

Palestine wants Dr M to help save its territory

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PALESTINE wants Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to use his good offices to get help from the Bush Administration and European countries to pressure Israel to withdraw its forces from occupied Palestinian territories.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Farouk Kaddoumi made the call when he met the Prime Minister at the latter's office in Parliament.

"We need the good offices of the Prime Minister to get in touch with President George W. Bush.

"We are desperate and need help from the international community," he told selected newsmen at the Palace of Golden Horses, the venue for the special session.

Kaddoumi is leading the Palestinian delegation to the special session.

Kaddoumi also conveyed Arafat's message to Dr Mahathir and thanked the Prime Minister and the people of Malaysia for their continuous support for the struggle of the Palestinian people.

Kaddoumi said Dr Mahathir was also briefed on the peace initiative adopted recently by the Arab summit in Beirut.

The Saud-proposed plan calls for an Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands occupied since the 1967 war

in return for peace and normal relations with all Arab states.

He said the US Administration has leverage over Israel and was in a good position to do something to push for peace in West Asia.

"The situation in Palestine is very critical and the life of President Yasser Arafat is in danger," Kaddoumi said.

As the Israeli grip tightened around Arafat, Kaddoumi said he has not been able to contact Arafat to ascertain the latest developments in Ramallah.

Kaddoumi said he did not know of Arafat's current condition as all communication channels have broken down and destroyed by Israeli forces.

Besides seeking Dr Mahathir's help to help find a lasting solution to the Palestinian issue, Kaddoumi said he had earlier also spoken to Saudi Crown Prince, Prince Abdullah, on the same matter.

He was hopeful that Saudi Arabia too would use its good offices and urge the American administration to help end the present crisis.

Still hoping that a political solution would be found, Kaddoumi said Israeli forces must withdraw from occupied Palestinian territory and stop the siege of its people,

particularly on Arafat.

Asked how a political solution could be found under the present critical circumstances, Kaddoumi said this depended very much on the United States and United Nations.

The US through the UN can provide for enduring political solution by first of all urging Israeli forces to withdraw completely from Palestine.

"Our strategy is based on peace. The US is the co-sponsor of the peace initiative and, therefore, has the responsibility to ensure that this is properly and effectively done.

"It must be noted that Israel was created by the UN resolution," he said, adding that nothing can stop the UN from doing the same for Palestine.

Kaddoumi said the Israeli atrocities would continue and that food and medical supplies have been stopped from being sent to Palestine.

The Israelis have also destroyed water pipelines, uprooted fruit trees, and farms.

They also used helicopters, tanks and fired missiles to destroy police headquarters, the airport, including the runway and seaports.