

**Anwar: Palestinian state comes ahead of Israel's safety**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**February 16 , 2012**  
**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 16 — Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim insisted today a Palestinian state must come before Israel's security is guaranteed, after coming under pressure from Umno and PAS over his statement last month backing "all efforts to protect the security of the state of Israel."

The PKR de facto leader said that Umno and its media had slandered him by omitting the fact that the Wall Street Journal had reported this was "a step which he said remains contingent on Israel respecting the aspirations of Palestinians."

"My statement clearly makes the aspirations of Palestinians who want justice, peace and respect for their dignity a condition for Israel's demands that its safety is guaranteed," the opposition leader said in a press statement.

The international business daily had quoted Anwar as saying in an interview last month that he supported "all efforts to protect the security of the state of Israel."

But the newspaper said Anwar (picture) stopped short of saying he would open diplomatic ties with the Jewish state, saying Israel must respect the aspirations of Palestinians first.

Anwar came under heavy fire from Umno and its media after his statement was published in January.

He was forced to defend himself by stressing that his remarks in the newspaper meant that he supported a two-state solution, which he said was also mentioned by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman when the latter addressed the United Nations General Assembly in September last year.

The PAS Ulama Council had called on Anwar to retract his statement or sue the newspaper if he was misrepresented.

The Islamic party's spiritual leader Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat also said PAS was not in favour of the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute as the Jewish state was haram.

Anwar said today he "understands the difference of opinion between PAS and Keadilan" but said they agreed that an independent Palestinian state must be established, in line with "the desire of all Malaysians who love peace and justice."

Following the report, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad labelled his former deputy a Jewish sympathiser and a leader who disregarded the plight of the Palestinians.

Malaysia is a staunch supporter of Palestine and has no diplomatic ties with Israel.

Muslim politicians have long vied for support from Malays by denouncing what they say are inhumane acts of aggression by Israel towards its neighbour.

It is understood that Anwar will be meeting Nik Aziz next Monday after PKR's political bureau discussed the issue last night.

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