

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEMS OF TURKEY – ISRAEL NORMALIZATION

The normalization of states is not an easy decision to be agreed. The flow of decision making process is not as simple as turning around the palm of hand. There are a lot of considerations before the decision makers made the policy. Besides considering the domestic and international politics' conditions, the decision maker is also obliged to know their society or to involve the actors' perception if the policy is already certified, and it is ready for public consumption. Therefore, in this chapter, the writer would like to explain the accident of Mavi Marmara conflict until both states succeed to normalize.

A. The Incident of Mavi Marmara

The endorsement of Hamas – Israel cease-fire in 2008 became the initiative of Turkish volunteers to send the humanitarian aids to Gaza due to unstoppable conflict which suffered Palestinians in Gaza (Knight, 2008). Through this agreement, the Israeli authorities allowed humanitarian assistance to be brought to Gaza on December 26th, 2008. İHH İnsani Yardım Vakfı or Humanitarian Relief Foundation which had a big intention toward Palestinian issues was interested to send application letter to Israeli authority to be able to send their assistance in 2009. It had been long time for İHH to wait for Israeli authority's response to their application letter. Unfortunately, their long wait to Israeli response had never arrived. This situation made dilemmatic plans for İHH to take action. On the other side, Israel agreed to give permission for international assistance. However, Israel

did not respond the letter of IHH. On January 7th, 2010, IHH successfully came in to Gaza and screamed out to end Israel – Palestine suffering conflict due to the worst situation in Gaza. They also expressed to abolish humanitarian assistance banning in Gaza (Kafdagli, 2014).

The spirit of successful trip to Gaza on January 7th, 2010 became the power of IHH to ruin Israeli blockade in Gaza. IHH and 5 other organizations, Free Gaza Movement, the Turkish Foundation for Human rights, European Campaign to end the siege of Gaza, Ship to Gaza-Greece, Ship to Gaza-Sweden, and the International Committee to end the siege of Gaza had initiatively made an ally group called Gaza Freedom Flotilla. This group had three reasons to sail to Gaza. Those were giving humanitarian help, breaking Israeli siege in Gaza, and advocating Palestinian on Israel illegally action (Cadman, 2014).

The basic concepts which was brought by IHH were human rights and freedom. In the case of Palestine – Israel, Palestinian who lived in Gaza did not get any basic needs of democracy, human rights, and freedom. Israel which was considered as a democratic state even broke the basic value of democracy. They tended to implement their own democracy without giving Palestinians chance to feel their basic values of this ideology. Actually, if Israel really implements democracy, Israeli authority should not blockade the Gaza strip. Palestinians could not have access when the conflict between israel and hamas bombed. It was like the civilians were not given any access since they were the target to be killed.

As the organization which focuses on human rights and freedom, the condition of palestinians in Gaza can not be tolerated by IHH and its ally. On May 22nd, 2010, a ship group consisted of six ships sailed to which aimed to give their humanitarian aids. IHH as the head of the group sailed from Turkey and others left from Cyprus. The six ships brought 10.000 tons humanitarian assistance such as food, medicines, and clothes. The participants of this agenda were 700 volunteers from 38 states. This huge number of people had the same perspective and vision that the Palestinian must be in the pendent to live with their rights. On May 30th, 2010, the ships were finally floated in International water, and Israeli authority recommended them to be screened at first in the port of Ashdod. Unfortunately, the activists rejected, and the conflict could not be avoided (Migdalovitz, 2010).

B. The Discontinuance Process of Turkey – Israel Diplomatic Relations

The accident of Mavi Marmara on May 31th, 2010 which caused the cutting of Turkey – Israel diplomatic ties was not regardless to the role of Hamas. There are two big and well known organizations in Palestine which are figured out by the international world. Those are Fatah and Hamas. The strength of the organizations' powers is based on their region where Hamas base is in Gaza, and Fatah focuses in other region. Hamas is well known organization which refuses negotiations with Israel in declaring Palestine independence. Unfortunately, Gaza becomes the conflicting region between Palestine – Israel. It is the gate for Palestinians to get their humanitarian aids from International assistance. A bad relation between Hamas and Israel cause Palestinians suffer. Besides attacking

each other, the existence of Hamas in Gaza makes Palestinian's gate full of Israeli authority's control. The aim of the control is to avoid international assistance on giving sophisticated weapons to Hamas.

Israeli authority implemented regulations in the case of Mavi Marmara accident, and one of the regulations was screening transportation which wanted to come to Gaza. On May 30th, 2016, the ships of freedom flotilla became the targets of the regulation. The authority of Israel reminded them to be anchored in Israeli port, Ashdod. The group of freedom flotilla ships looked like ignoring the warning of Israeli Defense Force (IDF). The volunteers in those ships claimed that they brought the humanitarian aids such as clothes, medicine, food, and equipment for school. They knew the standard to pass the blockade. Therefore, the interrogation from Israeli authority was not needed. Finally, IDF forced those ships to be port in Ashdod before continuing their trip (Brodsky & Greenberg, 2010).

During the safety screening by Israeli authority, some of the volunteers rabbled against Israeli force. Instead, they tried to attack IDF. Looking at the response given by the volunteers, IDF acted as the military standard. The conflict inside the Mavi Marmara ships could not be avoided. Since the volunteers had no sophisticated military weapons, they were paralyzed by IDF personnel who completely brought their weapons. This conflict caused victims especially from Turkish volunteers. There were 10 people who became the victims with the majority from Turkish nationality, and many activists were also injured. The

accident of Mavi Marmara deeply made condolence of international society (Elshayyal, 2010).

The death of Turkish activists could not be accepted by the Turkish authority, especially for Erdogan as the Turkish Prime Minister on May 31th, 2010. For Turkey, Israel is actually an important partner in the Middle-East region due to the Turkish interest in joining European Union. However, the death of the Turkish activists is about the dignity of Turkish nation. The incident of Mavi Marmara made Erdogan angry. He directly decided to call Turkish ambassador in Tel-Aviv to come back to Turkey. Besides pointing his ambassador as a protest, Erdogan cut off Turkey – Israel military joint exercise and economic cooperation. The worst condition was formally cutting off the diplomatic ties on September 2nd, 2010 (Haaretz, 2013).

C. The Initiative of Turkey – Israel Normalization

Historically, Turkey and Israel never had any lasting conflicts for a long time as U.S. – Cuba conflict. Since both states conducted their relations in 1948, the fluctuations of their relations had bombed so many times. However, there was no a long-last relation downgrading for both states due to their mutual interests. It is impossible for both states to break off the relations if they looked at the first time when their relations was full of rejection especially from Muslim World. Both states realized that building their relations was not easy. Therefore, it was not easy for them to cut off their relations. It also happened in the post – conflict of Mavi Marmara which occurred in 2010.

The Mavi Marmara accident became the most recent phenomenon which severed the diplomatic ties of both states. Looking at the chronological event of this tragedy, it did not need times for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to cut off Turkish full diplomatic relations to Israel. The reason why Erdogan broke off the diplomatic relations with Israel was because he considered that Israel as a terrorist state which forbade other states to deliver humanitarian aids to Gaza (Benari, 2012). Meanwhile, the conditions of Palestinian who lived in Gaza strip were full of difficulties and they really needed people's helping hands. The Turkish initiation was to help those people by sending their humanitarian aids.

At that moment, Erdogan directly gave his strong reaction after the accident such as calling Turkish Ambassador for Israel to come back from Tel-Aviv, inviting international world to judge Israel of Israeli forces' action toward Turkish volunteers, and cutting of joint military exercises (BBC News, 2016). This reaction given by Erdogan was a hardly protest on Israeli defense force action which killed the Turkish volunteers in delivering humanitarian aids.

Even though Erdogan was the first man who cut off Turkey – Israel full diplomatic relations, he was the one who initiated an offering three conditions for Israel to restore the normalization. Those conditions which were a must to be fulfilled by Israel to give compensation toward the family of Mavi Marmara victims for around \$20 million, to open Gaza blockade, and to officially apologize to Turkey to Israeli government (Benari, 2012). Actually, Erdogan had an initiative to restore the diplomatic relations with Israel for long time. However, the agreement of the conditions was not reached at that time.

The initiative to initiate Turkey – Israel restoration was caused by the severe conditions of Turkey, Israel, and even Palestine, especially those who lived in Gaza strip. This conflict decreased the Turkish intelligence and military power since Israel is Turkish best partner on those divisions. Furthermore, unceasing humanitarian aids became Turkish main foreign policy to help muslim brotherhood states like Palestine. On the other side, Israel still depended on Turkey to build their relations with other muslim states. These interests which were brought the normalization initiative were made the restoration between Turkey and Israel were easier to be reached.

At the first time, Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the conditions given by Turkey. He considered that Israeli defense force acts as the procedural actions which could not be blamed. However, Netanyahu cannot maintain this situation for long time since it also caused Israeli domestic suffer and international condition. Obama's role to force Netanyahu to apologize since 2010 was finally reached. Netanyahu finally apologized by Calling Erdogan in 2013 (Fisher, 2013). The action done by Netanyahu was a big deal because it signed some policy changes which also became the first step for both states to normalize their full diplomatic relations.

The restoration on full diplomatic relations agreed by Turkey and Israel was actually the continuation of their bilateral economic relations in 2013. Even though the political relations of Turkey – Israel was in a difficult situation, in economic relations both states could increase their trading. Israeli Economy Ministry argued that Israeli export to Turkey in 2013 rose up 25% to \$949.2

million in the first four months of the year and it also happened to their import which mounted 21% compared previous year (Coren, 2014). The indication of the increasing economic cooperation was a clear signal that both states would be restored soon. Besides their trading, U.S. force had a very big role to initiate Turkey – Israel Normalization.

D. Turkey – Israel Normalization Process

The case of Flotilla accident was a different case compared by Turkey – Israel events which could break down their relations. This tragedy was about the sovereignty of a state. According to Westphalia Treaty agreed on October 24th, 1648, Sovereignty means every state has their own authority to govern their people, and it has rights to implement their political system. Other states cannot interfere the rules conducted by formal government of that state (Beaulac, 2004). Therefore, Turkey – Israel process of normalization was a bit hard to be reached considering the cause of conflict related to abuse of state sovereignty.

Israeli authority had decided a procedure that every humanitarian assistance delivered to Turkey should pass Israeli port of Ashdod and it should be checked by Israeli authorities. This procedure was created to minimize misuse of international assistance. The possible aids which can be delivered to Gaza strip is humanitarian helps. Military equipment is forbidden to be sent because it tends to be given to Hamas which can increase their power to attack Israel.

The situation at the first time normalization process was a difficult moment when both states' leaders, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Israeli

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood with their own ego which they are the right one. When Erdogan offered three conditions at first time, Netanyahu rejected this opening dialogue. He still believed that his defense force was in the right path. Therefore, he rejected the demand of Turkish government to have formally apology on July 3rd, 2010 (Coren, 2014).

On July 1st, 2016, the demand given by Turkey for Israel to apologize was initiated when the ministers of both states held meeting in Switzerland following the announcement of Turkish authority to break their relations with Israel starting on June 7th, 2010. During this period, the relations between Turkey and Israel was totally paralyzed. There was no bilateral cooperation in any aspects conducted by both states.

The process of normalization appeared successful when the minister of Israel defense sold Israeli Military equipment to Turkey for the first time on February 18th, 2013. This was the first transaction conducted by both states which also became the lightness signal toward their relations. Even though it was just in the sector of bilateral economic cooperation, it helped the process of normalization rapidly. On March 22th, 2013, Netanyahu finally reduced his ego by calling Erdogan to apologize (Haaretz , 2013). This talk was the first communication done by both states' leaders after their conflict. The intervention of Barrack Obama who succeeded to influence Netanyahu to apologize also became the ammunition to normalize Turkey – Israel conflict process.

Responding Netanyahu calling, Israel increased their intention to normalize their relations with Turkey by offering \$20 million to the victims' families of the Flotilla accident. After their offering on February 3rd, 2014, both states accelerated the normalization process by having meeting in Switzerland on December 17th, 2015 with their agreement to normalize as their main agenda. Looking at the cycle of normalization process which grew increasingly, Erdogan gave his remark that Turkey and Israel have mutual needs which should be fulfilled by both states. This statement indirectly welcomes Israel to create new relations. Finally, both states agreed to normalize their full diplomatic relations on 27th June, 2016 (Coren, 2014).

E. The Involving Actors of the Normalization Process

To normalize diplomatic relations of conflicting states needs a long process, and it also will involve many actors to decide the decision making process. Even though the conflicting states are only two parties, it does not mean that the conflict can be overcome by two formal governments of those states. In this globalization era, it must be considered that state is not the only actor in the politics world nowadays. There are so many involving actors which can influence the decision of a state. The dynamic of normalization on diplomatic relations of the conflicting states also became the other challenge of building the new relations. Not all parties agree on the restorations since it must be considered as their interest. In fact, an actor will refuse the restoration if their interest is not fulfilled. Each actor will struggle for their interest. Therefore, the restoration becomes complicated if the more actors involve.

Professor Ryo Osiba of Hitotsubashi University defines state as follow:

a) They should have autonomous capacity to determine their own purposes and interest; b) They should have the capability to mobilize human and material resources to achieve these purposes and interest; c) Their action should be significant enough to influence the state – to – state relations or behavior of other non – state actors in the global system. (Kan, Hideki, *Actors in the world politics*, 2003, p. 3)

Analyzing the normalization process conducted by Turkey and Israel, this case did not only involve both states' formal government but also involved many actors such as the other states, governmental organization, political party and non-governmental organization. The involvement of those actors due to the issue of this phenomenon was about humanitarian abuses. There are some parties which really support the normalization. On the other hand, there are some parties which are against the restoration as well.

Besides Turkish and Israeli formal government, United States of America (U.S.) became the most loyal supporter toward Turkey – Israel restoration. Since the diplomatic relations broke off, U.S. patiently looked for any solutions to restore Turkey – Israel relations. The U.S. efforts to overcome this case should be respectful. Starting at the downgrading on Turkey – Israel relations until both states restoration, U.S. is the only state which maintains the normalization process. In the first offering of Erdogan's conditions, U.S. under Obama's administration forced Netanyahu after he rejected to apology. Obama finally convinced Netanyahu to call Erdogan in order to normalize their relations in 2013 (Heller, 2013). The thirty-calls of both states' leaders resulted in their full diplomatic relations.

Unfortunately, the protest initiated by the unsatisfied group toward Turkey-Israel restoration arose up. They could not accept the result on the agreement. These groups were not only derived from Turkey and Israel, but also from Palestine. In fact, there are so many kinds of these groups such as INGO and society representative. Most of these groups have the similar interest to see this issue which is justice.

The biggest Turkish Non-Governmental organization, Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) is the most vocal group which rejects the agreement on Turkey – Israel restoration (Hurriyet Daily News, 2016). This group was the initiator to bring humanitarian aids to Gaza strip. The majority victims of the Flotilla incident were also derived from IHH. They demonstrated the agreement since the initiation on breaking Gaza blockade was failed. They believe that the blockade is injustice, inhumane, and unlawful action, and criminality toward Palestinian.

Hamas as one of biggest Palestinian group also refused the normalization in 2016. Even though Hamas is closed enough to the ruling party in Turkey, AKP, it cannot be related between their relations with the issue of humanitarian in Gaza at this moment. In fact, AKP is in power party which is a must become number one Turkish government's supporter. However, this condition does not change Hamas idealism. Hamas supported the conditions given by Turkey to Israel. Apparently, if the conditions are fulfilled, Hamas welcomes the restoration (Winer, 2016). Unfortunately, Israel still closes Gaza strip which becomes one of the three Turkish conditions.

The senior Hamas such as Hamas's foreign relations Chief Osama Hamdan and Khaled Qaddoumi gave their arguments. Osama clarified that Hamas was not engaged in the agreement and all of decisions were conducted by Turkey and Israel government. Additionally, Hamas's representative in Iran, Khaled Qaddoumi stated that "Sir, normalization is a bad thing and you must not legitimize it by adding the name of Hamas without relying on any official source within the organization" (Groisman, 2016). This clearly stated that Hamas is not allowed and joined the agreement.

The rejection on Turkey – Israel restoration was not only derived from Non-Governmental Organization but it also was derived from representative of the society. In fact, there are some society representatives whether from Turkey, Palestine, even Israel which refuse the agreement. The majority of people in Turkey who rejects the agreement is the victim family in this accident. Actually, they struggle for humanitarian justice especially for Gaza people and Flotilla victims. They scream out that apology and compensation are not what they want. They consider themselves as the ones who are reasonable to decide whether they have the relations or not. Unfortunately, Turkish government decided without victim families' considerations (Turkish Minute, 2016).

Some of Palestinians also rejected the normalization. The anger and frustrated expression were shown by Palestinian to face the restoration (Albawaba, 2016). Indeed, it is a kind of a diplomacy victory, but still, Gaza is under Israeli siege. This situation cannot be accepted by Gazans for they want freedom. Surprisingly, some of Israelis also opposed this agreement. The amount of number of people

who protested this agreement is more than 50% of Israelis. According to Channel 10 which initiated the survey, 33% was for the Turkey deal, 56% was against it and 11% was up stain from 600 total amounts of the respondents (Staff, 2016). The cause of protest was the military family who became the victims and did not get the compensation. They compared their condition to the Turkish victims who got the money. They considered that Israeli government had not finished their domestic human rights. Therefore, it is better for their government to discharge their domestic problem before they come to the international problem. This protest was one of problems on Turkey – Israel normalization process which became the dynamic toward the restoration.

F. The Mutual Assistance between Turkey and Israel

The natural disaster which attacked Israel, The forest fire of Mount Carmel became the gristliest calamity. This disaster occurred naturally through the dried pile of garbage which was naturally burnt by the extremely hot weather. The scary fire attacked at 12.02 pm next to Usfiya on Thursday, December 2nd, 2010. This big fire rapidly spread from the residential areas in Druze village to the prisons in the town. This forest fire happened for 8 days which became the longest forest fire during the history of Israel. 5 million trees, 74 structures fully burnt, 173 partly burnt structures, 17.000 evacuated people, and 33 bruised people became the victims (Ynet News , 2010)

Through the phenomenon experienced by Israel, Turkey initiated to send the assistance to decrease Israeli burden. Even though Turkey – Israel relations was

stretchable caused by Mavy Marmara incident, Turkish assistance toward Mount Carmel forest fire was not blocked away by their political conflict. Turkey assisted to extinguish Mount Carmel forest fire by sending 2 big fire-fighting aircraft to Israel (Keinon, 2016). Turkish government showed their good ethics and left their ego in assisting Israeli problem of Mount Carmel forest fire. Actually, between the incident of Mavi Marmara and Mount Carmel, it did not take a long time of the chronological events. After the Mavi Marmara broke up on May 31st, 2010, Turkish assistance arrived in December 2010. The distance between those two accidents was only around six months. It proved that Turkey had no intention to avenge toward Israeli action in Flotilla incident.

The kindness of Turkish government was replied by Israeli government through departing humanitarian relief after a massive-earthquake incident in Turkey. Unfortunately, Turkey rejected all items of assistance. The rejection of Israeli helps was caused by Israeli government refusal on apologizing formally toward Mavi Marmara accident. The efforts of Israel government to help Turkish people were not ended. Through their political leaders, they could influence Turkish government to accept Israeli assistance. Benyamin Netanyahu's statement that stated that I think this is what neighbors should be doing with one another and Israeli President, Peres' communication to Abdullah Gul which mentioned that at this difficult time, Israel is willing to provide any aid required anywhere in Turkey and at any time, could be the way for Israel to influence Turkish policy, and this effort worked (Lubell, 2011).

After the mutual assistances which were successfully conducted by Turkey and Israel, the sign of diplomatic ties to be restored was more open. Two years after the magnitude 7.2 quake destroyed Turkey, it increasingly strengthened Turkey – Israel relations. The willingness of Netanyahu to call Erdogan in 2013 was the signal that both states’ restoration would be reached soon.

The analysis was right for Turkey and Israel finally reached the deal to normalize their bilateral relations. Even though Netanyahu willingness to call was forced by Obama through his visit to Israel, it did not decrease the respect of Erdogan to agree on the normalization. Furthermore, most of the conditions proposed by Turkey were fulfilled by Israel. Turkey and Israel crocheted again their tangled threads. Their previous relations such as politics, military, strategy, intelligence, and economic cooperation were renewed to build their sophisticated relations. Finally, both states successfully restored their full diplomatic relations on June 27th, 2016 which was announced by their authorities.