

**Dr M: Taib must not get into a Mubarak situation**  
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Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamed said today Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud should have a successor ready before he considers stepping down after three decades in power.

Mahathir, himself having served as prime minister for 22 years before resigning in 2003, said it was best left to Sarawakians to decide on Taib's continued leadership.

However, he stressed, it must be an orderly process.

"It is up to the people of Sarawak to decide (when Taib should step down). I think they know best," he said at a press conference after launching the Palestinian Cultural Organisation Malaysia in Shah Alam.

"But if he does step down, he must have someone to replace him, or else it will be like (Hosni) Mubarak... he stepped down and I don't see any successor to take over," he said referring to the deposed Egyptian president, fled his country last Friday after 18 days of massive protests demanding his resignation.

Earlier last week, Taib (right) "admitted" that his willingness to step down from his post, which he has held since 1981, if he could find a credible successor.

This left opposition politicians in the nation's largest state incredulous, with Sarawak PKR chief Baru Bian calling it a joke.

**'Muslims must stop Zionists'**

Earlier, Mahathir made an impassioned plea to Muslims the world over to band together in the spirit of brotherhood and oppose Israel's genocide of the Palestinian people.

He said the continued occupation of Palestinian land and the oppression of its people only shows that the 'Zionists', with the full backing of the United States, are on course towards eradicating the very existence of Palestine.

Mahathir said the sufferings of the Palestinians over the past 60 years will mean nothing if Muslims do not do whatever they can to help in their liberation.

"Maybe we are not able to take up arms against such a powerful country, but there are other ways where we can help.

"One way is to preserve the culture of the Palestinians. To preserve their identity, we must preserve their culture.

"We must not allow the culture of the Palestinians to disappear, because that is the wish of the Zionists, to occupy all that is Palestine and erase every trace of them by violent means, where necessary," he said.

**'Give them jobs'**

Mahathir meanwhile urged the Malaysian government to find ways to make it easier for Palestinian refugees in the country to get jobs.

He said he has met many who are here but are unable to earn a living because they cannot secure work permits.

"They are unable to work and earn a living, and their kids can't even go to school. I hope the government will consider issuing them work permits," he said.

Mahathir however declined to push for Malaysia to ratify the UN convention on refugees, saying that it is problematic and prone to abuse by those who seek to take advantage of the special privileges that come with such refugee status.

When pointed out that ratifying the convention would be one of the fastest solutions to the problems faced by Palestinians in Malaysia, he simply said that he is "sure the government is aware of this".

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