

Government calls for emergency UN session on Gaza
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Malaysia today called on the United Nations to convene an emergency session on the Israeli military offensive in Gaza, saying it had a "moral duty" to end the violence.

"I note that the UN Security Council continues to fail to act on this critical matter," Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said in a statement.

"I therefore urge that an emergency special session of the UN General Assembly be convened to adopt a "Uniting for Peace" resolution."

While the Security Council includes the five permanent members and 10 elected nations, the General Assembly represents all member states.

"The United Nations Security Council has a moral duty to stop the atrocities committed by Israel and demand a ceasefire by all sides," he added.

Abdullah said Malaysia's representative to the UN would raise the issue with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) of developing nations and the 57-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Humanitarian award from the government

Meanwhile Abdullah also authorised the immediate disbursement of US\$1 million as humanitarian aid from the government to the Palestinian people.

He said the money had been channelled through and would be used by Mercy Malaysia, a non-profit medical relief organisation, to deliver relief supplies.

The Foreign Ministry had reopened its Fund for Palestine to receive and coordinate the collection of assistance from the people of Malaysia, he said in the statement.

He added that Malaysia would continue to extend humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza within its means.

The prime minister said he was also writing letters to various world leaders to request them to use their good office and personal influence to convince Israeli leaders to stop the bombardment of Gaza and agree to a ceasefire.

Washington condemned

The premier accused the United States of failing its responsibilities as a superpower by failing to take action.

"The United States has the capacity to and can stop the atrocities but they have chosen other options," Abdullah said according to state media.

"I hope the United States and its allies will not impede efforts to convene the special general

assembly."

Abdullah condemned Washington for blocking a UN resolution calling for an end to the Israeli offensive, and said it should have used its influence to bring about a ceasefire.

"This move is something which the world community cannot have respect for," he said according to the official Bernama news agency.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon has said he regretted the Security Council's failure to reach an accord on Israeli's military assault on the Gaza Strip and appealed for unity to end the nine-day crisis.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas and Arab foreign ministers were to convene at UN headquarters in New York on Monday to appeal for international pressure to end the hostilities that have killed some 500 Palestinians.

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