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## Leaders rally to defend Dr Mahathir

PUTRAJAYA, Fri. - Organisation of the Islamic Conference leaders came to the defence of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today, saying his remarks at the opening of the 10th OIC Summit on Thursday were not anti-Semitic.

Instead, they expressed support for Dr Mahathir who urged Muslims to learn from the Jews, who now "rule the world by proxy" after having "gained control of the most powerful countries".

Dr Mahathir, elected chairman of the OIC today, came under fire from the Governments of Australia, the European Union and the United States for his comments.

Several organisations criticised Dr Mahathir, claiming that he was calling on the Muslims to wage war against the Jews.

The various Muslim leaders who came to his defence had attended the summit opening and heard his speech.

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami said criticism that Dr Mahathir was anti-Semitic was actually a well-calculated Western propaganda.

In fact, he described Dr Mahathir's speech at the opening session of the OIC Summit as brilliant and enlightening to Muslims worldwide.

Khatami said anti-Semitism was in reality a product of the West, adding that Muslims were not anti-Semitic or anti-Jew but were merely standing up against the injustices waged on them.

"Anti-Semitism is produced by the West.

"In Germany and other parts of Europe, the Jews were under the most extreme anti-Semitism violence.

"Muslims are today made to pay for the crimes of the Western world against the Jews.

"No Muslim is anti-Semitic, we are all brothers and are all alongside each other.

"These Western propaganda do not have much effect," he told the New Straits Times, dismissing claims that Dr Mahathir had called on Muslims to wage war against Jews.

Khatami said Dr Mahathir had made a clarion call for Muslims to unite and avoid indulging in any form of violence which would only be selfincriminating.

"Dr Mahathir just asked fellow Muslims to think and not just act irrationally and be guided by emotion alone," he said, adding that criticism of his speech was something expected by many.

In a similar tone, Pakistani President Gen Pervez Musharraf said Dr Mahathir, who is the current OIC chairman, never called on the Muslims to wage war against any race or country.

"I don't think he has done that at all, I don't think he called for war against the Jews or anything like that, he expressed his own thoughts ... but I'm very sure he did not ask Muslims to go to war with anyone," Musharraf said at a Press conference.

Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai said Dr Mahathir's comments were made in the context of reminding the delegates about the challenges facing the ummah.

"Dr Mahathir was just talking about issues confronting the Muslim world and what Muslims should do.

"His historic analysis of Islam was very correct and Muslim communities must take a big step forward if they want to be a strong ummah and respected by others.

"Muslims must educate themselves, be progressive and develop themselves.

"It was great to hear Dr Mahathir speaking so eloquently on the problems of the ummah and ways to remedy them."

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Maher said Dr Mahathir's remarks had been taken out of context and blown out of proportion.

He called on Dr Mahathir's detractors to read the full text of the speech instead, because it would show that Dr Mahathir had in fact made a shrewd and deep assessment of the problems facing the Muslims.

"Those who are commenting on the speech have not read it. Dr Mahathir made very, very wise assessments in his speech.

"It was addressed to the Muslims as an appeal to them to wake up," Maher said.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Farouk Kaddoumi pointed out how anyone would be labelled anti-Semitic merely for speaking up against the Israeli aggression.

"He (Dr Mahathir) spoke the truth but Israel and their sympathisers tend to regard any statement against them as anti-Semitic.

"They accuse us while they occupy our country, kill our people and claim that we are terrorists.

"It is Israel which actually practises State terrorism.

"Dr Mahathir's speech was in fact excellent, and he actually provided the strategy for Muslims to safeguard their interests.

"Israel, on the other hand, has violated human rights because they continue their occupation of our lands.

"Some 85,000 of their soldiers are in our country and other territories of the Arabs and in the Golan Heights, but Israel always claim they are pursuing peace."