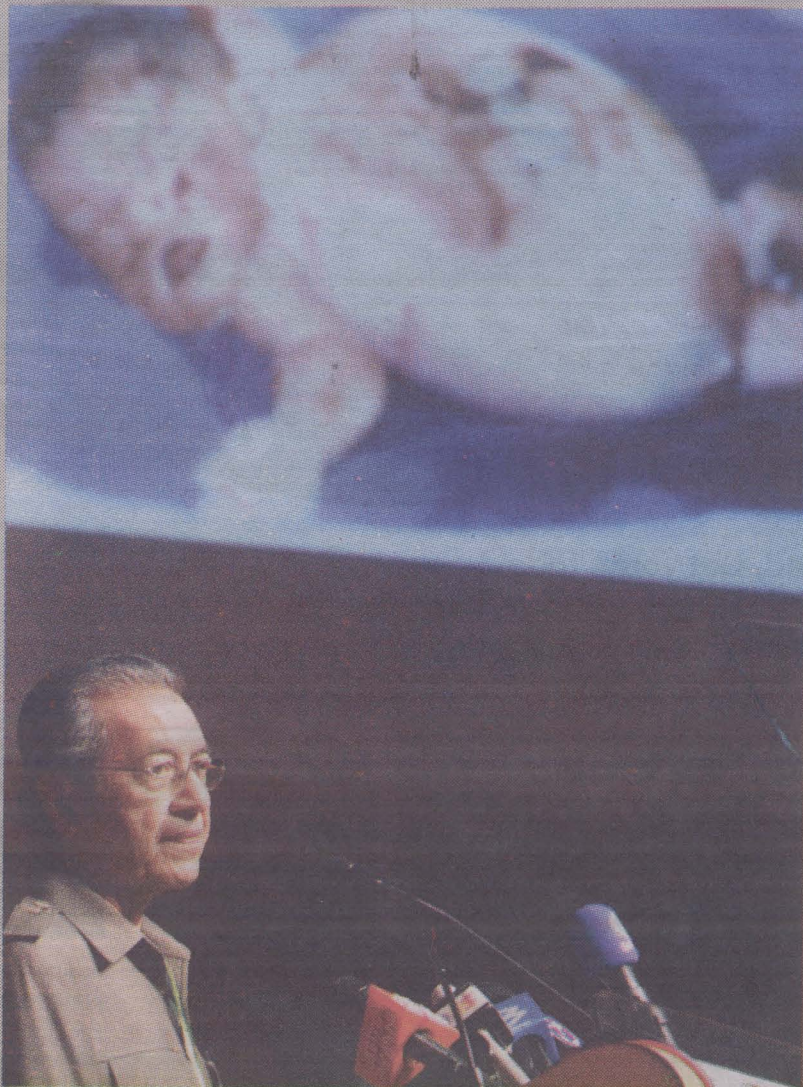


THE SUN

DATE: 29/10/2009



Mahathir addresses the conference against a backdrop of a child killed in a war atrocity.

'Shame war criminals' call at conference

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The Sun - 29/10/09

KUALA LUMPUR: There was a strong call at the Criminalise War Conference and War Crimes Tribunal here yesterday to ostracise leaders of countries who are considered war criminals or initiators of wars, including banning their entry into countries, throwing shoes at them, and insulting them in public.

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said such leaders should be banned from entering Malaysia, and countries and organisations that identify them as war criminals should do the same.

British parliamentarian, author and broadcaster George Galloway, a panellist at the event, who supported Mahathir's suggestion, took it a step further by suggesting that people should emulate Iraqi journalist Muntadar Al-Zaini, who threw his shoes at former US president George Bush during a press conference, or shout "war criminal" when they see these leaders in public.

In his keynote address, Mahathir said: "We may not be able to arrest or jail such persons but we hope the world would take notice that these are criminals who go to war and kill so many people.

"People should not associate

with them and (should) avoid and ostracise them."

He said countries and organisations should also avoid these individuals and not have anything to do with them.

Imposing trade sanctions on countries is too complicated because people need essential goods, so the punishment should be directed at the individuals themselves.

Asked why the campaign at the conference was targeted at the United States, Mahathir said: "We know that there are problems elsewhere, but this time around, we are talking about Iraq and the Americans are the principal players in Iraq.

"There is a tendency for some people to excuse America because other people are also bad, but this is akin to saying that because other people also commit crimes so a criminal cannot be arrested."

Galloway also said a distinction should be made between Jews and Zionists.

At a question-and-answer session following the panel discussion, he said "attacks should not be narrowed towards the Jewish community".

"There are many good Jews and we should not be blaming all of them, lest our intentions be misconstrued," he said, adding that many war criminals are not Jews.