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Mahathir-Palestine

MALAYSIA, INDONESIA STRONGLY CONDEMN ISRAELI ACTION

LANGKAWI, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Indonesia today strongly condemned the disproportionate use of force by the Israeli forces against the Palestinians.

"We want peace to be established in Palestine as soon as possible. We want both sides to stop fighting and talk to each other," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Speaking at a joint press conference with Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid at the Sheraton Perdana Hotel, here, he said the use of force was not the way to achieve peace.

"I think this is not the way for countries to conduct their relationship especially when they declare that they want to have peace. It is difficult to have peace when they start shooting people," Dr Mahathir said.

He was asked to describe in a nutshell Malaysia's and Indonesia's stand on the issue after Abdurrahman said that their foreign ministers would issue a joint communique on Palestine.

In their joint communique, Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and his counterpart Dr Alwi Shihab said their governments and people mourned the deaths of more than 100 civilians including children.

"The Security Council must bring to justice those directly and wilfully responsible for these tragic deaths," they said.

They said Malaysia and Indonesia held Ariel Sharon responsible for his provocative visit to the third holiest Muslim shrine Al Haram Al Sharif on Sept 28 which sparked the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories.

Both countries, they said, welcomed the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1322.

The resolution calls on Israel as the Occupying Power to abide scrupulously by its legal obligations and responsibilities to the protection of the civilian persons in time of war which is applicable to all territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

Malaysia and Indonesia reaffirmed their recognition of Al Quds Al Sharif as the political and historical capital of the Palestinian people and state.

As chairman of the 27th Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM), Malaysia proposed that a Special Session of the ICFM be convened in Jerusalem to discuss the Palestine issue and the government of Indonesia fully supported the proposal.

The ministers said Malaysia and Indonesia also commended the efforts of all parties in convening the Sharm el Sheikh summit in Egypt to seek ways in ending the nearly three weeks of violence between Israel and Palestinians.

They expressed the hope that the summit would address the urgent issue of resuming the peace negotiations, leading to a final political settlement.

A report from Sharm el-Sheikh said US President Bill Clinton left the Egyptian Red Sea Resort Tuesday after spending a day and a half at the emergency summit to broker an agreement between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Clinton was quoted as saying that both sides agreed to publicly call for an end to the violence and take concrete measures to stop it.

Jordan's King Abdullah also attended the summit.

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