



Boycotting McDonald's: Between Ethical Choice and Fiqh Rulings

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the feasibility of implementing an Islamic Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model based on Musharakah (joint venture partnership) and Istisna (construction financing) for Djibouti's Gale La Koma geothermal project, contributing to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7, which aims for affordable and clean energy. The theoretical underpinnings of this study are Islamic finance principles and the literature on public-private partnerships (PPPs), with a focus on ethical investment, risk-sharing, and sustainable infrastructure development. The research implemented a qualitative approach, conducting semi-structured interviews and surveys with key stakeholders, including government agencies, project developers, Islamic financial institutions, and local communities. The findings of this study revealed that the proposed Islamic PPP model can enhance project financing by promoting risk-sharing and adherence to Shariah principles. Nevertheless, challenges such as regulatory alignment, financial sustainability, and integration of Islamic and conventional financing need to be addressed. The study contributes to the growing discourse on integrating Islamic finance into renewable energy projects, providing a framework for expanding geothermal energy development in Djibouti and similar contexts. The added value of this study lies in developing a novel Islamic PPP model tailored to geothermal projects, demonstrating how Islamic finance can support SDG 7 while addressing stakeholder concerns in sustainable energy infrastructure.

1. Introduction

Boycotting movements originated in 19th-century Ireland. The term comes from Cunningham Boycott, the land agent of a landlord who was disliked by the farmers [1]. This movement also written on Times newspaper that catch how dreadful picture of victory of anarchy that begs to be recognized as a civilized act and received legal protection. Three days after this declaration of social and economic ostracism the term "boycott" was coined by O'Malley [2].

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From its early usage, boycotts have evolved into a prominent form of economic and social protest, serving as a tool for marginalized groups to challenge power structures. In the early Meccan period, a notable example occurred during the early Meccan period when the Quraysh initiated a boycott against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his family, the Banu Hashim, to pressure them into abandoning Islam [3]. This comprehensive economic and social embargo also included the Banu Muttalib, reflecting the lengths to which the Quraysh were willing to go to suppress the nascent Islamic movement.

Another significant historical example is the Arab League's boycott of Israel in 1945, initiated to exert economic pressure on Israel without targeting Jewish individuals or businesses outside its borders. Over decades, the global response to boycotts has been diverse, with some countries revising their stances due to geopolitical and economic considerations. For instance, by the 1990s, several Arab nations had scaled back their boycott measures, reflecting varying priorities within the Muslim world [4]. These inconsistencies underscore the complexities inherent in achieving unified action among Muslim-majority countries.

In contemporary Malaysia, calls for boycotts remain a contentious issue, with multinational corporations like McDonald's also affected. Amid accusations of indirect support for Israel, McDonald's Malaysia has faced significant backlash, including an estimated RM6 million in losses attributed to boycott efforts. These losses include RM1.5 million spent on severance packages for laid-off employees, illustrating the tangible economic consequences of these movements [5].

The effectiveness of boycotts is often scrutinized through dual lenses. One approach considers their historical, geopolitical, and economic implications, as seen in the Arab boycott of Israel, while another focuses on cultural resistance and consumer choices, emphasizing individual agency and ideological alignment [6]. A boycott's success hinges on consumer preferences, the availability of alternatives, and the extent of public support [7].

Despite the prevalence of boycott campaigns in Malaysia, particularly against multinational corporations, scholarly debate has often remained polarized, either emphasizing their symbolic solidarity with oppressed communities or critiquing their economic repercussions, while little attention has been given to a balanced evaluation that integrates fiqh principles with Malaysia's socio-economic realities. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by critically assessing the rationale of boycotting McDonald's in Malaysia through historical, economic, and jurisprudential perspectives, evaluating whether such calls align with Islamic principles such as *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and *tabayyun*, and analyzing their broader socio-economic implications for the Muslim community. The significance of this research lies in providing clarity for policymakers, religious scholars, and Muslim consumers, ensuring that solidarity with global Muslim causes is pursued in ways that remain consistent with Islamic jurisprudence while safeguarding local welfare and economic stability.

2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze the boycott of McDonald's in Malaysia through the lens of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). The methodology integrates a review of historical, theological, and socio-economic literature, focusing on key Islamic principles such as Maqasid al-Shariah (protection of life, wealth, and religion) and tabayyun (verification based on clear evidence) [8]. Fatwas and scholarly opinions, including those from Yusuf al-Qaradawi and the Malaysian Mufti's Council, further inform the ethical evaluation of boycotts [9,10].

McDonald's Malaysia is used as a case study to contextualize these principles. The franchise, owned locally by the Reza Group, adheres to halal standards certified by JAKIM and contributes significantly to the economy through employment and zakat payments [5]. The study highlights the

lack of credible evidence linking McDonald's Malaysia to actions supporting Israel, emphasizing the importance of informed and balanced decision-making.

By combining theological analysis and socio-economic evaluation, this methodology ensures a nuanced and evidence-based assessment, aligning with Shari'ah principles to prioritize public benefit while minimizing harm.

3. Results

3.1 Boycott

Boycotting movements were born 19th century in Ireland, this word came from figure of Cunningham Boycott, who is a right hand of the landlord which was dislike by the farmers. Around September 1880, the farmers decided to make labour strike action because of arbitrariness land that was unfair for them. However, Boycott and his family had to survive on their own, from tending to their cattle to cultivating their fields. That time even many sellers also rejected transaction from Boycott's family, this action also followed by post officer [1]. This movement also written on Times newspaper that catch how dreadful picture of victory of anarchy that begs to be recognized as a civilized act and received legal protection. James Redpath, the captain of boycott movement, think that this movement should be named for strengthen political effect and a priest, John O'Malley, suggested to call this movement Boycott. Three days after this declaration of social and economic ostracism, the term "boycott" was coined by O'Malley [2].

Since that time, many boycotts movements have started their actions, one of them is boycott of Israel by Arab League in 1945. Arab claimed that this movement does not operate on a religious basis, they insist that boycott is directed against Israel, not the Jews, Jewish companies outside Israel still received same treatment as non-Jews. in 1951, Arab Boycott Office (ABO) is established in Damascus. ABO has developed a system of questionnaires and certifications to ensure compliance with the boycott that form in three basic documents:

1. The affidavit must reveal that the firm's business does not constitute a breach of the boycott regulations
2. Certify that the good being shipped to Arab countries were not made in Israel or by a blacklisted company
3. Answer a set of questionnaires that sent to firms suspected of violating the boycott regulations, If the firm can prove that they did not have any relations, then the matter is dropped and if it fails to reply to the questionnaire within 6 weeks, it may be blacklisted.

Based on its operations, ABO and majority of scholars do agree that boycott works on four levels: First, primary level, means ABO banned all trade between Arab countries and Israel. Second, foreign companies were pressured and forced to end the deal with Israel when they declared their Independence Day. Next, tertiary boycott, companies that deal or trade with firms on the blacklist were prohibited and borrowers were pressured into excluding blacklisted banks and other financing institution with alleged Israel connections. Lastly, voluntary boycott, some American companies think they should boycott Israel in order to safeguard their positions [11].

After its 20 years and the next decade, U.S. legislation was not concern of boycott until in 1977, it became controversial issue chiefly in the United States as seen when this action became subject of but one amendment to a U.S. law in that time [12]. In 1979 U.S. make Export Administration Act, this law prohibits U.S. persons or companies to take actions or support this movement [13], U.S also make some movement to defend Israel, such as Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act

In 1994, some countries like Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain declared to withdraw secondary and tertiary boycott and only performs primary boycott actions, this happened because of action of some Arab countries that withdraw boycott actions [4]. The inconsistency of the boycotting action shows that there is no cooperation and differences behalf among Muslim's countries.

Based on Friedman's literature, boycotting divided into two categories. The first, through a wide lens, considering their historical, geopolitical, and economic aspects and more focus on economic action. Arab economic boycott of Israel can be the illustration of this approach. The second perspective, often emerging from fields like market research and cultural studies, scrutinizes boycotts from a narrower, cultural standpoint. It highlights the importance of comprehending boycotts as reflections of individuality, taste, ideology, or opposition to globalization, perceived as cultural domination [6]. This action can be mentioned successful if people as a consumers preference for the boycotted product and easily can access the substitutes goods and what extent these people are sensitive to this move [7].

3.2 Boycott from Shari'ah Perspective

In the early Meccan period, the Quraysh initiated a boycott against Prophet Muhammad and his family (Banu Hashim) to pressure them into abandoning Islam. The leaders of the Quraysh resolved to impose a comprehensive economic and social boycott against both Banu Hashim and Banu Muttalib. A formalized agreement was drafted and displayed within the Ka'bah (the revered site in Mecca) to give legitimacy upon it. The terms included; No commercial transactions or business engagements with Banu Hashim or Banu Muttalib, No matrimonial alliances or social interactions with individuals from the clans and No individual was permitted to communicate or engage with them in any manner [3].

After a span of three years, certain members of the Quraysh began to express discomfort regarding the inhuman treatment of their relatives. A select group of prominent figures, such as Zuhair ibn Abi Umayyah and Mut'im ibn Adi, collaborated to oppose the agreement. They contended that such inhumanity towards their own kin was inequitable and contradicted their ethical principles [14].

Tradition narrates that a celestial sign manifested during this period: The Prophet Muhammad informed to his uncle, Abu Talib, that termites had consumed the entirety of the agreement, leaving merely the phrase "In the name of Allah." Upon the Quraysh's examination, they discovered the document obliterated as Muhammad had prognosticated [15]. This extraordinary occurrence further undermined their determination.

In contemporary discourse, the Shari'ah possesses its own interpretation and stance regarding boycotts. Fundamentally, boycotting is permissible within the framework of Islam. This permissibility is rooted in its alignment with the concept of Jihad in Islam. Jihad encompasses a broad spectrum of meanings to be comprehended. The fundamental term Jihad, derived from Jahada, signifies the undertaking of hard and difficult. From this perspective, we can understand Jihad as a way of doing something seriously with a lot of effort to fulfill some ambition or to gain something for yourself It can be either by doing or avoiding by a lot of ways to get our ambition to be filled. And, for the definition of Jihad it can be understand as a way of to defend, protect and raise the Shari'ah in the world by fighting to defend Islam, control our nafs, to strive for the benefit of Ummah, to struggle for raising our knowledge, to defend our nation and anything which is related to raise Islam by doing something which is align with the Shariah.

There are a lot of phrases in Al-Quran describing about Jihad. As example, in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 218,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Meaning: *"Surely those who have believed, emigrated, and struggled in the Way of Allah, they can hope for Allah's mercy. And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful."*

Tafsir Tazkirul Quran elaborate this Ayah as when the Muslim is being forced to leave their homes, they sometimes have to take arms in self-defence. There is a two-sided process which is separated the people of God (Muslim) and the enemies of God (Kuffar and Musyrikin). When the Muslim is being oppress by the non-Muslim, the Jihad become an opportunity for the Muslim to show the strength of their faith and continuing trust in God. And Allah SWT tell, He is the Most Forgive and the Most Loving to show His love for those who are doing Jihad.

Next, in Surah Ali Imran Ayah 142, Allah SWT also said about those Muslim who already has a wishful thinking to enter the heaven but didn't put a good effort to have the Jannah,

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ

Meaning: *"Do you think you will enter Paradise without Allah proving which of you 'truly' struggled 'for His cause' and patiently endured?"*

The Tafsir Maarif Al-Quran describe this Ayah as in this mortal world, there are the days of hardship, pain and suffering. At the same time, there are also days where ease, comfort and peace. The change for hard and ease are happened among people by turns. For some reason, false-motivated power such as wealth, rank and praise will be loosed and end up with defeat and stress. On the other hand, those who are motivated by truth which is considered as Iman, Tauhid and Jannah should not lose their heart to think about the short-term success. In the end, the group which is motivated by truth shall emerge the ultimate victory. Hence, it is referring to the Muslim back. They must not lose their motivation and must maintain their struggle to have the real success which is to enter the heaven.

One of part from Jihad is via economy and wealth. Because it is aligned with the general meaning of Jihad which is striving to protect Islam, Shariah and to raise the Command from Allah SWT. The main reason of applying Jihad via economy is to defend the Muslim rights from being oppress of the others. One of the verse from Quran which is describing about the jihad through wealth and economy can be seen in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 15,

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ

Meaning: *The 'true' believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger — never doubting — and strive with their wealth and their lives in the cause of Allah. It is those who are the truthful.*

Imam Al-Maraghi said in his book Tafsir Al-Maraghi for defining this Ayah, he said one of the signage of a true believers to Allah SWT is the person chose to sacrifice his wealth and himself for the sake of Allah SWT. The person will expense and give his money and wealth for protecting and defending his religious (Islam) and to fight the enemies. The person also ready to sacrifice even his own life as long as the honor of Islam will be protected. Therefore, boycott as a way of Jihad in an economic is a justified idea and approve in Shariah prespective.

Several scholars have voiced their position on this matter, including Yusuf al-Qadarawi. He emphasized that economic pressure is a legitimate tool for political and ethical resistance, urging Muslims globally to participate in such boycotts as part of their religious duty to support the Palestinian cause. [16]. Another prominent scholar, Sheikh Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir Al Sa'di stated that boycotting enemies through commerce, business, and trade is a major pillar among the pillars of Jihad and has tremendous benefits [17]. Similarly, Sheikh Muhammad Tantawi, former grand imam of Al-Azhar in Egypt, encouraged peaceful methods of resistance, including boycotting Israeli goods, as part of the ethical responsibility of Muslims to support justice and oppose oppression. He often cited the Quranic injunction to support the oppressed and abstain from aiding aggressors. Tantawi also advocated for state-level decisions to ensure boycotts were systematic and impactful, rather than ad hoc or uncoordinated [18].

In Pakistan, Mufti Taqi Usmani, supports the idea of boycotting products associated with entities causing harm to Muslims or others, viewing this as a form of ethical responsibility. He encourages Muslims to adopt such measures as part of their personal and collective duty to stand for justice [19].

In Indonesia, Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has taken a significant step in addressing the ongoing conflict in Palestine by issuing Fatwa Number 83 of 2023. This fatwa outlines the Islamic legal perspective on supporting the Palestinian struggle [20]. According to Professor Sudarnoto, a key figure in MUI, this fatwa emphasizes fundamental principles rather than prescribing specific actions or directives. One of the notable aspects of the fatwa is its approach to the issue of boycotting products linked to Israel. Professor Sudarnoto clarified that MUI has not published a list of products to be boycotted for their alleged support of Israel. Instead, the fatwa focuses on encouraging individuals and communities to align their actions with Islamic ethical principles. MUI's position is to provide a moral and religious framework, empowering individuals and organizations to make informed decisions. Professor Sudarnoto further highlighted the importance of research in identifying products that may or may not support Israel. He urged all stakeholders, including academic institutions and the broader public, to conduct thorough investigations into the affiliations and implications of the products they consume. By promoting a culture of informed consumerism, MUI seeks to foster a sense of responsibility and solidarity with the Palestinian cause .

Meanwhile in Malaysia, through an official statement on their website, the Office of the Mufti of the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur emphasized that the implementation of economic boycotts must be considered within the context of the situation. Boycotting can sometimes become obligatory, particularly when the targeted products or companies are directly supporting actions that harm or kill Muslims. As an act of solidarity with the oppressed in Palestine, Muslims are encouraged to unite and demonstrate their protest against the atrocities committed against the Palestinian people [10].

The Mufti's office also advised the public to engage in boycotts with knowledge and good conduct, warning against acting impulsively or without proper consideration, which could lead to

unintended harm. Boycotting must be carried out responsibly to ensure it does not result in greater damage or counterproductive consequences.

Economic boycott strategies, therefore, require careful planning and wisdom. They must take into account broader considerations of *maslahah* (public benefit) to avoid causing harm that outweighs the intended benefits. Sheikh Izz al-Din ibn Abd al-Salam, a prominent Islamic scholar, elaborated on this in his writings, explaining that there are certain situations where even minimal involvement in wrongdoing might be permissible if it prevents greater harm or achieves a higher moral objective [21].

قد يجوز الإعانة على المعصية لا لكونها معصية بل لكونها وسيلة إلى تحصيل المصلحة الراجحة وكذلك إذا حصل بالإعانة مصلحة تربو على مصلحة تفويت المفسدة

Meaning: *"Sometimes it is obligatory to help in a sin not because of its sin, but because it may lead to a greater benefit, as well as if the help brings a greater benefit than avoiding mafsadah.."*

This balanced and ethical approach to boycotting not only reflects the principles of Islamic jurisprudence but also ensures that the act of protest aligns with the values of wisdom, justice, and unity within the Muslim community [10].

Islamic principles guiding boycotts emphasize justice, harm prevention, and collective benefit. They require careful consideration of evidence, objectives, and potential consequences to ensure that the action aligns with Shariah and achieves its intended goals without causing undue harm. Therefore, understanding the key principles that guide boycotts is essential. The Mufti's of Wilayah Persekutuan advised the public to engage in boycotts with knowledge and good conduct, warning against acting impulsively or without proper consideration, which could lead to unintended harm. Boycotting must be carried out responsibly to ensure it does not result in greater damage or counterproductive consequences.

First, alignment with Maqasid al-Shariah. Boycotts should fulfill at least one of the five essential objectives of Shariah, which serve as the foundation of Islamic ethics and law [8]. These objectives include the protection of life, wealth, and religion: Firstly, the protection of life (*hifz al-nafs*) underscores the importance of reducing harm to Muslims and other oppressed communities. Boycotts can act as a means to undermine systems or entities perpetuating violence, as seen in conflicts affecting civilian populations. Secondly, the protection of wealth (*hifz al-mal*) ensures the preservation of Muslim resources. By avoiding financial transactions with oppressive entities, Muslims prevent their wealth from indirectly funding unethical practices. This aligns with Islamic values of economic justice. Lastly, the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*) involves upholding the sanctity and dignity of Islam. Boycotts targeting businesses or entities engaged in actions contrary to Islamic principles reinforce the integrity of the faith community [9].

Second, The principle of *tabayyun* (verification) in Islamic jurisprudence mandates that claims against a targeted entity must be substantiated with clear evidence. Decisions must rely on *burhan* (evidence) rather than speculation or rumour to ensure fairness and justice [6]. Boycotts should not result in unintended consequences that outweigh their intended benefits. For instance, boycotts must not cause economic instability within Muslim communities, particularly if jobs and livelihoods are at stake, lead to the loss of essential services, such as halal-certified products or critical economic resources, and damage the reputation of Islam if the boycott is perceived as unjust or based on insufficient evidence.

3.3 Boycott in Malaysia

Some studies have identified boycotting decision among consumers, which influenced by personal factors of the boycott operation and organization [22]. In Malaysia, boycott's calling are far from something new, in 1981, Mahathir, Malaysia's Prime Minister had launched call to boycott British products that called Buy British Last Policy and sustained until 1983, since this the Malaysian society has experienced significant shifts in both economic and social realms, fundamentally altering the national landscape concerning the comprehension and implementation of boycotting [23]. Today, Malay community represents the largest and rapidly expanding segment of the middle class in Malaysia, attracting attention from both commercial enterprises and ongoing discussions about the interpretation and significance of Islam.

A study conducted by Practices *et al.*, [24] shown that Malaysian customer's susceptibility is influenced by many factors, such as interpersonal influence and boycott antecedents like animosity and egregiousness of customers, which believed that it can affect their willingness to boycotting of USA products and companies. These boycotting calls happen because of several reasons. A fatwa issued by the Rabitah of Palestinian scholars asserts that it is both a national and religious obligation to engage in any lawful means necessary to combat the enemy, including boycotting Israeli products and their allies, particularly those led by the United States. They emphasize that any purchase made will directly contribute to the ammunition used against the Palestinian.

Some Muslim scholars, like Omar Suleiman for example, calls for a global boycott of goods that support Israel, He emphasizes the significance of collective actions, even in everyday decisions, in holding accountable those responsible for the continued challenges endured by the people of Gaza [25]. Dr. Husin Shahatah, a professor at the University of Azhar, underscores that this boycott holds the status of a religious obligation, mandated as an act of obedience to Allah and His Messenger. He emphasizes that such a directive has been endorsed by scholars. Based on Pratama [26], Dr. Yusuf al-Qardhawi states that Muslims are needed to fight using all available means, whether through authority, verbal expression, conviction, or even via boycott. He emphasizes the importance of employing any method that can weaken the enemy and bring them under control. Dr. al-Qardhawi insists that every Muslim bears the responsibility to contribute to this effort to the best of their ability and must not provide aid or support to the enemy, whether they be Jews, nationalists, or others.

Meanwhile a minority of scholars based in Saudi Arabia argue that boycotts should only be implemented under governmental decree, the prevailing view among the majority of scholars is supportive of boycotts as a legitimate means of addressing terrorism in Israel. However, in terms of action, it is crucial to undertake the boycott in a manner that accounts for the socio-economic view and the actual capabilities of Muslims locally. This article will emphasize the importance of considering the socioeconomic factors of Muslims in Malaysia. These considerations are guided by the principles of Fiqh, or the comprehension of the concept of 'grounding law,' with the overarching priority being the attainment of comprehensive benefits.

3.4 Introduction to McDonalds and their Contribution to Malaysia's Economy

McDonald's Malaysia opened its first outlet in downtown Kuala Lumpur in 1982 and established the Ronald McDonald Malaysia Welfare Association (RMHHC) eight years later. Currently, McDonald's Malaysia is fully owned by the Reza Group company from Saudi Arabia and a local business partner, under a franchise system known as the "Developmental License". Under this system, McDonald's Malaysia is given full rights and responsibilities to manage, operate, and develop the McDonald's restaurant chain business throughout the country. In addition to McDonald's

Malaysia, the Reza Group also owns McDonald's restaurant chains in the western and southern regions of Saudi Arabia as well as throughout Singapore, under the management led by Abdulrahman Alireza. He has experience managing over 100 McDonald's restaurants in Saudi Arabia, including those located in the cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jeddah.

Up to this point, McDonald's Malaysia has 320 outlets with 14,000 employees. Based on their reports at McDonald's Malaysia website, they provide various job opportunities for young people to develop their potential and build a career in the food service industry, such as the McDonald's Vocational Internship Program or the National Dual Training Scheme, McDonald's Management Trainee Program, and Bachelor of Business Management Program with UTM (Universiti Teknologi Malaysia). Additionally, since 2017, McDonald's Malaysia has contributed over RM4.9 million to state Zakat authorities for distribution to those in need. McDonald's Malaysia is also active in social activities such as Community Contributions, Teacher Programs (McDonald's Inspiration Teacher, Teacher Motivation Seminar, and Teacher's Day celebrations), and McDonald's Community Month.

Since 2016, Lionhorn Company from Saudi Arabia's ownership has made McDonald's Malaysia a company fully owned by Muslims. McDonald's is among the first fast food restaurant chains in Malaysia to receive Halal certification from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) in the early 1990s. All food and beverages served by McDonald's Malaysia are guaranteed 100% Halal by JAKIM and other Halal certification bodies approved by JAKIM. The Internal Halal Authority of McDonald's Malaysia always ensures that all Halal standards are complied with. They consist of the company's Board of Directors and key departments such as Supply Chain, Quality Assurance, Operations, Human Resources, and Marketing.

3.5 Boycott to McDonald's Malaysia from a Fiqh Perspective

The call for a boycott of goods or services produced by a country like Israel is aim to put pressure on their business and trader. They will urge their governments to peace and stop cruel actions to other countries just like the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Even, the action can have a bad effect on their country's economy. This matter is one of the efforts that Muslims can make to help other Muslim brothers who are oppressed. This action is aligned with Hadith narrated from Abdullah Ibn Umar RA that the Prophet PBUH said that,

المُسْلِمُ أَخُو الْمُسْلِمِ، لَا يَظْلِمُهُ وَلَا يُسْلِمُهُ

Meaning: "A Muslim to another Muslims are brothers, he will not leave their brother be hurt and be done by something cruel."

Therefore, the purpose of boycott Israel's products is to stop the cruel action from their government. But at the same time, we need to look and justified our action especially for the McDonald's product as the main company for this study.

McDonald's is one of the food franchises in Malaysia. Franchising is one of the marketing and distribution method based on the relationship between two parties. The party are the franchisor (owner and grantor of rights) and the franchisee (recipient of rights). For the McDonald's case, the franchisor is the original McDonald's which is in United State America (USA) while the franchisee in Malaysia is owned by the Reza Group. McDonald's is one of the franchise companies that often alleged to contribute economically to Israel. However, McDonald's has made a clear statement that they do not contribute and support the country that committed the atrocities, genocides, and crime. Even, the profits have never been channeled to support the country. Therefore, it should be taken

seriously that the target of the boycott should be accurate and influence the enemy instead of harming the wrong parties.

McDonald's has made a clear statement which is taking the Fatwa from Mufti Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, which is said, the call for 'Mandatory boycott' is only valid if there is any ordered by the umara' or national government. In this context, Malaysian national leaders and any Islamic authority in Malaysia have never issued any order to boycott McDonald's Malaysia. Therefore, any call for a mandatory boycott of McDonald's is wrong from an Islamic perspective and just a false decision made by irresponsible parties. This is the first reason why we should not boycott McDonald's Malaysia.

The second reason why should not boycott McDonald's Malaysia because there is no evidence can show McDonald's in Malaysia are really related to Israel. In Islamic Jurisprudence, there is a methodology state about a clear and confidence fact cannot be reduced by doubt and suspicion. It can be understood as

الْيَقِينُ لَا يُزَالُ بِالشَّكِّ

Confidence means A knowledge that does not have any doubts. While from a term point of view confidence can be understand as the result of absolute certainty, whether something happens or does not happen. This level of confidence can be understood as the absolute truth and be supported by a clear evident. On the other hand, doubt and suspicion can be understand as a state of condition to describe either an act is happened or not. A clear evident cannot be given to support the statement. In this situation, a doubt fact has no evidence to be lay on for making the statement more credible to be trusted.

For the boycotting McDonald's situation, the confidence fact that we have is a clear statement from McDonald's Holding which is not involve in any activities or giving any fund for supporting genocide activities for any countries or any parties. They have state clearly which is their main business is to provide food and beverages and become a player in the food and halal industries. Just like what they are doing right now in the market of Malaysia even in the other countries. At the same time, if we look in the annual report from McDonald's for 2023 on their website, there is no share of money be used for funding war and criminal activities from McDonald's. The income and the expenses are clear. They are just focus on doing their own business and there is no sign showing any contribution from McDonald's supporting any political parties. In addition, Penang Mufti Datuk Seri Dr. Wan Salim Wan Mohd Noor has advised the public in Malaysia against boycotting McDonald's Malaysia. He emphasized that the company's management has provided a valid explanation, clarifying that they do not contribute in any form to Israel [27].

The third reason why we should not boycott McDonald's are because the rumors about McDonald's giving support to the Israel's government are not clear fact. There is no evidence showing the flow of money funding the Israel for doing genocide criminal from McDonald's. Some said McDonald's need to pay royalty to the main McDonald's in the United State America. The fact is true. However, there are no evidence showing the royalty money be paid off are really going for support the Israel's government criminal activities. This is called a doubt fact. It could not become a real knowledge or something to be trusted as the statement are not credible. Moreover, McDonald's Malaysia has also publicly contributed RM1 million to Palestinian humanitarian efforts. From a fiqh perspective, this contribution reflects maslahah (public benefit), as it directly supports an oppressed community. Conversely, calls to boycott McDonald's Malaysia, despite this act of solidarity, risk producing mafsadah (harm), particularly by reducing zakat contributions, creating job insecurity for Muslim employees, and weakening halal-certified industry players. The principle of al-yaqīn lā yuzāl bi al-shakk (certainty cannot be overruled by doubt) further reinforces that decisions must rest on

verified evidence rather than assumptions. Thus, while boycotts may serve as a form of economic jihad, misdirected actions without clear proof risk undermining maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, particularly the protection of wealth (ḥifẓ al-māl) and community welfare. This suggests that policy-level fatwas should carefully weigh the balance between solidarity with Palestine and the unintended socio-economic harms inflicted on local Muslims. This way of refusing the unclear statement and focusing on clear facts aligns with the verse in Al-Quran Al-Karim. As found in Surah Yunus verse 36,

وَمَا يَتَّبِعْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ

Meaning: *"Most of them follow nothing but 'inherited' assumptions. 'And' surely assumptions can in no way replace the truth. Allah is indeed All-Knowing of what they do."*

Imam Al-Tabari in his interpretation about this verse said, verily doubt does not give the slightest value to confidence. And even the slightest doubt does not replace the position of confidence and does not give any benefit because something is intended for confidence. Therefore, an assumption about McDonald's supporting Israel is not a justified facts and it also did not support by a clear evident.

Last but not least, the methodology in Islamic Jurisprudence discussing about leave something unclear and take something clear among you can be related to a hadith by Prophet Muhammad PBUH said,

دع ما يريبك إلى ما لا يريب

Meaning: *"Leave something you unsure and go for something which is you are sure."*

The uncertain part concerns the allegation that McDonald's supports Israel. But, for the fact and sure part is McDonald's make a statement did not support Israel. Plus, the clear effect from boycott to McDonald's give a big significant problem especially to Muslim.

A lot of people will lose their job in McDonald's as they did not have income to pay the salary. McDonald's is one of the companies contribute to zakat for cooperate sector. They can't give a good amount of money for zakat as did not generate a good revenue as the cause from boycott. Hence, those who are Asnaf did not have benefit and could not support people even for the Muslim itself. Plus, McDonald's is one of the companies which is really give a good commitment in the Halal regulation in Malaysia. The rumors McDonald's supporting Israel will make a bad reputation to one of good company and will be given a bad reputation to Malaysia Government that be seen as not serious in the term of Halal Regulation. Thus, boycott McDonald's is a movement which is not stand by a clear fact and did not back by a justified study.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of McDonald's Malaysia from a fiqh perspective underscores the necessity of balanced and evidence-based decision-making in addressing economic boycotts. While the call to boycott McDonald's arises from a sincere desire to support oppressed communities, particularly in Palestine, such actions must remain consistent with Islamic jurisprudential principles, including *tabayyun* (verification), *maslahah* (public benefit), and the avoidance of unjust harm.

This study finds no verified or credible evidence linking McDonald's Malaysia to support for Israel's activities. On the contrary, the franchise is locally owned, fully compliant with JAKIM halal certification, and contributes substantially to Malaysia's economy through employment, zakat distribution, and community welfare programs. A boycott against McDonald's Malaysia, therefore, risks unintended consequences, such as economic hardship for Muslim workers and reduced charitable contributions that directly benefit marginalized groups, contradicting the objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

From the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, decisions must be guided by certainty rather than doubt (*al-yaqīn lā yuzāl bi al-shakk*). Rumors or assumptions cannot override clear evidence, especially when such actions may cause greater harm to the Muslim community. Malaysian fatwas further emphasize that mandatory boycotts require state-level directives to ensure consistency, systematic enforcement, and alignment with the broader principles of Shari'ah.

The originality of this study lies in its integration of fiqh analysis with Malaysia's socio-economic context, an aspect often overlooked in prior discussions. By situating classical jurisprudential principles within contemporary realities, this paper demonstrates that boycotts must not only be religiously permissible but also socially and economically responsible. Moving forward, policymakers, scholars, and community leaders should adopt a more informed and united approach, ensuring that solidarity with Palestine is expressed in ways that uphold Islamic values while safeguarding the welfare of local Muslim communities.

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