

# Abdullah: Muslims must end sectarian conflict

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has made an impassioned plea to Muslim countries to stop sectarian violence.

Abdullah, who is also chairman of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, made the call during a panel session at the second World Islamic Economic Forum here yesterday.

"As Muslims, we must co-operate. Your *mazhab* (sect) is your *mazhab* and my *mazhab* is my *mazhab*," he told some 600 participants in the forum.

Sectarian violence is most pronounced in Iraq. Killings due to clashes between Sunnis and Shias have soared to hundreds of civilians a week, according to latest reports.

"That's a shame. Why should there be a civil war?" Abdullah said.

He was also supported by Pakistan's Presi-



dent Pervez Musharraf, who spoke on the need to resolve political disputes at the panel session.

"(With sectarian violence) how can we contribute towards improving ourselves?" he asked.

Abdullah also criticised the United States' stand on Palestine. "Washington has not been a fair arbitrator, protecting Israel all the time."

he said, drawing applause from the floor.

Palestine has faced international sanctions that have crippled the government since Hamas came to power in March, after defeating Fatah in the January general election.

Many nations have stopped dealing with Hamas, and have frozen financial assistance, as they consider the party to be a terrorist organisation.

On Saddam Hussein's death sentence, Abdullah said it should not distract from the main focus of rebuilding war-torn Iraq.

"What is important is the future of Iraq. We hope it will be one that is stable, peaceful and so to enable Iraq to rise again."

The former Iraqi leader was found guilty of crimes against humanity and was sentenced to hang, following a year-long trial.