

# Dr M: No such thing as a moderate Muslim

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**ASTANA:** There is no such thing as a moderate Muslim and US President George W. Bush is mistaken in casting his war on terror in terms of a "struggle for civilisation", former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

Mahathir, who is known for his frequent barbs against what he has called Western double standard, said he believed even the Sept 11, 2001 attacks on the US were at root linked to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land.

"What is happening today has got nothing to do with religion. It has got to do with territorial disputes, mainly the dispute over Palestinian land," he told Reuters after a religious congress here.

He said Bush's description of America's "war on terror" as "a struggle for civilisation" on the fifth anniversary of the attacks was flawed, as was the West's hope that moderate Muslims would have a dominant voice.

"There is no such thing as a moderate Muslim," he said. "We are fundamentalists in Malaysia. We follow the true teachings of the religion and the true teachings do not teach us to bomb and kill people without reason."

On Bush's comments, Mahathir,

81, said: "He's not civilised, he shouldn't be talking about civilising others."

Although most of the men who carried out the Sept 11 attacks were Saudis, Mahathir - whom Israel has in the past dubbed anti-Semitic - said he saw the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands as the root cause of Islamist extremism.

"They (the hijackers) had no direct link but there is a great deal of sympathy for the sufferings of the people of Palestine," he said.

"Maybe that is because they are co-religionists but it is not because their religion urges them to do so. The West tends to blame religion, they blame Islam for whatever happens and associate Islam with terrorism," he said.

He said he believed dubbing a fight against Islamic extremism as a struggle for civilisation risked becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

"(Muslims) are without arms, they are weak and they are pushed into a corner. If you are pushed into a corner and the only thing you can do is bite, you bite," he said.

The tactics used by the US and allies such as Britain were an attempt to "out-terrorise the terrorists" and would therefore fail, Mahathir said. - Reuters