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Arab-Israeli conflict shows up Washington's double standards

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THE horrors of the on-going conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis since last week is probably best depicted by the footage of France TV on 12-year-old Mohamed al-Durrah.

The footage which showed how the Palestinian boy was shot and later died in the arms of his father, Jamal, sparked off the uprising against the Israelis.

Mohamed is only joining the many, in the statistics list, victims of cruelties and murders of Palestinians.

His death is no less senseless than the massacre of some 5,000 Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in September 1982 by the Zionist regime.

While the world watches in horror how the Tel Aviv administration carry out its ruthless genocide on the Palestinians, year after year, one wonders why the United States, which struts around in its self-appointed role as the global policeman, has not pushed for sanctions or other punitive measures against Israel.

Furthermore, the killings of Palestinians by Israelis is not something new but has been going on for years and yet, the best the Americans have proposed in dealing with them is to sponsor peace talks which have yet to be successful.

But such questions are definitely rhetorical, as discussing the double-standards of Washington is like listening to a broken record.

However, these concerns, much as they may be voices in the wilderness, need to be said repeatedly, so as to remind Muslims and other Third World people on why they should not place their faith nor trust in American leaders.

The best way to deal with the Washington administration is to look at it as a capitalist without a conscience - there is no altruism in whatever they do in the name of humanity, freedom or equality.

Of course, it is unfair to generalise this of all Americans. Here, the criticisms are on the US Government.

Look at the foreign policy of Washington when dealing with Iraq.

The latter has been punished by decade old sanctions which resulted in the death of thousands of children and yet, the US administration refuses to even consider calls for the sanctions to end.

Back home, when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad pointed out in 1997 that most of the currency speculators were Jews, the American Congress described him as anti-Semitic and threatened to impose sanctions on Malaysia.

However, the continuous murders akin to genocide on the Palestinians by the Tel Aviv regime does not seem to warrant efforts to impose sanctions on Israel.

The same goes for the attitude of American leaders, vice-president Al Gore and secretary of state Madeleine Albright.

The former was so impressed by "brave Malaysians" who staged the reformasi demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur in 1998 that he couldn't resist giving his commendation at a dinner hosted by the Malaysian government.

If the reformasi supporters of Kuala Lumpur are brave, then what would Al Gore's accolades be for the Palestinians who throw stones to fight the Israeli soldiers who are armed to the teeth with the latest sophisticated weapons most probably bought from the US.

The bravest of the lot, probably, but do not expect Al Gore to come out in the open to say it as Israel does seem to be like a "protectorate" of the US.

While the murders and massacres of the Palestinians will continue to evoke debates, the problems in the Southern Philippines are also a subject which can test many a Malaysian mind, especially of the Malays.

The military operations by Manila came about following a spate of kidnappings by the Abu Sayyaf group and those kidnapped included Malaysians.

Prior to this, most Malays had much sympathy for the separatists groups in Philippines be it the Abu Sayyaf, Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) or the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Most of the sympathy arises from the fact that they are Muslims and that their cause is to set up an independent state which is not subjected to the Christian-dominated Manila administration.

However, the kidnapping activities by the Abu Sayyaf of late has somehow made the sympathy turn to scorn as there is nothing Islamic in the deeds and if anything, they have given the religion a bad name.

Now, the Philippines Government decided to mount a military operation on "suspected" hideouts of the Abu Sayyaf and along the way the Manila administration is alleged to have killed innocent Muslims. Pas has protested against this.

Earlier, on May 9, Parti Keadilan Nasional president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail had written a letter to Philippines President Joseph Estrada expressing appreciation for his handling of the hostage crisis in Jolo.

She commended him for his patience and forbearance in trying to resolve in a peaceful manner a crisis that involves the lives of so many innocent men and women (the letter appeared on the web site <http://www.keadilan.org>).

That was in May. Today, it seems that Estrada's patience has been stretched over the limit and he has had enough with negotiations.

In short, what the Abu Sayyaf did has given reasons for the Manila administration to carry out the attack.

An almost similar situation occurred in Southern Thailand involving the Muslim separatists which were grouped under the Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO), Barisan Revolusi Nasional Pattani (BRNP), Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Pattani (BNPP) and Barisan Bersatu Mujahideen Pattani (BBMP).

In the late 1980s, the Thai Government had been trying hard to change the image of these groups from that of Muslim separatists to terrorists.

By the 1990s, after some bombing of public places including the railway station in Haadyai which killed innocent civilians, the efforts to make these groups be known as terrorists became quite successful.

Such is the fate of Muslim separatists and fighters the world over. From being crusaders in a jihad (holy war), they end up as terrorists and bandits.

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