

02 SEP 1997

Palestinians

S.O.S. TO MALAYSIA ON PALESTINIAN REFUGEE KIDS IN LEBANON

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's help has been sought to get the United Nations to continue basic support for children of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon following a decision by a UN agency to stop such support from January next year.

The director of the Beit Atfal As-Samoud Children Home in Beirut, Kassem Aina, told a news conference here today that the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) had given notice that it would no longer provide basic services to the children from next year due to budget constraints.

He said Malaysian well-wishers were currently sponsoring 400 such children, many of whom were here recently on a sponsored visit.

"The cut in UN support would mean their future education is in jeopardy. It will mean Malaysian sponsors will need at least RM90,000 per year for these children. Where is this money going to come from," he said.

He said the UNRWA had been forced to freeze the appointment of 250 additional teachers required for Palestinian schools as a result of the measure.

Aina said only the Malaysian government would be bold enough to highlight this problem at the coming session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Sociological Research Institute (MSRI), the local facilitators of the Palestinian children sponsorship programme, has appealed to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to intervene.

"Dr Mahathir is the only leader I know who has the guts to help these kids by bringing up their plight to the UN," said MSRI chairman Dr Alijah Gordon. -- BERNAMA

SLR AU RM