

Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	24/1/2013

PAGE 4 | NEW STRAITS TIMES

PRIME NEWS



A TV grab showing Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak with Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi in Cairo yesterday after visiting Gaza.

# Najib speaks to Abbas on Gaza trip

NST-24/1/2013

**SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINIANS: PM regrets Israeli air restrictions made him unable to visit West Bank**

**KHAIDIR A. MAJID**  
CAIRO  
kjadir@nstp.com.my

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said his groundbreaking visit to Gaza on Tuesday was humanitarian in nature and should not be misconstrued as an interference into the domestic affairs of Palestine.

Najib said he would have visited the Fatah-ruled West Bank if not for the constraints placed by Israel's air control over the Palestinian Territories.

"It was my every intention to also visit Ramallah (de facto capital of the Palestinian Authority) but since I have to fly to get there and the sky is controlled by Israel, I could not make the trip," he said at the end of his three-day visit to Gaza and Egypt.

For Israel to give permission to fly into Ramallah would have meant that Malaysia would have to recognise Tel Aviv.

Najib was asked to comment on reports that his visit to the Hamas-controlled Gaza on Tuesday — the

first by a Malaysian prime minister — had drawn reactions from the office of Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas.

Najib said he had spoken to Abbas over the phone before leaving for Cairo onward to Gaza to explain the humanitarian nature of his visit and again met Palestinian Waqf Minister Mahmoud Al-Habash of Fatah in Cairo on Tuesday night to do the same.

"My visit to Gaza was purely humanitarian and we wanted to show our solidarity and support for the Palestinian cause.

"It was also to show support to Fatah and Hamas for their quest to form a unity government as soon as possible," he said, adding that Gaza was now an issue because it bore the brunt of Israel's eight-day aggression last November.

"I had the opportunity to see the destruction caused by this aggression and clearly saw that the targets had no significant military value."

Asked how he felt after making the risky visit to a conflict area, Najib said he had wanted to visit Palestine "for a long time".

"I had followed the Palestinian issue for a very long time and it is close to my heart because I had in the past adopted two Palestinian children."

Najib had supported the children until the programme ended with the death of Dr Elijah Gordon of the Malaysian Social Research Institute.

"I had sent money to the children every month since I was at the Education Ministry and later at the Defence Ministry.

"I would have looked for my adopted children during my visit but it is impossible to locate them. They are probably in the West Bank."

Najib expressed satisfaction over his Gaza trip, saying he was happy that he could represent Malaysians who had for so long provided assistance and shown strong support for the Palestinians.

Najib also expressed his condolences to the family of a Malaysian killed in the hostage drama in Algeria.

"I sympathise with the family for the tragedy. This is something that can happen (to anyone) and very hard to predict. I hope the families (involved) will remain strong in facing this test."

Najib said there had been discouraging reports about the fate of the Malaysian still missing, but Wisma Putra was monitoring the situation closely.

Najib left for Davos yesterday to attend the World Economic Forum.

**"I had the opportunity to see the destruction caused by this aggression and clearly saw that the targets had no significant military value."**  
Datuk Seri Najib Razak