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OIC (Wrap-up)

OIC BLOOD BOILS OVER CONTINUED ISRAELI AGGRESSION IN PALESTINE

By: Muin Abdul Majid

DOHA (Qatar), Nov 15 (Bernama) -- Condemnation of Israel's brutality against Palestinians rose to a crescendo at the just-concluded ninth summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) here as Muslim countries stood solidly behind Palestine in its struggle for nationhood.

The Doha Declaration of the OIC issued at the end of the two-day summit condemned Israel for what it called Tel Aviv's rejection of the will of the international community asserting the right of the Palestinian people to set up an independent state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif (East Jerusalem) as its capital.

Joining in the Islamic community's chorus of outrage over the injustices perpetrated by the Tel Aviv regime in the Occupied Territories was Malaysia.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reminded OIC countries to stop bickering among themselves and approach this issue "with a collective heart and mind".

He said: "Let us truly act as an organisation of like-minded and religiously dedicated people. Let us shame those who loudly condemn imaginary oppression and yet do nothing when blatant violations of human rights take place before their very eyes.

"The Palestinians have struggled and suffered long enough. The time has come for them to take what is theirs with our support."

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has vowed that the Al Aqsa uprising would continue despite the high cost in human lives and financial losses until the end of Israeli occupation.

Meanwhile, the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani who is the new chairman of the OIC, has proposed that an OIC ministerial team be despatched to the United Nations (UN) to press for a stop to Israel's aggression against Palestinians.

And just as the delegates were leaving Doha, reports emerged of more deaths in the Palestinian territories with daily television footages showing the ritual of yet another body being carried aloft by a sea of Palestinians en route for burial.

This leaves one to wonder what the Muslim countries could really do to halt the violence in a land so bitterly disputed by the Muslim and the Jewish communities that they are prepared to do battle, and sometimes, die over it.

Although previous OIC summits have addressed many issues over the years like Bosnia Herzegovina in 1994 and the financial crisis in 1997, the conflict in Palestine has always been the backdrop of summit proceedings.

This is not a surprise really for the organisation was formed in Morocco on Sept 25, 1969 with the holding of the first meeting of the leaders of the Islamic world in the wake of a Zionist attempt to burn down the Al Aqsa mosque a month earlier in the occupied city of Al Quds.

The latest round of violence was sparked off by a controversial visit by an Israeli politician to a holy sanctuary in Jerusalem where the Al Aqsa mosque stands.

The Doha summit also called on Iraq and the UN to engage in a comprehensive dialogue that could lead to the lifting of sanctions against Baghdad imposed 10 years ago following its invasion of neighbouring Kuwait.

In fact, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan met Iraqi Vice-President Ezzat Ibrahim in the Qatari capital to discuss deadlocked efforts to ease the decade-old sanctions.

Turning to economic matters, the OIC called for a higher level of economic and commercial cooperation between its 56 member states which could lead to the objective of an Islamic Common Market.

The summit has been quite a successful outing for Malaysia as Kuala Lumpur has been given the honour of hosting the next OIC leaders' meeting in 2003 although it is the turn of Africa to do so.

Dr Mahathir has thanked all the delegates for the confidence and support expressed to Malaysia.

It has also been decided that Malaysia will hold the post of OIC assistant secretary-general from July 2003 to June 2005.

Kuala Lumpur's call for a reform of the OIC has also been met with a favourable reply with the proposed appointment of consultants to look into the matter.

-- BERNAMA

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