Malaysia ready to send peacekeepers

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PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia will send a fully mechanised battalion to Lebanon as soon as a ceasefire is declared.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Indonesia and Brunei will also send their respective peacekeeping troops.

"We are going on the basis that there will be a ceasefire... and when that happens, we will go into Lebanon... there is no doubt about it," Abdullah said at the end of the emergency meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference here.

As chairman of the OIC, he said he would send a letter to Washington to express the sentiments of the Muslim world on the Lebanon-Israel crisis.

The contents of the letter would include points in the Putrajaya Declaration.

Among other things, the declaration called for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon and condemnation of the attacks by Israel.

Earlier, Abdullah urged the OIC nations to come up with a practical plan of action to stop the war and restore peace in Lebanon and Palestine.

He said expressing sympathy and issuing statements was insufficient.

"The situation in Lebanon and Palestine does not affect Sunnis or Shias, Muslims or non-Muslims.

"The carnage affects Lebanese and Palestinians of all religions and sects, and of all ages and cultures.

"We must help rebuild Lebanon and Palestine... We must address the humanitarian situation... Malaysia is ready to do that," he said at the opening of the one-day meeting.

Abdullah said Muslim states must be prepared to contribute forces for peacekeeping operations under the United Nations banner.

He also called on member states to urge their national media to ensure stories from all sides of the conflict were told.

"The Western media have been constantly reporting Israel's side of the story and broadcasting pictures of Israeli families being forced to leave their homes to seek shelter from Hizbollah attacks.

"Stories and pictures concerning Lebanese and Palestinian women and children being bombed or driven from their homes have not received equal share of airtime.

"The world must see with their own eyes the atrocities and inhumanity inflicted in Lebanon and Palestine, where children constitute the majority of the dead, maimed and homeless."