

Umno, Pas unite for

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Declaration calling on international community

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. Umno and Pas, in a rare but welcome show of unity, tonight set aside their political differences to call on the international community to seek an enduring political solution to the Palestinian conflict.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Pas counterpart, Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor, stood on the same stage at Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka's Balai Keris Mas to sign a joint declaration on the issue.

The declaration also represents the people's support for the cause of the Palestinians in defending their homeland. It calls on the international community to make concrete efforts to seek peace and help promote and protect the sovereignty of the Palestinians.

The historic occasion was conducted in the packed hall and witnessed by top leaders of the two parties and some 3,000 supporters, observers and members of the public.

Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Pas deputy president Datuk Abdul Hadi Awang were with the two leaders on the stage as Dr Mahathir and Fadzil penned their signatures on the declaration.

Pas vice-presidents Hassan Shukri, Datuk Mustaffa Ali and Datuk Hassan Ali, Information chief Azizan Abdul Razak and secretary-general Nasharuddin Mat Isa were among familiar Pas faces at the hall.

Top Umno leaders included vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo and several supreme council members.

Parti Keadilan Nasional president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and Parti Rakyat Malaysia president Syed Hussein Ali were also present.

Dr Mahathir and Fadzil had earlier delivered speeches at the *Syarahan Perdana* on "Palestine and Humanity" organised by Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia and Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

Before signing the declaration, Dr Mahathir and Fadzil spoke for 50 minutes each on the struggles and plight of the Palestinians.

Palestine

to solve conflict signed

Israel and Ariel Sharon are our common enemy, says Dr M

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Dr Mahathir started his speech by saying that it was rare for him and Fadzil to speak from the same podium, but the Palestinian issue had drawn them together.

"We can have disagreements on other issues but on Israel and Ariel Sharon, we cannot afford to disagree because they

are our common enemy. They are enemies to all Muslims.

"That's why I accepted this invitation. I wish to make just one request... that we should not be divided over the Palestinian issue. We can have our differences in politics, but we should not be disunited over this issue.

"Our strategies may differ but we are fighting for the same cause. I may not agree with

Fadzil's strategy, and he may not with mine, but most importantly we are fighting for the same cause. Hence, I don't see how we can have many differences over this issue," he said.

Umno leaders and Fadzil, along with his Pas colleagues, had met the Prime Minister on his arrival.

They then accompanied Dr Mahathir to a photo exhibition

on Israel's atrocities. The exhibition was organised by the *New Straits Times*.

A poem recited by Muslim scholar Uthman El-Muhammady, followed by a TV3 documentary on the sufferings of the Palestinians, then set the stage for the two leaders to begin their talk.

The occasion was telecast live by RTM.