

Anwar defends meeting Hamas leader in Qatar

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Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has defended his meeting with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Qatar earlier this month.

Speaking at a question-and-answer session at The Future of Asia, Nikkei's flagship annual conference in Tokyo, Japan, Anwar said this is because he and Ismail have been friends "for decades", so there was no reason they should not meet.

The premier explained that during the meeting, he pleaded to Ismail (above, right) to abide by calls for conciliation, accept the two-state solution to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the swapping of prisoners.

"It is an offence (to meet Ismail?) Am I promoting terrorism? (My answer is) No.

"I urged (Ismail to abide by conciliation efforts) because I have an advantage. What's my advantage... I know them (Ismail/Hamas) and they see me as a friend," Berita Harian quoted Anwar as saying when asked about his meeting with the Hamas delegation during his three-day official visit to Qatar last week.

Anwar's meeting with Ismail sparked various assumptions, especially when Malaysia was alleged to be channelling funds to Hamas.

Unprecedented humanitarian crisis

The prime minister said that as a friend, he is obligated to try and get a peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

It was crucial to view the situation in Gaza as an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, he added.

"Regardless of one's ideology or ties with other countries, can we allow, or close an eye to such cruelty from happening?" he asked.

He said the Oct 7 attack launched by Hamas, which is used as the reason for the ongoing war in Gaza, can never erase the seven decades of oppression against Palestine.

Hence, this is why Malaysia advocates for a two-state solution to the conflict, Anwar stressed.

"What's important now is to stop all the killing. Stop shooting women and children, as well as destroying hospitals, schools, and mosques."

Anwar urged for the increase of humanitarian aid to those affected by the war.

More than 35,000 Palestinians have been killed since the conflict erupted, the majority of them women and children.

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