CHANGING PERCEPTION OF ISRAEL

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Abstract

This study examines the changing perception of Israel among politicians, artists, and the public following the outbreak of conflict between Israel and Hamas in 2023. As a result of the hostilities, the Israeli state bombed schools, hospitals, and refugee camps in Palestine without regard for humanitarian considerations, leading to the tragic deaths of thousands of innocent Palestinians, with the killing still ongoing. Those who survived have been left facing hunger and extreme hardship. This situation has forced many Palestinians to flee, and some of the areas they left have been taken over by Israeli settlers. The international media has widely reported on these events through photographs and documents, which has begun to shift global public opinion on Israel. In particular, the Israeli government's actions in Palestine—its use of violence in violation of international law, the threats to Palestinian human security, displacement, land and property losses, and struggles for identity and independence—have become increasingly visible, especially among the populations of Western countries that have historically supported Israel. The wave of criticism from political leaders, artists, and prominent figures in society, along with widespread protests in many countries, has led to Israel being associated with concepts such as ethnic cleansing, genocide, mass psychosis, settler colonialism, and Zionism. A key indicator of this shift is the International Criminal Court's issuance of an arrest warrant for Netanyahu. These developments demonstrate a transformation in the political perception of Israel, influenced by cognitive, emotional, and ideological factors. In this study, data were obtained from primary and secondary sources, and a qualitative research method was employed.

Keywords: Israel, Palestine, War, Political Perception
Jel Classification: Y80, Y90, Z00

DEĞİŞEN İSRAİL ALGISI

Öz

Bu çalışma İsrail ile Hamas arasında 2023 yılında patlak veren çatışmadan sonra siyasilerin, sanatçıların ve kamuoylarında değişen İsrail algısını ortaya koymaktadır. Yaşanan çatışmalar neticesinde İsrail devleti insani hiçbir faktörü dikkate almadan Filistin'deki okulları, hastaneleri, mülteci kamplarını bombalamış ve bunun neticesinde binlerce masum Filistinli trajik bir şekilde ölmüş, öldürmeye devam etmektedir. Hayatta kalan Filistinliler ise açlık ve sefalet ile karşı karşıya bırakılmıştır. Bu durum Filistin halkını göçe zorlanmış, göç edilen yerlerin bir kısmı İsrailli yerleşimcilerle istila edilmiştir. Bütün bu yaşananların görüntüleri fotoğraf ve belgelerle uluslararası medyaya yansıması dünya kamuoyunun İsrail algısını değiştirmeye başlamıştır. Özellikle İsrail'e destek veren Batı yönetimlerine karşı bu ülkelerin halklarında İsrail'in, Filistin'de uluslararası hukuka aykırı gösterdiği şiddet, Filistinlilerin insani güvenliği, yerinden edilmeleri, toprak ve mülk kayıpları, kimlik ve bağımsızlık mücadeleleri görünür hale gelmiştir. Siyasi liderlerin, sanatçıların ve toplumun önde gelen kesimlerinin arka arkaya gelen eleştirileri, birçok ülkede gerçekleşen protesto görüntüleri artık İsrail'i etnik temizlik, soykırım, kitle psikozu, yerleşimci sömürgecilik, siyonizm gibi kavramlarla ilişkilendirmektedir. Bunun en büyük göstergesi de Uluslararası Ceza Mahkemesi'nin Netanyahu hakkında tutuklama emri çıkarmasıdır. Bu olaylar bilişsel, duygusal ve düşünsel birçok etkenin bir araya gelmesiyle değişen İsrail siyasal algısının değiştiğini göstermektedir. Çalışmada birincil ve ikincil kaynaklar kullanılarak nitel araştırma yöntemi tercih edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: İsrail, Filistin, Savaş, Siyasal Algı
Jel Sınıflaması: Y80, Y90, Z00

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1. Introduction

The conflict between Israel and Hamas that erupted in 2023 is considered one of the largest and most destructive wars in the region. On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a large-scale attack on Israel. Hamas' attack dealt an unprecedented blow to Israel's settler-colonial society (Bresheeth-Žabner 2024). For Hamas, these attacks were motivated by the tensions around the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem in 2023, Israeli repression of the Palestinian population in Jerusalem, Israeli efforts to expand settlements, political tensions in the region, and security measures against Palestinians.

Israel responded to this attack with a major military operation. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) launched airstrikes on Gaza and began hitting Hamas targets. In a short period of time, these attacks destroyed many structures in Gaza, many civilians were killed and a major humanitarian crisis ensued. However, the targeting of civilians during the conflict drew criticism from much of the international community. International reactions to the events began to snowball. The United Nations called for a ceasefire. However, this did not even come close to materializing.

The question of how Israel could be so unsustainable, illegal, immoral and lawless during the bloody massacre has begun to be discussed. A deeper analysis of the events clearly shows that Israel's policy is an inevitable consequence of the Zionist project. The goal of Zionism is the exclusive control of historic Palestine through the gradual expulsion of Palestinians from their current homes and their replacement with Jewish settlers. This was the logic of the Nakba of 1948 with 800,000 ethnically cleansed refugees and the 1967 war with another 250,000 refugees. Ethnic cleansing is a violent method of exterminating or weakening indigenous peoples. The move towards genocide is therefore clearly evident.

Despite the terrible war crimes committed against them since 1967, Palestinians have not left Palestine. Palestinians have been forced to live in Palestine through apartheid, daily denial of rights, constant land theft, house demolitions, the illegal detention of thousands without trial, and frequent and violent attacks on West Bank Palestinians. The knowledge that they would never be allowed to return after leaving meant that Palestinians chose resistance through attachment to the land. This delayed Israel's colonization of the West Bank and completely halted the colonization of the Gaza Strip when all Gaza settlements were evacuated in 2005 (Bresheeth-Žabner 2024).

This conflict is often referred to as the "2023 Israel-Gaza War" or the "October 2023 Hamas Offensive". So far, 44,000 civilians have lost their lives. Millions of Palestinians have been

forced to flee as a result of destruction and shortages of food, water and health services. As a result of Israel's strikes on schools, hospitals and refugee camps, the tragedy experienced by Palestinian civilians was reflected in the international media with photographs and documents, and the perception of Israel has undergone major changes in the world public opinion. The International Criminal Court's decision to issue an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on suspicion of crimes against humanity is the biggest proof of the change in the perception of Israel. The arrest warrant will be executed by a number of countries, including Ireland, Belgium, France, Slovenia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, Norway, Lithuania, Lithuania, Estonia and Liechtenstein. Netanyahu and Gallant will have to refrain from traveling to 124 member states of the International Criminal Court, including all member states of the European Union, as well as Japan, Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, almost all countries in Central and South America, and most African countries (Biogradlija 2024).

In short, the reflection of these events between Palestine and Israel in the international media caused people to question the events. At this point, the media came to the fore. The role of the media in perception management, using the media and other means of communication to create an idea about which issues are important and framing the event in question is the first factor that serves the right perception. Likewise, important issues are framed while unimportant issues are left out. This technique involves determining which issues to discuss and which issues to ignore. Media and information sources greatly influence how individuals perceive political events. News bulletins, newspapers, social media and other information sources shape public perception through the way they present and interpret political information. The framing and agenda-setting effects of the media are important in this context (Entman 1993).

This study reveals how the perception of Israel has changed in the eyes of politicians, artists and the world public. Political perception refers to how individuals and societies perceive and interpret political events, actors and processes. As a result, it is seen that the perception of the state of a genocidal people has been replaced by negative concepts such as genocidal, colonialist, ethnic cleanser, war criminal and land occupier in the world public opinion after the 2023 Israel-Gaza War.

2. The Effect of Political Perception on Public Opinion

Perception refers to the process by which individuals make sense of the world around them. In the psychology literature, perception is defined as the processing of information received through the sensory organs in the individual's mind and making it meaningful. This process varies depending on the individual's past experiences, expectations and current cognitive structure. Perception is not only limited to the processing of sensory information; it is also shaped by cognitive processes and emotional reactions (Goldstein 2013).

Political perception refers to how individuals and societies perceive and interpret political events, actors and processes. Political perception encompasses how political information is processed and evaluated and takes into account individuals' cognitive, emotional and social factors in this process. Political perception plays a critical role in shaping individuals' political preferences and behaviors.

The cognitive component of political perception includes individuals' knowledge and beliefs about political events and actors. This component includes how political information is The affective component includes individuals' emotional reactions towards political events and actors. Political events may cause strong emotional reactions in individuals and these emotions may affect their political attitudes and behaviors (Iyengar 1991). The behavioral component includes individuals' behaviors towards political events and actors. This component includes political participation, voting behavior, protests and other political actions (Zaller 1992).

Social environment and networks, individuals' families, friends and social circles play an important role in the formation of their political perceptions. Social interactions can influence how individuals process and interpret political information. Social networks play a critical role in the diffusion of political attitudes and behaviors (Gamson & Modigliani 1989). Cultural and ideological factors determine how individuals perceive political events. Different cultural contexts and ideological perspectives may interpret the same political event in different ways. This increases the diversity and complexity of political perceptions (Zaller 1992).

Political perceptions play an important role in shaping public opinion and voter behavior. Individuals' perceptions of a particular politician or party influence their voting decisions. Political campaigns aim to direct these perceptions (McCombs & Shaw 1972). Political communication strategies and propaganda techniques are used to shape public perceptions. These techniques aim to emphasize a particular political message and weaken competing messages. Perception management is particularly important in crisis situations and electoral

processes (Iyengar 1991). Political perceptions influence diplomatic relations between countries and international politics. How a country is perceived internationally can determine its relations with other countries. Public diplomacy is an important tool of perception management in this context (Entman 1993). Israel has been effective in public diplomacy by establishing strong strategic relations with some Western countries, particularly the United States of America. However, we see that the image of the genocided Jewish State that Israel has created in the world public opinion in order to achieve its strategic goals in the context of public diplomacy is no longer working. Israel's strong media activities directed at international public opinion have difficulty in managing negative perceptions. The most meaningful reaction to Israel, which uses public diplomacy in its search for international support, has been the protests in many parts of the world. The anti-Israel and anti-Netanyahu protests organized by university students, football fans, civil society organizations and people coming together in different geographies are important examples of the change in political perception.

3. Perception Management in Defense-Offense Axis

Perception management is a systematic strategy to influence the emotions, thoughts, attitudes and behaviors of the masses. In this strategy, perception management is carried out using a variety of tools and methods. These methods usually include strategic communication, the use of traditional and social media, and psychological tactics. Its main objective is to ensure that the target audience develops a positive or negative perception of a particular issue, event or person. The concept of perception management, derived by the US Department of Defense, is defined as follows:

'Actions organized to convey and/or deny information and indicators selected to influence the audience's emotions, attitudes, and objective thinking. It is also the use of outsiders' behavior and official actions to influence their intelligence systems and the official predictions of leaders at all levels so that the source's objectives are achieved. Perception management combines different methods of truth projection, operational security, concealment and deception, and psychological operations.' (Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms 2009: 415).

As can be seen, perception management, defined with reference to psychological operations, is the planned operations to convey selected information and indicators in order to influence the emotions, motives, objective reasoning of foreign audiences and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups and individuals. In order to ensure that these

operations achieve their planned objectives, many fields such as psychological operations, public diplomacy, public relations, strategic communication, media planning, both military and civilian, need to be considered together.

Perception management causes the enemy to implement changes in favor of the originator more slowly. This effort may involve manipulation of the opponent's perception through an attempt to influence the decision-making process by presenting a false case or creating a target that supports the originator's goal (O'Neill 1989).

Perception management also deals with the international political environment. Governments, states and politicians use perception management techniques to influence public opinion on a particular issue, gain support or direct it. In this context, they can influence public perceptions by drawing the framework of which issues will be brought to the agenda, highlighted, and from which perspective they will be presented. According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the process of perception and world image formation can be considered to involve two sub-processes. Sensory data are first acquired, then organized and analyzed to form a coherent and comprehensive picture (CIA 1979). Therefore, misperception of the world can result either from incorrect data or from incorrect processing of correct data.

In perception management, it is very important to convey carefully selected messages to the target audience through the right channels and to create attitude change in the target audience in terms of message control. The fact that the idea or thought conveyed by the message to the target audience is on important issues and supported by sound, image and content will have an important place in the formation of persuasion. The main elements of effective communication that cause attitude change; issues such as developing a new attitude in the target audience, increasing the intensity of the existing attitude of the target audience, changing the existing attitude of the target audience should be carefully evaluated in terms of perception management.

Perception management, commonly used during peacetime, does not necessarily use misleading information. It is influencing the views of a country's top officials through a long-term and complex manipulative process, whose aim is usually to improve an image or prevent a conflict. Perception management, considered a more complex undertaking than deception, focuses on influencing the highest levels of an enemy government or the general public. This goes far beyond trying to mislead the enemy with camouflage or false signals intelligence. Much more preparation is required during a perception management attack. 'Knowledge of the

enemy's capabilities is important, but to be effective one must understand his decision-making process, psychological makeup, culture, history, and leadership' (O'Neill 1989).

When designing a perception management attack, the first step is to set a strategic objective. Once the target(s) have been identified, the user should research and get to know the opponent. The source of the message should have a clear and accurate understanding of the opponent's decision-making process, culture, beliefs and history. Perception management planners should be careful not to treat all targets in the same way. Different cultures react differently in different situations. Also, for a successful perception management effort, the source must be aware of the target's frame of reference. Senior officials are often slow to change their views and often give more weight to their own personal observations because they have specific belief sets (Godson & Wirtz 2000).

The next step is to design the perception management effort and determine how best to influence the competitor. At this stage, the risk of being discovered should be quantified. This step should always be taken remembering that such actions must be grounded in facts. Once the campaign has been designed and implemented, feedback mechanisms should be established and an assessment made on the effectiveness of the effort. Such feedback allows the originator to make adjustments as needed, withdraw when necessary, and protect against counter-perception management efforts by the opponent. At a minimum, perception management involves four steps: (1) attracting the target's attention; (2) presenting relevant information to hold the target's attention; (3) presenting the information in a way that is compatible with the target's memory or experience; and (4) communicating the information repeatedly, thus remaining consistent and avoiding the discovery of pitfalls by the target. In addition, information needs to be timely (O'Neill 1989).

When designing a perception management effort, certain principles of deception apply. A deception research program conducted by the CIA in 1980 produced ten principles that apply to the practical application of deception. Six of these can be regularly applied to the more complex process of perception management. First, known as the McGruder Principle, it is easier to manipulate an opponent's pre-existing belief than to present false evidence when trying to change it. When applying this principle to perception management, 'what a person notices and how they interpret it may depend on what the person expects to find.' The second principle relates to the concept of conditioning. It is much more effective to manipulate an opponent's perception by presenting information piecemeal than all at once. An opponent tends to reject sharp presentations, especially when they are incompatible with their beliefs and frame of

reference. In contrast, small and gradual changes, even if ambiguous in nature, are considered more likely to change an opponent's perception over time. The third principle of perception management is to use as much accurate information as possible. By reducing uncertainty with factual information, it increases the likelihood of influencing the opponent. The use of feedback mechanisms is essential in any perception management effort. These return channels are essential in determining the effectiveness of the effort and the changes that need to be made when necessary. This principle is more necessary for perception management efforts than for basic deception operations because perception management campaigns last longer and are likely to require course corrections.

Like basic deception or more sophisticated reflex control operations, perception management planners should closely monitor the results of their efforts. Another principle addresses the need to be aware of any subtle and unintended side effects. While all possible outcomes of a perception management effort cannot be predicted in advance, it is most advantageous to deal with undesirable developments as soon as possible. Planners should eliminate negative side effects before they develop into more serious problems. The last principle concerns the overall design of the effort. Before embarking on a perception management project, the placement and presentation of the material should be determined. With perception management, the timing and flow of information transfer to the opponent is important (Callamari & Reveron 2003).

The perception of Israel as a victimized Jewish state was reversed with the 'Israel-Gaza War'. Israel's military operations in Palestine, which resulted in civilian casualties, human rights violations and forced displacement of the Palestinian people, have received and continue to receive widespread international criticism. In many countries, especially in the West, this has led to a negative perception of Israel.

Reliable sources in the Western media have portrayed Israel's policies and military actions as they are, leading to an increase in the negative perception of Israel. Moreover, content shared on social media platforms, especially images and documents criticizing Israel's harsh policies and military operations during conflict periods, have reinforced this negative perception. Social media posts have created a spontaneous and unpredictable reaction against Israel, especially among the younger generation. This reaction has also created public opinion in support of Palestine and a tough stance against Israel.

4. Political Perception Management: World Leaders' Comments on the Palestine-Israel Conflict

Political leaders have an important role in perception management. Political leaders' suggestions or comments on an issue have a strong impact on changing the perception of the target audience. Charismatic personality traits of leaders can have a strong impact on society. In perception management, the credibility, respectability and trustworthiness of the source of the message show that effective communication creates more attitude change in the target. In this case, with the right communication method, it will usually bring about a large amount of attitude change in the target audience, and the most attitude change will occur when the view put forward in the communication is very different from the view of the listener. Especially in crisis situations, the attitudes and behaviors of leaders influence the public's perception of events. Therefore, perception management is fundamentally concerned with the international political environment.

World leaders gathered in New York for the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly. One of the most important items on the agenda was Israel's war on Gaza. The General Assembly frequently featured speeches by leaders on the perception of Israel (AL JAZEERA 2024).

President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan:

'As a result of Israeli attacks, Gaza has become the world's largest cemetery for women and children: More than 17,000 children have been targeted by Israeli bullets and bombs.'

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva:

'In Gaza and the West Bank, we are witnessing one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent history, dangerously spreading to Lebanon.'

US President Joe Biden:

'In Gaza, innocent civilians are living through hell. Thousands have been killed, including humanitarian aid workers. Many families have been displaced, forced to take refuge in tents and face a serious humanitarian crisis. Going forward, we need to address the escalating violence against innocent Palestinians in the West Bank and create conditions for a better future. This must include a two-state solution in which Israel lives in security and peace, with full recognition and normalized relations with all its neighbors, and Palestinians live in their own state with security, dignity and self-determination.'

Efforts to protect a country's image internationally can nowadays be done through social media strategies and media events. One of the best practitioners of this is King Abdullah II of Jordan, who, in a message posted on his website, addressed the United Nations General Assembly.

'It is often impossible to feel that there is a moment in our world without chaos. And yes, I cannot remember a time of greater danger than this one. Palestinians have been subjected to occupation and oppression for over 57 years. During this time, the Israeli government has been allowed to cross one red line after another.... But now, after decades of Israeli impunity, it is becoming its own worst enemy..... And the results can be seen everywhere.....The Israeli government has been accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Around the world, outrage at Israel's actions is being expressed. Cities have seen mass protests and calls for sanctions are growing louder.' (KingAbdullah 2024).

We see that political leaders' speeches are dominated by their emotional reactions. Phrases such as graveyard, humanitarian crisis, innocent civilians, oppression, occupation are framed for Palestine, while phrases such as bullets, bombs, genocide, rage, aggression are framed for Israel. In particular, the International Criminal Court's (ICC) issuance of arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on suspicion of crimes against humanity shows that the court focuses primarily on the humanitarian dimension of the war. This is the first time an international arrest warrant has been issued against Israeli officials, and the first time such a warrant has been issued against officials of a country considered part of the community of democratic nations (Doğan 2024).

All these high-level reactions, and especially the proper use of social media, enabled the people of the West to face the truth, unlike their politicians, and to identify Israel as the "mass murderer".

5. Changing Perception of Israel in World Public Opinion

Public perception refers to the general thoughts, attitudes and beliefs of the public about a particular issue, person, event or situation. This perception is often shaped over time and influenced by factors such as media, social media, cultural norms, education and individual experiences. Public perception can be used as a tool to reflect how individuals or groups evaluate and react to social realities.

The components that influence public perception are social consciousness, emotional reactions, values and beliefs, and media and social media influence. For the development of social consciousness, it is important how much information people have about a subject and how much correct or incorrect information they have. Media and educational institutions play an important role in shaping this consciousness. Likewise, these are important factors that influence public perception.

Emotional reactions of the public to an issue, such as love, hate, fear, anxiety, etc., are important inputs affecting public perception. For example, natural disasters or crisis situations determine how the public responds to these events. The norms and values within each society guide public perception. For example, while environmental awareness may be an important value in one society, economic growth might be prioritized in another.

Media, especially television, newspapers, magazines, and social media platforms, plays a significant role in shaping public perception. The way news is presented, the language used, and visual representations can influence people's perceptions (McCombs 2005, 2014; Chan 2007). Public perception generally has a dynamic nature and can evolve based on societal changes, events, or new information. Therefore, it can change over time and may quickly transform as a result of social movements or political decisions. This can be most clearly observed in the changing perception of Israel.

According to a survey conducted with 16,960 people from 36 countries, Israel dropped 10 places in the global rankings of the best countries. In the public opinion-based study, participants expressed negative views regarding Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza. According to the new ranking, Israel was in 36th place out of 87 countries in 2023, but now ranks 46th out of 89 countries listed (Staff 2024).

Americans now identify anti-Semitism or prejudice against Jewish people as a much bigger problem than they did 20 years ago. According to recent studies, nearly half of Americans view anti-Semitism as a 'very serious' issue. This figure was recorded as 9% in Gallup measurements conducted in 2003. Currently, 81% of Americans view anti-Semitism as either a 'very serious' or 'somewhat serious' issue, compared to 57% in 2003. Perceptions of prejudice against Jewish people show significant differences based on age groups and political party affiliations. Older Americans are more likely to define anti-Semitism as a very serious issue compared to younger Americans. While 66% of those aged 65 and over and 55% of those aged 50-64 view it as a very serious issue, only 36% of those under 50 feel the same. Meanwhile, Republicans (63%)

are more likely to define anti-Semitism as a very serious issue than Democrats (49%) and Independents (40%). Most Americans consider prejudice against Jewish people a problem in the country, and half see it as a very serious issue. The recent experiences of American Jews support these concerns. More than a third of American Jews report that they have faced mistreatment or harassment at least occasionally due to their religious identity over the past year. About half of them state that this mistreatment has increased compared to previous years. Likely as a direct result, most American Jews say they are hesitant to disclose their religious identity to others. American Jews are not the only group facing faith-based prejudice in the U.S. However, such treatment is experienced more frequently and intensely by Jewish Americans compared to other major religious groups (Jones 2024).

According to another study, about a quarter of Americans (26%) stated that they had never heard of Benjamin Netanyahu. However, among those who are familiar with him, more have a negative view of Netanyahu than a positive one. 42% of Americans say they do not trust Netanyahu to do what is right in world affairs, while 32% express trust in him (Dinesh & Silver 2023).

It is an undeniable fact that Israel under Netanyahu's leadership does not seek peace in the region. Netanyahu has gone beyond the control of the United States and will remain unmanageable until the U.S. elections are over. Netanyahu is the 'Hitler' of this century. It seems that Netanyahu prefers a regional conflict to secure his hold on power, rather than serving global peace that would reflect the spirit of the Olympics in the Olympic year (Karaca 2024).

Due to the events in Gaza, 58% of Israelis believe their country is not respected internationally. The majority of Israelis (83%) think that anti-Semitism is widespread globally, with nearly half (49%) stating that it is very common today (Silver & Smerkovich 2024).

According to a survey by Morning Consult, since the beginning of October, the percentage of voters who expressed more sympathy for Israelis dropped from 41% to 34%, while those who said they sympathized equally with both Israelis and Palestinians increased from 26% to 34%. During the same period, the percentage of voters who believed the U.S. should provide humanitarian aid to Palestinians increased from 57% to 63% (Statecraft 2024).

One component of public perception, emotional response, was seen in the UEFA Nations League match between France and Israel. Hundreds of protesters condemned France for hosting the match and expressed their anger at President Emmanuel Macron and other prominent

politicians attending the game. There were clashes in the stands and protests outside the stadium.

In the match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Atletico Madrid at Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris, fans in the stands unfurled a large banner reading 'Free Palestine' in support of Palestine (BBC News Türkçe 2024a; Taşkın 2024).

Thousands gathered in Berlin to protest in support of Palestine and against Israel's attacks on Gaza. The crowd carried Palestinian flags and banners reading 'One genocide does not justify another,' 'Germany's silence is complicity,' '15,000 children have been killed' and 'All parents cry the same language' (Başay 2024).

In the U.S., protests against Israel and in support of Gaza were held at 140 universities. Students demanded that universities sever financial ties with companies associated with Israel (BBC News Türkçe 2024b). In Europe, particularly in the Netherlands, France, and Germany, pro-Palestinian demonstrations continued to spread at least 15 universities.

6. Results and Recommendations

Israel, by using the Hamas attack, did not hesitate to play the victim card in the Western public opinion, gaining significant support. Western governments gave such strong backing to Israel that it paved the way for a massacre, even genocide.

Initially, governments supporting Israel did not face backlash from their own populations due to Hamas's attack. However, when images of the inhumane actions driven by Israel's relentless desire to kill began to surface, things changed. The state founded by a people who had experienced the Holocaust, in which over 7 million Jews were killed, was now responsible for killing 44,000 people in just 418 days, and this started to be questioned. As horrific reports of death, destruction, and famine came from the region, public support for Israel began to decline, even in countries where military support for Israel had been the highest. Even Iran's attack on Israel could not stop this decline in support.

The data from Gallup, Pew Research Center, and Morning Consult corroborates this. Research shows that even in the United States, Israel's biggest supporter, support for Israel's military policies has declined. The reflection of these figures was seen in actions initiated by students in the U.S. These protests made a significant impact and spread to universities in Europe that supported Israel. Interestingly, those who claim to represent democracy and freedom of expression responded to these humanitarian actions with harsh interventions by police forces.

In European countries such as Spain, Ireland, Malta, and Norway, public reactions were focused on Israel's actions being seen as revenge, rather than self-defense. Within the EU, members led by Spain and Ireland recognized the right of Palestinians to establish a state based on the 1967 borders, including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. While these interventions made the protests more effective, they also began to shift the perspectives of governments on the issue.

The acceptance of the decision by the UN General Assembly to grant Palestine membership and additional rights serves as the first example. In addition to all this, the decision by the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on suspicion of committing crimes against humanity, and the acceptance of this decision by many Western governments, will be a testament to the changing perception of Israel in the international community.

In the future, the decision of the people to stand with Palestine will directly affect the future of the issue. The establishment of the State of Palestine will have much stronger public support, and this support could lead to international unity in the reconstruction of Palestine.

Israel, on the other hand, will no longer be able to hide behind the narrative of a "victimized" people and state, claiming its actions as self-defense, while referring to its "genocidal" history. The massacres it has committed in Palestine will continually be brought to the forefront. Israel's closest allies are concerned not only about the impact the war will have on Israel's credibility but also on their own. Moreover, while Israel is clearly violating international law, it becomes difficult for its allies to advocate for respect for international law or the rules-based order. Israel has caused more damage to its global perception in the year since the conflict began than it did in the previous 56 years of occupation. This outcome does not only affect Israel. More importantly, Israel's allies are also losing their global credibility.

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