

# NO TROOP PULLOUT

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## PM: Malaysians to stay in Bosnia as matter of principle

By WONG CHUN WAI

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia will not pull out its troops serving with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina despite the uncertainty there.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government was aware of the dangers facing the Malaysian troops but said they would fight back if attacked by the Serbs.

"The Government cannot recall its troops because the move will be similar to the measures of the United Nations which we criticise," he said here yesterday.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia did not only speak of justice but also practised it.

Malaysia was aware of the dangers posed to its troops but could not allow the unarmed Bosnians to be continuously killed by the Serbs, he added.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to newsmen after presenting ex-

cellence awards to Home Ministry staff at the Prime Minister's Department.

He was responding to questions about the position of Malaysian troops in Bosnia following reports that the Muslim town of Gorazde was teetering on the brink of a major humanitarian catastrophe.

Malaysia has 1,500 soldiers, most of them from the 23rd battalion Royal Malay Regiment, stationed in several Bosnian towns, including Sarajevo.

Dr Mahathir expressed concern that the Malaysian soldiers were not adequately equipped as their duties were confined only to peace-keeping.

"I fear that if our troops are trapped, the other UN soldiers might not go to their assistance as was the case when the Bosnians needed help," he added.

He repeated his criticism against countries which spoke of justice and human rights but did nothing while others were killed.

"I have lost faith in them altogether. They have no right to

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## 'UN did nothing to help'

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talk about human rights," he added.

The United Nations and its Security Council, he said, had not done anything to help the Muslims in Gorazde.

He said nothing was done to stop the Serbs from moving into the town and that the UN was now merely trying to save the UN troops.

Dr Mahathir questioned the rationale in refusing to arm the Bosnians to defend themselves.

"This is tantamount to handing them over to the Serbs to be killed. I don't understand all this, what kind of human beings are these," he said.

Major powers, he said, which questioned the detention of even one person were allowing this massive killings to go on.

On the letter sent to him by Bosnia-Herzegovina President Alija Izetbegovic for help, Dr Ma-

hathir said Malaysia was prepared to help if the UN were to attack the Serbs but said that Malaysian troops must be given adequate weapons.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said Malaysia had pressed for more concrete and firm action by the Western forces in the interest of humanity and justice.

"It is a clear signal of negligence and apathy on the part of Nato, the United Nations and Western forces who had been making pronouncement on human rights and democracy.

"They have been preaching to the whole world about these enshrined values but still completely ignore the massacres that have been happening in Bosnia," he told reporters after launching a low-cost housing scheme in Sungai Buloh near here.