Palestine and Israel a geopolitical or religious conflict continues without resolution. Rather than uniting to pursue a common goal of fighting the violence and injustice committed by Israel against the Palestinian people, military activism in Malaysia tends to turn various issues related to the conflict into matters of concern. This includes calls to boycott products with connections to Israel, particularly American brands such as McDonald's. Therefore, this study aims to examine the determining factors behind their boycott of the McDonald's brand, their responses, and implications in the Malaysian market. Using a qualitative narrative review as a method, this study takes the period from 2014 to 2023 in Scopus and Google Scholar when calls to boycott McDonald's products became a military activism in Malaysia. The findings of this study reveal that McDonald's Malaysia has experienced negative impacts due to religion, humanity and justice motivated as well as social pressure. The study's analysis is narrative review based on primary sources such as media statements and social media posts, supported by secondary sources such as online news and broadcast news. The discussion in this study concludes that the boycott of McDonald's Malaysia stems from deep-seated religious sensitivities, particularly concerning the sanctity of Palestine as a holy land, as well as from humanitarian and justice-driven sentiments in response to the oppression faced by the Palestinian people. The boycott also serves as an effort to distance oneself from potential negative social perceptions.

**Keywords:** *military activism, boycott, McDonald's, Palestine, Israel, Malaysia*

## 1.0 Introduction

Boycotts have become a cultural practice in Malaysia, especially concerning the Palestine-Israel conflict. This approach is a result of the non-governmental Islamic bodies' doctrinal beliefs that boycotting would impact the Israeli economy and its allies, thereby weakening their operations against Palestine. Brands often associated with Israel and its allies (especially American brands) have faced boycotts whenever this conflict arises.

[1] explain that this boycott scenario has gained significant strength due to the expanding influence of Palestinian diaspora communities outside Palestine, spearheaded by a group known as Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS), which conducts awareness operations and a grassroots movement to aid in rejecting violence against Palestinians. BDS collaborates with non-governmental organisations advocating humanitarian, peace, and religious concepts to further extend their influence within a country's local communities. They conduct various programs, including humanitarian funding, awareness lectures, and boycott campaigns.

In the context of this study, the primary focus is on examining the boycott movement arising during the Palestine-Israel conflict and its effects on a leading American and global quick service restaurant chain, McDonald's. This explanation will not delve deeply into the entire series of conflicts between Palestine and

Israel as the complexity of the conflict is not entirely relevant to this study. The chosen cases are based on the years of conflict and the McDonald's boycott, specifically in 2014, 2017, and 2023.

[2] explain that the Palestine-Israel conflict has stirred global opposition, particularly within the Islamic world, eventually forming activist groups and movements, some of which have even turned radical and extreme. Indirectly, this situation leads individuals or groups to participate in indirect warfare, a scenario described as military activism. Military activism does not only imply direct military engagement or fighting against an enemy but also includes civilian involvement resulting from the conflict, contributing to war efforts [3].

Furthermore, this boycott movement gained momentum when military activism highlighted the connection between McDonald's and the Jewish community. Organizations such as Cinta Gaza Malaysia (formerly known as Aqsa As-Syarif) and the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement have been at the forefront of military activism for pro-Palestinian causes. The call to boycott products associated with Israel has become an annual event in Malaysia whenever Palestine is under attack. It has become a common practice among Malaysians to associate international brands, especially American brands, with direct support for Israel during such times. In this study, McDonald's is one of the brands affected and impacted. Despite McDonald's Malaysia affirming that they have no connection to the decisions made by McDonald's Corporation or McDonald's Israel due to the Developmental License (DL) ownership, many refuse to accept this reality.

Hence, this study will investigate military activism and its boycott on McDonald's Malaysia in the context of the Palestine-Israel conflict. The study aims to examine the factors leading to the boycott of McDonald's Malaysia, its responses and the impact in Malaysia's market. Research findings are drawn from primary and secondary sources such as media statements, commentary articles, news coverage, among others. The study focuses on the boycott of McDonald's Malaysia that occurred specifically in 2014, 2017, and 2023.

## 2.0 Literature review

### 2.1 *Palestine-Israel War Conflict*

The description of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict presents a significant challenge due to the complexity of religious and political history. Therefore, in this section, only a few significant series of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will be highlighted to underscore the relevance of this study.

The first reference is to the An-Nakbah on May 15, 1948, marking the inception of the establishment of the state of Israel and the displacement of the Palestinian population [4]. Israel's foundation emerged from the British government's retreat from Palestine in 1948, overseeing the Palestinian Mandate, as it could no longer contain the conflict between the Arab and Jewish communities. Arab opposition arose from surrounding areas like Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, opposing the Jewish presence in Palestine. Consequently, the British handed over the Palestinian affairs to the United Nations, which decided to partition Palestine into two states: an Arab state, now Palestine, and a Jewish state, now Israel, through Resolution 181 [5]. Despite several subsequent war series sharing similar elements, they were unable to displace Israel from Palestine.

The second reference is to the Gaza conflict in 2014, which is significant in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. When Palestine was divided into two parts in 1967, Gaza and the West Bank, there were two different political administrations [6]. Gaza was led by Hamas, while the West Bank was led by Fatah. Ideally, Israel supports Fatah as the legitimate Palestinian administration, while Hamas is labelled as a militant group. As a result, Israel frequently takes action against Gaza. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict in 2014 saw Israel conducting intense airstrikes, resulting in the deaths of over 2,000 civilians in Gaza [6]. Moreover, it became a dark moment in Gaza as various public infrastructures like hospitals, schools, and residences were destroyed. In August 2014, Hamas and Israel agreed to implement a ceasefire.

The third reference pertains to the conflict sparked by the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital by US President Donald Trump in 2017. In his address, Trump expressed his commitment to relocating the

US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as a symbol of this recognition [7]. This decision has sent shockwaves globally, particularly among the Islamic world, which views Trump's move as a personal decision to win elections. This decision followed Trump's withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. Consequently, American citizens accused Trump of disregarding the United States' hegemonic power as a world police and yearning for a new leadership that is more progressive and opposed to violence.

The fourth issue refers to the conflict between Hamas and the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in Gaza in October 2023 [8]. The war began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas attacked and captured Israeli civilians. However, the IDF and Israel's subsequent actions were more severe as they targeted essential facilities such as hospitals, family residences, schools, and others. Israel also decided to cut telecommunication lines and water supplies reactively to cripple Gaza. The United States, supporting these efforts, positioned their troops by sea and land as a preparedness measure to join the conflict if it escalated. Several series of United Nations Security Council meetings were held, but the United States used its veto power to deny the majority decisions, including the ceasefire [9].

## 2.2 *Understanding Military Activism*

According to [10], the definition of military activism was introduced in the 1950s by David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, who referred to it as a political-security approach aimed at promoting disproportionate military actions as the most effective prevention against Arab terrorism. Ben Gurion considered international opinions peripheral to Israel's vital interests. Ben Gurion emphasised military strength as the key to gaining acceptance from Arab states and foreign ministries, making them realise that there was no other way to deal with Israel except by acknowledging its existence as a state [10]. However, it is crucial to note that Ben Gurion's views and approach to military and military activism were within the specific historical context related to the formation of Israel as a state.

Military activism stands apart from other forms of activism, such as political, economic, social, and cultural, but it can exist within the military spectrum [3]. This is because during a crisis, individuals engage in and participate directly in warfare or conflict. Thus, participating in warfare or conflict through activist efforts is considered military activism, whether through intervention, power, diplomacy, or advocacy. Besides the military directly involved in operations, military activism by political, economic, social, and cultural activist organisations, such as demonstrations, protests, boycotts, disinvestment, and sanctions, also contributes to war or conflict efforts.

### 2.2.1 *Military Activism in Malaysia*

Since gaining independence in 1957, Malaysia has not experienced physical warfare situations. However, during the process of forming the Federation of Malaysia in 1963, there were several issues and conflicts involving Malaysia and other nations. One of them was the Confrontation Crisis in 1963, when Indonesia and the Philippines fought against the formation of the Federation of Malaysia [11]. Additionally, as a member of the United Nations (UN), Malaysia has participated in several Peacekeeping Missions, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Timor-Leste, and Lebanon, demonstrating a commitment to global peace. Furthermore, Malaysia actively engages in military activism with other nations to strengthen relationships and unite voices against regional threats in Southeast Asia, such as nuclear threats. However, all historical chains of Malaysian military activism involve military institutions, and there is no study linking it to the Malaysian people's movements.

Explaining Malaysia's direct involvement in military activism is somewhat challenging because it is not very pronounced. However, Malaysia's engagement in similar activism and movement with other nations can be extensively discussed as there are several series of military activism that can be referenced. For example, in 1981, Buy British Last (BBL), a national campaign initiated by the Malaysian government under the administration of Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, aimed to pressure the British government, which had acted against his policies [12].

In the context of public engagement in military activism, there is evident involvement in the series of Palestinian-Israeli conflicts. This movement is spearheaded by Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS)

Malaysia, supported by non-governmental organisations (NGO) united in the struggle for Palestine. Initiated by BDS Malaysia, this movement gains strength through NGOs efforts via social media and outreach to the public. There's a list of products urged for boycott, particularly those associated with Israel, such as PUMA, Hewlett Packard (HP), and McDonald's [13].

### **3.0 McDonald's Corporation**

McDonald's fundamentally started as a two-brother hamburger restaurant business, Dick and Mac McDonald, in San Bernardino, California, in 1940 [14]. Due to their successful business and promising prospects, Ray Kroc, a salesman, approached them to expand their fast-food restaurant concept globally. Kroc seized the opportunity to purchase the exclusive rights to the McDonald's brand, taking over operations and designing the McDonald's business for global expansion. Using the franchise business model, Kroc succeeded in expanding McDonald's into a global phenomenon, ensuring that regardless of our location, McDonald's maintains the same concept, consistency, menu, and taste. As of 2023, McDonald's has over 36,000 restaurants in more than 100 countries worldwide.

#### *3.1 McDonald's Malaysia*

The first McDonald's restaurant in Malaysia opened in April 1982 on Jalan Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur [15]. Operated by a local company known as Gerbang Alaf Bhd, McDonald's Malaysia gained halal certification in February 1995, becoming the first fast-food restaurant to receive recognition from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). In 2017, Gerbang Alaf Bhd was acquired by Lionhorn Pte. Ltd., a company under the Reza Group based in Saudi Arabia. The Reza Group was granted a Developmental License (DL) by McDonald's Corporation through the franchise system. This acquisition signifies that McDonald's Malaysia is granted full rights and responsibilities to manage, operate, and expand McDonald's restaurants within Malaysia. Additionally, the Reza Group is a Muslim entity, making McDonald's Malaysia a 100% locally owned Islamic operation. As of 2023, McDonald's Malaysia has over 350 restaurants across the country.

##### *3.1.1 Boycott Movement on McDonald's Malaysia*

The call to boycott products associated with Israel has become an annual event in Malaysia whenever Palestine is under attack. It has become a common practice among Malaysians to associate international brands, especially American brands, with direct support for Israel during such times. According to [16], this movement is a demand from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS), an organisation founded by Palestinians residing outside the country to raise awareness about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The boycott movement against McDonald's in Malaysia began in 2014, impacting a significant market in the country. This movement, supported by non-governmental Islamic organisations through social media, gained momentum notably on Facebook and WhatsApp. The call for this boycott occurred during the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in 2014, when Israel launched an attack on Palestine [17]. According to [18], the call for boycott spread widely, urging the public to refrain from patronising McDonald's on 8th August 2014. The situation intensified due to rumours circulated online, suggesting that McDonald's Malaysia would distribute free food and drinks on that day. This misinformation fuelled public anger, as it insinuated an attempt by McDonald's Malaysia to compromise dignity. However, McDonald's Malaysia issued a statement refuting these claims [19].

The second boycott of McDonald's Malaysia occurred following US President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, sparking widespread anger among the global Muslim community. As a dissent against Trump's decision, there was a push to boycott American brands, including McDonald's, by various groups. [20] reported the spread of calls for a boycott of McDonald's Malaysia through WhatsApp. Allegations against McDonald's Malaysia included claims that the company financially supported the US to back Israel. However, McDonald's Malaysia issued a media statement denying these allegations and urged Malaysians not to spread misinformation [21]. Nevertheless, the boycott demand did not persist as several Islamic NGOs such as the Persatuan Pengguna Islam Malaysia (PPIM), MyCare, Aqsa

Syarif, Palestine Centre of Excellence dan Viva Palestina Malaysia, released statements against boycotting McDonald's Malaysia [22]. The delisting of McDonald's Malaysia followed the acquisition of McDonald's Malaysia by Lionhorn Pte. Ltd., a subsidiary of Alireza Group based in Saudi Arabia. This acquisition resulted in McDonald's Malaysia becoming a 100% Islamic-owned company under local business jurisdiction.

The third boycott of McDonald's Malaysia occurred in October 2023 following the conflict between Hamas and Israel Defence Federation (IDF) in Gaza. This boycott, once again urged by BDS Global and BDS Malaysia, was supported by Islamic NGOs who believed that McDonald's Malaysia paying royalties to McDonald's Corporation was an effort to fund Israel. Additionally, the boycott was triggered by McDonald's Israel providing food sponsorship to the IDF during the conflict. In a media statement, McDonald's Malaysia clarified that the markets in Israel and Malaysia are distinct entities as the franchise owner is a Developmental Licensee [23]. This signifies that decisions made by McDonald's Israel are not representative of McDonald's Corporation, let alone McDonald's Malaysia.

#### **4.0 Methodology**

This study reviews evidence of events involving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and aligns the timeline of this conflict with boycott events in Malaysia. Due to the multifaceted nature of the events involving various parties, the study selects McDonald's Malaysia as a case study because it holds significant relevance to the aspects under examination, particularly concerning military activism, boycott movements, and their impact on the Malaysian market.

To address the research questions, the researcher employs a narrative review method. [24] outlines it as a way to investigate a topic by describing and discussing its circumstances or subject matter based on theoretical structure or study context. Referencing various sources such as previous studies, articles, books, primary, and secondary materials, the narrative review method does not necessitate specific focus on data or methodological approaches, but it still requires critical assessment.

Compared to other review studies, this study focuses more on elucidating the 'current state of affairs', which fundamentally does not involve meta-analysis, statistical data collection, or scientific validation. [25] employed a similar method in their study, explaining that research aimed at proving the 'current state of affairs' can utilise a narrative review, which synthesises data from previous studies and interprets it collectively.

In this study's context, the researcher employs a narrative review approach to examine previous studies related to consumer behaviour that determine their choices concerning the factors influencing the boycott of McDonald's Malaysia. This is linked with the context of the Palestine-Israel conflict, particularly focusing on military activism efforts and their relationship with the McDonald's Malaysia boycott. Using Scopus and Google Scholar as a primary source, supported by desktop search on the issue such as news articles, blogs and social media, the research will only look into the series of Palestine – Israel conflicts that took place in 2014, 2017 and 2023, which were the boycott towards McDonald's Malaysia taken place.

Based on the initial analysis in conducting searches on the topic of interest, the researcher identified inclusive criteria for suitable keywords. Terms used to search for relevant studies included "McDonald's", "Jewish", "boycott", "royalty", "halal", "Palestine", "Israel", and "Muslim consumer behaviour". Using these keywords, a total of 37 studies and reference materials were found and utilised in shaping the findings and analysis of the study.

The process of selecting reference materials and previous studies took into account several factors, including the relevance of research questions and their findings. Subsequently, a thematic analysis was used to unravel the research questions based on the relevance of literature to the research objectives. This method was referenced from [26], who employed keyword selection and thematic analysis in elucidating the narrative review method used in forming the study's conclusions.

The diversity in factors such as boycotts and significant events undoubtedly introduces bias, yet it suffices to elucidate the situation in Malaysia, which is inherently centred around the country's identity as an Islamic constitutional state. This is reinforced by strong motivations when it comes to religious, ethnic, and social issues, as elucidated by [2].

## 5.0 Findings and Discussion

### 5.1 Factor Determining the Boycott

#### 5.1.1 Religion Motivated

The Palestine-Israel conflict is often associated with the significance of religious holy sites, particularly in Islam, where Masjid Al-Aqsa stands as their first qibla. This sacred position has made the issue a symbolic cause, justifying Malaysian participation in the conflict. This belief has driven them to advocate for a boycott of McDonald's Malaysia, believing it would cripple McDonald's Corporation and reduce contributions to Israel.

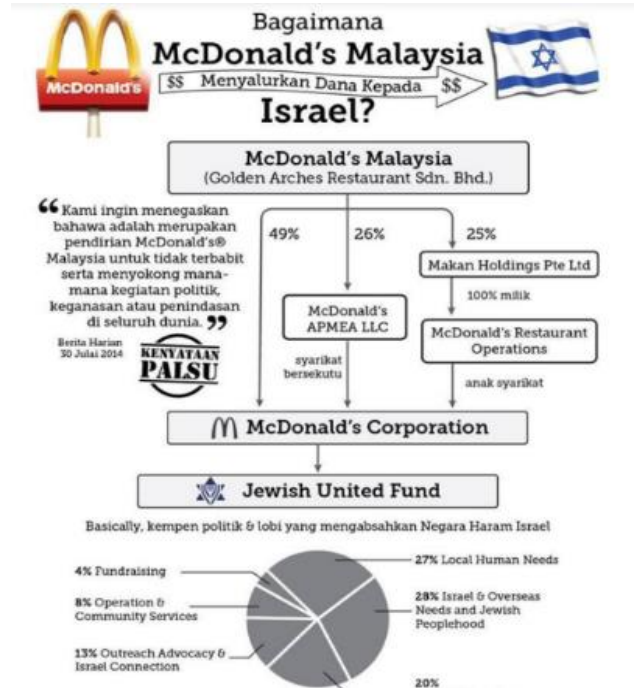


Figure 1 Visual on how McDonald's connected to JUF.

[16] in their study explaining the McDonald's boycott in 2014 identified religiously motivated factors as the cause, based on two incidents. First, allegations that McDonald's was a corporate partner of the Jewish United Fund (JUF) and was recognized in 2000 as a corporate partner of Zionism as per figure 1. Second, the majority of those boycotting were Muslim. This second incident was supported by the McDonald's boycott case in the east coast (Terengganu and Kelantan), witnessing not just a boycott of the business but also actions against employees and McDonald's facilities.

Previous studies have highlighted that religiously motivated factors are linked to consumer choices [27][28][29]. For instance, food labelled as haram becomes a factor in Muslim communities' rejection. Therefore, religion plays a crucial role in shaping consumer choices, including in this case, where purchasing McDonald's would impact the civilization and Islamic community in Palestine.

#### 5.1.2 Humanity and Justice Motivated

The conflict between Palestine and Israel has sparked key policy issues beyond religious importance, encompassing matters of rights and ethics. In every instance of this conflict, disputes arise over the killing of children and women, human rights violations, power seizure, political matters, and more. Consequently, it becomes the responsibility of non-governmental organisations to disseminate this

information and create a wave of military activism, focusing on humanitarian explanations and social justice.

Discussions around these issues often revolve around why no power is willing to stop the madness in Palestine, considering the destruction of many lives and public facilities like hospitals, telecommunication networks, residences, and more. As mentioned by [9], several UN Security Council sessions have passed resolutions to stop, ease, or even reconcile the Palestine-Israel conflict. However, the United States often acts as an obstacle, employing its veto power to override all decisions made by Security Council representatives. This has stirred global discontent towards the United States and has become a primary reason why actions are taken against US brands. Indirectly, this has fostered military activism through humanitarian and justice movements to express opposition to the United States.

[30] demonstrated in their study that ethical awareness, encompassing humanitarian issues and social justice, serves as a yardstick for consumer behaviour. In this context, supporters of Palestine, viewing it from a humanitarian and social justice perspective, refrain from using or purchasing items associated with the United States and Israel. The study's findings also substantiate that humanitarian and social justice issues in this situation significantly influence public sentiment. This underscores how military activism prompts people to empathise and share the suffering endured by the Palestinian people while concurrently pressing against the United States' interests through economic means.

### 5.1.3 Society Pressure

In any conflict, there are those among us who choose not to boycott due to exceptions or an apparent lack of connection between the boycott and the war. Nonetheless, previous studies, such as [31], have shown that social factors play a role in determining consumer attitudes, specifically group membership and reference groups. This means that while someone might exempt themselves from a boycott, they still opt to avoid using or buying a product due to social pressure from their surroundings. This context is also known as cognitive dissonance, where incongruence in behaviour and beliefs leads to a dilemma within an individual [32].

[30] in their study, found that some individuals choose not to boycott but instead refrain from purchasing McDonald's due to current societal sentiments, taking an exceptional approach until tensions ease. The issue arises when military activism fosters an "us vs them" mentality, causing individuals to feel pressured by social perceptions.

## 5.2 McDonald's Malaysia's response and implications in the Malaysian market

At present, as tensions in this conflict escalate, McDonald's Malaysia is among those affected by military activism. McDonald's Malaysia has undertaken several measures to rectify the situation and regain customer loyalty.

Firstly, they issued statements to clarify their stance and the actual circumstances. McDonald's Malaysia has maintained consistent key messages from 2014 to 2023, emphasising their non-involvement in any political activities, violence, or oppression in any country. They have highlighted their corporate social responsibility efforts, including significant donations to various causes such as Palestine, underlining their contributions to society [19] [21] [23].

*However, the real victims of these allegations are McDonald's employees, their friends, and families, who have faced discrimination – (McDonald's Malaysia).*

Secondly, they conducted public awareness campaigns regarding McDonald's Malaysia's position, royalty payments to McDonald's Corporation, and contributions to the Jewish United Fund (JUF) as per *figure 2*, which is educational posters explaining royalty payments, ownership, and McDonald's Malaysia's position in the conflict [23].

**Penjelasan McDonald's Malaysia**

McDonald's Malaysia ingin menjelaskan perkara yang sering menjadi tanda tanya orang ramai tentang isu hubungan kami dengan penindasan di Palestin. Ianya adalah **FITNAH** dan **TIDAK BENAR** sama sekali.

- 1

**Siapakah pemilik McDonald's Malaysia?**

McDonald's Malaysia (**Gerbang Abi Restaurants Sdn Bhd**) adalah sebuah syarikat operasi restoran dan perniagaan yang dimiliki 100% oleh orang Islam sejak ia diambil alih Lionhor Pte. Ltd., sebuah anak syarikat Kumpulan Reza dari Arab Saudi pada tahun 2017.


- 2

**Adakah McDonald's Malaysia membuat pembayaran royalti kepada McDonald's Corporation?**

Dalam dunia perniagaan francais, pembayaran royalti adalah semata-mata bertujuan untuk mendapatkan hak menggunakan jenama dan sistem perniagaan McDonald's. Ini membolehkan pelanggan mendapat pengalaman yang sama apabila mereka berada di mana-mana restoran McDonald's di Malaysia atau negara lain.


- 3

**Adakah pembayaran royalti kepada McDonald's Corporation digunakan untuk menindas rakyat Palestin?**

**TIDAK.** McDonald's Corporation tidak boleh membiayai atau terlibat di dalam sebarang bentuk keganasan dan penindasan di mana-mana negara sekali pun. Sebagai sebuah syarikat milik awam yang tersenarai di bursa saham, wang perbelanjaan McDonald's Corporation adalah tertakluk kepada undang-undang, kod etika perniagaan, sistem tacir urus dan pengauditan yang sangat ketat dan telus.


- 4

**Bolehkah McDonald's Malaysia menjelaskan pendiriannya mengenai konflik Israel-Palestin?**

McDonald's Malaysia tidak terlibat dalam konflik politik atau agama di mana-mana negara. Walau bagaimanapun, McDonald's Malaysia amat prihatin dan peka dengan krisis kemanusiaan yang akan berlaku setiap kali tercetusnya konflik Palestin-Israel. Kami telah dan akan terus menyokong usaha Kerajaan Malaysia dalam misi bantuan kemanusiaan di kawasan-kawasan yang terkekan.



Sila rujuk [www.mcdonalds.com.my](http://www.mcdonalds.com.my) untuk mendapatkan maklumat yang tepat atau hantarkan komen anda menerusi ruang "Just Tell Us" di laman web tersebut.

*Figure 2 McDonald's Malaysia Enlightenment Visual*

Thirdly, they engaged with non-governmental Islamic organisations. Through a closed-door meeting with MyCARE, McDonald's clarified their ownership structure and were removed from the boycott list. Other Islamic NGOs like Persatuan Pengguna Islam Malaysia (PPIM), Aqsa Syarif, Palestine Centre of Excellence, and Viva Palestina Malaysia released statements against boycotting McDonald's Malaysia [22]. Even the Mufti Negeri Pulau Pinang supported McDonald's Malaysia, suggesting that boycotting would harm Muslims and society at large [33].

These boycott campaigns have various implications for McDonald's Malaysia. Firstly, there were implications for their employees. During the 2014 boycott, McDonald's Malaysia suffered an 80% loss in daily revenue, damage to facilities, especially in the East Coast areas [16]. Some employees faced violence, and certain outlets had to be closed for safety reasons. Despite official statements, McDonald's Malaysia was still unable to escape the repercussions [17]. Some employees resigned in solidarity with Palestine, affecting both their morale and working hours [34].

Secondly, consumer brand loyalty took a hit. The boycott negatively impacted customer confidence and McDonald's Malaysia's image. Reports revealed a significant decline in customers across Malaysia, with many outlets experiencing drastic drops in business [35][36][37]. Notably, reports indicated that the customer base primarily comprised ethnic Chinese Malaysians, indicating a sudden and dramatic loss in consumer brand loyalty, consequently affecting McDonald's market share in Malaysia. This suggests that religious motivations played a significant role in this activism-driven boycott.

In summary, the identified boycott factors align with the efforts initiated by military activism. The lack of Malay patrons points towards religious motivations, while the absence of other ethnicities indicates motives based on humanitarian concerns and justice, alongside social pressures.



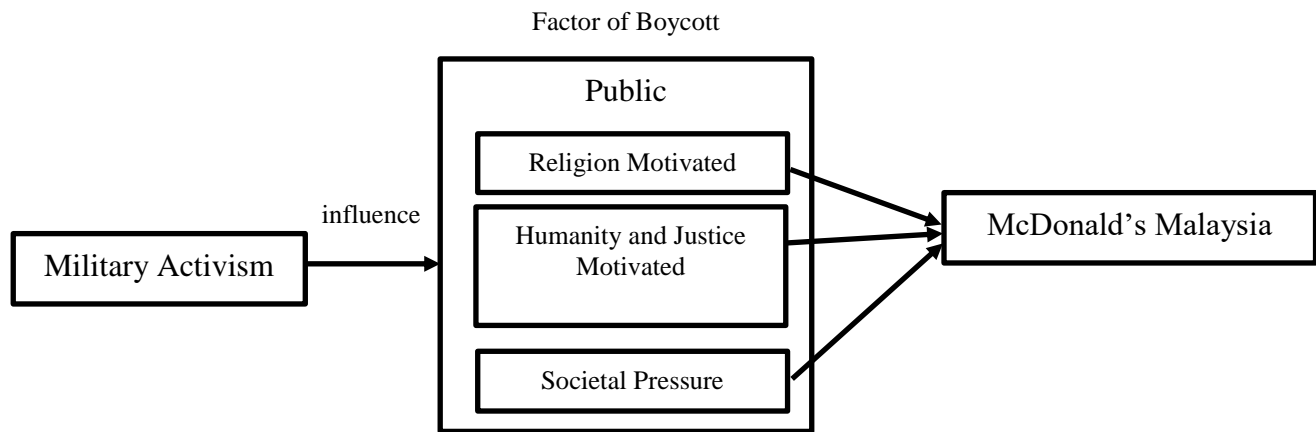


Figure 3 Research Conceptual Framework

## 6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, military activism is a call led by responsible bodies, as observed in this study by BDS and supported by non-governmental Islamic organisations. *Figure 3* shows how military activism is associated with the factors of boycott towards McDonald's Malaysia. The study demonstrates that the call for boycotting McDonald's Malaysia is one among many to boycott goods and brands associated with Israel, primarily brands from the United States. Calls for boycott often arise during conflicts between Palestine and Israel, making boycott efforts a means to cripple or dampen the economy of the United States, claiming to sponsor Israel in oppressing the Palestinian people.

Various conflict scenarios instigated movements with different motives. This study illustrates that the call to boycott McDonald's Malaysia, motivated by religion, plays a significant role in encouraging the public to boycott. This is because they share emotions and feelings of oppression with the Palestinian people. Moreover, the significance of Palestine as a holy land in Islam also contributes to the religious motivation. In fact, the absence of Malay Malaysians visiting McDonald's, alongside some violent incidents, is also triggered by this sentiment. Rejection towards Jews is so strong that all efforts to ease tensions by McDonald's Malaysia have been unsuccessful until MyCARE delisted McDonald's Malaysia in 2018. Yet, boycott incidents persisted until 2023. Sensitivity towards Palestine is high due to Jerusalem's sacred status as the first qibla, the oppression of Muslims, and Malaysia's stance as an Islamic country rejecting Israel and Zionism.

Additionally, this study demonstrates that while Muslims reject based on religious motivation, others join this military activism based on humanitarian and justice reasons. After witnessing numerous casualties in Palestine, they too participate in boycotting McDonald's Malaysia. This explains that customers from other ethnicities have also declined, with reports indicating less than 10 customers in each restaurant. The humanitarian and justice motivations clarify that rejection of Jews and Zionists is not only because Palestine is an Islamic state but also due to their aggression that destroyed public facilities and claimed civilian lives, compelling the boycott of McDonald's Malaysia. This analysis is not solely due to their unawareness of McDonald's Malaysia as a separate entity, but the current shared suffering and pain supports this motivation towards humanitarian and justice factors.

Furthermore, this study explains the societal pressure that drives boycotts among the public. This occurs because they are concerned about the social perception involving loyalty to religious, humanitarian, and social justice causes. In some referenced studies, some individuals still visit McDonald's Malaysia but feel uncomfortable and are more inclined to avoid buying and consuming McDonald's temporarily. This

highlights how the impact of military activism is so strong that even those who wish not to be involved isolate themselves and avoid associating with support for Israel and its allies.

Several explanations regarding McDonald's Malaysia's actions are highlighted in this study. These include statements, enlightenment, and public education efforts. Additionally, efforts from influential figures, such as muftis, to assist McDonald's Malaysia in handling the boycott. However, these efforts have not yielded significant changes, as most Malaysians still believe that anything associated with Israel and its allies holds an advantage. This is evident through unsuccessful attempts, despite three conflict series and more than three efforts by McDonald's Malaysia to explain yet failing each time.

In conclusion, religious, humanitarian, justice, and societal pressure factors truly drive military activism when conflicts between Palestine and Israel arise, with McDonald's Malaysia repeatedly becoming the target. In essence, McDonald's Malaysia needs considerable efforts to disassociate itself from McDonald's Corporation, JUF, and Israel if it still aims to solidify its position as Malaysia's premier fast-food chain.

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