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KL wants peace process expedited

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MALAYSIA wants the US to exert its influence on the Israeli Government to push forward the West Asian peace process.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Malaysia regrets that the US has been unsuccessful in exerting its influence on the Israeli Government under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to push the peace process ahead.

"In fact, Netanyahu has completely ignored whatever peace agreements that have been entered into between Israel and Palestine," he told newsmen after meeting Palestinian Foreign Minister Farouk Khadoumi in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Khadoumi, who arrived Kuala Lumpur on Sunday, is on a five-day visit to Malaysia. He will leave for Singapore on Thursday.

Khadoumi, who was also present at the press conference, shared Abdullah's views on the deadlock in the West Asian peace process.

He urged Malaysia and other countries which support the Palestinians' struggle, to pressure the US to inform the international community that Israel is responsible for the stalemate and is "killing" the peace process.

"Action should be taken in the UN and economic sanctions should be imposed on Israel, similar to the apartheid regime in South Africa in the past," he added.

Khadoumi also met Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad later in the afternoon.

Describing the Palestinians' struggle as legitimate in terms of fighting for human rights, Abdullah said the Malaysian government and its people support the Palestinians in their struggle.

"Your (Palestinians) struggle is legitimate," he told Khadoumi.

"The struggle of the Palestinians is a struggle of human rights ... their rights to their homeland, their rights to live in peace and harmony, their rights to establish relations with other countries. This is important.

"Whatever happen to the Palestinian people is an aggression against human rights. This is something we strongly oppose to and we will continue to support your struggle," he added.

Abdullah said Malaysia will do whatever it can through active participation at international forums and conferences, to see that peace and harmony return to West Asia.

Abdullah said Malaysia also supports the setting up of an international war crimes court.

"We support the move because we want to see an international court that has the freedom to listen or tries any cases rather than depending on the decision of the UN Security Council.

"We do not want the UN Security Council to determine which case should be listened to at the international court as there may be a conflict of interest among Security Council members and the use of veto power to oppose or bring a case to court.

"This is not good in terms of the freedom of a court that need the confidence of the international community," he said.

The statute for the proposed international war crimes court was drafted in Rome last Friday, in which 120 countries were in favour, seven countries against, while 21 abstained.

Israel is one of the seven countries which opposed the statute because it fears that the decision made on the construction of Jewish settlements in occupied territories can be considered as a war crime.

It was reported that some 160,000 Jews live in settlements scattered among more than two million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, areas captured by Israel from Jordanian and Egyptian rule in the 1967 West Asian war.

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