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Türkiye's "Friendly Hand" Makes for Effective Public Diplomacy ^[1]


“There is hope after despair... and many suns after darkness...” The renowned words of Mevlana Jalaleddin Rumi summarise the humanitarian assistance provided by the Republic of Türkiye during the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in the final days of 2019 and affected the entire world. While the COVID-19 pandemic has engulfed the entire world, leaving many countries in despair, the lines above, which were written on aid packages sent from Türkiye, actually reveal the mental and emotional dimension of the Republic of Türkiye's foreign aid policy.

Human-centred policies in and of themselves are appreciated as acts of kindness. Do they also enhance states' global reputation and contribute to their public diplomacy? The solidarity in the face of crises or challenges should be at the heart of humanitarian policies. Thus, genuine policies upholding the needs of people, naturally, are welcomed and praised by the publics. It should be noted that Türkiye has been engaging in humanitarian efforts and taking

steps accordingly to help alleviate human suffering in various parts of the world. The transformation of Turkish foreign policy from a single-axis inward-looking Cold War foreign policy approach to a human and value-oriented foreign policy approach, has laid the groundwork for Türkiye to successfully conduct public diplomacy and has contributed to building itself a reputation as a beacon of hope for its region and the world.

Türkiye's Friendly Hand

During the times of humanitarian crises and challenges, Türkiye has extended its friendly hand to the countries in its region and across the world, thanks to humanitarian aid provided by its official institutions such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (T?KA), the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) and other organisations. In fact, according to the annual "[Global Humanitarian Assistance Report](#) ,

 Türkiye is the world leader in humanitarian aid. With \$5.6 billion in aid, Türkiye was ranked as the second most generous nation in [the report for 2022](#) . However, Türkiye ranks first when this amount is calculated using the gross national product (GNP). Türkiye carries out its humanitarian aid efforts in collaboration with the international community and provides aid to over 170 countries worldwide.

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During a time when the Covid-19 pandemic challenged the world economy and many countries reviewed their relief policies, Türkiye continued its efforts of providing aid to those in need despite the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent global economic crisis. According to the 2022 Global Humanitarian Aid Report, Türkiye continued to be one of the largest international donors of humanitarian aid, contributing \$5.6 billion in total. This was essential as it indicated that Türkiye did not halt its humanitarian policies and prioritized continuing its efforts to provide relief.

Moreover, Türkiye offers assistance to those who have been displaced from their home countries due to conflicts and other unfavourable circumstances, as well as those who have been forced to flee and seek refuge in Türkiye. The number of forcibly displaced people worldwide has reached 103 million, as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) [Mid-Year Trends Report](#) for 2022 indicates. According to the report, Türkiye has hosted 5.1 million people as of 2022 (3.7 million of them are refugees; the rest are displaced persons and asylum seekers). Furthermore, Türkiye provides critical humanitarian aid in the event of natural disasters such as floods, wildfires, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and volcanic eruptions. Among the disasters where Türkiye has extended [humanitarian assistance](#) are the 2004 Southeast Asia earthquake, 2005 Pakistan earthquake, 2010 Haiti and Chile earthquakes, Pakistan flood disaster, 2011 Japan earthquake, 2013 Philippines typhoon, 2014 Balkans flood disaster, 2015 Nepal earthquake, and the 2016 Macedonia flood disaster.

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Along with these, Türkiye's humanitarian assistance is not limited to in-kind and cash donations. Furthermore, possibly for the first time since the outbreak of war on February 24, 2022, Ukraine and Russia sat at the same table and signed the Grain Corridor Deal in Istanbul on July 22, 2022, thanks to the initiatives of the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. As the global food crisis was averted through Türkiye's initiatives, hope for a lasting peace between the parties in the medium and long term has arisen through Türkiye's mediation. As seen, the initiatives undertaken by the Republic of Türkiye as part of its foreign policy that prioritizes humans are leading steps that contribute to establishing peace not only in its region but also in the whole world. The normalization of relations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, which could meet at the same table thanks to Türkiye, will undoubtedly make a significant contribution to international stability and peace.

In this respect, the concepts of foreign aid and humanitarian aid are closely related to the states' public diplomacy. The Republic of Türkiye has extended its "helping hand" to those in need and has continued to provide assistance even during challenging times. Thus, the country's acts of kindness have been appreciated by the foreign publics, strengthening public diplomacy efforts. When the country was hit by devastating earthquakes in February, many foreign states and publics rushed to help Türkiye, which led to some analysis on media that the foreign aid was a repay of Türkiye's humanitarian policies pursued in different parts of the world. As Türkiye highlights its vision of "Century of Türkiye," it is expected to continue its public diplomacy efforts which value relationship building and engagement with foreign publics.
