

## Mahathir in Thai violence talks

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**Former Malaysian leader Mahathir Mohamad is in Thailand for talks about an insurgency in the largely Muslim Thai south.**

Increasing violence in the area, which borders Malaysia, has led to rising tensions between the two countries.

Thai security officials have accused Malaysia of failing to stop insurgents crossing the border into Thailand.

About 1,000 people have died in the southern Thai provinces since early 2004.

Few details have emerged about the discussions Dr Mahathir will have with Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

But he is expected to discuss a disagreement between Malaysia and Thailand over what to do about a group of 131 southern Thai residents who crossed into Malaysia in August seeking refuge.

Although Dr Mahathir's visit has been officially billed as a private trip, he is seen as an envoy of the Malaysian government. Despite his retirement in 2003, he still commands respect in the region.

Dr Mahathir is due to meet the head of the Thai National Reconciliation Commission for the south on Tuesday. There was further violence in the Thai south on Sunday night, the Associated Press quoted police as saying.

Three Buddhist villagers were reportedly killed as unidentified gunmen rampaged through Yala province. Thailand's three southern provinces - Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala - are the only regions with Muslim majorities in the Buddhist-dominated country.

The Muslim population has long complained of being treated as second-class citizens.

Source: BBC News World edition | <http://news.bbc.co.uk>