

Gaza as District 13 : Parallels Between Panem's Rebellion and Palestinian Resistance

Muhammad Fito Alfaritzi¹, Made Panji Teguh Santoso²

¹ Faculty of social and politics, singaperbangsa University, Indonesia. E-mail : muhammadalfaritzi49@gmail.com

² Faculty social and pilitics, singaperbangsa University, indonesia. E-mail: made.santoso@staff.unsika.ac.id

Abstract: *This article explores the striking parallels between Suzanne Collins's dystopian narrative The Hunger Games and the ongoing conflict in Gaza. By analyzing seven thematic sub-sections, the study examines mechanisms of control, the use of hunger as a weapon, the impact of conflict on children, symbols of resistance, media manipulation, forms of rebellion, and the role of fiction as a mirror to reality. The findings reveal that elements within the fictional narrative reflect the actual conditions in Gaza, including economic blockades, stringent surveillance, and the deployment of propaganda. Symbols such as the Mockingjay and the keffiyeh serve as representations of resistance, while social media emerges as a crucial tool for disseminating alternative narratives. By linking fiction and reality, this article underscores the importance of understanding modern conflicts through the lens of popular culture to foster awareness and social action.*

Keywords: *Gaza, The Hunger Games, Symbols, Resistance*

1. Introduction

The genocide in the Gaza Strip has made the region a symbol of resistance to the oppression that occurred due to the oppression and massacre caused by the Zionist Israeli army. In recent times, narratives of resistance and situations on the ground have become increasingly similar to the dystopian fictional world, one of which is *The Hunger Games*. The title has become a symbol of resistance and the hopes of activists, journalists and the diaspora of the community to convey what is currently happening in Palestine. The tense situation where the blockade and mass slaughter occurred in Gaza made *The Hunger Games* an analogy of visual metaphor, in addition the theme of the hunger games can also be a symbol of resistance from the Gaza community to attract support from the global community in facing the genocide that has occurred until now. *The Hunger Games* can be a relevant public diplomacy tool, especially because this film has been popular throughout the world. Public diplomacy that uses soft power themed on fictional films or novels, allows for the participation of the general public, artists, diaspora, journalists and so on. To participate in fighting the illegal occupation and restoring the rights of the Palestinian people that were unfairly seized by the Zionist Israel. Reframing the conflict through cultural narratives and the background of the Palestinian nation can be a strategic approach, considering the difficulty of formal diplomacy. When discussing the genocide that occurred, Symbolism of resistance such as keffiyeh and watermelon, become a strong analogy with the symbol of Mockingjay in *The Hunger Games*, a symbol of revolution and resistance against injustice and brutal treatment by the ruling party. This reflection tries to convey the reality that is happening in Palestine today, not only in Gaza, but also in the West Bank region which is eroded by the illegal Israeli occupation. This study aims to analyze and voice popular narratives as a tool of public diplomacy, by Palestinian actors in the context of the genocide that occurred in Gaza. The study that connects the parallels between the situation in Gaza and the fictional world of *The Hunger Games*, will explore how the relationship between symbolism and cultural narratives will change the global view of Palestinian diplomacy. The big challenge that occurs in the context of Palestinian public diplomacy is spreading messages of resistance amidst the hegemony of major media, not a few of which are pro-Israel, this makes it difficult for actors to influence the public audience, because major media tend to cover up the real perpetrators with narratives that are twisted. However, with the power of art and culture, this challenge can be easily overcome. The creation of alternative narratives will help Palestinian diplomacy to prove that they are victims of Israel's brutal actions. The use of *The Hunger Games* narrative is expected to

be able to convey the complexity of the conflict and the suffering of the Gaza people against the genocide that is currently taking place.

2. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with an effort to specifically explore the use of popular narratives in the case being raised. This approach allows researchers to explore the meaning, symbolism and communication strategies used by non-state actors in the form of global opinion. As Creswell & Poth (2017), this approach is suitable for exploring individual or group behavior related to social problems.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. . The Capitol and the Occupier: Mechanisms of Control and Oversight

Referring to The Hunger Games, the Capitol applies strict control to the districts by restricting movement and creating coercive dependency, in order to create obedience to the ruling party. The situation is very similar to what is happening in Gaza today, Israel has imposed a blockade since 2007, limiting the supply chain of goods and isolating the region, making Gaza a large prison. In 2025, Israel has carried out an excessive blockade, while many children have died of starvation and others suffer from malnutrition due to the blockade carried out by the Israeli military, this greatly illustrates the situation of The Hunger Games where the Capitol does not care about humanity at all and only cares about its evil ego, the fictional narrative becomes very horrifying when the reality occurs in the present. Israel often uses fear and terrible terror to suppress Palestinian civilians, from propaganda, snipers to bombardments that continue to be carried out by Israel which often targets civilians. This then becomes a big question mark regarding the existence of an international legal system, when non-combatants are attacked to the death but no party dares to impose sanctions, becoming a dilemma for the effectiveness and relevance of international law. The rhetoric of Israeli cruelty that often tries to erase the traces of the Palestinian nation, in line with the brutal actions of the Capitol, which always uses non-combatant civilians as pawns to emphasize fear. The use of the word terrorist which is often thrown by Israel which is directed at Palestinian civilians seems like an act of uncivilized dehumanization in this modern era, this gaslighting not only makes the Palestinian people lose their identity, but also becomes Israel's validation in carrying out various human rights violations against Palestinian civilians.

3.2. Hunger as a weapon: starvation and the economic blockade in Gaza

Since 2007, Israel has imposed a tight blockade on the Gaza Strip, including restrictions on the flow of goods, food and other logistics. In 2006, a senior adviser to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert made a statement that the policy was intended to put Gazans on a "diet" but still ensure they do not starve to death. Documents released in 2012 said that Israel had calculated the number of calories needed to prevent malnutrition, so that the blockade could be carried out without causing direct starvation. However, Israel's actions have crossed the line after October 7, 2023, until now, the blockade imposed by Israel threatens the lives of hundreds of innocent children with starvation and malnutrition. The author himself saw many videos on social media showing Palestinian people in Gaza fighting over food aid, jostling due to the limited aid entering there, plus Israel deliberately attacking civilians who were gathering around the aid.

The blockade that occurred has destroyed agricultural infrastructure such as greenhouses and irrigation facilities, local agricultural production has also been affected by disrupted facilities. The disruption of agricultural activities has had a negative impact on food security in Gaza, coupled with the tight Israeli blockade. 1 million people are at risk of catastrophic famine and more than 30,000 people have died from the resulting famine. UNCTAD states that without the blockade and genocide, Gaza's Gross Domestic Product in 2017 could have been up to 50% higher than its actual size. Due to Israel's cruel treatment, the poverty rate in Gaza has increased rapidly and it would take four times as much to free people from poverty. In the Parallel concept, starvation caused by the blockade can be likened to collective punishment imposed by the Capitol to ensure the obedience and submission of all districts to the Capitol's control, but in Gaza, starvation is used as a tool of war with various inhumane actions carried out by Israel to destroy local resources and slowly strangle Gaza. Israel is indeed deliberately using starvation to facilitate its intentions in the context of ethnic cleansing of Palestine in Gaza.

3.3. Children as tribute

Since the escalation of the conflict in October 2023, children have always been the main victims of the genocide carried out by Israel, until November 2024, more than 17,000 children have lost their lives due to continuous attacks and bombardments for months. The victims include newborn babies to children who have lost their parents due to the ongoing genocide. Malnutrition and starvation have hit children for months. The silence of world leaders is the main factor why genocide can befall innocent children. Trauma is a deadly weapon for children

in Palestine today, the continuous attacks have caused mental disorders among children. A 2020 study said that 53.5% of children in Gaza suffer from PTSD. The study once again proves that this horror did not start on October 7, 2023 as echoed by Israel. They deliberately made children the target of their operations. Continuous bombing has a traumatic effect on children there, limited access to health care coupled with the loss of parents and then directly seeing body parts scattered due to Israeli bombardment.

This condition is very familiar with what happened in *The Hunger Games*, when children were forced to become tributes, as many as 24 children had to fight to the death and only 1 remained. The parallel situation that occurs always makes children a symbol of collective suffering. However, children also become a symbol of resistance and demonstration due to the cruelty that occurs, encouraging Israel to stop its brutal actions against the original owners of Palestinian land. The hypocrisy of the superpower is still visible even though tens of thousands of children have lost their lives, lost hope for freedom that should have been their birthright. Those who take a neutral stance are only cowards who support the occupation in secret.

3.4. The Mockingjay and the Keffiyeh: Symbols of resistance against oppression

In *The Hunger Games*, the Mockingjay bird symbol becomes a symbol of hope and struggle for eternal freedom for all people. In the real world, Keffiyeh takes the opportunity to become a symbol of Palestinian resistance to fight oppression and the erasure of identity by the colonial entity called Israel. In *The Hunger Games*, the Mockingjay wears a special pin as a symbol that she is the hope for change awaited by various groups which then becomes the fire of resistance against the Capitol. Keffiyeh also plays the same role, various people in various parts of the world wear Keffiyeh as a symbol of solidarity and resistance against Israeli arbitrariness in Palestinian land. Keffiyeh becomes a soft diplomacy tool that can be used by various groups and non-state actors to jointly show concern for the original identity of the Palestinian landowners. Keffiyeh, a typical Palestinian checkered scarf, has long been a symbol of resistance and national identity, its motifs symbolize certain meanings such as olive leaves as a plant that is often found in Palestine, then there is also a fishing net as a symbol of the Mediterranean which has historically witnessed the civilization of the Palestinian people for thousands of years. In recent years, Keffiyeh has been known as a symbol of the rise of global solidarity, now its popularity is not only among Arabs, but also Europe and Africa. Public figures often wear keffiyeh as a form of soft diplomacy to show their support, such as Bella Hadid who wore it at international events.

The increasing popularity of keffiyeh has a positive impact on Palestine, so that they will not be forgotten, no matter how much Israel tries to erase them.

3.5. The media manipulates while the world watches the suffering

Media as a propaganda tool is very common, both in The Hunger Games or Israel, Capitol which uses the media to manipulate public opinion, and control the mindset of society by hiding the main perpetrators of the genocide crime against the Palestinian people. The strategy is to regulate narrative control to the selective dissemination of information. To hide their heinous actions, Israel prohibits international journalists from covering the horrors that are happening in Gaza today, this aims to keep the public fixated on the opinions of the mainstream media that have been lobbied by Zionism. The movement of independent news is very limited so that the public finds it difficult to digest the information obtained because it has the potential for Zionist propaganda. Systematic efforts are also made to discredit news from Gaza, by claiming that the news is fake, that the victims are just fabrications, this seems hypocritical because Israel also spreads false claims against Hamas, that Hamas beheaded 40 babies, even though there is no real evidence regarding the claim. In fact, Israel is the one who has massacred more babies in Palestine than they accuse Hamas of. Western media tend to display bias in their coverage, many media outlets use Israeli-made narratives that of course do not display actual facts, and ignore Palestinian suffering. With the alibi of self-defense, although it is unreasonable because Palestine is the one who should get the narrative to defend itself, because they are defending what is their right, including the right to life.

The media also plays a role in the spectacle of Palestinian suffering, where there is a lot of news and distribution of real images that occur there, but world citizens can only watch and world leaders can only remain silent, the visual content consumed raises ethical questions about humanity, especially for the audience. The spectacle of suffering reminds the author of what happened to the tribute in the arena when the Hunger Games took place, The Hunger Games which is a critique of humanity in a fictional world, unfortunately has to happen in the real world, and ironically the world only watches.

3.6. From district 13 to Gaza, resistance will continue to rage

In The Hunger Games, district 13 is the center and pioneer of resistance, organizing an attack on the capitol to free all of Panem from the madness of its leader, in Gaza, the resistance is also very strong against Israel. Although the blockade and bombardier continue to go hand in hand,

Gaza does not give up, Gaza is a pioneer of resistance, Gaza is an inspiration that makes the world community aware that colonization in the world is not yet completely over. Israel tries to suppress and break the spirit of Gaza, but together with Hamas. Gaza continues to survive even though only with their faith and piety. The Palestinian people try to survive in order to continue their lives, even in the midst of destruction. Young Palestinian activists become mockingjays in playing their role in the resistance. Using social media and soft diplomacy, they try to voice their rights through peaceful means, trying to rebuild Gaza with international relations. As in *The Hunger Games*, district 13 is not alone, so is Gaza, international solidarity now fills social media, activists, artists, religious figures and ordinary civilians take their steps to save humanity. Activists like Greta Thunberg even bravely sailed to Gaza to provide aid and moral support for Palestine, these actions show that the world still has a glimmer of light for fellow human beings..

4. Conclusion

The Hunger Games is not just entertainment, it is a satire on power, injustice and resistance. Through her world, Suzanne Collins presents a sharp critique of the injustice that often befalls the powerless, making suffering a collective punishment to ensure obedience. The work displays the moral dilemma that occurs in the realm of government that often uses manipulation to carry out their plans.

The Hunger Games can be a reflection of the reality that is happening in Palestine today, when the massacre is no longer fiction while the world is a witness. *The Hunger Games* is a reflection of the suffering of the Palestinian people so far, those who are oppressed by foreign parties who come and then expel them from their homes, their homeland. The author once again emphasizes that Israel has no rights to Palestinian land, it only belongs to Palestine and will always be so.

Fiction helps us understand the reality that is happening. Then imagine what the future will be like, what the future of Palestine will be like if the world's citizens just sit still and watch while Palestine is slaughtered in blood. They are not just statistics, but each individual holds a hope and various dreams, and once again. The right to live. When the understanding of the fictional world has been achieved, now is the time for us to become mockingjays to free our fellow human beings, shoulder to shoulder as citizens of the world so that there is no more word of genocide. The strands of the keffiyeh will continue to flow side by side, Together with the blowing leaves of the olive trees, which are rooted Together with the Al-Aqsa mosque. There, in the land of Palestine

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