

'Back Syria's claim on Golan Heights'



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the Malaysian delegation during their visit to the Golan Heights yesterday. — Bernama picture

DAMASCUS: The international community must support Syria's claim for the Golan Heights to be returned.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Israel's occupation of the lost territory has resulted in 500,000 people being displaced from their homes.

Abdullah, who is Organisation of the Islamic Conference chairman, was yesterday driven 65km from the Syrian capital to the Golan Heights, which remains closely guarded by the United Nation forces.

"Syria has the right to its claim and it must get the support from the international community. Those who hate invasion and respect human rights must support Syria.

"Syria's role in the Middle East is important and we would like to see peace return to the Golan Heights," Abdullah said after planting a Peace Tree in the Friends Park, where visiting foreign dignitaries perform this symbolic gesture after visiting the area.

In the chilly wet morning, a typical Syrian winter, Abdullah received a warm welcome from young schoolgirls, dressed in white gowns, holding Malaysian and Syrian flags.

Abdullah, when asked to comment on his

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meeting with several Syrian religious leaders said:

"We discussed invasions and violence which bring a bad image to Islam," he said, adding that the OIC would continue to press for a solution to this long-protracted crisis.

The governor for the province of Quneitra, Nawaf Al-Fares, who briefed Abdullah on the situation in the Golan Heights, said Israel had pumped 30 billion cubic litres of water from

the water-rich Golan Heights since its occupation in 1967 to flood Israeli deserts.

The Golan Heights contained 14 per cent of Syria's water resources, he said.

It appeared bare with bombed out structures with a sparse population. It was captured by Israeli troops in 1967 during the Arab-Israel war and Tel Aviv has refused to return the land to Syria despite decades of international pressure. — Bernama