

OIC wants peace role in strafed Lebanon

The Sun - 4/8/2006

PUTRAJAYA: The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) wants a role in peace-building initiatives in war-torn Lebanon after a ceasefire has been enforced, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday.

Abdullah, who is OIC chairman, said every member country in the 57-member organisation must play a proactive role in the Israel-Lebanon conflict and be prepared to contribute troops for peacekeeping operations under the UN banner.

"Malaysia is ready to do that," he said at the opening of the Meeting of Friends

of the Chairman of the 10th Islamic Conference here.

The one-day conference, attended

by several heads of state and government and foreign ministers of 18 member countries, later issued a declaration condemning Israeli offensive in Lebanon and called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire.

Abdullah urged OIC members to help rebuild Lebanon and Palestine and address the humanitarian situation in the affected region.

He also urged every member state to counsel their national media to play a proactive role and make sure stories from all sides were told.

Currently, he said, the western media had only been reporting Israel's side of the story by broadcasting pictures of Israeli families being forced to leave their homes to seek shelter from Hizbollah attacks.

"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," he said.

Abdullah said Israel must be made to understand their actions would only breed greater hatred and bigger contempt, Bernama reports.

At a press conference last night, after bilateral talks with countries such as Turkey, Bangladesh and Pakistan, Abdullah said Malaysia and several OIC members - Indonesia, Brunei and Bangladesh - have agreed to send their troops to Lebanon.

He said he will write a letter to US President George W. Bush in a few days and another to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, calling for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire.

All the other OIC members will also write letters to the US and UN, he said. "Many of the OIC member countries want the US to play a (middleman) role in trying to resolve the conflict in the Middle East. If the US only supports one party from the beginning till the end, it's something that is not justified," Abdullah said.

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- Abdullah