

HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY: INDONESIA'S RESPONSE TOWARD ROHINGYA HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to explain Indonesia's response to the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Myanmar in 2017. The purpose of this paper is to explain Indonesia's success in opening up humanitarian space. The Rohingya humanitarian crisis has come to international attention with manifestations such as the pressure on the Myanmar government to stabilize its domestic security, calls for dialogue, and the provision of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations. However, Myanmar declined the invitation and withheld the assistance provided. Amid the refusal, Indonesia emerged as an actor who sought to help deal with the humanitarian crisis which was responded positively by Myanmar. Indonesia's response to the crisis in 2017 was different when the crisis that occurred in 2012, i.e. Indonesia rise the Rohingya crisis as a joint problem in the OIC and ASEAN forums. This paper uses qualitative methods using secondary data. The conceptual framework used is humanitarian diplomacy. The findings of this paper are that Indonesia responded to the crisis by coordinating with Bangladesh after holding a dialogue with the Myanmar government to open up humanitarian space. Furthermore, the establishment of AKIM shows that the response of the Indonesian government was also encouraged by Islamic groups in Indonesia. Indonesia's success is due to Indonesia's good track record of Myanmar.

Keywords: AKIM, humanitarian diplomacy, Indonesia, Myanmar, Rohingya

A. Introduction

The abolition of Rohingya ethnic citizenship by the Myanmar Government has led to discrimination for these ethnicities. As a result, the Rohingya are categorized as stateless so the Myanmar Government is not responsible for the safety of the Rohingya people. Another impact felt by the Rohingya is the difficulty of accessing basic rights and services that exist in the community (Ullah, 2016). Besides, the ethnic Rohingya who embraced Islam among Myanmar's predominantly Buddhist communities generated friction which led to conflict. Although according to S. Wolf that the root of this conflict is not only due to religious aspects but also due to political and economic aspects. According to him, from the political aspect, the fear of Rohingya ethnic will separate themselves if they get rights and citizenship like other ethnicities. Furthermore, from an economic aspect, the government feels there is an economic burden to be borne related to safety and welfare if the Rohingya are recognized as citizens (Singh, 2014).

The increase in violence against the Rohingya in 2012 was signed by a statement by President Thein Shein about the emergency at Rakhine (BBC, 2012). Responding to this, Surin Pitsuwan, ASEAN Secretary-General, proposed that ASEAN, the Government of Myanmar, and the United Nations hold a dialogue so that violence does not spread. Unfortunately, this proposal refused by Myanmar (Aljazeera, 2017). At that time, Indonesia

had already shown its concern for Rohingya by providing a place for Rohingya refugees in Aceh because of pressure from Islamic groups in Indonesia (Zaidi and Baihaqie, 2017). However, these groups still operate individually. Conflict in Rakhine continues to occur until 2017 on a larger scale. This conflict killed 1,000 people and 270,000 fled Rakhine (CNN, 2017). Myanmar not only closed itself to dialogue but also in channeling aid to the Rohingya ethnic group. At that time, ASEAN did not react, because it was hampered by the principle of non-intervention (BBC, 2017). Not to mention, the Myanmar government refused the arrival of the UN Fact-Finding Team and accused the UN of assisting terrorists, because the United Nations continues to urge Aung San Suu Kyi to reveal the truth by allowing the Fact-Finding Team to investigate the matter at Rakhine (Kompas.com, 2017).

The deteriorating conditions in Rakhine, prompting the public to urge the Government of Indonesia to respond to the crisis that occurred. So, on September 3, 2017, President Jokowi sent Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi regarding the opening of the humanitarian space. Based on these facts, this paper contributes to explain the actions of a country to open up humanitarian space through humanitarian diplomacy efforts.

B. Methods

The method used in this paper is a qualitative method. The data used are secondary data derived from journals,

books, online news portals such as BBC, CNN, Kompas.com, and Tempo.Co, then the official government website, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Keywords used to collect data are Indonesia's foreign policy, the Rohingya crisis, Myanmar's response, Indonesian humanitarian diplomacy. Based on these keywords, data will be collected. Next, the data will be analyzed using the conceptual framework of humanitarian diplomacy. According to Regnier, a humanitarian diplomacy is a form of effort made by humanitarian workers to be allowed to get access to victims at any time (Regnier, 2011). In addition, according to Whittall, humanitarian diplomacy is the use of international law and humanitarian action as a tool to facilitate the delivery of aid and promote the protection of civilians in emergency and complex situations (Whittall, 2009). According to Pease, humanitarian diplomacy is a process of negotiation, negotiation, and advocacy aimed at protecting human rights and humanitarian principles (Pease, 2016). Therefore, it can be concluded that humanitarian diplomacy is an act to open humanitarian space through negotiations in assisting vulnerable people. The humanitarian space is a space for freedom to assess needs, free to monitor the distribution of aid and dialogue with victims of conflict (Wagner, 2005).

In the process, humanitarian diplomacy can occur in multiple ways, because the state is not the only actor, NGOs and IGO can be involved and have the same goals (Pease, 2016). The goal is

to open a humanitarian space, namely a space for freedom to evaluate needs, monitor the distribution of aid, and dialogue with people who conflict. To convey persuasive messages, actors will conduct humanitarian negotiations, i.e. (1) the actors will make use of existing and ongoing good relations to make contact; (2) the actor will then identify the problem in order to be able to provide option recommendations based on the wants and needs of the target actor as a solution; (3) implementation of recommendation options (Belliveau and Singh, 2017). Furthermore, after the data is analyzed, a conclusion will be drawn.

C. Result and Discussion

International Response to the Myanmar Humanitarian Crisis (2017)

The humanitarian crisis in Myanmar is at the level of complex emergencies because there are conflict and discrimination that triggers a humanitarian crisis. The Rohingya ethnic conflict as an unrecognized ethnic minority in Myanmar makes this condition declared a humanitarian crisis in the category of complex emergencies (World Vision, 2018). The humanitarian crisis that has occurred for years and its unrecognized existence has made this ethnic group flee Myanmar. Increasing the intensity of refugees every day makes this problem into the international spotlight. In 2015, various foreign media were livened up with news related to Rohingya refugees under sad conditions (Yumitro, 2017). Here caused the humanitarian

crisis at Rakhine to become an international concern.

According to the United Nations, the Myanmar government's actions against the Rohingya ethnicity constitute crimes against humanity and constitute ethnic cleansing. In response, the United Nations visited Myanmar and asked the government to provide open access to Rakhine (BBC, 2017). Besides, in March 2017, the United Nations assigned a Fact-Finding Team to find information and truth from the crisis. However, the Myanmar government rejected the existence of the team as conveyed by the Myanmar Government Spokesperson, Zaw Htay, that the government had never allowed the UN Fact-Finding Team to enter Myanmar, therefore the government did not agree to any resolution made by the UN Human Rights Council (CNN, 2018). Besides, the Myanmar military also said that military operations condemned by the international community were aimed at eradicating terrorists and denying civilians the target (BBC, 2017). The refusal made by the Myanmar government directly made the UN Fact-Finding conduct direct interviews with Rohingya ethnic groups in Bangladesh. The UN Fact-Finding examines data through direct interviews and uses the results of research conducted by international NGOs and international media to supplement the data. Based on these data the UN Fact-Finding concluded that the description of the crisis that occurred was following media reports and the Myanmar armed forces committed

widespread human rights violations in Rakhine (Muhammad, 2018). Rohingyas who are victims of violence fled Myanmar and became refugees.

This problem has an impact on regional security stability. Geographically, Myanmar is in the Southeast Asia region. Journeys made by Rohingya illegally because they do not have citizenship have the potential to create new problems. As expressed by the Former ASEAN General Secretary, Surin Pitsuwan stated that the Rohingya statelessness case has the potential to create unstable conditions in the Southeast Asian region (The New Humanitarian, 2013). ASEAN as a regional organization in the Southeast Asian region was also urged to help deal with the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. In this regard, ASEAN cannot impose strict sanctions because it is impeded by the principle of non-intervention in ASEAN. Therefore, Surin Pitsuwan proposed to the Myanmar government to hold a dialogue with ASEAN member countries and the United Nations. Responding to Surin's proposal, the Myanmar government refused and stated that the government was not willing to discuss the existing problems. The refusal which is often done by the Myanmar government complicates the resolution of this crisis.

Indonesia's Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Era (2012)

In the preamble of the Indonesian Constitution explained that Indonesia partook in carrying out world order based on independence, eternal peace, and social

justice. Regarding the Rohingya ethnic issue which is of concern to Indonesia because it is written clearly that Indonesia will participate in creating world peace and also Indonesia is having the same religious identity with them. Since the era of the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) government, Indonesia has participated in helping to deal with the crisis in Rakhine. First, SBY has written a letter to Myanmar President, Thein Sein, which states that Indonesia accepted the arrival of refugees in Aceh and provided humanitarian assistance in the form of funds as well as a method of sharing expertise and assistance in the economic field, namely capacity building.

Indonesia's concern also shown by raise the crisis to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and ASEAN. This is because SBY is aware that Indonesia has limitations in helping to resolve the crisis that occurred at Rakhine. In helping this crisis, large amounts of funds are needed for humanitarian assistance to victims of the crisis. Then Indonesia invited the OIC to contribute by assisting. As a result of Indonesia's action, on August 13, 2012, the OIC visited Myanmar and provided funding for the construction of 800 housing units for the Rohingya ethnic group (Ardani, 2015).

It can be concluded that Indonesia has a dominant role since the beginning of the Rohingya crisis in international attention. During SBY's administration, Indonesia tended to involve other parties in the actions that Indonesia would take on this crisis. Indonesia in the SBY era

bilaterally sought to help Myanmar resolve this crisis. Indonesia multilaterally cooperates with the OIC and actively proposes conflict resolution policies with ASEAN. This aspect tends to differentiate Indonesia's response to the crisis that occurred in 2017 under Joko Widodo's administration which will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

Indonesia's Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in Joko Widodo's Era (2017)

As mentioned in the previous section, Myanmar tends to restrain issues concerning the Rohingya, but amidst the refusal, Indonesia was successful in opening up humanitarian space in Rakhine. This success was achieved because of the Indonesian government's diplomatic efforts towards Myanmar. The most determining aspect is the good relations developed by the two countries. It becomes important because when a humanitarian crisis occurs the negotiator will initiate contact with the target negotiating actors. Of course, negotiators will take benefit of the good relations that have been established. In this context, relations between Indonesia and Myanmar have been established since 1947. However, the diplomatic relations between the two countries were formalized legally and formally in 1951 where the two countries recognized each other's sovereignty. Myanmar also provided support when Indonesia experienced a conflict related to the liberation of West Irian and became the founding country of the Asian-African

Conference in 1955. In 1962, Myanmar's democratic government ended due to a military coup, Myanmar's state ideology turned into a socialist one. Then relations between Indonesia and Myanmar were slightly hampered but remained intertwined but not intensive. The relationship began to drift back to being close again when Myanmar joined ASEAN on July 23, 1997, as the ninth member through the 30th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Subang Jaya, Malaysia. In each period the Indonesian government continued to establish communication with Myanmar through mutual visits between leaders which became evidence of the strong relations between Indonesia and Myanmar. Despite experiencing ups and downs of relations, Indonesia Myanmar relations went well for 67 years. Good relations between Myanmar and Indonesia were used by the Indonesian Embassy in Yangon as representatives of the Indonesian Government to be able to build and develop cooperation in the political, economic, socio-cultural and defense fields. Referring to the data of the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, the economic relations between Indonesia and Myanmar in the oil and gas and non-oil and gas trade sectors in 2012-2017 experienced an increase seen from the trade balance of the two countries (Kemendagri, 2019).

Therefore, related to bilateral relations between Indonesia and Myanmar, referring to the humanitarian diplomacy process, Indonesia is a negotiator who makes contact and builds

good relations. This relationship has been previously owned by Indonesia to facilitate Indonesia in identifying crises and handling crises that occur. This form of good relations is an investment for Indonesia in supporting the course of humanitarian diplomacy. In this case, Indonesia already has a long-term investment relationship so that it is easier to make contact with the Government of Myanmar.

Besides, the crisis that occurred in Rakhine became a concern for the people of Indonesia, because of the common identity as Muslims. A large number of refugees who came made the Indonesian people urge the Government of Myanmar to stop all acts of violence and urged the Government of Indonesia to participate in handling the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. The Indonesian people staged a demonstration in front of the Myanmar Embassy in Jakarta. Criticism from the Indonesian people urges the Indonesian government to act in dealing with the crisis.

Responding to this, President Joko Widodo immediately reacted in handling the crisis in Rakhine, which was released on Sunday, September 3, 2017. In his statement, he said that real action was needed to deal with the crisis, and therefore it was sent by the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi, to visit Myanmar by offering a dialogue to consider options to be given in dealing with the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar (DetikNews, 2017). This statement proves that the crisis in Rakhine is still a concern

of Indonesia despite the change of President.

The visit in the context of dialogue conducted by Minister Retno Marsudi turned out to give a positive response by the Government of Myanmar which was then represented by Myanmar's de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. Besides, the Indonesian Foreign Minister also communicated with Bangladesh's Foreign Minister, Abul Hasan Mahmood Ali, this is because Bangladesh is the closest position to Rakhine and is the initial destination for refugees. The meeting was held in Dhaka with an agenda to discuss plans for Indonesian humanitarian assistance for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The form of humanitarian assistance that Indonesia will provide to refugees in Bangladesh is emphasized more on humanitarian assistance than financial assistance.

The Indonesian Foreign Minister also communicated with the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In recent years Kofi Annan has focused on handling the crisis and urged Myanmar to grant citizenship status to the Rohingya. In consideration of the offer given by Indonesia to Myanmar, Indonesia entered into a dialogue with Myanmar also bringing the results of previous communications with Kofi Annan and the Bangladesh Foreign Minister. The results of communication carried out by Indonesia are considered in taking action and formulating bids in a humanitarian crisis. At the meeting, Minister Retno also said that the Indonesian people were

worried and had concerns about this crisis. Then, the Indonesian Foreign Minister stated that Indonesia was willing to help deal with this crisis so that the humanitarian and security crisis did not worsen. At this meeting, the Indonesian Foreign Minister gave a proposal related to the resolution of the Rohingya humanitarian problem in Myanmar. The Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs provides a 4 + 1 formula that consists of handling the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. The formula consists of four elements, namely to restore stability and security; maximum restraint not to use force; protection of all people in Rakhine regardless of ethnicity or religion; the importance of opening access to humanitarian assistance: as well as recommendations from the Koffi Annan report.

Furthermore, the Government of Indonesia under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs formed the Indonesian Humanitarian Alliance for Myanmar (AKIM). This alliance was formed as a forum for the concern of the Indonesian people and Indonesian humanitarian NGOs. It consists of 11 humanitarian institutions namely Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center, Lembaga Penanggulangan Bencana dan Perubahan Iklim – Nahdatul Ulama, PKPU Human Initiative, Dompot Dhuafa, Rumah Zakat, Dompot Peduli Ummat – Daarut Tauhiid, LAZIZ Wahdah, Laznaz Lembaga Manajemen Infak (LMII), Aksi Cepat Tanggap, Laziz Dewan Da'wah Islamiyah Indonesia, Social Trust Fund –

UIN Jakarta together with the Government of Indonesia and the entire community of Indonesia committed to helping the handling of the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. AKIM created a program called Humanitarian Assistance for Sustainable Community (HASCO). The program aims to help the people of Myanmar especially the Rohingya in increasing capacity, sending experts, livelihood, and recovery. The program carried out for two years to meet the needs of the Rakhine community in the fields of health, education, and economy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2017). In meeting the basic needs of people in crisis, AKIM collects donations from the people of Indonesia. Institutions that are affiliated with AKIM also collect donations, funds collected are channeled through AKIM to Myanmar. The Government and AKIM work together to carry out a commitment to supporting the handling of the crisis through humanitarian assistance. This is for the realization of reform, reconciliation and inclusive development in Myanmar.

The humanitarian approach taken by Indonesia towards Myanmar stems from the assistance sent by Indonesia. Assistance provided to Indonesia in crisis was in the form of basic needs. The forms of assistance provided by Indonesia are food, blankets, water reservoirs and tents for refugee dwellings who have fled the violence of the Myanmar government (Tempo.Co, 2017). Then the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia also sent aid in the form of a ton of medicines for Rohingya refugees on the Bangladesh-

Myanmar border (Setkab RI, 2017). In handling short-term crises Indonesia helps by meeting the basic needs of Rohingya ethnic groups in times of crisis. Then, the Indonesian government helped by building a hospital in Myaung Bwe with an area of four thousand square meters (Embassy of RI, 2017). This is in the form of long-term Indonesian assistance to the Rohingya community in handling the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.

Indonesia also contributes to accepting refugees who come and treat refugees well. Then this form of action was communicated by the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs to Myanmar's de facto leader. The outcome of the dialogue between Indonesia and Myanmar took the form of access given by Myanmar to Indonesia in handling the crisis that occurred in the country. The Indonesian government has succeeded in opening up humanitarian space in Myanmar in the form of easy access to humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya ethnic group. The Myanmar government allows humanitarian assistance to enter Myanmar and provides a positive response related to actions taken by Indonesia against Myanmar. The Government of Myanmar appreciates Indonesian humanitarian assistance, this was conveyed by the Minister of Social Welfare of Myanmar, U Ko Ko Naing (Kemenlu RI, 2017). In the process of implementing the bidding option offered by Indonesia to the Myanmar government, the Myanmar government expressed its commitment to distributing aid from

Indonesia to refugees without ethnic and religious discrimination. The Myanmar government is collaborating with the international humanitarian organization ICRC in the allocation of aid due to the location of refugees who are widely spread over a considerable distance.

Delivery of aid to refugees went well with the support of full cooperation between the Myanmar government and the Government of Indonesia. The Government of Myanmar appreciates the process undertaken by Indonesia in gaining access to assistance to Myanmar. This is because the Indonesian government adjusts to the procedures set by the Myanmar government (Kemenlu RI, 2017). This gives Indonesia access to monitor aid distribution in Myanmar.

D. Conclusion

This paper concludes that among the rejection given by Myanmar to the Rohingya crisis response, Indonesia is an actor who can dialogue with Myanmar. Indonesia utilizes good bilateral relations in the process of identifying humanitarian crises. It is easier for Indonesia to contact Myanmar to gain access to humanitarian negotiations. Furthermore, Indonesia prepared options for handling the crisis and meeting with the Myanmar government. Indonesia through the Minister of Foreign Affairs successfully held a meeting with the Myanmar government and provided options for handling the crisis. This meeting is a form of Indonesia's success in opening humanitarian space in Myanmar. In the process of humanitarian diplomacy

through humanitarian negotiations conducted, Indonesia's actions received a positive response from the Myanmar government. This is proof that Indonesia succeeded in opening humanitarian space in Myanmar through humanitarian negotiations. The Myanmar government is committed to distributing aid to refugees without discrimination through collaboration with the ICRC. Based on this, it was also concluded that Indonesian humanitarian diplomacy had succeeded in opening up humanitarian space through humanitarian negotiations on the handling of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Myanmar with several action plans and actions taken by Indonesia to realize the goals to be achieved.

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