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OIC-Palestine

PALESTINIANS' ARMED STRUGGLE WILL CONTINUE, SAYS KADDOUMI

By: Mohd Haikal Isa

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 12 (Bernama) -- The Palestinians will continue their armed struggle against the Israelis and will stop only when the occupying forces withdrew from the occupied territories, a top Palestinian official said.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) Political Bureau Chief, Farouq al-Kaddoumi, said pursuing the armed struggle was a must "as it was the only solution in sight to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

"The continuation of resistance is a must. We must continue our struggle against the occupation. This is the only solution to our problem.

"The fighters are determined to liberate the occupied territories to establish the state of their own with Jerusalem and Haram al-Sharif as the joint capital," he told BERNAMA upon arrival at the KL International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang, near here.

Kaddoumi is the highest ranking Palestine official to attend the 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit which started at the Putrajaya Convention Centre here yesterday with the Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM).

Palestine President Yasser Arafat will not be attending the summit as he is confined to his Ramallah headquarters.

Kaddoumi said the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip would continue as the actions of the occupying forces are supported by the United States while the European countries declined to take any measures to prevent the atrocities.

"More than 85,000 Israeli soldiers with 1,000 tanks are in our territories. They divide the land into small cantons. They also implement a policy of hot pursuit, meaning they enter the cantons and kill people, destroy houses and arrest people," he said.

Kaddoumi said attempts by the Palestinians to free their homeland from the clutches of the occupiers should not be equated to terrorism as the United Nations Charter had allowed people under occupation to use all means to liberate themselves.

"There is a difference between terrorism and trying to liberate occupied lands. As long as our lands are occupied, why are we accused of terrorism. The UN Charter states that we should fight by all means," he said.

He said latest efforts to revive the West Asian peace process through the implementation of a road map had failed due to the Israelis' refusal to honour their commitment.

The Road Map, which was endorsed by the United States and European countries including Russia, envisioned a fully viable Palestinian state by 2005.

Kaddoumi said: "They (Israelis) never do anything but on the contrary, we've a new Prime Minister, have drafted a new constitution and a new cabinet.

"The Israelis did not do anything but instead killed more Palestinians and assassinated our political leaders."

As to the OIC Summit, he said, Palestine placed great importance on the meeting and expected unequivocal support for its struggle from the 57-member organisation.

"The OIC needs to remain united as we can ride all the challenges if we are united," he said.

Kaddoumi said the Palestinians needed economic and political support from member states as they were fighting for the Islamic cause.

On Malaysia taking over the OIC Chairmanship, he said, it augured well for the Palestinian cause as Kuala Lumpur had been a strong supporter against the occupation.

"We know Malaysia will deliver and are confident this meeting will make an impact," he said.

He said Arafat conveyed his deepest regards and respect to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and to other OIC leaders.

He said the ageing Palestinian leader, who had just recovered from a minor health problem, apologised for his inability to attend the summit.

"He is very sorry for not attending the meeting," he added.

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