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Public Opinion and Reaction to Israel's War on Gaza after October 7 in Türkiye

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ABSTRACT *This article investigates the perception and the reaction of Turkish people to Israel's war in Gaza. For this purpose, we utilized a survey involving 1,393 respondents. First, we documented that there is widespread support for Palestinians from both sides of the political spectrum, Second, 94 percent of people do not believe that Israel's public statements about protecting civilians are true. Third, an overwhelming percentage of people also joined the economic boycott by not buying Israeli products. Although young voters are less likely to support the Palestinian cause, this relationship disappears once voting preferences are taken into account. This implies that voting preferences matter for understanding the support for Palestinian cause. Compared to those who do not vote or vote for parties with a small base, AK Party and MHP voters are relatively more likely to support and CHP and HDP voters are relatively less likely to support the Palestinian cause. Overall, these results show that there is a strong pro-Palestine sentiment in Türkiye, and companies that have business ties with Israel are going to be hurt economically by the ongoing war due to consumer boycotts.*

Keywords: Palestinian-Israeli War, Türkiye, Voter Preference, Product Boycotts

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Introduction¹

After the Hamas attacks on October 7 on Israel, the conflict between Palestinians and Israel has once again captured the world's attention. Israel's response to the October 7 attacks was largely unmeasured and indiscriminate, leading to widespread devastation and loss of life in Gaza.

At the heart of Hamas' attack on Israel lies the desperate situation of Palestinians and the issue of territory tied to the ongoing dispute regarding sovereignty and self-determination. Previous actions of the Israeli government in Gaza and the West Bank have drawn sharp criticism from international observers² and human rights organizations, including Israel's own organization B'tselem.³ The Israeli attacks have been much more severe and evidence of disproportionate use of force, civilian casualties, and violations of international humanitarian law have raised profound ethical questions, which have culminated in the International Court of Justice finding plausible evidence of genocide.⁴

Yet, amid the geopolitical complexities and humanitarian crises, it is essential to recognize the diverse perspectives and reactions that emerge from different parts of the world. Although there had been staunch solidarity with Israel in some circles, when the indiscriminate bombing of civilians, mosques, schools, and hospitals became an everyday reality in Gaza, public opinion started to shift toward Palestinians. It has been demonstrated that an increasing percentage of people sympathize with Palestinians in the UK. As of February 2024, 66 percent of people in the UK believe that Israel should cease military action and call for a ceasefire, up from 59 percent in November 2023.⁵ In the U.S., although the majority see Hamas as responsible for the ongoing war and side with Israel,⁶ there is also an increasing sentiment for a permanent ceasefire, with 67 percent of voters supporting a permanent ceasefire as of February 2024,⁷ an indication of acknowledging the grievances of Palestinians. One can also discern the increasing criticism of Israel with the growing number of pro-Palestinian protests and the declining number of pro-Israel demonstrations in the U.S.⁸ Moreover, younger Americans are more sympathetic to Palestinians. Opinion polls show that 51 percent of 18-24-year-olds in the U.S. believe that Hamas' attacks can be justified by the grievances of Palestinians.⁹

Many people around the globe, especially people from the Muslim world, are curious about Türkiye's response to the ongoing events. Public opinion in Türkiye is influential because the country has historical ties with the Palestinian cause and a predominantly Muslim population. Türkiye was also a country that maintained good and smooth relations with Israel, as documented in the background section.

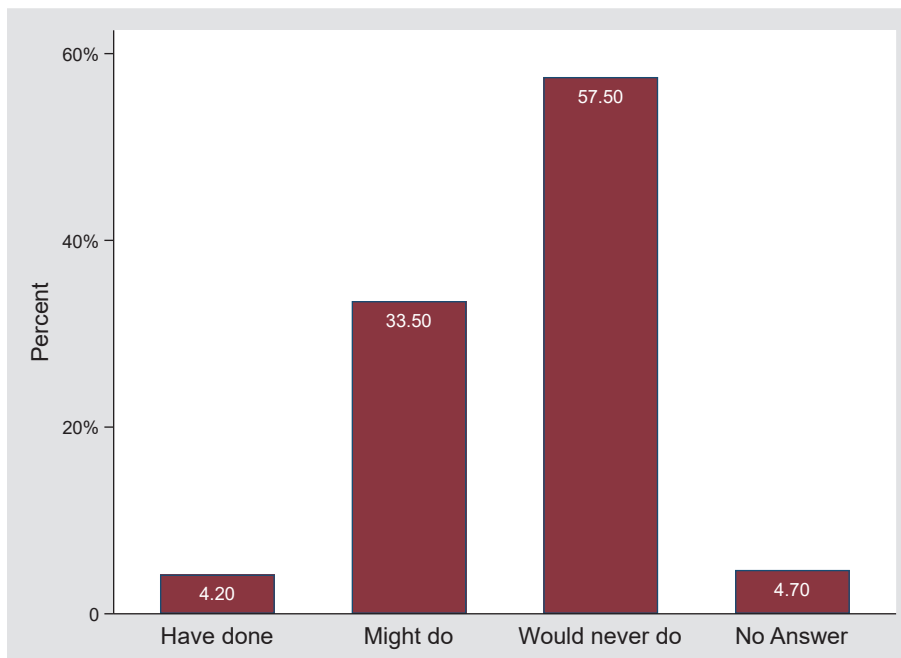
In this study, we document the perspectives of people in Türkiye regarding the war in Gaza through a survey conducted with 1,393 individuals in January 2024. Additionally, we inquire about their engagement in economic boycotts of products and companies that support or have ties with Israel.

Public opinion in Türkiye is influential due to its historical ties with the Palestinian cause and a predominantly Muslim population

Although in economics textbooks, human behavior is depicted to be utility-maximizing in line with self-interest, in recent years, burgeoning literature documents that people also care about fairness.¹⁰ Likewise, individuals' emotions widely affect their behaviors in the short and long run. In addition, religious motivation matters for people's actual decisions,¹¹ including many different economic phenomena.¹² Thus, we may expect a large-scale response and economic boycotts from Turkish people, especially from more religious segments of the society. However, people in Türkiye are not used to joining boycotts in general, let alone economic boycotts.

Figure 1 lists data from the latest World Values Survey conducted in 2018 for Türkiye and shows that 58 percent of people responded by stating that they would never join in boycotts.

Figure 1: Attitude toward Joining Boycotts in Türkiye



Source: World Values Survey (2018)

There may be many reasons for people choosing not to participate in boycotts. In particular, people may believe economic boycotts are ineffective for various reasons. One such reason is the uncertainty surrounding the involvement and accountability of companies whose founders or shareholders have ties to countries where the ruling government engages in acts of violence. Second, people may not know which companies to boycott. Third, they may not always find alternative products or companies. However, since the events after October 7 were so blatantly and broadly broadcasted via social media platforms, the fog of uncertainty about responsibility was lifted. Second, again with the help of online platforms such as X and WhatsApp, the names of companies that were supporting Israeli occupation have been widely shared. One such social movement is a Palestinian organization called “Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions,” in short BDS.¹³ Another well-known civil society movement in Türkiye is “Boykotyolu,” which not only shares a list of products and/or companies that have ties with Israel but also alternative products.¹⁴

Some studies document that sanctions are sometimes effective,¹⁵ including the Arab boycott of Israel.¹⁶ Some studies find that they do not matter much.¹⁷ However, the effect of state-to-state sanctions was studied. The unique contribution of this study is to show that economic boycotts can reach very high public levels, even without government involvement.

This study first documents the views on the current conflict and later whether people join economic boycotts. Previous studies show that young people are on average less religious.¹⁸ Therefore, we hypothesize that young people are less likely to care about the Palestinian cause compared to the older generation. As the AK Party is largely known to communicate its religious values openly,¹⁹ we hypothesize that AK Party voters have a more pro-Palestinian stance. For the other political parties, we do not have a clear hypothesis.

This study is important for two reasons. Like every other country, Israel cares about how it is perceived by other nations. Like every company, companies that have some connection with Israel care about how consumers view them. Moreover, the Turkish government can restructure its Gaza policy based on public approval.

Background of the Hamas-Israeli Conflict and Türkiye’s Position

In this section, we briefly touched upon the pivotal events of the historical process of shaping public opinion in Türkiye. Many details have been omitted as they are addressed in many other studies.²⁰ Although the ongoing conflict has been portrayed as a centuries-old hatred with religious roots, this is largely incorrect. Jews were saved from prosecution in Spain by the Ottomans in the

15th century,²¹ and there was a small but largely educated Jewish population in İstanbul living in peace and prosperity.²²

The essence of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict goes back to the partitioning of land when the Ottoman Empire was collapsing in the early 1900s. According to the last Ottoman census conducted between 1881 and 1893 before the establishment of the British Mandate, the area in which current Israel and Palestinians live was called *Kudüs Mutasarrıflığı* (the District of Jerusalem). Out of 234,770 residents, there were 199,613 Muslims, which constituted 85 percent of the population, and 8,110 Jews corresponding to 3.5 percent of the population.²³ For centuries, Muslims, Christians, and Jews have lived together in these lands without major problems.²⁴ This peaceful coexistence has also been portrayed in Israeli history textbooks.²⁵

After the British took control of the District of Jerusalem from the Ottomans in 1917, many Jews immigrated to this region from Europe.²⁶ In 1947, after it became clear that Arabs and Jews were unlikely to live peacefully together, the land was divided into two states, with 45 percent of the land for Palestinian Arabs and 55 percent for Jews under a UN resolution.²⁷ The state of Israel was founded within that plan.

Türkiye was one of the first countries in the world²⁸ and the first country in the Islamic world²⁹ to recognize Israel's independence after its foundation. In addition, scientists who escaped from Germany after the Second World War were welcomed in Türkiye and worked comfortably in universities. Some of them, such as Phillip Schwartz, acquired Turkish citizenship.³⁰ These examples provide indications of a smooth relationship between Israel and Türkiye.³¹

However, the Arabs did not consider the UN land partition plan fair and fought and lost two wars: the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 and the Six-Day War of 1967.³² This led to Israel expanding its territories, although it is illegal to gain land through war under international law.³³ When Israel expanded its borders, it also forcibly removed 200,000-300,000 inhabitants of those lands, which led to Palestinian refugees fleeing to many countries.³⁴ To guard the rights of Palestinians, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed. Then, Hamas was formed as uprisings (intifada) and the PLO-style fight did not bring any results for the Palestinian people. In 2005, Israel withdrew its military force from Gaza, which granted more power to Hamas and expanded the

Responses indicate a widespread boycott of products and/or companies people perceive to have ties with Israel. It is worth mentioning that the participation in boycotts is slightly lower than those who expressed support for Palestine/Gaza/Hamas



Protestors from NGO's attend a march as part of their 'Walk for Our Martyrs and Palestine' action in Central Istanbul, Türkiye on January 7, 2024.

ELİF ÖZTÜRK
ÖZGÖNCÜ / AA

division between Hamas and the PLO. Hamas was elected to run Gaza in 2006. However, Israel put Gaza under a blockade, and unemployment soared, which makes living in Gaza almost impossible.³⁵

Analyzing Turkish textbooks can provide a meaningful picture of what kind of information Turkish society was receiving concerning Jews and Israel, especially considering that eight years of primary education has been compulsory in Türkiye since 1997. According to Tezcan and Murgul,³⁶ the portrayal of Jews varies across historical contexts: in the advent of Islam, Jews of Arabia are depicted antagonistically, whereas Jews within the Ottoman Empire are typically categorized as non-Muslims. Turkish tolerance is often illustrated through the Ottoman reception of Spanish Jews. However, there is not much discussion surrounding the Holocaust during the Second World War in Turkish textbooks.

The significance of events in Palestine for the Turkish public is partly based on the fact that it is the home of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque, which is considered the third holiest city and mosque in the Islamic tradition.³⁷ The expulsion of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland is also a factor affecting the perception of Israel in Türkiye. Yet, at the governmental level, Türkiye and Israel had a smooth relationship during the 1990s.

It is also important to consider leaders' thoughts, which often influence public opinion. Both former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have been vocal critics of Israel and Zionism.³⁸ In 2009,

92 percent of AK Party voters, 75 percent of CHP voters, 93 percent of MHP voters, 59 percent of HDP voters, and 73 percent of İYİ Party voters reported themselves as closer to Palestinians

during the Davos Economic Forum, Erdoğan expressed his reaction openly, a moment that has since been noted as the “one-minute” intervention.

Another important event was Israel’s raid on the Mavi Marmara international aid convoy to Gaza in 2010, which resulted in the deaths of 10 activists who were Turkish citizens.³⁹ That incident was another turning point that shaped public opinion in Türkiye as it negatively influenced the bilateral relationship between the two countries.⁴⁰

After historically poor ties in the 2010s, Türkiye and Israel’s relationship was largely normalized before October 7. Initially, Türkiye adopted a moderate position in an attempt to stem the atrocities. However, after it became clear that the Netanyahu government was determined to continue its attacks in Gaza no matter the cost of civilian lives, Türkiye took the side of Gazans and continued to label Hamas as a resistance group instead of “terrorists.”⁴¹ As of May 2024, Türkiye decided to cut all international trade with Israel to put pressure on Israel for ceasefire and allow humanitarian aid to go inside Gaza.⁴²

Methodology

To measure public opinion, we used a quantitative research technique. Data used in this study was obtained from a survey that collected observations from all over Türkiye. Because the observations were gathered via a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) method, it was not possible to increase the number of questions. Respondents are known to be reluctant to answer the questions in long surveys, which also reduces the quality of answers.⁴³

The following regression models are used to clarify the determinants of support for the Palestinian cause (we discuss indicators used for this purpose in the next section).

$$SP_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 age_i + \alpha_2 PP_i + \beta X_i + u_i \dots \dots \dots [1]$$

SP_i is a binary dependent variable that indicates whether the individual i supports the Palestinian cause. Age_i is a categorical variable representing the respondents’ age group. PP_i represents an individual’s political party preference and X_i is the vector representing variables such as age, gender, marital status, and education household income bracket.

Women are more likely to feel closer to Palestine, not believe in Israel's public statements, and join in economic boycotts

As the dependent variables are binary, we employed logistic regression analysis to examine whether there are statistically significant differences between age groups and individuals with varying political opinions regarding their views on the Hamas-Israeli conflict. We also use regression analysis to determine factors of joining in economic boycotts.

Data

In this study, we utilized a dataset compiled by a research company called ETIG Analytics.⁴⁴ ETIG Analytics conducts monthly polls for different topics to gauge public opinion, track political trends, and provide valuable insights for various stakeholders, including businesses, government entities, and non-profit organizations.

Our target population was individuals 18 years or older residing in Türkiye. As Türkiye's population has a 92 percent smart mobile phone usage rate, according to a survey conducted in 2011,⁴⁵ and an internet access rate of 94.1 percent, according to a survey conducted in 2022,⁴⁶ we can safely conclude that the target population is broadly representative of the adult Turkish population.

To reach out to this population, a simple random sampling method was utilized. Through a Microsoft Excel-based program capable of generating random telephone numbers belonging to communication operators in Türkiye, the contact information of the individuals to be interviewed was obtained. These numbers were then dialed by ETIG Analytic's own call center, and the surveys were conducted using the CATI method. The questionnaires started with information about the study and an informed consent statement. In cases where the respondent declined to participate in the survey, backup telephone numbers were used, similar to the backup respondents used in face-to-face field research.

Because the data was collected through a telephone survey, the sample consists of 18-plus-year-old mobile phone users in Türkiye. The data collection was conducted in early January 2024. The sample size was 1,393 individuals. Our calculations show that for nationwide surveys in Türkiye, a sample size of 385 is sufficient for a 95 percent confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error, while a sample size of 1,068 is sufficient for a 95 percent confidence level and a 3 percent margin of error. Therefore, the sample size is sufficient to represent the entire population of Türkiye.

First, respondents were asked the following question: “With which group do you feel yourself closer to in the Gaza War?” the answer options of “Palestine/Gaza/Hamas,” “Israel” and “Do not want to disclose any opinion.”

Second, another question was posed to measure the respondents' beliefs about Israel's stated intentions as follows: “Do you believe Israel's claim that it only targets Hamas in its attacks on Gaza and does not intend to harm civilians?” the answer categories of “Yes, I believe,” “No, I do not believe” and “Do not want to disclose any opinion.”

Third, the question to measure economic boycott was as follows: “Are you participating in the boycott campaign against Israeli products?” The answer options are “Yes, I participate,” “No, I do not participate” and “No idea/I do not know the companies that support Israel.”

The last question was about the support of Türkiye's stance on the Palestine issue as follows: “In your opinion, should Türkiye continue its policy of supporting Palestine?” with the answer categories of “Yes.” “No.” “Do not know.”

We also obtained demographic data of respondents, such as gender, age group, educational level, marital status, employment status, and political affiliation. Which age bracket respondents fall into was collected with the following five answer options: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55 and older. Gender data was collected as “woman” or “man” in two categories. The education level of the people was queried with two answer options: whether they have a high school education or less, or a university education or higher. Participants' employment status is also asked with the following simple Yes/No type question: “Do you currently work?” The marital status of individuals was gathered, encompassing categories of “single,” “married,” and “divorced/widowed.”

The political affiliation of individuals was asked with the following question: “In the general parliamentary elections on May 14, 2023, which party did you vote for?” via the following answer categories: (1) AK Party, (2) CHP, (3) MHP, (4) HDP/YEŞİL SOL, (5) İYİ Party, (6) other parties, and (7) did not vote.

We also used the Google Trends dataset that shows search data based on Google as a robustness check for our results. Google Trends data shows how many searches have been done using a term or a related term in comparison to all searches done on Google.⁴⁷ Google Trends data is provided after 2004. However, people in Türkiye started widely using the internet after 2014. When the dataset has many zeros, it is an indicator of data unreliability.⁴⁸ To obtain reliable data, we confined our dataset between January 1, 2015, and February 1, 2024, in Türkiye. We obtained the search data using the keywords “Israeli products” (“İsrail malları” in Turkish).

Findings

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics of the variables in the sample. 40 percent of the sample are women. 10 percent of the sample falls within the 18-24 age bracket, while the other age groups each comprise approximately 20 percent of the sample. 73 percent of the sample is married whereas 21 percent are single and the remaining 6 percent are either divorced or widowed. 33 percent of the sample have a university or higher level of education, whereas 67 percent have a high school level or less education. 51 percent of the sample are currently working. Among the respondents, 45 percent voted for the AK Party in the May 23 elections, 23 percent voted for the CHP, 7 percent voted for the MHP, 2 percent voted for the HDP, 5 percent voted for the İYİ Party and 18 percent did not vote or voted for parties with a small base that does not allow disintegrating data because of sample size issues.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Background Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Female	0.40	(0.49)
Age Group 18-24	0.10	(0.30)
Age Group 25-34	0.20	(0.40)
Age Group 35-44	0.24	(0.43)
Age Group 45-54	0.21	(0.41)
Age Group 55 +	0.25	(0.43)
Marital Status: Married	0.73	(0.44)
Marital Status: Single	0.21	(0.41)
Education Level: University or Higher	0.33	(0.47)
Employed	0.51	(0.50)
Party Voted for in the May 14 Election		
AK Party	0.45	(0.50)
CHP	0.23	(0.42)
MHP	0.07	(0.25)
HDP	0.02	(0.15)
İYİ Party	0.05	(0.22)
Other Parties/Did Not Vote	0.18	(0.38)

Figure 2 provides the distribution of answers to the four indicators regarding people’s views and reactions to the Hamas-Israeli conflict. Panel A shows that

people in Türkiye have broadly felt closer to Palestine, Gaza, and Hamas, with only 2 percent of people openly supporting Israel in this war. A non-negligible percentage (14 percent) of people did not want to disclose their opinion. It is easier to express support for Palestinians in the current conflict as the events in Gaza are so catastrophic. As a result, we think the group not wanting to disclose their opinion may mostly sympathize with Israel.

According to Panel B of Figure 1, 95 percent of people stated that they do not believe that Israel is trying to protect civilian lives in the Gaza Strip. Only 3 percent of people stated they believe that Israel is doing its best to protect civilians. Only 2 percent of people choose the response “do not know.” According to the data, almost nobody believes that Israel has good intentions in this war.

According to Panel C, 73 percent of people joined economic boycotts, whereas 24 percent of people reported that they did not join, and 3 percent do not have any opinion or do not know about economic boycotts. Again, responses indicate a widespread boycott of products and/or companies people perceive to have ties with Israel. It is worth mentioning that the participation in boycotts is slightly lower than those who expressed support for Palestine/Gaza/Hamas. Panel D shows that 81 percent of people approve of Türkiye's position supporting Palestine, 13 percent of people disapproved of Türkiye's stance, and 6 percent did not have a clear idea.

Figure 2: Views on Hamas-Israeli Conflict

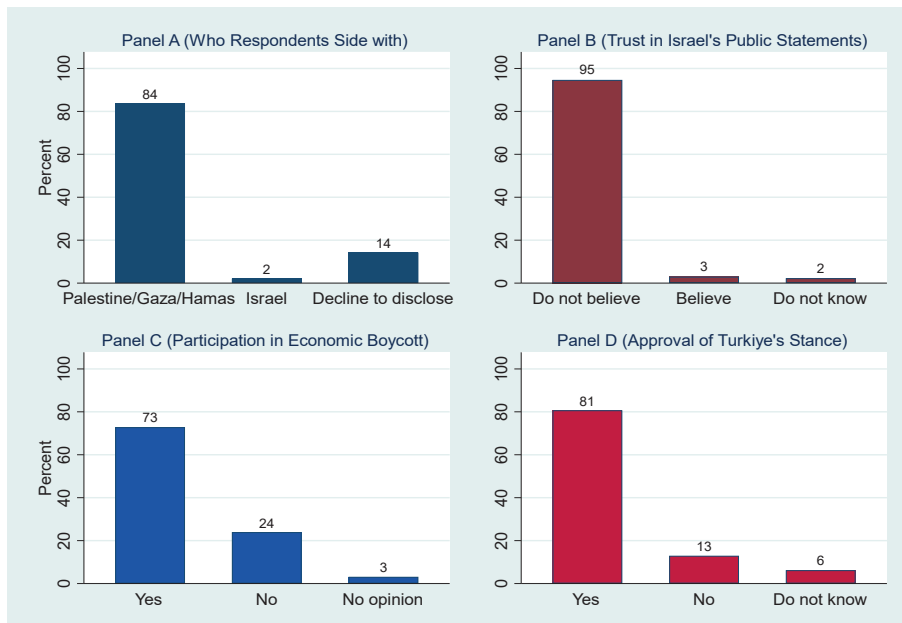


Figure 3 depicts the four indicators of support for Palestinians depending on respondents’ political preferences. In Panel A, we present the group respondents align with based on their political party affiliation. Panel A shows that 92 percent of AK Party voters, 75 percent of CHP voters, 93 percent of MHP voters, 59 percent of HDP voters, and 73 percent of İYİ Party voters reported themselves as closer to Palestinians. In Panel B, we document whether respondents find Israel’s public statements about protecting civilian lives depending on respondent’s political affiliation. Panel B shows almost unequivocal disbelief that Israel is doing its best to protect civilian lives regardless of political stance, with HDP voters having the lowest (91 percent) disbelief. Panel C shows that 86 percent of AK Party voters, 58 percent of CHP voters, 81 percent of MHP voters, 47 percent of HDP voters, 54 percent of İYİ Party voters, and 47 percent of the other party voters or those who did not vote joined the economic boycott. Again, in Panel D, when the approval for Türkiye’s stance is examined, 92 percent of AK Party voters, 57 percent of CHP voters, 89 percent of MHP voters, 56 percent of HDP voters, 73 percent of İYİ Party voters, and 71 percent of other party voters or those who did not vote approve of Türkiye’s stance with regard to supporting Palestinians.

Figure 3: Views on Hamas-Israeli Conflict by Respondents’ Political Preference

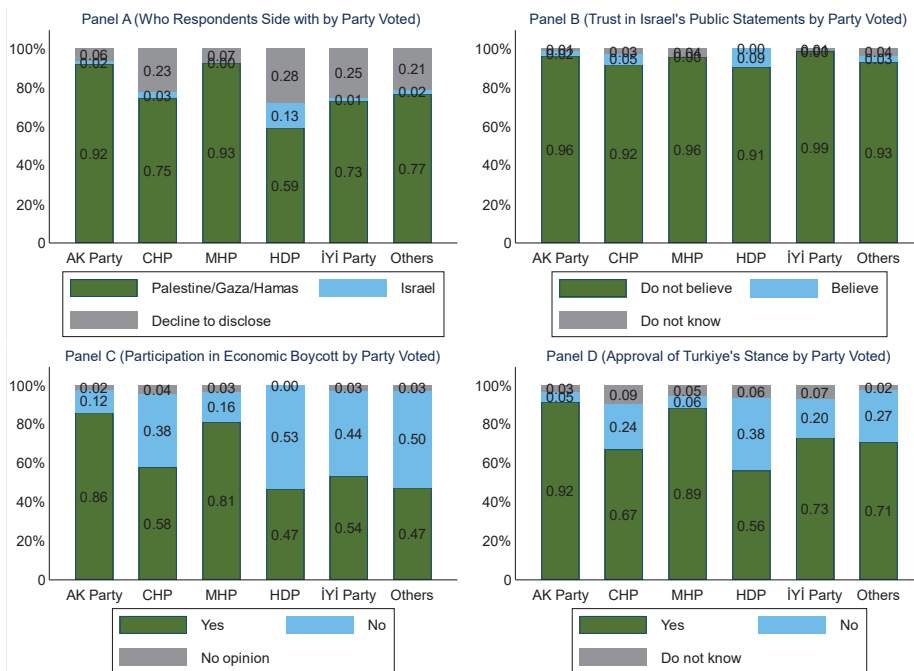
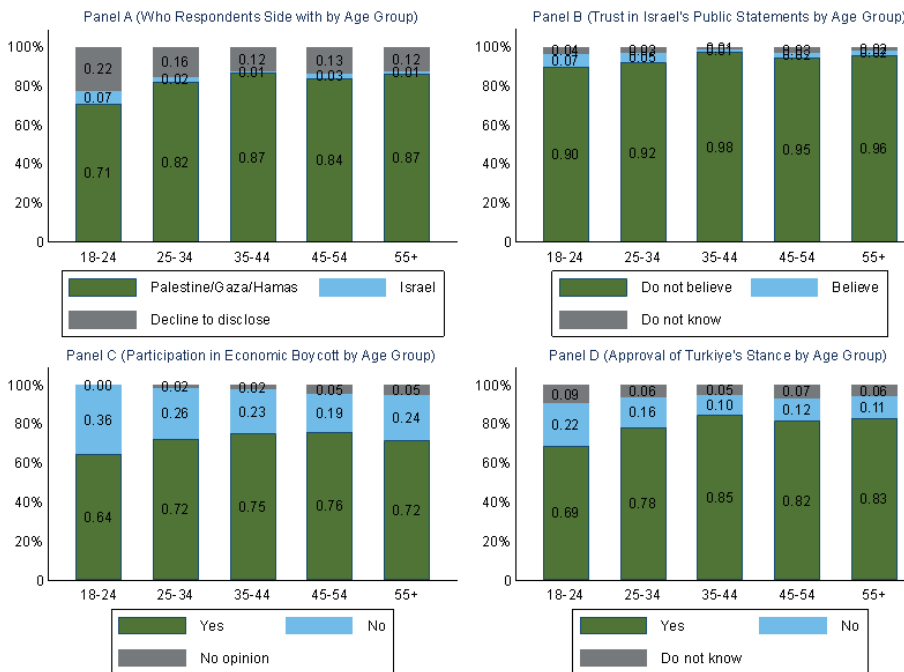


Figure 4 shows the indicators of Turkish people’s views about the Hamas-Israeli conflict disaggregated by the respondents’ age group. We see from Figure 4 that support for Palestinians and approval of Türkiye’s stance increase as

people get older. Also, we observe less participation in the economic boycott among the 18-24 age group; whereas the 55+ age group also participated less compared to people in the 25-54 age group, probably because they do not have the necessary information about how to boycott economically as 5 percent of the respondents report that they have no opinion about the economic boycott.

The only influence of age observed was in 55+ individuals, who were less likely to participate in economic boycotts than younger people between the ages of 18 to 24

Figure 4: Views on Hamas-Israeli Conflict by Respondents' Age-Group



In this section, we run a regression analysis to explain what factors explain the support for the Palestinian cause. Table 2 shows the marginal effects calculated from running a logit model. The dependent variable in Model 1 takes value 1 for those who feel close to Palestine/Gaza/Hamas. Those who did not want to disclose their opinion and those who support Israel takes the value 0 for this variable. For Model 2, not believing in Israel's public statements takes value 1 which can be assessed as siding with the Palestinian cause. Those who answered "believe in" or "do not know" are categorized as 0. In Model 3, those who reported participating in economic boycotts by not buying Israeli products are categorized as 1, whereas those who did not participate in boycotts and chose the option of no opinion are categorized as 0. In Model 4, those who

approve of Türkiye’s stance in supporting Palestine take value 1 whereas the other choices take value 0.

According to regression results in Table 2, women are more likely to feel closer to Palestine, not believe in Israel’s public statements, and join in economic boycotts; gender does not have a significant effect on approval of Türkiye’s stance. Although in Figure 3 there seems to be less support for Palestine among the youth, the age factor almost disappears once voting preferences are taken into account. The only influence of age observed was in 55+ individuals, who were less likely to participate in economic boycotts than younger people between the ages of 18 to 24.

Table 2: Regression Results for Measures of Support for Palestine, Marginal Effects

	Feeling Close to Palestine	Not Believing Israel’s Public Statements	Participating in Economic Boycotts	Approval of Türkiye’s Stance
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	0.070 ^{***} (0.022)	0.039 ^{**} (0.015)	0.082 ^{***} (0.025)	0.021 (0.023)
Age group- 25-34 (ref. 18-24)	0.028 (0.034)	0.009 (0.022)	-0.021 (0.043)	0.021 (0.036)
35-44	0.045 (0.036)	0.073 ^{***} (0.028)	-0.062 (0.047)	0.059 (0.039)
45-54	-0.005 (0.037)	0.032 (0.025)	-0.079 (0.048)	0.010 (0.041)
55+	0.053 (0.038)	0.054 ^{**} (0.025)	-0.101 ^{**} (0.048)	0.064 (0.041)
Married (Ref. Divorced/Widow)	0.034 (0.048)	0.003 (0.030)	0.039 (0.053)	0.049 (0.048)
Single	-0.035 (0.052)	0.005 (0.033)	-0.105 [*] (0.060)	0.008 (0.054)
University or Higher (Ref: High School or less)	-0.024 (0.021)	0.009 (0.013)	-0.060 ^{**} (0.024)	-0.015 (0.023)
Working	0.021 (0.022)	0.007 (0.015)	-0.006 (0.026)	0.025 (0.023)
Voted for AK Party (Ref: Others)	0.131 ^{***} (0.027)	0.021 (0.016)	0.185 ^{***} (0.031)	0.172 ^{***} (0.029)
Voted for CHP	-0.039 (0.025)	-0.023 (0.016)	-0.064 ^{**} (0.031)	-0.059 ^{**} (0.027)
Voted for MHP	0.159 ^{***} (0.053)	0.017 (0.028)	0.149 ^{***} (0.052)	0.132 ^{***} (0.050)
Voted for HDP	-0.111 ^{**} (0.051)	-0.019 (0.032)	-0.127 [*] (0.069)	-0.125 ^{**} (0.056)
Voted for İYİ Party	-0.039 (0.040)	0.069 (0.051)	-0.079 (0.049)	-0.018 (0.043)
Pseudo R-squared	0.096	0.064	0.107	0.094
N	1393	1393	1393	1393

Std. errors are robust, provided in (), *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10.

Regarding marital status, education level, and employment status, we did not observe a consistent pattern of behavior, except university or higher-educated

people were less likely to join economic boycotts.

When we look into the relationship between political preferences and measures of support for Palestinians, we observe a consistent pattern of voters of the AK Party and the MHP being more likely to align themselves with Palestinians, more likely to economically boycott and approve of Türkiye's stance compared to those who vote for other parties or those who did not vote in the May 14 election. Interestingly, the voters for the HDP are less likely to feel closer to Palestinians, less likely to economically boycott at a 10 percent significance level, and less likely to approve of Türkiye's stance on supporting the Palestinian cause. We do not observe any significant relationship between voting for the İYİ Party and Palestinian cause indicators.

We observe a consistent pattern of voters of the AK Party and the MHP being more likely to align themselves with Palestinians, more likely to economically boycott and approve of Türkiye's stance compared to those who vote for other parties or those who did not vote in the May 14 election

Robustness Checks

In this section, we provide evidence from Google Trends. For this purpose, we utilized time series data from Google Trends between January 1, 2015, and February 1, 2024. To have a sense of the economic boycotts, we obtained search data for the keyword "Israeli products." Google Trends provide monthly data. Figure 5 shows the monthly dataset demonstrating that every time a big incident occurs between Palestinians and Israelis, user searches for information on Israeli products increase. We observed a significant increase in searches during October 2023 as Israel began its offensive on Gaza following the Hamas attacks. In May 2021, there was an 11-day conflict between Israel and Hamas that resulted in the deaths of 260 people, including 39 women and 67 children.⁴⁹ In December 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that the U.S. recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.⁵⁰ In May 2018, when the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem was opened, there was a protest in which Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) opened fire on protesters, killing 52 Palestinians.⁵¹ In July 2015, there was the infamous Duma arson attack in which a Jewish settler set the Dawabsha family's house on fire and killed three members of the family, including an 18-month-old baby in the West Bank.⁵² All these spikes in the search for "Israeli products" show that whenever a calamity strikes Palestinians, it also strikes a chord in Türkiye.

Figure 5: Google Search Data for the Term “Israeli Products” in Türkiye



According to the Google Trends list, the top 5 related queries are as follows: “Full list of Israeli products 2023 (*İsrail malları tam liste 2023*),” “Israeli products 2021 (*İsrail malları 2021*),” “Full list of Israeli products 2021 (*İsrail malları tam liste 2021*),” “Israeli products 2018 (*İsrail malları 2018*),” and “Israeli products 2017 (*İsrail malları 2017*).” Interestingly, people use the year in the query. Most likely, people search for Israeli products in different periods taking into consideration that some companies may have been bought by an Israeli company or by a company that has ties with Israel.

Discussion

Our results show large-scale support for Gazans/Palestinians/Hamas against Israel in Türkiye. When we look at descriptives, we can say that compared to the elderly, the youth harbor less support; however, their level of support is also above 60 percent in every indicator, which indicates a large base of support among the youth, too.

When we run regression analysis to clarify which factors explain support for Palestine, it seems that political party affiliation matters. Compared to other parties and those who do not vote, AK Party and MHP voters maintain significantly larger support for Palestine in every indicator; the CHP and HDP voters harbor less support for Palestine, according to some indicators.

A word of caution is necessary for interpreting the results. These results should not be read like the CHP and HDP voters are not supporting the Palestinian cause. Figure 3 shows in every indicator, the majority of CHP voters and HDP voters (more than 50 percent) express their support. The regression results show less support among them compared to a reference category.

As the AK Party is largely known for its pro-Islamic values⁵³ and the CHP for its secularist tendencies,⁵⁴ we believe that the relatively high support for the Palestinian cause among AK Party and MHP voters, and relatively lower support among CHP and HDP voters, reflects the influence of religiosity on these attitudes. Unfortunately, our survey does not include an indicator for religiosity, preventing us from statistically clarifying the role of religion.

In the regression analysis, when voting preferences are included, the effect of age on indicators of supporting Palestinians is no longer statistically significant. Studies show that generally young people are less religious, and religiosity increases with age.⁵⁵ Thus, lower support for Palestinians among young people can be due to less religious affiliation of young people. Our conjecture about the voting preferences is that it is an indicator of religiosity as discussed in the paragraph above. Therefore, why young people are less likely to be pro-Palestinian in Türkiye's case is understandable.

73 percent of respondents participate in economic boycotts, which could pose challenges for Israeli companies operating in Türkiye or for those selling Israeli products

We document widespread support for Palestinians in Türkiye that concurs with the overall public opinion in many parts of the world, manifesting itself with rising sympathy toward Palestinians in the UK,⁵⁶ increased demand for a permanent ceasefire in the U.S.,⁵⁷ and an increasing number of pro-Palestinian demonstrations.⁵⁸

To put the results into context, we would like to compare what people from Türkiye reported in terms of prospects of joining a boycott as a form of political action in the latest World Values Survey conducted in 2018. When we compare the percentages provided in Figure 2 and Figure 3, Panel C, the percentage joining the economic boycott of Israeli products is remarkable. Figure 1 shows that the bulk of respondents never had the motivation to join boycotts. That is, it shows the ongoing events remarkably shifted something in the political activism of Turkish people.

Our results also concur with Fershtman and Gandal's study,⁵⁹ which demonstrates that Israel gained a peace dividend after the economic boycotts relaxed. Although we document large-scale participation in economic boycotts as a result of the ongoing war, whether these economic boycotts will be long-lasting or not is another question that has to be researched in further study.

One of the limitations of this study is that the survey, being oriented toward understanding political preferences, does not measure important variables such as religiosity to explain the support for the Palestinian cause. Second, the questions include fewer categories for background variables. For instance, regarding employment status, only information about whether individuals are currently employed is provided. Third, the survey posed a question regarding the group supported in the conflict, prompting respondents to indicate their affiliation. Unfortunately, the answer categories combined these three different entities, "Palestine," "Gaza," and/or "Hamás," as one response category. It would be inter-

As the humanitarian toll of the conflict becomes more apparent, Israel may recognize the damage to its soft power and the legitimacy of its 'self-defense' claims. A diminished soft power could lead to increased isolation and challenges in achieving diplomatic and economic goals

ments regarding the protection of civilian lives in Gaza. Furthermore, 73 percent of respondents participate in economic boycotts, which could pose challenges for Israeli companies operating in Türkiye or for those selling Israeli products.

The conflict in Gaza is likely to foster negative sentiment toward Israel, Israelis, Israeli businesses, and businesses with ties to Israel in Türkiye, as the widespread casualties in Gaza resonate poorly with the Turkish public, reflecting global reactions. Historically, Israel has been effective in public relations, but since October 7, global and Turkish opinions have become increasingly critical. Israel's ongoing actions suggest a potential disregard for public opinion, with no indications of a strategic shift. This perspective may reflect a short-term focus in decision-making. While Israel might currently prioritize immediate objectives over public opinion, the long-term consequences could be significant. As the humanitarian toll of the conflict becomes more apparent, Israel may recognize the damage to its soft power and the legitimacy of its 'self-defense' claims. A diminished soft power could lead to increased isolation and challenges in achieving diplomatic and economic goals. ■

esting to discern the level of support for Hamas among the respondents.

Conclusion

In this article, we explore how Israel's attack on Gaza after Hamas' October 7 attacks is perceived and interpreted by the people of Türkiye. Our findings show that there is significant support for Palestine among the Turkish population, with 83 percent declaring their support in the survey. Additionally, nearly everyone surveyed expressed skepticism about Israel's public state-

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AL-AQSA FLOOD

A Turning Point in the
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