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## Representation of International Criticism of the Middle East Conflict in Arab Cartoons on Instagram

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### *Abstract*

*The international community's contribution to the conflict in the Middle East did not provide a solution but rather exacerbated the conflict. This gave birth to various criticisms from various parties, both in the form of oral, written, and image. Using a qualitative descriptive method, this research analyzes five caricatures by @rahma\_toons and @hajjaj\_cartoons. The theory used in this research is Charles Sanders Peirce's perspective semiotic theory. This research aims to analyze the various elements of icons, indexes, and symbols in the five caricatures uploaded by @rahma\_toons and @hajjaj\_cartoons. In addition, this study also aims to explain the various icons, indexes, and symbols as a representation of criticism of the conflict that occurred in the Middle East. The results show that the 5 caricatures represent various criticisms. The first criticism is aimed at the UN and Arab countries that only provide symbolic support. The second criticism is aimed at the United States' partiality towards Israel and further aggravating the conflict. The third criticism is aimed at Israel's attack on UNIFIL which shows a violation of international law.*

**Keywords:** Representation, criticism, caricature, Middle East conflict, international

### **Abstrak**

Kontribusi dunia internasional terhadap konflik di Timur Tengah tidak memberikan jalan keluar, namun justru memperburuk konflik yang terjadi. Hal ini dapat melahirkan berbagai kritikan dari berbagai pihak, baik berupa lisan, tulisan, maupun gambar. Penelitian ini menganalisis lima karikatur karya @rahma\_toons dan @hajjaj\_cartoons menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah teori semiotika perspektif Charles Sanders Peirce. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis berbagai unsur ikon, indeks dan simbol pada lima karikatur unggahan @rahma\_toons dan @hajjaj\_cartoons. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga bertujuan untuk menjelaskan berbagai ikon, indeks dan simbol sebagai representasi kritik atas konflik yang terjadi di Timur Tengah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 5 karikatur tersebut merepresentasikan berbagai kritik. Kritik pertama adalah ditujukan kepada PBB dan negara-negara Arab yang hanya memberikan dukungan simbolis. Kritik kedua ditujukan kepada keberpihakan Amerika Serikat terhadap Israel dan semakin memperkeruh konflik. Kritik ketiga ditujukan kepada serangan Israel terhadap UNIFIL yang menunjukkan pelanggaran hukum internasional.

**Kata Kunci:** Representasi, kritik, karikatur, konflik Timur Tengah, internasional

## Introduction

The Middle East conflict has never found an endpoint, especially the conflict between Palestine and Israel. It is the most complex and multi-faceted conflict in modern history. The conflict, which was initially caused by a territorial dispute and then spread to religious, political, and humanitarian aspects, has captured the international community's attention. Various countries and international organizations, such as the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and Middle Eastern countries have played a role in this conflict (Mayangsari, 2023). The UN plays a role in this conflict because the main purpose of the international organization is to protect humanity from the threat of war (Islamiyah, 2016).

However, the obstacles faced by the UN Council made it unable to fully resolve the war between the two countries. One of the obstacles experienced by the UN is the involvement of the United States in promoting the Veto over the settlement of the Palestinian people. The United States favors Israel so the US always supports Israel in its efforts to maintain its sovereignty over Palestine (Mayangsari, 2023).

With this, Palestinian supporters are constantly criticizing the expose of alleged Israeli crimes. One of them is to strengthen the boycott movement against products that support Israel to suppress the Israeli economic sector because Israel is very dependent on free trade at the international level (Jelita & Akhirul, 2024). More interestingly, criticism of Israel is conveyed through various online media platforms, with Instagram playing an important role in spreading the message and mobilizing global public opinion. The strategy aims to create strong international pressure on Israel to hold Israel accountable for its actions, as shown in caricatures on @rahma\_toons and @hajjaj\_cartoons Instagram posts.

Caricatures are visual manifestations that are created to convey certain messages (Aritonang, 2023). In today's all-digital era, kaikatur is developing as a means of criticism of social events that occur. A good caricature is a caricature that can combine elements of intelligence, sharpness, and expressiveness of cartoon images in response to the phenomenon of problems that occur in society (Heru Dwi Waluyanto, 2000). Caricatures with usernames @rahmatoons and @hajjaj-cartoon are caricaturists who actively upload their works through Instagram. His caricature has a strong character in conveying criticism that focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Sharp criticism of the caricatures they created often sparked debate and various controversial harvests. In particular, their work depicting Israeli attacks on Palestinians is based on the reality of events, presenting a critical message to Israeli military action in the region.

From the description above, this study utilizes Charles Sanders Peirce's perspective semiotic theory to describe the meaning of each caricature element that the two caricaturists carry out. Semiotics is the study of signs related to human life and how they are used to interpret a sign. Semiotics is the study of signs related to human life and how they are used to interpret a sign (N. R. Sari et al., 2022). This study involves analyzing how signs, whether in the form of written words, images, gestures, or other symbols, are used in various contexts to communicate specific ideas, concepts, or meanings. Semiotics is a systematic study of the production and interpretation of signs, how they work, and what are their benefits to human life (Ratna, 2022). Semiotics is the study of signs that refer to other things and cover various aspects of human life, such as words, gestures, traffic lights, flags, songs, gestures, and so on (Setiawan, 2019). Therefore, interpretation is needed to understand its meaning.

Peirce explained that semiotics is the science or study of signs and everything related to signs (Mahendra & Ali, 2023). According to Hoed in (Alifatul Qolbi Mu'arrof, 2022) Peirce stated that signs are not structures, but signs are a process of meaning that is carried out in three stages. Signs are always in a triadic relationship: representation, object, and interpretant. This theory shows that semiotics presents three main interrelated elements. Representation is an element that represents something according to Peirce (in Mahendra & Ali, 2023).

This representation acts as a term that mentions an object and functions as a sign. The clarity of something will not be present without the presence of something else called a sign. The very conventional relationship between the marker and the sign allows the birth of various meanings that open up various interpretations. Everything that is stated by the sign and everything that it refers to is called an object. An object can also be interpreted as something represented by a sign (Noth, 1990). Without signs, objects are impossible to understand. Likewise, without an object, a sign cannot be a representative of something. An Interpretant is an interpretation or product resulting from a sign and what is expressed by a sign (object) (Pateda, 1987). Interpretants can also be interpreted as the result of a person's interpretation after seeing the representation.

In this caricature identification research, the author focuses on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics which focuses on objects (Sobur, 2017). Peirce explained that an object can be analyzed based on icons, indexes, and symbols. Icons are signs that have a direct natural connection between the marker and the sign. This means that the object and the sign that represents it have similarities in their original embodiment. An index is a sign with a natural relationship between signs and causal signs. While a symbol is a sign that has a direct natural relationship between the sign and its sign but is conventional (Sobur, 2017).

Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics are often used as a research analysis knife to identify various signs and reveal their meaning. As is the research case (Tania et al., 2022) who uses Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, produces a caricature implying that the President of Indonesia betrayed himself and his citizens, his promise to strengthen the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) is just an empty promise. Later in another study with different objects using Charles Sanders Peirce's theory it was found that cartoons Fawwaz wa Nurah successfully conveyed the values of moral education to children through visuals and dialogues that teach values such as hard work, responsibility, seriousness, honesty, integrity and steadfastness of principles (Daughter, 2024). In another study with the same theory, it was found that the visual of the film *Penyacopying Cahaya* is related to the moral message about the relationship between humans and themselves or the relationship between humans and other humans in the social sphere (Kartini et al., 2022).

As for previous studies that examined caricatures @gejayanmemanggil, it was found that the caricatures criticized President Joko Widodo and his palace circle including his ministers as opposing parties, anti-criticism, and silencing freedom of expression (Aritonang, 2023). In another study with the same object as the theory of conflict and social action, it was found that the caricature of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH is related to *Islamophobia is a discriminatory attitude carried out by some French people towards Muslim immigrants* (F. R. Firdaus & Supriyono, 2022).

This study uses Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to understand the purpose of the caricature in criticizing the role of Arab countries and other superpowers in dealing with the conflict that occurred between Palestine and Israel, and the conflict that occurred between Israel and Iran. Unlike previous research that discussed more domestic political cases, this research focuses on providing an understanding of international conflicts that occur through caricatures.

Therefore, the study aims to analyze various icons, indices, and symbols elements in five caricatures of @rahma\_toons and @hajjaj\_cartoons uploads. This research also aims to explain various icons, indices, and symbols as a representation of criticism of conflicts in the Middle East.

### Method

In this study, the author uses a qualitative research method with a semiotic Charles Sanders Peirce approach, focusing on the signs contained in the caricature. This research uncovers the deep meaning behind the sign, and the relationship of a sign, and creates the meaning as a whole. Semiotics was chosen because it allows us to explore deeper meanings from the signs contained in the caricature, especially in the context of the Palestinian issue. Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach will be used to analyze the signs, focusing on objects. Object is a reference to a sign or a

thing that is subject to an act or noun. Pierce divides objects into three categories: icons, symbols, and indices (Tania et al., 2022).

According to Peirce, an analysis of signs refers to the statement that each sign is determined by its object when we call the sign of an icon. Second, it becomes a reality and its existence is related to individual objects, which we call an index. Third, there is a definite presumption that it is interpreted as a denotative object as a result of a custom when we call the sign a symbol (Sobur, 2001).

The data in this study are five caricatures uploaded by Instagram accounts @rahma\_toons and @hajjaj\_cartoons. The caricature chosen is a caricature with elements that show the form of contribution of international parties, either in the form of organizations or other countries to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This study uses two data sets, primary and secondary. Primary data is data obtained directly from the data source, where the data is recorded and observed for the first time. The primary data in this study is in the form of caricatures on Instagram accounts @rahma\_toons and @hajjaj\_cartoons. Meanwhile, secondary data is supporting data as a reinforcement of primary data, where the data is obtained by authors from literature books, scientific journals, and various news that provide supporting information related to this research. In data collection, the record download technique is used. The author thoroughly searched @rahma\_toons and @hajjaj\_cartoons Instagram accounts to find caricatures that met the selection criteria, downloaded the selected caricatures in image format, and recorded information related to the downloaded caricatures.

The data that has been collected is then analyzed to identify and decipher the meaning of a sign contained in the caricature. The data analysis model used by the authors in this study is a model developed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The first is data reduction by the focus of the research problem. The researcher identifies relevant caricatures from the predetermined Instagram account at this stage. The second is data presentation, which aims to facilitate the proper interpretation of data. The data were organized and grouped based on the focus of the research through, (1) icons: (2) symbols; and (3) index. At this stage, all the results of the analysis are presented in detail. The last step is to draw conclusions, which are carried out based on data analysis and interpretation according to the focus of the research.

## Result and Discussion

By identifying various elements contained in the five caricatures of the account uploaded by @rahma\_toons and @hajjaj\_cartoons on Instagram, the author found several icons, indices, and symbols representing the conditions of the conflict in Palestine. The results of the research on icons, indices, and symbols of the five caricatures identified are as follows:



Figure 1. Instagram @rahma\_toons September 16, 2024

Theory	Element	Information
Icon	Old woman and boy	Representation of Middle Eastern society
	Stove stoves with the letters U and N	Stands for United Nation
Index	Boy's grim expression	The boy's gloomy expression is a form of waiting for help from the United Nations
	the fall of olive leaves on the UN logo into the pot because women picked them	Lack of UN aid and support for the Palestinian state
	Blue-to-green color change on olive twigs in UN logo	The change explains that the aid and support provided by the UN to Palestine is not real, but only symbolic.
Symbol	UN Logo	UN involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
	فلسطين تفوز بمقعد في الجمعية المعمومية للأمم المتحدة	"Palestine won a seat in the United Nations General Assembly."

The first caricature in figure 1 with the title **فلسطين تفوز بمقعد في الجمعية المعمومية للأمم** depicts an old woman in traditional Middle Eastern clothes cooking. The woman cooks the leaves she picks from the UN logo with a furnace for the letters U and N. while next to her can be seen a child sitting gloomily waiting for the food cooked by the woman.

### Criticism of the UN's Symbolic Support for Palestine

The caricature uploaded by @rahma\_toons on September 16, 2024 is a form of sharp criticism of the UN's support for Palestine's position as a member. Sentence **فلسطين تفوز بمقعد في الجمعية المعمومية للأمم المتحدة** referring to the UN having given support to Palestine by giving it a seat in the General Assembly. However, this support is only symbolic, not proven in real terms to overcome the conflicts and crises experienced by the Palestinian people. The caricature conveys it through a Palestinian woman who is cooking a deradish from the UN logo on the furnace with the letters U and N. This shows that the United Nations' symbolic assistance continues to be billed and awaited. The grim condition of the child is a direct reflection of the lack of effective help. Thus, UN support for Palestine is not entirely neutral as the UN logo symbolizes peace and universal assistance. The green color on the logo refers to the UN aid given to the Palestinian people, which is only symbolic assistance rather than a real solution.

The social context described by Karikatu is in line with the reality of the UN political process. In May 2024, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution stating that Palestine is a country worthy of full membership in the UN with the support of 143 countries, 25 countries abstaining and 9 countries abstaining (Aljazeera, 2024). The UN Security Council positively reconsidered this, because according to the draft resolution, the State of Palestine is eligible to become a member of the UN in accordance with article 4 of the charter (Aljazeera, 2024). With this, Palestine can include its representatives in the list of speakers to discuss Middle Eastern issues. However, Palestine remains a member of the observer it has acquired since 2012, because various vetoes, mainly the we have blocked its efforts. Meanwhile, to become a member of the United Nations, approval must be obtained from the 15 member countries of the UN Security Council (CNN, 2024). Therefore, Palestine does not have the right to vote in General Assembly meetings and cannot run for a position in the UN body (Iwamura, 2024).

The caricature also reflects the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people. The support provided by the UN to Palestine is only symbolic support. The UN is not serious in seeking Palestinian membership. Thus, this support has no impact on the prolonged humanitarian crisis in Palestine as interpreted by the character of Anak with a gloomy face. Since the beginning of the Israeli attack on Palestine on October 7, 2023, the most affected victims have been innocent

Palestinian children. Various things are taken away from them. Education, family, friends to their own psychological condition. As of September 25, 2024, UNRWA reported that more than 625,000 children experienced deep trauma in Gaza (R. A. R. Sari, 2024).



Figure 2. Instagram @rahma\_toons March 3, 2023

Theory	Element	Information
Icon	Chameleon	The chameleon's visual resembles its original shape and its adaptive nature by changing color in all conditions.
Index	Chameleon's bulging eyes	The chameleon's eyes bulge because it is in the chameleon's blue body. Indicates Israel's vigilance over all situations and vigilance against Palestinian attacks.
	The color gradient from red, green and white on the chameleon's tail to blue on the chameleon's body	It shows America's involvement in the Middle East conflict but is dominantly supportive of Israel.
Symbol	Star image and blue color on the chameleon's body	It is a symbol of the state of Israel
	Chameleon hat with the image of the American flag	Representing the US state's alignment with the state of Israel
	Red, green and white colors on the chameleon's tail	Symbolizes the state of Palestine
	الشرق الأوسط	It is an area that has been known as the center of geopolitical conflicts, especially those involving Israel, Palestine, and the influence of major countries such as the US.

The caricature in figure 2, which was taken from a post on @rahma\_toons's Instagram account on March 3, 2023, features a chameleon with visuals that resemble its original shape and a striking color change on its body and tail. The chameleon's eyes bulged, indicating awareness of the surrounding environment. The chameleon's tail is red, green, and white, while its body is blue. The chameleon also wore a hat with an American flag, emphasizing the country's alignment with Israel. In addition, around the chameleon, there is the inscription "الشرق الأوسط", which describes the Middle East region which is famous as the center of geopolitical conflicts involving major countries such as the United States, Israel, and Palestine.

### Criticism of the US for its involvement in the geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East

This caricature depicts the geopolitical dynamics that are happening in the Middle East with symbolism that reflects the role and involvement of various parties in resolving problems by means of war as well as with bilateral or multilateral diplomacy. However, in this effort there are obstacles, namely the United States and Israel itself (A. Y. Firdaus & Yani, 2020). The blue chameleon with bulging eyes depicts Israel's vigilance that is always ready to face threats from inside and outside. The red, green, and white colors on the chameleon's tail symbolize Palestine, indicating the country's involvement in the conflict, while the chameleon hat with the image of the American flag, confirms America's alignment with Israel in the face of Palestine. A Middle East peace plan devised by



Trump's adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner is billed to provide a solution between the two countries (Buncombe, 2018). But the reality is the opposite, namely Palestine with limited sovereignty and Israel guarding the security of the country (Barak, 2021). However, in the international media they show diplomatic support in the form of peace support (Khalil et al., 2023).

Symbol "الشرق الأوسط" affirming that this region is the center of geopolitical competition involving three continents, namely Asia, Africa and Europe. Conflicts in the Middle East region involve the intervention of global powers, such as the United States and the European Union under the pretext of maintaining stability, but in fact make the conflict never end (A. Y. Firdaus & Yani, 2020). This caricature criticizes the policy of the United States which promises to broker peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but in reality the United States sides with Israel by providing diplomatic support and military support



Figure 3. instagram @rahma\_toons October 25, 2024

Theory	Element	Information
Icon	Men dressed in traditional Arabic clothes	Representing Arab society
	The wounded man on a stretcher	Representing the Palestinian people who are suffering from the conflict that occurred
	Stretchers and bandages	Describe the emergency situation and the condition of the Palestinian community
Index	The action of an Arab man standing on top of the victim while holding up his 2 fingers	Index of neglect or even pressure on the victim. Describing instead of Arab countries helping and promising peace, it adds to the suffering
	Wounds on the body of a lying man	The wound is caused by a prolonged conflict against the Palestinian people, describing the physical suffering of the Palestinian people.
	The injured man's shocked and shocked expression	Showing the <i>Palestinians' expressions of shock</i> towards the Arab state, which does not support it, adds to the suffering
Symbol	The Arab league logo on the Arab men's back	It is a symbol of various groups or organizations of Arab countries
	Sentence ندعم صمودكم	It is a symbol of the circus or satirizing Arab countries that promise to support Israel, but in fact the support is just nonsense.
	Sentence "البيان الختامي"	The closing declaration refers to the final statement declared by Arab countries which has no impact and actually adds to the suffering.
	Inscription "غزة"	It shows that the men below are Gazans who are victims of the conflict

The third caricature in figure 3 titled *البيان الختامي* depicts a man dressed in traditional Arabic clothes who is crossing his fingers, and stepping on the feet of a Gazan resident who is lying on a stretcher with wounds on his body. There is also the Arabic league logo on the back of an Arab man

as well as **ندعم صمودكم** the symbol pronounced by an Arab man and the **غزة** symbol on the body of a lying person.

### Criticism of the symbolic support of Arab states for Palestine

This image explains the criticism of Arab countries that ignore the oppression experienced by the Palestinians. In the caricature, there is the action of an Arab man who stands on the victim while raising his 2 fingers which shows that the Arab state seems to provide help and support peace to the Palestinian state, but in reality it adds to the suffering that has been experienced due to the prolonged conflict, so that the people of Gaza are shocked by what the Arab countries are doing. Then there is the symbol **ندعم صمودكم** which is a circus symbol or satirizing Arab countries that promise to support Palestine, but in fact the support is just nonsense. The Arab league logo on the back of an Arab man explains the various gatherings or organizations of Arab countries. In the caricature there is also a title, namely **البيان الختامي** which means that the closing declaration refers to the final statement declared by Arab countries that have no impact, but actually add to the suffering. There is also a symbol **غزة** which shows that the men below are Gazans who are victims of the conflict.

The UAE once failed to normalize relations with Israel, and the agreement on normalizing UAE-Israel relations was signed on August 13, 2020. The existence of this country's agreement with Israel has of course drawn strong criticism from Palestine, which is considered a betrayal of the struggle of other Arab countries to liberate Palestine so far (Derajat & Kurniawan, 2022). In its March 2017 annual session in Jordan, the Arab League issued a *final communique* i.e. total support for Palestinian independence with Jerusalem as its capital, opposition to Israeli settlement construction and Israel's attempts to take full control of Jerusalem. However, this is seen by many parties as just *lip service* because it has been 69 years since the establishment of Israel, but Arab countries have not been able to help Palestine achieve its rights. In addition, conflicts among Arab countries are heating up, especially in Syria and Yemen, without being resolved by the Arab League (Pradana & Yulianti, 2017).

The Arab-Israeli League conflict that became the highlight that the Arab League opposed Israel can be seen in the Arab-Israeli War caused by the official announcement of the establishment of the State of Israel in Palestine in 1948, the Arab League strongly opposed the growth of the State of Israel in the land of Palestine. The Arab countries that already considered Palestine as part of the growth of the Arab League did not stand still, in which the territories of their member states were taken over, the Arab countries had formed an army and at the beginning of this war the Arab countries took over the victory overthrowing the Israeli side. The Arab League has been a staunch supporter of Palestine in its conflict with Israel. They provided diplomatic assistance and support at the United Nations to fight for Palestinian independence. However, at the end of 2020, there was a significant change when Bahrain, the UAE, and Sudan decided to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. This action is contrary to the agreement of Arab countries that previously agreed not to normalize relations with Israel before Palestine independence. As a result, the financial support of Arab countries to Palestine has declined (Junia Sarah, 2024) (Rimapradesi & Surwandono, 2022).



Figure 4. instagram @hajjaj\_cartoons October 13, 2024



Theory	Element	Information
Icon	Gorilla	Symbolizes Israel's anger at the Iranian attack
	Tower with <i>uncle sam</i>	Symbolizes the support of the United States
	Airplane	There is a battle between the two sides
	Missiles aimed at gorillas	Signaling mutual aggression from both sides
	Pigeons hit by missiles	Peace cannot happen because both sides refuse to make peace.
Index	Angry expression of solution	Full of anger at anyone who attacks mercilessly
	Missiles and falling debris	Missiles and debris that fell due to the conflict
	Gorilla on top of an American hat	Indicates the relationship between Israel and America
	Cracked American hat	Showing the weakening of American influence due to the conflict
Symbol	Israel Star	Showing the solution is manifested from Israel
	Hats with the flag of the United States	Symbolizing America's role as a supporter
	Position of the Missile on the hands and feet of the gorilla	Represents military power and does not hesitate to retaliate

The caricature in figure 4, taken from a post on @hajjaj\_cartoons's Instagram account on October 13, 2024, features a gorilla depicting Israeli anger over the Iranian attack. Above the gorilla's head is a hat with a picture of the United States flag, showing the close relationship between Israel and the United States. The tower with the image of Uncle Sam symbolizes the strong support of America for Israel in this conflict. The plane and the missile pointing at the gorilla signify a fierce battle between the two sides, with the dove hit by the missile as a symbol that peace is hard to come by. The falling debris shows the devastating impact of the ongoing conflict. The position of the missiles on the gorilla's hands and feet reflects a military force ready to strike back.

### Criticism of US involvement in the Israel-Iran conflict

This caricature depicts the conflict between Israel and Iran that occurred on October 13, 2024 (Berg, 2024) because Israel killed Hezbollah and Hamas leaders as well as a senior Iranian commander. After Iran's attack on Israel on October 1 in which Iran fired about 200 ballistic missiles at Israel. The United States is assisting Israel with military support by deploying the Terminal High Attitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system (Parry et al., 2024) and U.S. military personnel to bolster Israeli air defense and diplomatic (RDS, 2024). The enraged gorilla, with an expression of hatred, represents Israel that does not hesitate to retaliate against the attack, showing an aggressive attitude triggered by an external threat.

The cracked American hat and the position of the gorilla on it show that although the United States has close ties with Israel (Suhayatmi, Alia Rahmatulummah, 2024), his influence in handling this conflict began to weaken. The caricature highlights the inability to make peace, as illustrated by a dove hit by a missile, which symbolizes that both sides, both Israel and Iran, refuse to make peace. The falling missiles and debris show the devastation wrought by the conflict, as well as uncertainty regarding the future of the region.



Figure 5. instagram @hajjaj\_cartoons October 16, 2024

Theory	Element	information
Icon	Tank	A direct representation of military vehicles often used in warfare
	Dove	Representation of native pigeons
	Hat	Direct representation of the shape of the hat
	Greenery	Direct representation of plants in general
Index	Tank runs over pigeons, un caps and plants	The direct impact of military violence or aggression on peace solutions (pigeons) and the role of international mediation (UN). Tanks running over became an index of the destruction of diplomatic efforts and peaceful solutions.
	Bloody Pigeon	Indications of peace have been brutally destroyed by military force.
Symbol	Israeli flag on the tank	Showing that these destroying tanks are an Israeli force
	UN	United Nations

The caricature in figure 5 depicts a tank labeled with the Israeli flag running over a white dove, a hat with the UN logo, and greenery. The pigeon was run over until it bled, and its feathers were scattered.

### Criticism of Israeli aggression against UNIFIL and its impact

Caricature uploaded by @hajjajcartoons on October 16, 2024 with *Caption* هجوم اسرائيل على اليونيفيل is a form of sharp criticism of the Israeli military attacking the United Nations Interim Force (UNIFIL) tasked with protecting civilians in the South Lebanon region or more precisely on the Blue Line (Al-Basri, 2024). The tank with the Israeli flag tag is a depiction of the IDF Merkava tank that fired its attack on the UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura and wounded two peacekeepers (HRW, 2024). Not only that, Israel also launched attacks in the form of shooting and flying drones around the UNIFIL headquarters which caused damage to vehicles used in humanitarian aid, communication systems, and paralyzed UNIFIL surveillance cameras (UNIFIL, 2024). The aggression carried out by Israel is considered by the UN to be an act that violates the laws of war. Because UN personnel are considered civilians under international humanitarian law, and any attack launched against them is a violation of the laws of war (HRW, 2024).

The pigeon that was run over in the caricature reflects the destruction of peace values, while the hat with the UN logo that is also run over is a picture of the helplessness of the UN international agency in the face of this act of aggression. The aggression launched by Israel hampers UNIFIL's mandate to carry out its mandate to protect civilians and provide humanitarian assistance in the territory of Southern Lebanon (HRW, 2024). The degraded greenery reflects the social and ecological impact of the conflict between Israel and UNIFIL, including restrictions on the distribution of humanitarian aid needed by thousands of people in conflict zones. Since mid-September, the conflict has claimed thousands of lives and millions of refugees due to the destruction of various facilities. It also complicates the lives of civilians due to the lack of access to food or water due to the escalation of this conflict (HRW, 2024).

## Conclusion

From the various discussions that have been presented, it can be concluded that the conflicts in the Middle East, especially between Israel and Palestine and Israel and Iran, reflect geopolitical complexity involving many parties and interests. The caricatures reviewed based on index icons and symbols show a sharp critique of the aggressive actions taken by those countries, as well as the inability of international institutions such as the United Nations to uphold peace and protect civilians. The first and fourth caricatures criticize the support provided by the UN and Arab countries as merely symbolic support. The second and fourth caricatures are a form of criticism directed at the American country Serikta because the support shown to Israel further aggravates the conflict that occurs in the Middle East. The fifth caricature criticizes Israel's attacks on UNIFIL and other aggressive actions, showing violations of international law and threatening humanitarian missions run by the United Nations.

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