

PROPHETIC GUIDANCE VERSUS STRATEGIC REALITY: A COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF MUSLIM VISITS TO AL-AQSA UNDER OCCUPATION

Nouvna Nore SUSIMAH*

ABSTRACT: The proliferation of Muslim visits to Al-Aqsa Mosque under the Buffer State/Israel occupation –a practice actively promoted, particularly within the Indonesian context– constitutes a highly contentious phenomenon within contemporary Islamic jurisprudence and strategic thought. This article employs a critical analytical framework, synthesising normative Islamic guidance (derived from the Prophetic Sunnah and the scholarly insights of Professor Dr. Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi) with strategic calculus (informed by Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* and international security principles). This approach argues that such campaigns, despite sincere religious intent, fundamentally contradict both prophetic instruction and strategic realities. The core of the study is an empirical cost-benefit analysis that details both significant, quantifiable, and non-quantifiable costs and benefits. Key findings include the documentation of substantial direct financial contributions to the occupying power (e.g., calculated visa revenue exceeding IDR 1.44 billion from a single Indonesian travel agency), the involuntary submission of critical intelligence data, and the establishment of occupation normalisation. This counterproductive behaviour is conceptualised as an “Intellectual Nakba (catastrophe)”. The analysis, which is substantially validated by the researcher's direct qualitative fieldwork (including personal observations from a 2024 visit), demonstrates that the resulting costs –comprising compromised strategic intelligence and support for the occupation– dramatically outweigh the limited, purported spiritual and economic benefits. The paper concludes by presenting strategic recommendations aimed at realigning Muslim action with the ultimate goal of Al-Aqsa's liberation.

KEYWORDS: Al-Aqsa Mosque, Bayt al-Maqdis, Muslim Visits, Intellectual Nakba, Indonesia.

1. INTRODUCTION

The genocide perpetrated by the Buffer State/Israel¹ against Palestine has grown increasingly brutal and intensified since the Thufan Al-Aqsa Operation launched by Hamas on October 7, 2023. This physical genocide, which originally began with the Nakba (catastrophe) in 1948, has finally gained momentum, drawing greater global attention. Concurrently, the ongoing brutality has given rise to another

* Bachelor of Social Sciences, Department of International Relations, Universitas Indonesia, Depok/Indonesia., nouvna@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0009-4170-9108.

contentious phenomenon: visits to Bayt al-Maqdis in general and al-Aqsa Mosque in particular.

The relentless attacks continue to affect not only the residents of the Gaza Strip but also all Palestinians. This includes those who reside in Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank (such as Jenin, Al Khalil/Hebron, Ariha/Jericho, Nablus, etc.) or Israel-occupied territories, including al-Aqsa (Fallahnda, 2023). Specifically, in the Bayt al-Maqdis region, the genocidal conditions have made it increasingly difficult to visit al-Aqsa Mosque. Ultimately, this has severely impacted and limited the economic well-being of the local population.

Over the past two years, numerous promotions and invitations have emerged. In Indonesia, various influencers are more frequently campaigning to “enliven” the deserted al-Aqsa Mosque, a consequence of the brutality committed by Israel (Nisa, 2024). This situation has inevitably sparked considerable debate regarding the appropriate stance of Muslims toward al-Aqsa Mosque under these circumstances. Therefore, this article aims to answer the question: “What should be the attitude of Muslims toward the campaign to enliven al-Aqsa Mosque?” This article is written with the following objectives:

1. To revisit the guidance of Prophet Muhammad concerning visits to al-Aqsa Mosque specifically and Bayt al-Maqdis generally, while these areas remain under occupation.
2. To elucidate the tangible impacts arising from “enlivening” of al-Aqsa Mosque specifically and Bayt al-Maqdis generally, while these areas remain under occupation.

Generally, this article reflects the researcher's experiences over the past year, starting in 2024. This includes the researcher's diplomatic journey to London in June 2024, a visit to al-Aqsa Mosque in September 2024, and participation in the Saladin (Salahuddin) Camp *dawrah* 4th batch from April to May 2025 (including basic, intermediate 1, and intermediate 2), and the 5th batch in October 2025 (advance). Beyond personal reflection, this article also draws insights from the researcher's study of Professor Dr. Abd Al-Fattah El-Awaisi's book, “*Rencana Strategis Pembebasan Masjid Al-Aqsa*” (التخطيط الإستراتيجي للتحرير القادم للمسجد الأقصى المبارك), which serves as a primary source for this research.

This article will not only focus on the guidance of Prophet Muhammad but will also detail the tangible impacts. The article contains several main points including: the researcher's hypothesis, explanation on the guidance from the Prophet Muhammad, elaboration on how many current Muslim attitudes toward the al-Aqsa Mosque under occupation do not align with the Prophet's guidance, the researcher arguments for the connection between this phenomenon and the intellectual *Nakba*, the researcher discusses the dangers of visiting occupied territories from an international security perspective, the researcher's arguments reflecting on excerpts from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, the researcher reinforces the arguments regarding the tangible impacts of “enlivening” al-Aqsa Mosque under occupation, the researcher presents a cost-benefit analysis. The article

concludes with a discussion and recommendations, and a plan for follow-up actions.

This research represents an initial endeavour to explore a debatable topic, and, as is characteristic of evolving research, it still has limitations. Therefore, the researcher highly anticipates constructive criticism and suggestions from colleagues and readers to refine and enrich the discussion in the future.

2. THE FOUNDATIONAL CASE: THE GUIDANCE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

There is a similarity between the current state of the Muslim community and the circumstances when Prophet Muhammad was first transported to al-Aqsa Mosque during the *Isra'* (Night Journey) as part of the *Isra' wal-Mi'raj* event. At the time of *Isra'*, the al-Aqsa Mosque was under occupation. While the area was historically under the control of the Roman Empire for most of the Prophet's life, and at the specific time of the *Isra'*, the al-Aqsa Mosque was under Persian occupation. However, we cannot interpret Allah's bringing Prophet Muhammad to al-Aqsa Mosque in its occupied state as purposeless.

We must recognise that the wisdom behind the *Isra'* journey lies in how Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad the profound importance of al-Aqsa Mosque. This is evidenced by how, ever since the *Isra'*, Prophet Muhammad continuously strove for the liberation of al-Aqsa Mosque from Roman occupation. On the other hand, during these liberation efforts, Prophet Muhammad never permitted the Companions who wished to visit al-Aqsa Mosque while it was under Roman occupation.

In the current situation, with al-Aqsa Mosque under Israeli occupation, other concerns have emerged and proliferated among the Indonesian community. These concerns relate to the increasing scarcity of visitors to al-Aqsa Mosque. This situation not only leads to a decline in worshippers but also reduces the income of residents, the guardians of al-Aqsa Mosque.

In Indonesia, these emerging concerns are also felt by Muslim celebrity influencers. Despite the dilemma and debate between those who support and oppose visits, several arguments are consistently presented. Those who advocate for “enlivening” al-Aqsa Mosque, even under occupation, often cite the following arguments:

1. The call to maintain mosques as mentioned in Surah At-Tawbah: 18: “Only those who maintain the mosques of Allah are they who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakah and do not fear except Allah. For those it is expected that they will be among the [rightly] guided”.
2. The virtue of travelling to three mosques, as narrated in a Hadith from Bukhari: “Journeys (for worship) should not be undertaken except to visit three mosques: Al-Haram Mosque (Makkah), this mosque of mine (Prophet's Mosque in Madinah), and al-Aqsa Mosque”.

Professor Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi (2025) presented an important methodology in his book. When examining a Hadith, it is essential to understand its context, background, factors, conditions, and circumstances. This is akin to the necessity of understanding the cause (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) when comprehending the revelation of a Surah (El-Awaisi, 2025). Therefore, we need to follow guidance according to the prevailing conditions and situation. Consequently, our attitude towards “maintaining” mosques and travelling to the three mosques must be adapted to the circumstances. If faced with the current situation where the al-Aqsa Mosque is under occupation, it is appropriate for us to follow guidance that aligns with these conditions.

As previously explained, the current condition of the Muslim community mirrors that of Prophet Muhammad, meaning we both face the al-Aqsa Mosque being under occupation. Thus, it is important for us to know the steps taken by Prophet Muhammad at that time. Professor El-Awaisi, based on his research on extracting the *Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, argued in his book that the Prophet Muhammad forbade his Companions from visiting the al-Aqsa Mosque while it was still under occupation (El-Awaisi, 2025). Although not directly prohibiting it, Prophet Muhammad always advised the Companions who wished to pray at al-Aqsa Mosque to pray at his own mosque (in Madinah), for the time being or at the Ka’bah after the *Fath* (liberation). As a community that claims to love and follow his teachings, it is only fitting that we adhere to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.

Professor El-Awaisi presented several Hadith to support his argument that Prophet Muhammad prohibited visiting al-Aqsa Mosque when it was under occupation. However, Prophet Muhammad still offered **alternatives that still allowed them to connect with and contribute** to the al-Aqsa Mosque. **Firstly**, when Prophet Muhammad told Al-Arqam ibn Abī al-Arqam that praying in Al-Haram Mosque was better than 1,000 prayers in Bayt al-Maqdis. **Secondly**, when Prophet Muhammad repeated three times, urging a Companion to pray in Al-Haram Mosque after he had vowed to pray in Bayt al-Maqdis when Makkah was liberated. **Thirdly**, when Prophet Muhammad instructed **Ummul-Mu’minin Maymuna**, who wished to pray in Bayt al-Maqdis when Makkah was liberated, by sending someone to bring oil with which she would light lamps in Bayt al-Maqdis. **Fourthly**, when Ummul-Mu’minin Maymuna quoted the Prophet’s teaching that prayer in his mosque in Madinah was better than 1,000 prayers in other mosques (besides the Ka’bah) to a woman who vowed to pray in Al-Aqsa after recovering from an illness. These consistent alternatives, from Masjid al-Haram to the Prophet’s Mosque, demonstrated a strategic approach to education for the Companions, channelling their devotional energy towards safe, Muslim-controlled sanctuaries while maintaining the spiritual importance of al-Aqsa Mosque through charitable contributions.

In September 2024, the researcher embarked on a journey from Jakarta to Egypt, then to Palestine, passing through the Sinai Desert and the Taba border.

This trip was decided upon in early 2024, before the researcher became aware of the Prophet Muhammad's guidance regarding the prohibition of visiting al-Aqsa Mosque while it is under occupation.

The intermediate 1st Saladin (Salahuddin) Camp class and Professor El-Awaisi's book “Rencana Strategis Pembebasan Masjid Al-Aqsa” (التخطيط الإستراتيجي للتحرير القادم للمسجد الأقصى المبارك) were the researcher's initial sources of knowledge regarding the Prophet Muhammad's guidance. When the researcher first encountered this information, the researcher did not immediately share the same perspective. This was a result of the researcher's direct experience visiting al-Aqsa Mosque. Upon arrival, the researcher observed first-hand that the residents the researcher met expressed joy and gratitude for the arrival of visiting groups to al-Aqsa Mosque, even though it remains under occupation.

The researcher's experience led to further questions: “How, then, can we, as fellow Muslims, provide support to our brothers and sisters, especially the local residents of al-Aqsa Mosque? Is there any guidance given by the Prophet Muhammad to the Muslim community for this?” These questions arose from the researcher's observation that, in reality, no area in Palestine is safe. All Palestinians, from the river to the sea, experience oppression and torture, even to the point of being killed in great numbers. Palestinians from various regions also have to contend with starvation and difficulty meeting their basic needs, confined and slowly killed by the occupiers. Also, it is impossible for most Palestinians to reach al-Aqsa Mosque, although they live within close proximity.

The researcher will utilise the findings of the discussion with Professor El-Awaisi (2025) to elaborate on the inconsistency between current Muslim attitudes and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The researcher gathered several key points from Professor El-Awaisi's answers to the researcher's questions. **First**, during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, there were no Muslims in Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), which was then under Roman Empire occupation. **Second**, we can emulate what was done during the second liberation struggle led by Salah al-Din Al-Ayyubi.

During this second liberation struggle, the conditions were similar to the world's current situation, where Muslims reside in the Bayt al-Maqdis area. The Muslims residing in Bayt al-Maqdis were also remnants of those who had been massacred by the Crusades and those who had fled to other regions. Professor El-Awaisi explained that at that time, the exiled Muslims helped the Muslims who remained in the Bayt al-Maqdis area by sending money. Therefore, we can apply the lessons learned during the Salah al-Din Al-Ayyubi era's liberation struggle to the current era.

In this regard, Professor El-Awaisi (2025) also provided a parable. According to him, visiting Al-Aqsa Mosque while it is under occupation might indeed seem reasonable. However, liken it to *khamr* (intoxicant), drinking it can also be suitable

for making the body feel warm. Nevertheless, drinking *khamr* is not permissible according to Islamic law.

3. “ENLIVEN” AL-AQSA MOSQUE CAMPAIGN: A FORM OF INTELLECTUAL NAKBA

The phenomenon of campaigning to enliven and increase visits to al-Aqsa Mosque amidst brutal occupation, often driven by good intentions but lacking a deep understanding of the guidance of Prophet Muhammad and the strategic realities on the ground, can be categorised as an “Intellectual Nakba.” The term Nakba (catastrophe) historically refers to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948 during the Arab-Israeli war, which encompassed not only the loss of land and lives but also systematic efforts to erase Palestinian identity and narrative (United Nations [UN], n.d.). In this context, Intellectual Nakba refers to a state of crisis or decline in the field of knowledge/science resulting from neglect of scholarly preparation as an urgent and fundamental priority for the progress of the liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis.

This kind of campaign is not just about isolated individual actions; it has broader implications. By flocking to al-Aqsa Mosque under the occupiers' control, Muslims indirectly normalise the occupation. They unwittingly participate in a scenario desired by the Israeli occupiers: creating the illusion that “everything is fine” and that the occupation does not pose a significant barrier to worship and tourism. However, this is a form of collective failure in strategic thinking, where emotions and sincere intentions overshadow rational consideration, knowledge, and prophetic guidance. The desire to help residents or experience the blessings of the noble mosque actually creates an opening for the occupiers to gain financial benefits through visas and other fees, and to gather crucial intelligence data from visits.

Furthermore, the arrival of Muslim visitors under occupation fundamentally degrades the dignity and honour of Muslims as a sovereign community. Every step taken on occupied land, every interaction with the occupying authorities, and every payment made is indirectly a form of acknowledgement of the occupation's legitimacy. This sends a misleading message to the world and, more importantly, to themselves and future generations: that Muslims can accept worship under the shackles of oppressors as if oppression is normal. This is an insult to the values of freedom and justice upheld by Islam and an affront to the countless sacrifices made by the Palestinian people to defend the sanctity of al-Aqsa and their land.

These visits are not just about financial losses or exposed intelligence data; they are about a much greater moral and spiritual loss. When a Muslim, who should be a defender of truth and an opponent of injustice, willingly submits to immigration, interrogation and security procedures imposed by the occupiers, they sacrifice a part of their identity as a noble community. The dignity and honour that should be upheld as a representation of Islam are trampled by the reality that to worship in al-Aqsa, they must pass through the gates and obtain permission from those who have usurped it. This is a form of invisible occupation of the soul

and honour of the Muslim community, which has been unconsciously normalised and accepted as an acceptable consequence for the sake of a “pilgrimage” visit.

This intellectual Nakba also means obscuring the priorities of the struggle, exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad and other Islamic heroes. History records that Prophet Muhammad never allowed his Companions to visit the al-Aqsa Mosque while it was under Roman/ Persian occupation; instead, he focused on efforts to liberate it. Similarly, Salah al-Din Al-Ayyubi fought hard to reclaim al-Aqsa Mosque, not merely to enliven it while it was under enemy control. When the Muslim community prioritises personal desires to worship there over strategic considerations and sharia guidance in an emergency, it moves them further away from the true goal of liberating al-Aqsa Mosque. This is a betrayal of the larger principles of the struggle, transforming al-Aqsa Mosque from a symbol of resistance into a tourist destination and object that benefits the occupiers, while simultaneously weakening the position of the Muslim community in future liberation efforts.

In the initial points discussed, Professor El-Awaisi emphasised the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad and lessons drawn from history. Additionally, Professor El-Awaisi (2025) presented an international security perspective to strengthen the argument regarding the dangers of visiting the al-Aqsa Mosque while it is under occupation.

First, there are two possibilities concerning residents who express happiness and gratitude for the arrival of visitors when the al-Aqsa Mosque is still occupied. According to Professor El-Awaisi, they might be unaware of the situation, or, in the worst-case scenario, they could be collaborators.

Second, given the fact that Indonesia does not have diplomatic relations with the Israeli entity, it poses a security threat if Indonesian citizens continue to travel to the Palestinian territories under Israeli occupation.

The researcher spent a considerable amount of time fully grasping the first and second points. However, the subsequent points require even more time to digest. **Third**, Professor El-Awaisi mentioned that visitors returning from the al-Aqsa Mosque have the potential to become “infiltrators”.

Finally, by entering an area under occupation, visitors must pass through borders controlled by the occupying authorities. Going through the immigration process, with all its inspections, checks and interrogations, is tantamount to voluntarily offering oneself as a sample to the occupiers.

In June 2024, the researcher had the opportunity to visit London, England, as part of a people-to-people diplomacy mission focused on gathering academic information about Southeast Asia. The researcher visited the British Library and met with the head of the Southeast Asia Collection. During the meeting, the researcher also met with another visitor, a doctoral student from Japan who was researching the Javanese ethnic group and also needed information from the

British Library's Southeast Asia Collection. This student was pursuing their doctorate at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, an institution run by the Buffer State/Israel. Months after the trip to London, the researcher formulated a hypothesis regarding the research being conducted at the university in Israel. The researcher suspected that the occupiers were making strenuous efforts to gain influence over Indonesia, which they perceived as one of their biggest obstacles to fully controlling Palestine. However, at that time, the researcher still could not find validation for this hypothesis.

After attending the Saladin (Salahuddin) Camp, the researcher's hypothesis was finally validated. According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik [BPS], 2015) of the Republic of Indonesia, as of 2025, the Javanese are the largest ethnic group, constituting 40.05% of Indonesia's population. Whether consciously or not, this aligns perfectly with the last point made by Professor El-Awaisi in his explanation from an international security perspective. The Israeli people are born intelligent, even if their intelligence sometimes leads them to deny God's commands. The researcher agrees with Professor El-Awaisi that entering an area controlled by the occupiers through immigration means making oneself a "sample" for the occupiers. The Israeli entity's authorities would not simply let "enemy" samples that voluntarily come to them go unchecked. The researcher argues that Israel would not allow Muslims to visit freely without a high cost. Indonesia currently has the largest Muslim population in the world, with almost 87% of its residents being Muslim, totalling approximately 244.69 million people (detikTravel, 2025). Israel leverages the arrival of Muslim visitors (especially from Indonesia, a country that consistently supports Palestinian liberation) as an advantage to advance their strategic plans.

Often, good intentions, especially in a religious context, are deemed sufficient to justify an action. However, as explained in this article, good intentions must be accompanied by knowledge and proper guidance. Campaigns to "enliven" al-Aqsa Mosque, while perhaps driven by sincere intentions to help residents or experience the mosque's blessings, could have counterproductive effects. Good intentions to prosper the mosque or experience the virtues of the three holy mosques do not automatically justify visiting if it contradicts the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad amidst the occupation. This is an important lesson: in Islam, accepted deeds are those based on knowledge and following the Sunnah, not merely on feelings or emotions.

4. THE IMPACT OF "ENLIVENING" AL-AQSA MOSQUE UNDER OCCUPATION

Sun Tzu – a Chinese General, military strategist, and philosopher who lived during the Eastern Zhou dynasty (771–256 BC)– is a familiar name in the field of international relations. Sun Tzu authored *The Art of War*, a military strategy treatise that has profoundly influenced both Western and Eastern philosophy. His work incorporates several concepts that the researcher previously studied as an

undergraduate in the International Relations program at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia.

As a military strategist, Sun Tzu offered many ideas on warfare. In his work, Sun Tzu wrote, *“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained, you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle”* (Sun Tzu, 2005). Furthermore, in his book, Sun Tzu (2005) argued, *“To know your enemy, you must become your enemy”*.

From *The Art of War*, we can see how Sun Tzu (2005) emphasised the importance of strategic or competitive thinking. This means we need to understand the enemy's motives, mindset, and potential actions from their perspective. Sun Tzu highlighted the importance of understanding an opponent's strengths and weaknesses to counter them effectively.

Conversely, occupiers will strive to understand us, their enemies. They will analyse the motives, strengths, and weaknesses of Muslims, including our mindset, strategies, and potential reactions. The arrival of visitors, for example, can become a valuable opportunity for occupiers to gather intelligence on demographics, sentiments, and Palestinian support networks. They will endeavour to exploit every vulnerability, including goodwill that may not be based on a comprehensive strategic understanding. Occupiers are highly likely to use this data to:

- **Build intelligence profiles:** Every visitor, especially those from pro-Palestinian countries such as Indonesia, will be included in an extensive database. These profiles can include personal information, travel patterns, social media affiliations, and even an analysis of political sentiment based on interactions.
- **Map networks:** By analysing who comes, where they originate from, and perhaps with whom they interact within the occupied territories, occupiers can map global support networks for Palestine.
- **Identify potential “threats”:** Occupiers will look for patterns or individuals they deem a threat to their security or who have the potential to become “agents” of resistance.
- **Exploitation and propaganda:** The collected data can be used for propaganda campaigns, manipulating public opinion, or even for covert intelligence operations in the future.
- **Seek weaknesses:** Furthermore, through the immigration process and data collection, occupiers also aim to identify individuals with weaknesses in faith and psyche that can be exploited. They look for vulnerabilities in character, finances, or even personal problems someone might have. This information can be used for pressure, blackmail, or tempting “cooperation” offers.

The researcher has undertaken several unrelated journeys. Nevertheless, these journeys feel like collecting a series of puzzle pieces that are now finally complete. These trips have brought the researcher to an awareness of the tangible impact of “enlivening” al-Aqsa Mosque under occupation, which is:

4.1. Contributing Significant Funds to the Occupiers Through Visa Payments

Every visitor who enters al-Aqsa Mosque through territory controlled by Israel directly and knowingly makes a significant financial contribution to the occupying entity through visa payments, border fees, and various other charges. For example, the Israeli visa fee amounts to €210 EUR, equivalent to IDR 3.56 million. This fund, though seemingly small individually, when collected from thousands of visitors, becomes a substantial source of income for Israel.

The researcher conducted simple research on a travel agency whose services were used. So far, the agency has sent nine visit groups to al-Aqsa Mosque, with each group consisting of approximately 45 people. One of the nine groups departed in early 2025, while three of the nine departed in 2024 when the genocide was intensely ongoing. Furthermore, for 2025, the agency has already opened four more groups. With the data showing that the Israeli visa fee amounts to €210, or IDR 3.56 million, we can perform a simple calculation. If the travel agency has sent nine groups, assuming each group has 45 people, the total number of visitors who have departed is nine groups \times 45 people/group = 405 people. From this number, the total estimated funds that have entered Israel's coffers from visa payments alone reach 405 people \times IDR 3,560,000/person = IDR 1,441,800,000.00, or more than 1.4 billion rupiahs. This figure does not include other costs, such as border fees and the purchase of goods and services in the occupied territories, which would certainly further increase the financial contribution to the occupying entity.

If only a handful of people visit, this amount might not seem significant, but imagine if the number of visitors continues to increase to thousands or even tens of thousands. The accumulated funds from these visa payments could reach billions of rupiah. These funds can then be used to finance their military operations, the construction of illegal settlements, or even to suppress the Palestinian population.

On the other hand, sincere intentions to help residents often cannot be fully realised. Carrying large amounts of cash to al-Aqsa is not as easy as imagined, because, according to the travel agency used by the researcher, carrying large amounts of money can raise baseless suspicions from the Israeli authorities. This would undoubtedly make it difficult for visitors to carry large sums of money. Therefore, it is unfair and disproportionate if we are unable to bring much money to help residents, yet are forced to pay billions of rupiah to Israel. Thus, the good intention to help residents becomes blurred when most of the funds flow into the coffers of the occupiers.

4.2. Submitting Oneself as a Sample for the Occupiers to Study

This is one of the most crucial and often overlooked impacts. When a visitor enters the territory occupied by Israel and goes through the immigration process, they voluntarily surrender their personal and biometric data to the occupying authorities. This information, including nationality, religious background, travel

history, and even social media affiliations, can be used by Israel for intelligence and analysis purposes.

Israel, as an entity highly dependent on data and information, can collect complete profiles of visitors, especially those from countries supporting Palestine, like Indonesia. This data can then be used to map support networks, identify influential individuals, or even for more sophisticated propaganda operations in the future. The joy of worshipping at al-Aqsa Mosque, if done under occupation, comes at a very high price: our personal data is used as a sample by the occupiers, which ultimately becomes a boomerang for the struggle for the liberation of al-Aqsa itself. This is an unequal sacrifice.

5. COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS: VISIT TO AL-AQSA MOSQUE UNDER OCCUPATION

Based on the reflections and arguments presented, the campaign to enliven al-Aqsa Mosque under Israeli occupation brings more costs than benefits. This approach analyses the impact of such visits from various perspectives, including religious guidance, strategic considerations, security, and economics.

5.1. Costs

Visits to al-Aqsa Mosque under occupation incur several high costs:

A. Normalisation of occupation and legitimacy of the occupying entity

Cost: The arrival of a visitor indirectly normalises the occupation, creating an illusion that “everything is fine” under occupation. This weakens the narrative of resistance and recognition of the occupation, as if worship can be performed “normally” even while under the oppressor’s shackles.

Impact: It blurs the essence of the Palestinian struggle and diminishes the dignity of Muslims who should reject the occupation. This is a betrayal of Islamic values of freedom and justice.

B. Direct financial contribution to the occupier

Cost: Each visitor directly contributes significant financial resources to the occupying entity through visa payments (e.g., €210 or IDR 3.56 million per person), border fees, and various other charges.

Impact: These funds, when accumulated from thousands of visitors (e.g., nine groups x 45 people = 405 people x IDR 3.56 million = IDR 1.44 billion), become a substantial source of income for the occupier. These funds could potentially be used to finance military operations, build illegal settlements, or oppress the Palestinian population. The intention to help residents becomes obscured because the funds flowing to the occupier are far greater.

C. Handover of intelligence data and important information

Cost: Visitors voluntarily submit personal and biometric data to the occupying authorities through immigration and inspection processes. This

includes nationality, religious background, travel history, and social media affiliations.

Impact: The occupier uses this information to build intelligence profiles, map global support networks for Palestine, identify potential “threats”, and find individuals' weaknesses for exploitation (blackmail, propaganda, etc.). This backfires on the struggle for the liberation of al-Aqsa.

D. Incompatibility with the guidance of Prophet Muhammad and the history

Cost: This campaign is not in line with the guidance of Prophet Muhammad, who forbade the Companions from visiting al-Aqsa Mosque when it was under Roman occupation, and instead focused on liberation efforts.

Impact: It demonstrates an intellectual Nakba where good intentions without knowledge and deep strategic understanding distance the Muslim community from the true goal of al-Aqsa's liberation. This blurs the priorities of the struggle and transforms al-Aqsa from a symbol of resistance into a tourist attraction.

E. International security threat for Indonesian citizens

Cost: Given that Indonesia does not have diplomatic relations with the Israeli entity, travel by Indonesian citizens to Palestinian territories under Israeli occupation poses a security threat.

Impact: Visitors could potentially become “infiltrators” or intelligence targets, especially for Israel, which considers Indonesia a primary adversary on the Palestinian issue.

5.2. Benefits

The claimed benefits of visits to al-Aqsa Mosque under occupation tend to be limited, and their validity is questionable from a strategic and religious standpoint:

A. Economic support for residents (partial/limited benefit)

Claimed Benefit: Providing economic support to local Palestinian residents who depend on religious tourism.

Reality/Limitations: The ability to bring large amounts of cash for direct distribution to residents is limited and can arouse suspicion from the occupier. Most of the funds flow into the occupier's treasury through visas and other fees.

More Effective Alternatives: Supporting residents can be achieved through direct monetary transfers (as a gift for them), as exemplified during the time of Salah al-Din Al-Ayyubi, without requiring entry into the occupied territory.

B. Enlivening the mosque (subjective/dilemmatic benefit)

Claimed Benefit: Fulfilling the call to enliven the mosque (Qur'an, 9: 18) and the virtue of visiting the three holy mosques (Bukhari).

Reality/Limitations: The understanding of religious texts must be adapted to the conditions. Prophet Muhammad forbade visits during the occupation. To “enliven” the mosque under occupation can be interpreted as normalisation, not liberation. This is a test of faith to see whether the community will follow the guidance of Prophet Muhammad or their personal desires.

More Effective Alternatives: Focus on preparing for liberation according to the guidance of Prophet Muhammad, which is based on knowledge, not just emotions or personal desires to worship there.

Aspect	Benefits	Costs	Explanation & Impact
Religious Guidance & Struggle Strategy	●(Claim) Enlivening the Mosque & Virtues of 3 Mosques: Fulfilling QS. At-Taubah: 18 & Hadith narrated by Bukhari.	●Violation of Prophet Muhammad's Guidance: He forbade the Companions from visiting al-Aqsa when it was occupied by the Romans, instead focusing on its liberation. ●Intellectual Nakba: Good intentions without knowledge & strategy, obscuring the priorities of the struggle.	Disregarding the Prophet's guidance and liberation strategies, visits can actually normalise the occupation and distance the Ummah from the true goal of al-Aqsa's liberation. This is a test of faith, a decision between following guidance or letting emotion lead the way.
Economic Impact	●(Claim) Local Economic Support: Helping Palestinian residents who depend on religious tourism.	●Significant Financial Contribution to the Occupier: Payment for visas (e.g., EUR 210/person), border fees, and other charges. ●Difficulty in Delivering Aid to Local Residents: Restrictions on carrying large amounts of cash.	The majority of visit funds (billions of Rupiah from thousands of visitors) flow directly into the occupier's coffers, which Israel can use to finance military operations and illegal settlements. The intention to help residents becomes ineffective.
Security & Intelligence	(No relevant security benefits)	●Submission of Intelligence Data: Visitors are required to surrender their personal and biometric data during immigration. ●Potential Security Threat (for Indonesian Citizens): Indonesia has no diplomatic relations with Israel, which poses a risk for becoming an intelligence target.	The occupier collects data for intelligence profiles, mapping networks, identifying "threats," and exploitation (propaganda/extortion). Visitors' personal data becomes samples that could harm the liberation struggle.
Dignity of the Ummah	(No benefits that enhance dignity)	●Normalisation of Occupation: Worship under the occupier's control diminishes the Ummah's identity. ●Sacrifice of Freedom Values: Accepting the occupier's immigration procedures as a condition for worship.	Visit under occupation implicitly acknowledges the legitimacy of the occupation, sacrifices the noble identity of the Ummah, and tramples on the values of freedom and justice in Islam.

Figure 1. Cost-Benefit Analysis of Visit to al-Aqsa Mosque Under Occupation
Source: Researcher's original analysis

To validate the theoretical framework of this study –specifically the concepts of "Intellectual Nakba" and the economic costs of visitation– the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with three Indonesian Muslims who visited Al-Aqsa Mosque in 2024. The respondents were asked to reflect on their motivations, their post-visit feelings, and their critique of the strategic arguments presented in this paper.

To bridge the gap between strategic theory and the lived experience of Indonesian visitors, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. These interviews were designed to elicit the psychological and ideological motivations of visitors. The following three questions were posed to the informants:

1. **Motivational Inquiry:** What was your primary reason or motivation for visiting Al-Aqsa Mosque at that time?
2. **Impact & Reflection:** What were your immediate feelings upon completing the visit, and what specific actions (if any) did you take regarding the Palestinian cause after returning?
3. **Critical Alignment:** After reviewing the arguments presented in this paper (specifically the Cost-Benefit Analysis and the concept of the Intellectual Nakba), how does your current perspective align or conflict with your previous experience?

The primary motivation for all respondents was rooted in individual spiritual fulfilment. Informant A described the visit as a “long-held Wishlist” item, seeking personal “peace”. At the same time, Informant B noted that the desire to go was sparked by humanitarian empathy and the influence of public figures.

However, the interviews revealed a significant “strategic void”. Informant B observed that while news of aggression is highly accessible, the “strong why” (historical and strategic depth) is often absent from the popular narrative in Indonesia. This suggests that the decision to visit is frequently made in a vacuum of strategic literacy, driven more by emotional “ego” (as noted by Informant A) than by an informed understanding of the long-term impact on the Palestinian cause.

A critical theme emerged regarding the commercialisation of Al-Aqsa visits. Informant B identified this as a “systemic homework” for the Ummah –a deep-seated challenge where travel agencies and influencers package the visit as a religious priority, often placing business interests above strategic liberation goals.

“At the top of it all is business... I don’t know if the advisors or religious figures involved deeply understand the priorities. This is systemic homework (PR sistemik).” (Informant B, 2025)

This aligns with the researcher’s argument regarding the “Intellectual Nakba”, where the Muslim public is led to believe that “enlivening” the mosque through tourism is the most virtuous act, overlooking how such travel inadvertently supports the occupying power’s economy and security apparatus.

Upon reviewing the cost-benefit analysis presented in this paper, all respondents reported a significant shift in perspective. Informant A acknowledged that the reality of the visit is heavily tied to the occupation's economy and that the desire to visit was often a manifestation of personal ego. Informant C highlighted the “Intellectual Nakba” and the “Economic Impact” as “eye-openers”, noting the danger of Al-Aqsa being reduced to a mere “tourist object” in the eyes of the visitors.

Based on the presented analysis, the researcher draws several conclusions regarding the phenomenon of the “enliven al-Aqsa” campaign in Indonesia, primarily as carried out by Muslim influencers and celebrities. **Overall, the cost-benefit analysis suggests that the costs of visiting al-Aqsa Mosque under occupation are significantly greater and more detrimental than any potential benefits may be.** These costs include the normalisation of occupation, the flow of funds to the enemy, intelligence data collection, and inconsistency with religious guidance and liberation strategies. The claimed benefits, such as local economic support, tend to be insignificant and can be achieved through other, more effective, and less harmful means.

6. DISCUSSIONS

These observations represent a significant advancement in our understanding of Muslim visits to Al-Aqsa under occupation. **First**, the researcher is against the normalisation of visits. The researcher does not support actions that normalise visit trips to al-Aqsa Mosque outside of humanitarian activities, such as aid distribution, and so forth. Furthermore, the researcher opposes campaigns, promotions, and invitations, especially those initiated by individuals who play a significant role in shaping public opinion, such as influencers and celebrities. Promoting and inviting people to visit al-Aqsa Mosque while it is still occupied is a form of imprudence and an act without knowledge, as it does not follow the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad.

Second, the importance of knowledge for action. The researcher views this as a manifestation of the crucial role knowledge plays in any action. Good intentions, in reality, must be realised through correct actions that are certainly in line with guidance, and this can only be achieved if based on knowledge, because being good alone is not enough. Knowledge without action is indeed like a tree without fruit, while action without knowledge is like walking in darkness. The Muslim community should focus on preparing for liberation according to the guidance of Prophet Muhammad, which begins and is based on knowledge, rather than flocking to the occupied territory.

Third, a dilemma is a test of faith. The researcher believes that this dilemma is a manifestation of faith or trust in Allah's promise. Just as Allah has promised freedom and the return of al-Aqsa Mosque to Muslims, what we should do is strive according to the guidance given by the Prophet Muhammad. The researcher opines that concerns about the current emptiness of al-Aqsa Mosque and the fate

of residents experiencing economic hardship are a test for us, to see whether we believe in the guidance of the one we call our role model or not. This is a test for the Muslim community to continue following the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad or not.

Fourth, evidence of an intellectual Nakba. The campaign to "enliven al-Aqsa," although based on good intentions, is actually a manifestation of an Intellectual Nakba because such actions disregard prophetic guidance and strategic realities, and have the potential to normalise the occupation and benefit the Zionist entity.

Fifth, fighting desires as a form of jihad. The researcher argues that fighting the urge to pray and make the visit to al-Aqsa while it is still under occupation is a form of jihad. This is because we know that there are indeed so many blessings to be gained from visiting al-Aqsa, but on the other hand, we suppress that desire because we want to follow the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad. Worshipping in al-Aqsa is not wrong. However, like other acts of worship, we need knowledge and guidance in doing so. The advice given by Prophet Muhammad is for us to worship in al-Aqsa in a state of freedom and honour. This is not without reason; Prophet Muhammad certainly provided such an example to demonstrate the importance of al-Aqsa and its freedom.

Sixth, ultimately, it all comes back to business. Behind the sacred intention of worship and longing for al-Aqsa lies a complex economic network that benefits the occupying power. Every visa paid, every service used, every purchase made in the occupied territory, directly or indirectly, contributes to the coffers of the oppressive entity. The personal data surrendered also becomes a valuable asset that can be processed for Israel's strategic interests. This is a tragic paradox: while we feel we are drawing closer to sanctity, we are unknowingly becoming part of the economic engine of occupation, thereby strengthening their grip and ultimately making the struggle for al-Aqsa's liberation itself more difficult.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

This often-dilemmatic situation frequently raises questions about the effectiveness of efforts already made. When Muslims feel they have exerted maximum effort, but the desired outcome (the liberation of al-Aqsa) has not yet been achieved, feelings of frustration and despair can arise. The "enliven" al-Aqsa campaign phenomenon could be one manifestation of this frustration, where the community seeks direct ways to feel "involved" or "contributing," even if such methods may not align with the proper guidance. This serves as a reminder that success is not just about how hard one tries, but also about the accuracy of the direction of that effort. Allah has promised victory to His servants, but that victory will only come if the servants follow His guidance and the guidance of His Messenger.

One should not think that continuously visiting al-Aqsa Mosque, even under occupation, makes the liberation of al-Aqsa itself a secondary priority after a

direct visit to al-Aqsa. The campaign to enliven al-Aqsa Mosque under occupation is not recommended. It can even be considered a form of imprudence and an act without knowledge, ultimately harming the struggle for Palestinian liberation. The proper stance to take is to follow the guidance of Prophet Muhammad to focus on liberation efforts and support Palestine through means that do not benefit the occupier. Although the final decision rests with individual choice, based on the conclusions reached, the researcher recommends several points:

1. **Hold firmly to the guidance of Prophet Muhammad:** In this liberation effort, Muslims must hold firmly to the guidance of Prophet Muhammad and learn from history. The following points are derivations of this recommendation.
2. **Urge Muslim unity to stop visit promotions:** The researcher emphasises the need to unite voices in stopping the promotion, invitation, and campaigns to enliven al-Aqsa Mosque.
3. **Base the liberation struggle on knowledge:** The researcher also sees the importance of basing the liberation battle on knowledge. Therefore, the Muslim community needs to continuously read, learn, understand, and draw lessons from history.
4. **Help residents by sending money:** The researcher encourages us to support our Muslim brothers and sisters in Bayt al-Maqdis by emulating the actions of Muslims during the second liberation struggle era, which involved helping fellow Muslims by sending them money. In doing so, we remain within the framework of Prophet Muhammad's guidance.

For these recommendations, the researcher has done several initiatives. At the personal level, recognising the importance of knowledge in performing an act, the researcher has a follow-up plan focused on disseminating knowledge through various activities. The researcher plans to continue this effort both individually, through personal media platforms, and collectively. Personally, the researcher intends to continue sharing knowledge that is contextually relevant to the current situation of the Muslim community.

Several weeks after completing the Saladin (Salahuddin) Camp 4th batch on April 2025, the researcher conducted a book giveaway for "*Rencana Strategis Pembebasan Masjid Al-Aqsa*" by Prof. Dr. Abd Al-Fattah El-Awaisi. Furthermore, the researcher has also taken the initiative to gift the book to strategic parties. The researcher distributed it to various groups, including lecturers (academics), candidate diplomats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kemlu) of the Republic of Indonesia (practitioners), Gen Z Muslim influencers, educators, and parents. Gifting the book to strategic targets is intended to share the blessings of this book while spreading the culture of Bayt al-Maqdis.

The researcher is now determined to deepen their knowledge of Bayt al-Maqdis continually. This is not just a fleeting interest, but a long-term commitment that will manifest through active participation in various in-depth study classes. The pinnacle of this intellectual commitment is the researcher's

resolve to thoroughly prepare for further higher education, specifically the **Quds Studies program in Ankara**. The choice of Ankara is not without reason, given Turkey's strategic position in the history and diplomacy concerning Middle Eastern issues, as well as the presence of educational institutions specialising in these fields, such as Bayt al-Maqdis. This step embodies the desire to enrich academic and scientific understanding, thereby making a more significant and data-driven contribution to the struggle for the liberation of al-Aqsa.

The decision to pursue higher academic studies, particularly in Quds Studies, is based on a deep understanding that influencing the decisions of stakeholders (be it governments, international organisations, or influential civil society groups) requires more than just enthusiasm and rhetoric. Academic legitimacy is key. Formal studies and in-depth research will equip the researcher with a comprehensive understanding, valid data, and structured analysis concerning the history, politics, international law, and other dimensions relevant to the issue of Bayt al-Maqdis.

The researcher also plans to continue the idea channelled through a group assignment, which is to mobilise the **Baitul Maqdis Book Club (BMBC)**. BMBC (www.instagram.com/baitulmaqdisbookclub) is expected to be a pioneer in establishing other book clubs that focus on Bayt al-Maqdis. As Professor El-Awaisi's message at the beginning of the Saladin (Salahuddin) Camp suggests, it is not just the intention that is important to prepare and constantly strengthen. Another factor mentioned as necessary is friends. Several fellow alumnae run BMBC from Saladin (Salahuddin) Camp, who share the same struggle. With a primary focus on literature concerning Bayt al-Maqdis, BMBC is an effort to prepare knowledge for liberation.

This initiative was launched by the students of Prof. Dr. Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi (Al-Maqdisi) and is conceptualised as a literacy bulwark to counter the narrative of hegemony and monopoly of knowledge that resulted in the "Intellectual Nakba", "Occupation of Muslim's Mind", and "Intellectual Slavery". The core principle of BMBC is the belief that true liberation of the land begins with the liberation of the mind, ultimately aiming to eliminate colonisation of the land by eradicating colonisation of the mind. The club's operations are grounded in a strategic framework based on "*Rencana Strategis Pembebasan Masjid Al-Aqsa*" by Professor El-Awaisi, which is viewed as a blueprint for liberation. Based on the "Barakah Circle Theory", BMBC leverages Indonesia's strategic distance to act as the "Rear Guard" and lead the long-term intellectual preparation.

Beyond its significant digital strategy of synthesising scholarly works into accessible content, BMBC also mobilises people to offline activities. These initiatives include:

- Civic Action: Initiating activities such as making a Petition to invite Palestinian academics.

- Public Engagement: Organising events like the Public Lecture: Beyond 1948 and the Monologue Performance: Global Solidarity for Palestine.
- Community Building: Hosting communal, interactive events such as the Bayt al-Maqdis Book Party and the Iqra Monologue Performance, which uses performance art to engage with themes related to knowledge.

The further plan for BMBC focuses on continuous intellectual development and community expansion. Key initiatives include:

- Knowledge Dissemination: Providing accessible, remote learning via the Online Bayt al-Maqdis Class.
- Narrative Building: Advancing its message by Publishing Literary Works (including research papers, essays, or historical analyses).
- Community Building: This is central to the plan, as exemplified by the Bayt al-Maqdis Book Party, which focuses on hosting a communal, interactive event to encourage discussion, connection, and in-depth reading among members. The plan also includes the Iqra Monolog Performance, which organises creative events using performance art to engage with themes related to knowledge.

The overall long-term goals for BMBC are to **educate** (provide resources in multiple languages), **connect** (gather like-minded individuals into a cohesive community), and **amplify** (utilise modern media to disseminate the message effectively). This continuous, collective effort with fellow alums who share the same struggle is an integrated attempt to prepare knowledge for liberation and build a worldview centred on that goal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Badan Pusat Statistik [BPS] Indonesia. (2015, November 18). *Mengulik Data Suku di Indonesia - Berita*. Www.bps.go.id.
<https://www.bps.go.id/id/news/2015/11/18/127/mengulik-data-suku-di-indonesia.html>
- El-Awaisi, Abd Al-Fattah. (2025). *Rencana Strategi Pembebasan Masjid al-Aqsa*. Jakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- El-Awaisi, Abd. al-Fattah. (2024). Israel Is Not A State, But A Western Colonial Project. In *Al-Aqsa Flood: A Turning Point in the Middle Eastern Politics*. Istanbul, Turkiye: SETA Publication.
- Fallahnda, B. (2023, October 12). *Peta Kekuasaan Palestina: Hamas di Gaza, Fatah di Tepi Barat*” Accessed June 1, 2025, <https://tirto.id/membedah-peta-kekuasaan-palestina-hamas-di-gaza-fatah-di-tepi-barat-gQYG>
- Nisa, K. (2024, October 18). Dilema ziarah al-Aqsa di tengah pendudukan. Detiknews. Retrieved from <https://news.detik.com/kolom/d-7590793/dilema-ziarah-al-aqsa-di-tengah-pendudukan>
- Sekar Arum, M. R. (2024, January 17). Cara daftar visa masuk Israel. OkezoneNews. Retrieved from <https://news.okezone.com/read/2024/01/17/18/2956273/cara-daftar-visa-masuk-israel>

- Sun Tzu. (2005). *The art of war* (T. Cleary, Trans.). Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications. (Original work published ca. 5th century B.C.E.)
- Tim detikTravel. (2025, March 3). 10 negara dengan umat Muslim terbanyak, Indonesia peringkat satu. *Detik.com*. Retrieved from www.detik.com/jabar/berita/d-7803002/10-negara-dengan-umat-muslim-terbanyak-indonesia-peringkat-satu
- United Nations. (n.d.). *About the Nakba*. Retrieved June 2, 2025, from www.un.org/unispal/about-the-nakba/#:~:text=The%20Nakba%2C%20which%20means%20%E2%80%9Ccatastrophe,the%201948%20Arab%20Israeli%20war.

ENDNOTES

-
- ¹ For a better understanding of the meaning of Buffer State/Israel, see El-Awaisi, Abd. al-Fattah. (2024). Israel Is Not A State, But A Western Colonial Project. In *Al-Aqsa Flood: A Turning Point in the Middle Eastern Politics*. Istanbul, Turkiye: SETA Publication.