

12 NOV 2000
OIC-Opening
OIC SUMMIT GETS UNDERWAY IN DOHA

DOHA (Qatar), Nov 12 (Bernama) -- The ninth Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit opened here today amid indications that Muslim countries are resolved to send a strong signal to Israel over its violent conduct against Palestinians.

The Palestine-Israel conflict will top the agenda at the three-day gathering of leaders and representatives from 56 member countries, dubbed the Summit of Peace and Development.

Malaysia is represented by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is making his fourth summit appearance.

The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, started the ball rolling when he said in his keynote address that there was no other choice for Muslim countries but to work to accomplish a comprehensive renaissance that would secure for the people and societies opportunities of progress and development.

"This, undoubtedly, requires from us a lot of self-criticism and rethinking, and calls for further consistent hard work," he said.

On the subject of Palestine, he said the least the Doha meeting could do was to come up with a practical strategy that would contribute effectively to restoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the past eight weeks had made it abundantly clear to all sides that the cause of peace could only be damaged by excessive use of force, indiscriminate violence or terror.

"There are wounds in the families and communities concerned that may take a generation to heal. I can only imagine the anguish of the Palestinian people at their terrible losses in the recent violence.

"I feel special sorrow at the deaths and injuries of so many young people and I join you in sending my heartfelt condolences to every bereaved family," he said.

Annan took the opportunity to remind all members of the UN of their obligation to comply with Security Council resolutions.

He also said that the challenges of the future did not lie in the battlefield but in the minds of the young people who must be given tools to succeed in the information age.

Meanwhile, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat gave a lengthy update on what was happening in the occupied territories.

Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) South African President Thabo Mbeki said the situation in West Asia posed a direct threat to world peace and security.

He said: "We would like to reiterate the long-standing solidarity of NAM with the Palestinian people. All UN resolutions on the question of Palestine, including those related to Palestinian refugees, should be implemented as a matter of urgency."

Mbeki also said that the OIC and NAM should intensify efforts to ensure the democratisation of the UN as well as all other political and financial global multilateral organisations.

-- BERNAMA

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