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Abdullah-Palestine

M'SIA TO ASK U.S. TO ASSERT INFLUENCE ON NETANYAHU

KUALA LUMPUR, July 20 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will continue to ask the United States to assert its influence on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to take more positive efforts to break the deadlocked West Asia peace process.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today Malaysia regretted very much that the US had not been successful in asserting influence on Netanyahu to move the peace process forward.

"In fact Netanyahu has completely ignored whatever peace agreements that have been entered into between Israel and the Palestinian people. This is certainly most regrettable," he said at a joint news conference with Palestinian Foreign Minister Farouk Khadoumi at the Foreign Ministry, here.

They had earlier discussed for about an hour the latest developments in West Asia.

Khadoumi, who arrived here yesterday for a five-day visit, was accompanied by his political adviser, Terzi Zuhdi, and Palestinian ambassador to Malaysia Ahmed Al Farra during the discussion.

Abdullah said Malaysia's commitment to supporting the Palestinian struggle remained very strong and Kuala Lumpur would do whatever it could in its active participation at international forums.

"It is our hope to see that peace returns to the Middle East. We hope that the Palestinian people will have the right to return to their homeland, the struggle of the Palestinian people is the struggle for human rights," he said.

Khadoumi voiced his appreciation to Malaysia for the firm support given to the Palestinian cause.

He said the Israeli government headed by Netanyahu had caused a setback in the peace process, which the previous Israeli government had agreed on, while the US, as the main broker of the process, had said that it was unable to convince the Israeli government to carry out the agreement.

Khadoumi said the Israeli government led by Netanyahu had made two major decisions which very much undermined the peace process.

The first defines Israel's vital national interests which included the Eastern and Western security zones, the areas surrounding Jerusalem, the areas of the settlements, infrastructure (water, electricity and transportation) interests and military-security sites.

"If they have defined their interest in the same settlement, roads, round roads, the eastern park and Jerusalem park, nothing is left of the West Bank, which is 97 per cent of the occupied Palestinian territories in 1967," he said.

He said Israel annexed even more areas around Jerusalem a week ago, with the area annexed equal to 80 per cent of the West Bank territories.

Khadoumi said the second decision made implementation of redeployment of forces conditional on Yasser Arafat's compliance with terms that were difficult, if not impossible, to meet.

"They behaved as Hitler....this is the same Nazi," he said, adding that Netanyahu had come up with a redeployment idea that would look reasonable on paper, but had almost no chance of being carried out.

Asked what other countries could do to help Palestine, he said they could pressure the US to announce its initiative in order to tell the public that Israel was responsible for the stalemate and for killing the peace process.

"Action should be taken later by the United Nations and economic sanctions should be imposed on Israel, similar to that on the apartheid regime of South Africa in the past," he said.

Khadoumi later held talks with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at his office, here.

-- BERNAMA

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