

PM condemns US veto against observers in Middle East

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PUTRAJAYA, Mon: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has condemned the US veto rejecting the United Nations Security Council resolution to deploy international observers in the Middle East.

He said despite repeated requests to US President George W. Bush, the US has maintained its stance to oppose such a move.

"I think that the veto power (as it exists) causes loss to the international community. If at all it has to be retained, it should be conditional," he told reporters during his Hari Raya open house for VIPs at Seri Perdana yesterday.

"By using the veto power, we are actually hampering democracy in the world."

Wire agencies had reported that the US used its veto power again to oppose the resolution which, among others, directed international observers to be sent to the West Bank and the Gaza strip to monitor the violence

between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Mahathir said: "We feel sad because the Palestinians have no recourse when attacked by the Israelis. There is no one to defend them, so they have to resort to blowing themselves up and violence.

"If we don't help, what else can they do. We have always maintained that the Palestinians and Israelis must be kept apart. To ask them to negotiate is impossible."

Mahathir also does not know why the US opposed the resolution despite having written to Bush previously requesting UN forces to be sent in.

"I had also requested the same thing when I met him (Bush) in Shanghai recently but it seems that the US is not changing its stance."

Despite the support from 12 countries, the resolution had to be set aside following the Bush administration's rejection. Britain and Norway had abstained.