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Between War and Compassion: Humanitarian Diplomacy Narratives in Middle Eastern Media During the Gaza War

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Abstract

Humanitarian diplomacy has become a central framework through which states and non-state actors respond to armed conflicts and humanitarian crises. While existing research has examined humanitarian diplomacy primarily from institutional or diplomatic perspectives, limited attention has been paid to how it is mediated and framed by state-funded international broadcasters in the Middle East. This study analyzes how humanitarian diplomacy was represented in four influential state-owned media outlets-TRT World, Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and Press TV-during the Gaza War. A total of 370 news items published between June 1 and June 30, 2025 were examined using quantitative content analysis. The findings reveal significant differences in thematic emphasis, particularly regarding civilian protection, humanitarian aid appeals, ceasefire advocacy, and human rights discourse. The results suggest that these media organizations function not merely as channels of information but as strategic actors that shape humanitarian diplomacy narratives in line with broader geopolitical orientations. By foregrounding media's role in constructing humanitarian diplomacy, this study contributes to the literature on international communication and crisis reporting in the Middle Eastern context.

Keywords: Humanitarian Diplomacy, International Communication, Digital Media Analysis, Content Analysis, Media Framing

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Savaş ve Merhamet Arasında Gazze Savaşında Ortadoğu Medyasının İnsani Diplomasi Anlatıları

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Öz

İnsani diplomasi, devletlerin ve devlet dışı aktörlerin silahlı çatışmalara ve insani krizlere verdikleri tepkileri şekillendiren temel yaklaşımlardan biri hâline gelmiştir. Mevcut çalışmalar insani diplomasiyi ağırlıklı olarak kurumsal ve diplomatik boyutlarıyla ele alırken, bu olgunun Orta Doğu'daki devlet destekli uluslararası yayın kuruluşları tarafından nasıl temsil edildiği ve çerçevelendiği sınırlı ölçüde incelenmiştir. Bu çalışma, Gazze Savaşı sürecinde dört etkili devlet destekli medya kuruluşu olan TRT World, Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya ve Press TV'nin insani diplomasi söylemini nasıl temsil ettiğini analiz etmektedir. Bu kapsamda, 1 Haziran–30 Haziran 2025 tarihleri arasında yayımlanan toplam 370 haber, nicel içerik analizi yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Bulgular, özellikle sivillerin korunması, insani yardım çağrıları, ateşkes girişimleri ve insan hakları söylemi açısından medya kuruluşları arasında belirgin tematik farklılıklar bulunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Elde edilen sonuçlar, bu medya kuruluşlarının yalnızca bilgi aktaran platformlar olmadığını; aynı zamanda daha geniş jeopolitik yönelimler doğrultusunda insani diplomasi anlatılarını şekillendiren stratejik aktörler olarak işlev gördüklerini göstermektedir. Medyanın insani diplomasinin inşasındaki rolünü ortaya koyan bu çalışma, Orta Doğu bağlamında uluslararası iletişim ve kriz haberciliği literatürüne katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsani Diplomasi, Uluslararası İletişim, Dijital Medya Analizi, İçerik Analizi, Medya Çerçevelemesi

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1. Introduction

The clashes around the Al-Aqsa Mosque in April 2023 intensified regional instability, with tensions between Israel and Palestinian factions continuing to escalate in the following months. By September 2023, international media emphasized that Israel and Hamas were on the brink of war (Murphy et al., 2023). On September 29, the United Nations, Qatar, and Egypt proposed mediation efforts, arguing that reopening border crossings could reduce tensions. Egypt also warned that a large-scale conflict was imminent (The Guardian, 2023).

On October 7, 2023, Hamas and other Palestinian groups launched coordinated attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory, officially triggering the Gaza War. Approximately 1,200 people, most of them civilians, were killed in Israel. In response, Israel launched extensive air and ground operations across Gaza. According to the Hamas-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, more than 65,000 civilians, predominantly women and children, had been killed over the course of the conflict. United Nations reports further indicate that Israel's military campaign caused widespread destruction and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people (BBC, 2025).

The Israel–Palestine conflict has produced severe humanitarian consequences for decades, but the 2023 escalation rapidly developed into a large-scale humanitarian crisis affecting civilians. Such crises demonstrate that reliance on military force rather than soft power weakens international legitimacy and limits prospects for sustainable peace (Nye, 1990, pp. 166–168). Addressing humanitarian emergencies therefore requires cooperation based on international norms and collective action.

Recent studies have examined the representation of the Gaza War through different media framing and human rights perspectives. El Damanhoury and Saleh (2025), for example, comparatively analyzed the visual framing of the 2021 Gaza War in Al Jazeera Arabic and Fox News, demonstrating how the geopolitical proximity of media organizations influenced the representation of Israeli and Palestinian actors. Similarly, Miladi and Miladi (2025) examined BBC and i24 News coverage of the 2023–2024 Gaza War and identified differences in the prominence of humanitarian, conflict, and Israeli security frames. Alhirthani (2025), focusing on BBC coverage, further examined how civilian suffering and human rights were represented within the context of international humanitarian

law. While these studies provide important insights into media framing, civilian suffering, and human rights representation, relatively limited attention has been given to humanitarian diplomacy as a distinct dimension of media discourse, particularly across state-supported international broadcasters representing different geopolitical actors in the Middle East. Addressing this gap, the present study comparatively examines TRT World, Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and Press TV through a humanitarian diplomacy framework and analyzes how humanitarian suffering, humanitarian action, human rights, ceasefire efforts, and related media frames were represented during the same period of the Gaza War. In this respect, the study contributes to existing research by connecting humanitarian diplomacy with international media framing and by providing a comparative perspective across four Middle Eastern state-supported international media organizations.

The growing involvement of non-governmental organizations, humanitarian agencies, and international institutions has increased the importance of humanitarian diplomacy in responding to armed conflicts and other crises (Minear & Hazel, 2007, p. 1). Beyond providing humanitarian assistance, humanitarian diplomacy has become an important instrument for enhancing states' international legitimacy and strengthening relations with global civil society (Regnier, 2011, pp. 1213–1215). The participation of both state and non-state actors in protecting civilians and supporting the implementation of international law makes humanitarian diplomacy a multidimensional field of international relations (Harroff-Tavel, 2006, pp. 5–7). Accordingly, humanitarian diplomacy can be understood as efforts that prioritize humanitarian values, uphold universal norms, and promote solidarity during times of crisis.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Humanitarian Diplomacy and International Relations Perspective

The concept of 'Humanitarian Diplomacy' was first used by Larry Minear and Hazel Smith in their work titled *Humanitarian Diplomacy: Practitioners and Their Crafts*, published in 2007, and it is defined as diplomatic efforts that humanitarian organizations and workers in this field undertake for humanitarian purposes. Humanitarian diplomacy aims to open up space for the activities of humanitarian organizations as well as political and military actors and encompasses areas such as the coordination activities of humanitarian organizations, aid to civilians,

transportation of humanitarian aid, and raising awareness on international law and norms (Şahin & Çevik, 2015, p. 51).

The processes experienced by people with different national identities across different geographical regions are not independent of one another. Humanitarian diplomacy has been developing through this awareness as a derivative of public diplomacy. And today, for all international actors, it has become no longer a choice but a responsibility. Therefore, beyond promoting economic development through aid, it focuses on more humanitarian goals, such as strengthening democracy in target countries and meeting urgent needs arising from war, natural disasters, and similar crises.

Today, humanitarian diplomacy signals 'a new development paradigm' that addresses the various forms of inequality faced by people in different parts of the world and, therefore, constitutes a human rights–based approach (Şahin & Çevik, 2015, p. 55). Human rights refer to the rights that all individuals must possess, without any discrimination, solely by virtue of being human and as a requirement of human dignity (UNDP, 2000, p. 16). The concept is based more on moral beliefs than legal provisions (Akyıldız, 2011, p. 42).

In every extraordinary situation concerning human beings, human rights emerge as one of the most fundamental issues that are most intensively examined. Today, efforts aimed at helping, protecting, and rescuing people who face suffering and torment in situations such as wars, internal conflicts, poverty, injustice, and natural disasters are now addressed within the framework of humanitarian diplomacy (Altunışık, 2022, p. 663; De Lauri, 2018). Humanitarian diplomacy is guided by several core principles, including humanity, neutrality, and independence, which emphasize protecting civilians, alleviating suffering, and maintaining impartial humanitarian action in conflict settings (O'Hagan, 2016, p. 658; Slim, 2019, p. 69).

Humanitarian diplomacy, situated at the intersection of diplomacy and humanitarianism, seeks to alleviate suffering, protect human dignity, and respond to humanitarian crises (Dieckhoff, 2020, p. 570; Howe & Stites, 2019, p. 3). In this context, neutral states, media organizations, international organizations, public diplomacy actors, and non-governmental organizations assume the function of mediators in humanitarian diplomacy, contribute to raising public awareness of the situation of victims, and carry out efforts aimed at resolving these problems (Slim, 2024, p. 153). In order to reduce and eliminate problems within the scope

of humanitarian diplomacy, ensuring effective cooperation among institutions and organizations is of great importance. Moreover, dialogue developed between local communities and institutions, the effective operation of international law, and the delivery of humanitarian aid are among the key elements that enhance the functionality of humanitarian diplomacy (Dixon, 2017, p. 8).

Not only states, but also international media and non-governmental organizations are among the important actors in humanitarian diplomacy. For this reason, humanitarian diplomacy should be defined not merely as the elimination of the problems faced by victimized individuals or the provision of humanitarian aid, but also as a human-centered approach grounded in the establishment of a balance between power and conscience (Yıldırım, 2019, p. 2566; Warner, 2013, p. 4). In recent years, many states have adopted and implemented the phenomenon of humanitarian diplomacy as a strategic tool in their foreign policy visions (Weiss, 1999, p. 3). In this process, social construction and strategic behaviors have been shaped by the solutions developed by state and non-state actors on the basis of their conscientious responsibilities rather than ideological or political concerns. Therefore, the roles of academic circles, media outlets, and think tanks are becoming more decisive in humanitarian diplomacy than material results or symbolic applications (Kelman, 2011, p. 11; Baird, 2015, p. 471).

In humanitarian aid activities or organizations that typically operate in foreign countries, states, rather than acting directly, pursue their objectives through non-governmental organizations, non-state actors, and activists in accordance with international law (Egeland, 2013, p. 39). For societies to attain higher living standards and address the problems faced by individuals, it is essential that political and diplomatic circles act with common sense while also complying with the rules established within the framework of international law. Otherwise, attitudes that may be perceived as aggressive or tensions that may arise in relations with the country where aid activities are conducted or in interactions with other states may lead to damage to international relations (Akpınar, 2013, p. 738; Hay, 2013, p. 110). In this context, humanitarian diplomacy activities are conducted within the framework of a 'win–win' strategy based on mutual trust, negotiation, and agreement, and are acceptable to all parties involved (Falk, 2008, p. 5; Egeland, 2013, p. 40).

In humanitarian diplomacy activities directed toward societies experiencing democratic deficiencies, underdevelopment, or ongoing conflict, priority is given to addressing the fundamental problems people in the region face. However, such activities are not limited to the humanitarian aid dimension; they also enhance the reputation and image of the relevant country's reputation and image internationally and serve as an element of soft power in foreign policy. In addition, humanitarian diplomacy also contributes significantly to the increase of trust, love, and respect for the country in society (Barnett, 2011, pp. 33–35; Constantinou, 2022, p. 4). Although states may gain power and prestige in the international arena as a result of these activities, the primary focus of humanitarian diplomacy remains on people and the resolution of the problems they face. Thus, the enhancement of image and reputation is regarded as a secondary yet significant added value of the process (Tokmak, 2024, p. 154; Mahdavi, 2015, p. 25).

2.2. Communication in Humanitarian Diplomacy: International Broadcasting Diplomacy

Media content plays a crucial role in determining and influencing the public agenda. In this respect, framing theory is a communication theory that explains how individuals or societies perceive topics, events, facts, and news from certain angles and frames. People use mental frames when making sense of the societies and the world they live in, which helps determine which information or event is important and which is unimportant (Goffman, 1974, pp. 10–11). In media studies, framing refers to how news highlights certain aspects of events while downplaying others, thereby shaping public perception (Gitlin, 1980, pp. 6–7).

Framing is the process of selecting some aspects of perceived reality and making them more obvious. From this perspective, how perpetrators, victims, events, problems, and solutions are defined in media content may vary among different actors (Entman, 1993, p. 52). When media contents are examined within the framework of framing theory, it is seen that the contents are not neutral and they differ according to certain political, ideological, cultural, and economic interests and points of view (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, pp. 8–11). For this reason, in the literature, a distinction is made between 'media frames' and 'news frames' in framing analyses. Within the context of peace journalism, this distinction holds

analytical significance in revealing how a conflict is constructed in terms of the actors involved, its underlying causes, and the perspectives on possible solutions (Kabeya & Ngwenya, 2026, pp. 3–4).

These frameworks, especially in multilingual and conflict contexts, are constructed not only through editorial preferences but also through translation and mediation processes. The transfer of information in war journalism also includes discursive deconstruction along with inter-linguistic transformation. Therefore, translation plays a central role in the formation of news frames, directly affecting the way the conflict is interpreted and the representation of actors (Ruiz Rosendo & Ponomarenko, 2025, p. 3). Media diplomacy plays a key role in international relations by transmitting information and political signals between governments (Cohen, 1986, pp. 245–246). In conflict situations, media also functions as a key channel for the dissemination of strategic narratives. Political actors employ narratives to shape perceptions of identity, define allies and adversaries, and legitimize policy actions, thereby influencing public understanding of international crises (Locoman & Lau, 2025, pp. 327–328).

As a public sphere, the media provides a fundamental communicative space in which ideas, interests, and ideals find public representation. Although it is debatable to what extent the media shapes political outcomes in the political communication literature, the influence of the news media on public perceptions is generally accepted. However, some approaches see the influence of the media as limited, emphasizing that political attitudes are determined by a large number of structural and contextual factors (Čakš et al., 2025, pp. 2–3). The media has an important role for states in transferring, making sense of, and understanding studies in many fields related to foreign policy to foreign peoples on the basis of reconciliation, negotiation, and cooperation (Saliu, 2022, p. 5). With the media emerging as a prominent news and communication tool, its capacity to set agendas, shape public opinion, and influence the environment has become a strategic asset for states. In this regard, states frequently employ their national media in foreign policy communication, particularly to project their peaceful approaches, highlight key achievements and innovations, and convey positive aspects of social life (Eren, 2019, p. 31).

In addition to emphasizing national power and influence, state-owned media channels and organizations aim to form public opinion in foreign societies by

reinforcing national values through social, cultural, scientific, economic, political, and social content. In this way, states seek both to enhance their influence and to foster positive perceptions among foreign publics (Karadeniz, 2022, p. 564). The capacity of the media to reach heterogeneous and wide audiences allows individuals to be easily convinced by the correct creation of messages, and this situation is considered an important element of power (Gilboa, 2001, p. 2). The influencing power of the media is considered as the 'fourth power' in many societies due to its ability to steer audiences toward specific objectives, facilitate changes in perceptions and attitudes, influence political processes, and reshape international relations (Tokmak, 2024, p. 159). Similarly, the British diplomat Edmund Burke also identified the media as the most important force after the British Parliament in the eighteenth century, emphasizing that it is a critical actor in the protection of democracy and the supervision of politicians (Gentzkow et al., 2006, p. 187).

Exaggerated, unverified, or misleading content undermines the communicative value of the media and causes such content to take on a propagandistic character. For this reason, states have been establishing professional institutions to manage international media relations and, by employing communication experts, aim to influence the perceptions of target audiences through strategic, purpose-oriented content (Anholt, 2011, p. 139). The transmission of culture, art, sports, and humanitarian aspects of a state through the media constitutes an important dimension of soft power. Accordingly, states consider official media institutions as foreign policy spokespersons and communicate their positions to broad audiences through them (Nye, 2005, p. 105).

Many state-funded international broadcasters operate in multiple languages to influence global audiences (Ertekin, 2012, pp. 331–333). For example, Türkiye conducts studies in line to become an effective actor on a global scale and regional level through channels broadcasting in different languages such as TRT World, TRT Arabi, TRT Avaz, TRT Africa, TRT Español, TRT Français and TRT Russia to instantly announce cultural elements and national developments to the world and augment its soft power (Baritci & Aydeniz, 2019, p. 1559).

All these perspectives and practices underscore the importance that official media organizations hold for states within the context of humanitarian diplomacy. In the context of international relations, strategic communication practices designed

by states to convey their soft power, perspective on events, and conscientious assessments to the public are of great importance in terms of increasing public awareness. Within this framework, the findings will be analyzed in the light of the data obtained from official state organizations in the study.

3. Method

This study examines content related to humanitarian diplomacy published on the digital platforms of state-supported media organizations in the Middle East in connection with the Gaza War, which began in 2023 and, as of 2025, was still ongoing in Gaza. The universe of this study consists of 735 items published between June 1 and June 30, 2025, on the websites of four major state-supported media organizations in the Middle East-TRT World, Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and Press TV-related to the Gaza-centered Palestinian-Israeli War. The sample of the study was determined by employing the purposive sampling method. Within this scope, 370 news items related to humanitarian diplomacy published during the specified time period by the institutions included in the study's universe were examined using the content analysis method. This date range encompasses the one-month period preceding U.S. President Donald Trump's call for a ceasefire on June 28, 2025. It was selected because this period represents one of the most intensive phases of humanitarian developments and international diplomatic discussions regarding Gaza. Examining media coverage immediately before a major diplomatic initiative provides an appropriate analytical context for assessing how humanitarian diplomacy narratives were constructed before a significant shift in international political discourse.

The media organizations included in the sample were selected through purposive sampling based on their representation of four influential regional actors—Türkiye, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Iran—which play significant political, economic, and diplomatic roles in the Middle East. In addition, these organizations operate as state-supported international media outlets with broad regional and global audiences and have provided continuous and extensive coverage of the Gaza conflict. Their inclusion enables a comparative examination of how humanitarian diplomacy narratives are constructed across different geopolitical perspectives while reflecting the communication strategies of states with considerable regional

influence. In this study, the following basic research questions are considered in the context of humanitarian diplomacy:

Research Question 1: In the Gaza War, how are humanitarian suffering and crises highlighted in the news coverage of state-supported media organizations in the Middle East between June 1 and June 30, 2025?

Research Question 2: What discourses and themes related to humanitarian diplomacy carry weight in these media contents?

Accordingly, the findings of this study should be interpreted within the methodological scope of the selected sample. Since the analysis is limited to four state-supported international media organizations operating in the Middle East, the findings are not intended to represent all international media outlets or media systems. Furthermore, the study focuses exclusively on textual news content published on the official digital platforms of these organizations and does not include audience reception. These methodological boundaries were established to ensure a focused and systematic analysis of humanitarian diplomacy narratives during the selected period.

The content analysis method was employed for the systematic examination of news texts related to humanitarian diplomacy obtained from the selected media institutions. Content analysis enables the systematic examination of textual data in order to identify themes and patterns (Krippendorff, 2018, p. 18). This method stands out as an objective and data-oriented technique that is often used in qualitative research. In the application of the method, the data are collected, coded, divided into categories, and then the results are interpreted (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 28). The method allows both quantitative measurement and qualitative interpretation of media content (Elo et al., 2014, p. 4).

To enhance the consistency and reliability of the coding process, the news content was coded independently by two researchers. Following the initial coding, the researchers compared the assigned codes and thematic categories, discussed the cases in which disagreements occurred, and reached consensus through joint evaluation. This iterative process contributed to improving the consistency of the coding scheme and the reliability of the content analysis.

The data obtained from the news items were classified using evaluative and frequency analysis methods. Thus, the content was examined within a thematic framework using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, with the aim of obtaining comprehensive results. Within the scope of the study, 370 news content in selected media institutions are examined in accordance with the following categories and subcodes: 1- Civilian Casualties and Humanitarian Plights (deaths, injuries, mass migration, health services), 2- Humanitarian Diplomacy (humanitarian appeals, civilian protection efforts, international cooperation and diplomatic initiatives), 3- Ceasefire Efforts (peace calls, agreement initiatives, peace messages), 4- Media Discourse and Framing (emotional messages, fostering empathy, accusations, transfer of responsibility, political support and criticism), 5- Human Rights and Legal Framework (human rights violations, international law, transmission of rights violations) and 6- Social, Economic and Cultural Dimensions of the Crisis (food and water crises, access to educational services, economic destruction and basic needs).

4. Findings

Conflicts and wars that have negatively affected societies sociologically, psychologically, politically, culturally, and socially for centuries are still occurring in many parts of the world in the twenty-first century, causing individuals to suffer loss of bodily integrity by experiencing physical difficulties or to lose their lives. The destruction and losses experienced in this process may sometimes be short-term, while in other cases-such as the conflicts between Palestine and Israel-they can persist for years. Events occurring in wartime and all situations affecting human beings are reflected in the media and resonate at the international level, making them highly critical in terms of framing and forming public opinion.

In line with the findings, in the Middle East, the state-affiliated international media environments of countries such as Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Iran—countries that are particularly influential in political, strategic, economic, geopolitical, military, demographic, and cultural terms—were selected, and data from the specified time period were accessed. During this period, a total of 735 contents related to the Israeli-Palestinian war were published in the international press, including 135 news items in Al Arabiya, 236 news items in Al Jazeera, 199 news items in Press TV, and 165 news items in TRT World. It was determined that

82 news reports from Al Arabiya, 107 from Al Jazeera, 89 from Press TV, and 92 from TRT World were directly related to the concept of humanitarian diplomacy and its associated sub-codes.

To reveal the thematic distribution, conceptual density, and discursive orientations of the news coverage, the content was first examined using the frequency analysis method. The analysis revealed a significant relationship between the level of visibility of concepts related to humanitarian diplomacy in the media and countries' political positions, ideological approaches, and alignments during the course of the war. The frames through which each media organization presented the conflict were supported by quantitative data; the prominent themes in the news coverage were mapped and visualized using the MAXQDA 24 software. Accordingly, the map created by the data obtained from 370 news items related to humanitarian diplomacy is presented in Image 1.



Image 1. The Word Cloud of Human Diplomacy News

The words mentioned in all the news items were examined under a single file, excluding conjunctions and concepts related to states and place names (e.g., Gaza, Israeli, Israel, Palestine, Palestinians) and focusing on meaningful words, the ten most frequently occurring words, in descending order, stand out as follows: aid (1542), people (880), killed (822), war (732), humanitarian (691), international (577), military (562), distribution (507), Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (494) and

food (493). This finding constitutes an important indicator that humanitarian conditions are brought to the forefront in news coverage.

In Image 2, the word clouds of the media organizations Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera are presented, respectively. In Al Arabiya, similarly, the most frequently used words other than conjunctions and state and place names were aid (400), people, killed, military and war. In Al Jazeera, the most common words were aid (491), people, killed, Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, and war.



Image 2. The Word Cloud of News in Al Arabiya (right) and Al Jazeera

In Image 3, the word clouds of two other media organizations, Press TV and TRT World, are presented. In Press TV, as in others, the most used word was aid (379). This word was followed by the words regime, international, killed, and humanitarian. On the other hand, the most frequently used word in TRT World was aid (272), and the other prominent words were international, humanitarian, war, and children, respectively. When these data are evaluated as a whole, it is concluded that concepts such as "aid," "humanitarian," "war," and "killed" prominently and consistently appear in the news coverage of media organizations from different countries; therefore, humanitarian crisis themes emerge as a defining element in news discourse.

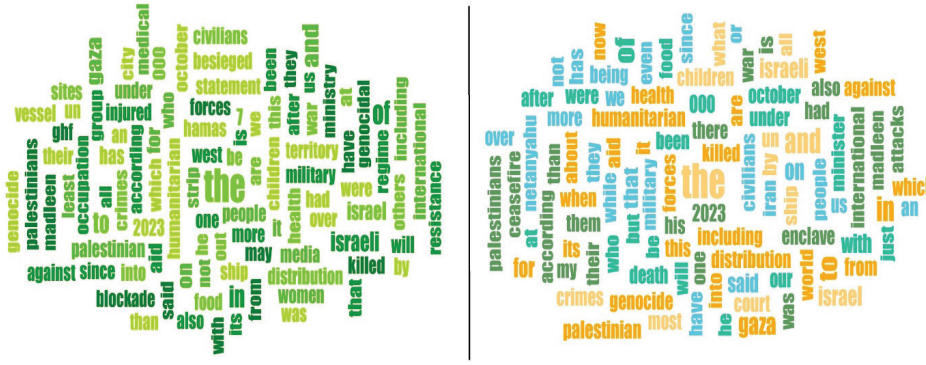


Image 3. The Word Cloud of News on Press TV (right) and TRT World

The news items were examined by classifying them into six categories associated with humanitarian diplomacy, based on their headlines, spots, and content. Accordingly, the determined categories and the distribution of news according to the relevant media organizations are presented in Table 1.

Category/Institution Name	Al Arabiya	Al Jazeera	Press TV	TRT World	Total-Percentage
Civilian Casualties and Humanitarian Plights	31	49	34	33	**147- %21.8**
Humanitarian Diplomacy	28	37	32	28	**125- %18.6**
The Social, Economic, and Cultural Dimension of the Crisis	30	35	28	27	**120- %17.8**
Human Rights and Legal Framework	23	34	30	29	**116- %17.2**
Media Discourse and Framing	13	30	23	19	**85- %12.6**
Ceasefire Efforts	21	19	13	27	**80- %11.9**
Total-Percentage	**146- %21.7**	**204- %30.3**	**160- %23.8**	**163- %24.2**	**673 – %100**

Table 1. News Categories and Distributions by Media Organizations

A total of 370 news items examined in state-owned media organizations were determined to be related to humanitarian diplomacy, but due to the length and versatility of their news content, they were found to be included in more than one category. Within this scope, content falling under a total of 673 categories was obtained from 370 news items. The largest amount of news content was included in the category "civilian casualties and humanitarian plights" (147), followed by the categories "humanitarian diplomacy" (125), "social, economic, and cultural dimension of the crisis" (120), and "human rights and legal framework" (116). In contrast, it is observed that the categories of "media discourse and framing" (85) and "ceasefire efforts" (80) were less represented.

When evaluated by media organizations, it was determined that Al Arabiya featured the highest number of items in the category of civilian casualties and humanitarian plights (31), while the lowest number of content appeared in the category of media discourse and framing (13). Similarly, in Al Jazeera, civilian casualties and humanitarian plights (49) ranked first (49), while ceasefire efforts ranked last (19) among the categories. Again, civilian casualties and humanitarian plights (34) constituted the most intense content group on Press TV, while ceasefire efforts (13) were the least discussed topic. Similar to other media organizations, the category of civilian casualties and humanitarian plights (33) stood out on TRT World, and media discourse and framing (19) was the least covered title. This situation shows that the casualties suffered during the course of the war were a determining factor in the news agenda, whereas ceasefire efforts were addressed in a rather limited manner.

When the prominent titles in the categories are examined, the category of civilian casualties and humanitarian plights stands out as the area with the most content. In this category, human losses and tragedies experienced as a result of attacks against Palestinians are frequently discussed. In a report published by Al Jazeera (2025a), it was stated that Israel's attacks on Gaza continued during Eid al-Adha, and that at least 75 Palestinians were killed on the second day of the holiday. In the news, it was reported that an apartment building was hit and a "massacre" was carried out in Gaza, and eight people waiting for assistance in the area near the US-supported Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) center in Rafah were killed. Discussions on the impartiality of GHF were also included; it was emphasized that pregnant women faced a risk of miscarriage due to hunger and medical insufficiency.

In another item falling within the category of civilian casualties and humanitarian plights, it was reported that during the attacks in Gaza, a ten-year-old boy named Adam lost his father and nine siblings, while he himself sustained serious injuries. It was stated that Adam, who was to be relocated to Italy with his family, would receive medical treatment and psychological support; moreover, his mother conveyed the tragedy they had experienced and the profound pain caused by their losses, while expressing hope for a safe and peaceful life for her child. These and similar incidents reveal a severe humanitarian plight in which civilian deaths, injuries, and mass trauma are compounded by difficulties in accessing healthcare services. It was reported that the death toll since the beginning of the war in Gaza had reached approximately 55,000, the majority of whom were civilians (Al Arabiya, 2025c).

The activities carried out for the protection of civilians, international collaborations, diplomatic initiatives, and humanitarian aid appeals stand out in the news about humanitarian diplomacy. According to a news report on TRT World (2025a), the "Madleen Ship", which was carrying human rights defenders from many countries such as Türkiye, Sweden, France, Spain, Brazil, and the Netherlands, set out to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza, but was detained by the Israeli navy in international waters. Activist Yasemin Acar, who was aboard the ship, stated that the initiative was "born not out of fear, but out of faith in a free Palestine"; moreover, the attack on activists on board, including Greta Thunberg, was condemned by the international community. Acar stated that what was taking place in Gaza was inhumane, arguing that "testing people through hunger signifies the silence of humanitarian diplomacy and justice." In one content published in Al Arabiya (2025a), it was stated that support for Israel in Europe was decreasing, and according to a survey conducted by YouGov, most of the public opinion considered Israel's attacks disproportionate. It was reported that only 13–%21 of respondents expressed positive views toward Israel, while 63–%70 held negative views; meanwhile, sympathy for Palestine was reported to have increased within the range of 18–%33. The majority described Israel's military intervention as an act that caused "disproportionate and civilian casualties;" they considered the likelihood of a lasting peace within the next decade to be low.

In another context related to this category, the United Nations reported that as a result of Israeli attacks, all hospitals in Northern Gaza have stopped

operating, and aid deliveries could not be resumed due to access restrictions. UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric reported that more than 100,000 people had been displaced, medical facilities had been severely damaged, and critical aid had not been allowed to enter over the past three weeks. Israeli attacks on hospitals, dialysis centers, and civilians were considered violations of international law, and the UN and the international community were calling for a diplomatic initiative to provide humanitarian assistance and protect civilians (Press TV, 2025b).

In the category addressing the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of the crisis, the controversial activities of the U.S.-supported GHF and attacks around aid centers come to the fore. All media organizations emphasized themes such as the destruction, famine, and social collapse experienced in Gaza. In a Press TV report (2025-a), it was stated that Palestinian resistance groups described the aid distribution carried out by the GHF as "part of a policy of forced displacement and ethnic cleansing". It was reported that aid centers had turned into "death traps" and hundreds of civilians had died while searching for help, so it was emphasized that aid activities should be transferred back to UNRWA. UNRWA also stated that Israel's alternative aid model was aimed at concealing the persecution of the Palestinians.

In another content related to this category, it was stated that the people of Gaza were facing serious food and water crises due to the Israeli blockade and the severe conditions at aid distribution points. Abnormal price increases, food shortages, and limited basic food resources made daily life difficult and prevented basic needs from being met. It was emphasized that US-supported GHF deployments had often become dangerous and inaccessible to civilians due to armed groups and chaotic processes in militarized areas. This situation, combined with economic devastation, lack of access to educational services, and the inability to meet basic needs, revealed a social, economic, and cultural crisis that deeply affected the lives of the people of Gaza (Al Jazeera, 2025c).

The human rights and legal framework category is another heading characterized by a high volume of content. In this section, different examples of human rights violations and international law stand out. An Al Jazeera story (2025b) covered the humanitarian difficulties faced by Raneem Abu Al-Eish and her mentally disabled sisters living in Gaza's Shati camp under war conditions. The family, who were rendered homeless as a result of Israeli bombardments, lacked access to

food and medical assistance, and Raneem was left responsible for caregiving after their father was detained. The news stated that there were no proper nutrition or health services for the siblings who had celiac disease, which shows that disabled people are deprived of their basic human rights in a war environment.

In another context related to this category, according to reports by the Palestinian Prisoners' Media Office and various rights groups, Palestinian women being held in Israeli prisons and detention centers were systematically subjected to torture and ill-treatment. It was stated that at least 545 women detained and abducted were facing beatings, threats, starvation, and isolation practices; some women had even lost up to half of their body weight due to these adverse conditions. According to the news report, within the framework of the practice of administrative detention, women who were held without charge or trial were reportedly used as hostages as a means of pressure. International human rights organizations emphasize that these practices clearly violate both human rights conventions and international legal norms and call on the international community to take effective, concrete, and urgent action (Press TV, 2025c).

Although there is less content in the media discourse and framing category than in other titles, emotional messages, empathy, and transfer of responsibility are at the forefront. In one news report on TRT World (2025b), it was claimed that the Israeli army released a "made-up" video in order to hide the killing of civilians in Rafah. The report alleged that Israel manipulated the massacre, distorted evidence, and violated international law. In contrast, Gaza officials and witnesses were framed as 'representatives of the truth.' Empathy was reinforced through expressions such as 'shooting at a hungry crowd' and 'death traps'; Israel's actions were presented in the context of a legitimacy debate through political criticism and an emphasis on international justice.

In TRT World's news coverage, two items related to media discourse and framing with regard to Western media stand out in particular. In a piece published by TRT World (2025c), the double standards in the way Western media frame the Israel–Palestine conflict were critically examined. The Washington Post's correction retracting Israel's responsibility for the deadly attack in Gaza was evaluated as an example of discursive manipulation, transfer of responsibility, and political bias. Experts emphasized that the Western media humanized Israeli actions through the use of passive language and ambiguous perpetrators, while weakening the

narrative of Palestinian victims. This whole situation points to a media discourse that prioritizes political sensitivities instead of empathy and ethical responsibility. In another content on TRT World (2025d), it was determined that partiality and double standards were revealed in the way the BBC reported on the Gaza conflict. While Palestinian casualties were reduced, Israeli casualties were presented with exaggerated emotional language and intense empathy. While Israeli rhetoric was reinforced in interviews and news reports, Palestinian voices were limited and subjected to criticism. The selective use of the terms death and violence made the transfer of responsibility unclear. This situation shows how political support and criticism are framed in the media, how emotional messages and fostering of empathy contradict the claims of impartiality.

The ceasefire efforts category is the title with the least content. This category consists of news coverage related to the cessation of the war and calls for peace. One news report in Al Arabiya (2025b) highlighted UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' call for an independent investigation and accountability over the deaths of 31 Palestinians during aid delivery in Gaza. Guterres' statements emphasized the requirements of international law in terms of the protection of civilians and the security of humanitarian aid, and advocated the principles of transparency and impartiality in the face of mutual accusations between Israel and Hamas. The text shows that the UN has established a framework that supports ceasefire and peace efforts.

5. Conclusion

This study examines how the humanitarian conditions resulting from Israel's military operations in Gaza during the Israel–Palestine War were represented through the framework of humanitarian diplomacy in the news discourse of four Middle Eastern media organizations: Al Arabiya (Saudi Arabia), Al Jazeera (Qatar), Press TV (Iran), and TRT World (Türkiye). It aims to reveal how the media highlights human values, diplomatic initiatives, and international law during armed conflict. The findings show that 370 news reports generated 673 thematic categories. The most frequent category was civilian casualties and humanitarian plights, whereas ceasefire efforts received the least coverage. This suggests that wartime media prioritizes the visibility of deaths and humanitarian

suffering while giving comparatively limited attention to peace initiatives and diplomatic solutions.

Most reports on civilian casualties focus on attacks, deaths, injuries, inadequate healthcare, and humanitarian deprivation. Across all four media organizations, these stories adopt an informative yet emotionally engaging narrative. Child deaths, forced displacement, and widespread destruction are particularly emphasized, reinforcing the emotional impact of the coverage and appealing to the moral conscience of the international community.

The humanitarian diplomacy category highlights international aid initiatives, diplomatic pressure, and civilian protection mechanisms. TRT World's coverage of the Madleen Ship activists and Al Arabiya's reporting based on European public opinion surveys demonstrate that humanitarian diplomacy is represented both through concrete actions and public perceptions. At the same time, recurring themes such as blocked humanitarian aid, detained ships, and international silence reveal the political and military constraints that undermine humanitarian diplomacy. Reports concerning the United Nations and humanitarian organizations further emphasize the collapse of humanitarian systems in Gaza and the growing challenges to sustaining relief efforts.

Coverage of the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of the conflict extends beyond military operations to illustrate the long-term structural consequences of war. Food insecurity, the collapse of healthcare, disrupted education, and the deterioration of social life demonstrate the severe decline in living conditions. Reports alleging that aid distributed through the US-backed GHF endangered civilians also raise concerns about the politicization of humanitarian assistance and declining trust in relief operations, questioning the principles of neutrality and ethical responsibility that underpin humanitarian diplomacy.

Within the human rights and legal framework category, reports document torture of female detainees, administrative detention practices, and restricted healthcare access for persons with disabilities. Evaluated considering the Geneva Conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these practices are presented as systematic violations that raise serious concerns regarding war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The media discourse and framing category mainly criticizes the double standards of Western media. TRT World's coverage argues that Israeli actions are frequently legitimized while Palestinian victims receive comparatively weaker narrative representation. The obscuring of perpetrators and unequal distribution of empathy are presented as significant ethical problems in media reporting. Meanwhile, the limited coverage of ceasefire initiatives reflects the international community's passive approach to peace efforts. Despite repeated UN appeals for accountability, ceasefire negotiations remain largely marginalized in media discourse.

Overall, the findings reveal a clear tension between humanitarian sensitivity and political positioning in the news production of state-supported media. Although the coverage emphasizes human suffering, ethical responsibility, and civilian victimization, these narratives are closely intertwined with political framing, national interests, and ideological positioning. Consequently, humanitarian diplomacy is represented less as a normative ideal than as a communication practice shaped by political discourse.

The study concludes that media representations of the Gaza war provide an important basis for debates on humanitarian diplomacy, international law, and media ethics. The dominance of civilian suffering, limited visibility of diplomatic initiatives, politicization of humanitarian aid, and differences in media framing demonstrate that news discourse serves both informative and ideological functions. Accordingly, humanitarian diplomacy through the media should be evaluated not only for its role in making crises visible but also for its capacity to mobilize global conscience and contribute to international peace and justice.

The findings of this study contribute to the literature by comparatively examining humanitarian diplomacy narratives across four influential state-supported international media organizations representing different geopolitical contexts in the Middle East. Unlike previous studies that have generally focused on a single media outlet, a single country, or humanitarian diplomacy from an institutional or foreign policy perspective, this research demonstrates how humanitarian diplomacy is constructed through media framing and strategic communication during an ongoing armed conflict. In doing so, it expands the discussion of humanitarian diplomacy by integrating perspectives from international

communication, media framing, and crisis reporting into a common analytical framework.

The findings also have practical implications. For media organizations, the results highlight the importance of adopting transparent, balanced, and ethically responsible reporting practices that strengthen the credibility of humanitarian communication while avoiding excessive political polarization. For policymakers and international organizations, the findings underline the need to support communication strategies that enhance the visibility of humanitarian principles, civilian protection, and international law alongside diplomatic initiatives aimed at conflict resolution. Increasing the visibility of peace-oriented narratives may contribute to strengthening international public awareness and humanitarian advocacy.

Finally, future research may extend this analytical framework by including privately owned international media organizations, different geographical regions, longer periods of observation, and multimodal media content such as visual and audiovisual materials. Comparative studies incorporating audience reception and cross-platform communication analyses may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of how humanitarian diplomacy narratives are produced, disseminated, and interpreted in contemporary international communication.

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