

Dr M: It was a bid to stop me from seeing Israel's atrocities

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MALACCA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was banned from entering Jerusalem and Jenin by Israeli officials on May 16, said it was an attempt to stop him from seeing the atrocities Israel had perpetrated on the Palestinians.

"Jenin is a place where the Israelis caused massive destruction and killed many Palestinians.

"That's why they prevented me from going there," he told reporters after delivering a keynote address at an international conference on information communications technology (ICT) management.

"It is very sad," he said, adding that he was invited by the Palestinian leadership to visit Jenin to see the destruction there.

Dr Mahathir, a vocal advocate of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state, was asked to comment on the Israelis denying him entry into Jerusalem during his visit to the West Bank.

He was delayed for an hour at the Allenby crossing from Jordan into the West Bank, where Israeli officials banned him from going to Jerusalem or

the city of Jenin in the West Bank.

Dr Mahathir said those who wanted to enter Palestine needed clearance from the Israelis.

"I had informed the authorities in Palestine two weeks prior to my visit. It was a lie if they (Israel) said they did not know (that I was going there)," he said, adding that he regretted that he could not pray at the

Al Aqsa mosque.

Israeli authorities, who manage the entry and exit points in the West Bank, claimed they were not informed in advance of Dr Mahathir's visit.

Dr Mahathir said Israel purposely delayed him from crossing the border by taking a long time to process his documents.

"When I arrived there, they took more than two hours,

resorting to all sorts of delaying tactics to prevent me from entering so that I would not be able to return from Jenin by 6pm (local time) when the border closes," he said.

He said when he changed his plans to go to Jerusalem instead, he received a call saying that he could not proceed, purportedly due to security concerns.