

22 FEB 2003

NAM-Jenin

HISTORICAL JENIN WANTS NAM'S HELP TO HALT ISRAEL'S AGGRESSION

PUTRAJAYA, Feb 22 (Bernama) -- The city of Jenin, which traces its history back to more than 4,000 years, wants the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) holding its 13th summit in Kuala Lumpur, to pressure Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories in Palestine.

The city, home to more than 50,000 Palestinians, also wants the international community to help halt the massacre of Palestinians by Israeli forces and ensure that all the United Nations' resolutions on Palestine be enforced.

Mayor of Jenin Walid Musa Abu Mowes said the city had seen too many killings, especially of children and women, and since last April it was being invaded regularly by Israeli forces.

"Houses are demolished, people killed on a daily basis by Israeli forces, claiming that Jenin is producing terrorists. This is not true at all. The city is now under siege," he told reporters after a 30-minute courtesy call on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at his office here today.

He said todate 5,000 houses had been demolished in the Jenin province, of this 1,360 were in the city of Jenin, while about 13,000 Palestinians had been jailed, including 2,030 from Jenin.

Walid Musa said the Israeli forces had also destroyed the city's infrastructure and that the people were living without proper sanitation, water and electricity.

"Jenin had reached 70 per cent unemployment, all our service facilities and buildings have been destroyed. Police station, jails and all official buildings had been destroyed," he said.

Walid Musa said Israeli tanks often barged into schools without any thought to children in the area. Recently a nine-year-old girl was killed after she was steam-rolled by tanks.

The city had one hospital but this too was destroyed forcing the people to seek medical treatment in other provinces.

"But this too is a problem as Israel had built checkpoints everywhere and it takes more than six to seven hours to get to a point only five kilometres away. It took me three days to get here. From Jenin to the Jordanian border, it took me 14 hours although the distance is not far, 10 hours to get to Kuala Lumpur," he said.

Asked on the impending United States attack on Iraq, Walid Musa said Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon might take the opportunity to "go all out" against the Palestinians and "wipe them out."

"If there is war in Iraq, Sharon would do whatever he wanted. We might be killed or even deported forcefully," he said.

He said the international community should find a peaceful resolution to the crisis and stop Israeli aggression. "We have to go on, that is the only thing we can do. We request peace lovers anywhere in the world to stand by us."

Of his meeting with Dr Mahathir, Walid Musa said he presented his gratitude of the Palestinians to the Prime Minister and he had promised more aid to Palestine.

Walid Musa said the Malaysian government has agreed to raise the US\$50,000 (RM190,000) aid it had promised for the building of two schools to US\$1 million (RM3.8 million).

He said Dr Mahathir had also promised more support for the Palestinians

to end the conflict.
-- BERNAMA
SR MFJ NDC