

Malaysia 'Gravely Concerned' Over Escalating Violence At Jerusalem's Holy Sites

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By Manik Mehta

NEW YORK, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's permanent representative to the United Nations, Datuk Ramlan Ibrahim has expressed Malaysia's grave concern over the provocations and escalating violence at the holy sites of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Addressing the United Nations Security Council today (Friday), he said, "We condemn in the strongest terms any and all attempts to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

"Such sinister attempts are in blatant violation of numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

"We strongly condemn such acts of provocations, incitement and violence at the Holy Sites by all sides, which only fuel tensions and exacerbate the deteriorating security situation on the ground," he said.

He stressed that all parties should exercise restraint and uphold respect for the sanctity of the holy sites.

"It should come as no surprise that the unresolved situation has culminated in the current outbreak of violence, death and destruction," he said.

He noted that the Council had been warned about the 'ticking time bombs' in occupied Palestine as its people grow increasingly desperate of being dehumanised, and suffer from daily humiliations, oppression and mistreatments under the longest occupation in modern history.

"And yet, time and again, this Council has done nothing," he reminded the UNSC members.

Ramlan pointed out that at the General Assembly, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting Human Rights of the Palestinian People, and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People had diligently reported on various atrocities and grave violations of human rights committed by the Occupying Power year after year for the past decades.

"No effective measures were taken to address the grave injustice, thus emboldening the occupying power to conduct itself with greater impunity and more repressive policies," he said.

Ramlan also chided the mainstream media for their "ludicrously one-sided and hugely distorted" reports of the current situation - that Palestinian terrorists were trying to kill and injure as many peace-loving Israelis as possible.

"We do not see reports of arbitrary killings and illegal targeting of children and women by the Israeli forces and the settlers; we do not read about daily humiliations and mistreatments suffered by Palestinians at the hands of the Occupying Force.

"We do not even hear the words 'occupation' and 'self-determination' mentioned anywhere in the mainstream media to provide the proper context; and we do not apply the same standard of human rights in Palestine and Israel as we preach elsewhere globally.

"Is it really surprising then that the subjugated and the oppressed chose to fight the illegal Occupier for their legitimate right to freedom and self-determination, since for far too long, all other legal, political, economic, diplomatic, and media channels have been systematically and exhaustively blocked?" he asked.

Ramlan, calling for UN protection for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said the international community, particularly the Security Council, shared the blame for allowing the situation to persist with impunity.

"Such UN protection would prevent continuing massacres and gross violations of human rights in Occupied Palestine. It would also benefit Israelis by addressing their security concerns," he said.

The UN protection, in line with international humanitarian law, particularly the Geneva Conventions, would ensure accountability for all parties to the conflict and enforce or monitor adherence to international law, international human rights law, and various General Assembly and Security Council resolutions to maintain peace and security in the occupied territory.

"After all, this UN protection had several precedents, including in Kosovo, East Timor, Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and even in Palestine itself," he said, urging the Council not to delay discussions on Malaysia's proposal.

Ramlan also spoke of "not losing sight" of the long-term need for a final comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

"Seventy years after the failure to grant self-determination for the Palestinian people, the international community has lost any pretext for a legitimate excuse to further perpetuate Israel's occupation," he said.

He said delays in addressing the root cause of the conflict attributed to looming elections, ineffectual Quartet meetings, and half-hearted bilateral initiatives begin to appear as facades to prolong occupation and to deny justice, dignity, and freedom to the Palestinian people.

"In the first half of this year alone, the number of settler homes built in the West Bank had increased by 54.8 per cent, compared to the same period last year," he said.

Urging the UNSC to act urgently to address the root cause of the conflict and finally put an end to the "longest occupation in modern history", he cautioned: "If we continue to turn a blind eye to the problem, there is no doubt that we will pay a much higher price in the future, which will not be in the long-term interest of Palestine, Israel and the world".

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