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Arafat-Observers

ARAFAT SEEKS INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS FOR PEACE IN WEST ASIA

PUTRAJAYA, Aug 25 (Bernama) -- Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said today he has been lobbying with the international community including the United Nations and Arab League to send international observers to Palestine so that all peace initiatives can be implemented.

Arafat, who is on his second visit to Malaysia in a year, said international observers should be deployed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to help end the 11-month-old wave of violence in West Asia which had claimed more than 700 lives.

He said the Palestinians had accepted all peace initiatives including those reached in Paris, Oslo, Camp David, Lisbon and Athens but nothing had been achieved so far but instead Israel had increased its military aggression against his people and the holy places for Christians and Muslims.

He was speaking at a media conference after an hour-long meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Prime Minister's official residence in "Seri Perdana" here.

The seven-member Palestinian delegation led by Arafat was on a brief stop-over in Malaysia to explain to Dr Mahathir the latest developments in West Asia.

It is part of a whirlwind tour of Asian countries to drum up international support for the struggle of the Palestinians against Israeli occupation and to end the bloodshed in that region.

Arafat said the last proposal came from Yemeni Foreign Minister Dr Abubaker Al-Qirbi who had initiated a meeting between him and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

"I told him that I have met Peres in Cairo, Lisbon and Athens. But until now, we have not achieved anything concrete to stop this military escalation.

"Now, (Israeli Prime Minister) Ariel Sharon is saying that they are going to implement the Hebron separation plan...it's a hell plan against the holy places for Muslims and Christians and also against our people," he said.

Despite the prolonged sufferings endured by his people from Israel's onslaught, Arafat said the Palestinians were in high spirit to weather the situation.

He said the Israeli military has been using gas bombs, sophisticated weapons including tanks and Apache helicopters against the Palestinians.

"All of them are American weapons.

"I have mentioned it to Bush (US President George W. Bush) and Powell (Secretary of State (Colin Powell)). I can't move without the approval of our Arab and Christian brothers to protect the holy and sacred places," he said.

On his brief visit to Malaysia before heading for his next stop in Bangladesh, Arafat said he explained the current situation to Dr Mahathir.

"I have given him (Dr Mahathir) the full picture on how we are suffering and we have received strong support from him and the people of Malaysia," he said.

Arafat was accompanied by Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Dr Nabil Shaath and Minister of Local Government Dr Saeb Irekat.

-- BERNAMA

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