

Anwar: It's insanity and the height of barbarism

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia strongly condemns the aggression by Israel and despite any threats, will not back down from its pro-Palestinian stance in the conflict, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Malaysia, he said, has the freedom to express itself.

"It is a level of insanity to allow people to be butchered, babies to be killed, hospitals to be bombed and schools to be destroyed - this is the height of barbarism in this world," he told a rally at the Axiata Arena last night.

The Prime Minister, who just returned from a trip to the Middle East, said he had met with several leaders to discuss the conflict.

"I was criticised and have been attacked by Europe, the United States and of course, Israel. We have to be careful.

"I want to say that as long as I have the mandate of the people, I will not back down from these threats. We will fight.

"Don't ever think of threatening us. Malaysia is a fiercely independent country; we decide what is right. We understand the meaning of freedom. We are with the Palestinian people in their struggle yesterday, today and tomorrow," said Anwar.

He added that Malaysians had stood with Palestine in its struggle for independence since the days of the late Palestinian political leader Yasser Arafat and must continue to do so without fear, and to condemn aggression.

Earlier, despite the gloomy weather, tens of thousands of Malaysians and foreigners braved the drizzle to stand in solidarity with Palestinians and to protest against the ongoing attacks by Israeli forces.

Clad in white, they descended upon the Axiata Arena Stadium in



Not backing down: Anwar defies threats, condemns Israeli aggression as he attends the 'Malaysia Stands With Palestine assembly' at the Axiata Arena, Bukit Jalil. - FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

Bukit Jalil where Anwar delivered his speech.

Many were heard chanting "takbir" and "hancur Israel" (crush Israel), while others condemned the Zionist regime in Israel.

There were also dozen of shops selling a variety of food as well as flags and shawls showing solidarity with the Palestinians.

"The Malaysia Stands with Palestine Rally," which took place from 6pm to 11pm yesterday, was jointly organised by over 40

groups, including the Malaysian Humanitarian Aid and Relief (Mahar) and the Malaysia Consultative Council of Islamic Organisation (Mapim).

Walid Abu Ali, Palestinian Ambassador to Malaysia, said he was touched to witness the outpouring of support towards Palestinians suffering in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

"No one in Palestine can question the solidarity and support of Malaysians. We are so proud of your continued support for our

struggle against the terrorism perpetrated by the Zionist state of Israel," he said in his speech.

The ongoing conflict, he added, showed that Israeli forces were rampantly violating international laws on a daily basis.

"As I'm speaking to you now, they (Israelis) continue to strike innocent civilians in Gaza. They continue to shoot innocent Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, Nablus, Jenin, and Al-Khalil (Hebron).

"They even continue to invade

the Al-Aqsa Mosque," he said.

Walid said there were over two million Palestinians stuck in the Gaza Strip in dire need of humanitarian aid.

"So, we are looking for your support and influence to help Palestinians," he said, thanking Malaysians for their support.

"The day will come where we will host you in the Al-Aqsa Mosque," added Walid.

Nisham Nazran, 20, a student at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), was at the rally with his friends to show their sympathy and empathy towards the plight of Palestinians.

"They (Palestinians) never got to live peacefully and pursue their ambitions there," said Nisham.

Another 20-year-old UKM student, Muhammad Haziq Faizi, said he felt sorry for Palestinians who were forced to grow up in a warzone under the oppression of the Zionist regime.

"As Malaysian youths, we hope this will unite Malaysians and Muslims around the world to save Palestine," added Muhammad Haziq.

Ahmad Lutfi Mohammad Noor of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) student union said Muslims should come together to hold congregational prayers at mosques.

"Let's continue to donate. It doesn't matter if we only have RM1 or RM2 because we can save a child or two in Palestine," he said.

Noraida Ariff, 35, said she rushed from work to join the assembly.

"The only way I could help was by donating money. I have also shown my support to the Palestinians through social media," she said.