

Anwar: Ties with Hamas purely diplomatic and political

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia's engagement with Hamas is purely for diplomatic and political purposes, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says amid Western pressure for Putrajaya to condemn Hamas.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia will continue to be consistent with its independent foreign policy stance in defending human rights and the legitimate aspirations of any country.

During his recent visit to Doha, Qatar, Anwar said he met with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and former Hamas chairman Khaled Mashal.

"Whether you like it or not, it (Hamas) does represent some portion of the Palestinian people in Gaza, and you cannot deny that.

"I am not here to defend anyone, but why the hypocrisy of condemning Hamas over Oct 7 and then being muted in regard to the more than 60 years of atrocities against the Palestinian people?"

"I think therefore we need to explain that this engagement is purely diplomatic (and) political, to persuade them (Hamas) to understand the concerns of others," Anwar said in an interview with Al Jazeera yesterday.

"It is of benefit, as the Qataris have done, to secure the release of hostages through contact and engagement.

"You don't need to agree with everything they do, but I think a principled stance would help," he said.

During the interview, *Talk to Al Jazeera* host Sami Zeidan asked if the United States is pressuring Malaysia to change its stance on the Gaza war, to which Anwar said "not publicly".

He added that Putrajaya continues to have good relations with Washington.