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Dr M: I wrote to reject relations, not congratulate Israel

IPOH: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the letters he wrote during his tenure as prime minister to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former prime minister Ehud Barak were not congratulatory messages over their appointments.

"I replied to their letters... no way it was congratulatory letters. They were about the stand of the government and the people of Malaysia not to establish diplomatic ties with Israel.

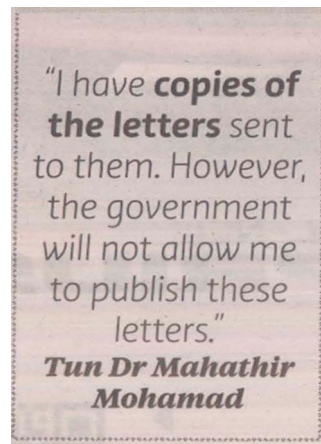
"They wrote to me to establish relationship with our country. We cannot do that as long as the status of the Palestinians is not recognised."

The issue of the letters came about after opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim expressed his support for Israel's security in *The Wall Street Journal*.

The former prime minister said: "I have copies of the letters sent to them. However, the government will not allow me to publish these letters."

On Anwar's recent statement that

Umno refused to have diplomatic relations with Israel but preferred to trade with the country, Dr Mahathir said: "Malaysia does not buy or sell goods with Israel."



On Anwar's support for Israel's security, Dr Mahathir said: "The regime is violent. They use bulldozers to demolish houses with occupants still living in there.

"These are people without any humanitarian feelings and Anwar is supporting such a regime."

Dr Mahathir, who is Perdana Global Peace Foundation president,

was speaking yesterday after attending the *Jelajah Keamaman Perak* (under the Wakaf Water4Gaza Peace Road Tour) organised by PGPF and the state government here yesterday.

Present was Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir.

A total of RM282,158 was collected by state government departments and agencies.

The money will go towards the foundation to help Palestinians in Gaza.