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Arafat-Condition

ARAFAT'S LIFE IN GRAVE DANGER- PALESTINE AMBASSADOR

By: R.Ravichandran

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 26 (Bernama) -- Palestine President Yasser Arafat's life is in grave danger as the Israeli military continues its siege of his headquarters in the West Bank City of Ramallah, its Ambassador to Malaysia Ahmad Al Farra said today.

He said President Arafat and about 200 people who were holed up with him in the building in Ramallah were facing food and water shortage.

Electricity supply had also been cut off to the presidential office and they were unable to charge their mobile phones, he said.

Ahmad said the Israeli military had demolished all the buildings adjacent to the headquarters.

"And even his office is now not safe and can collapse anytime. His life is in danger actually...when someone is under siege and deprived of the means to live...he is in danger."

"This is a very serious and dangerous situation," he told Bernama during an interview.

The Israelis began their siege exactly one-week ago, after Palestinian suicide bombers killed seven people in Israel. At least 1,564 Palestinians and about 600 Israelis had died in two years of Palestinian uprising.

Israel had demanded that Arafat hand over about 50 people holed up in the building which it claimed as suspected militants.

Ahmad also said that he would not rule out the headquarters being stormed by the Israeli military.

"I don't rule out anything...Sharon (Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon) can do any and everything. Everything can be expected," he said.

"I tried to contact Arafat yesterday night but was unable to reach him."

The ambassador said he last spoke to Arafat on Friday when the Palestinian leader also spoke to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad requesting assistance to end the siege.

However, Ahmad said Arafat's fighting spirit was still very high despite all the hardship and suffering being inflicted on him and his people.

"His morale is very high," Ahmad said of the 73-year old Arafat who is the symbol of the Palestinian people in their struggle to end more than 50 years of Israeli occupation and secure their homeland.

To a question, Ahmad said the latest siege was different from the last one a few months ago, as this time the Israeli military had demolished all the buildings around Arafat's headquarters.

"The US is saying Iraq must comply with all UN resolutions, but then Israel is not implementing the UN resolution demanding an end to the siege," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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