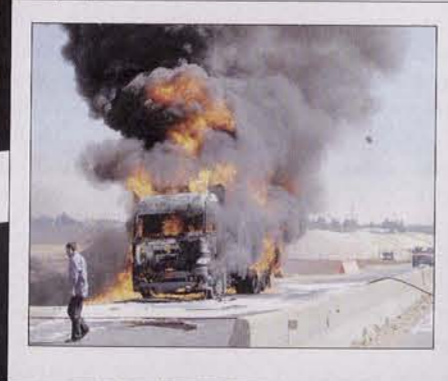




A peace forum on war



THE guest-speakers list includes a former UN Assistant Secretary General, a US Congresswoman, an editor from the Hezbollah media as the man who the world saw standing hooded on a wooden box wired to receive electricity in Abu Ghraib.

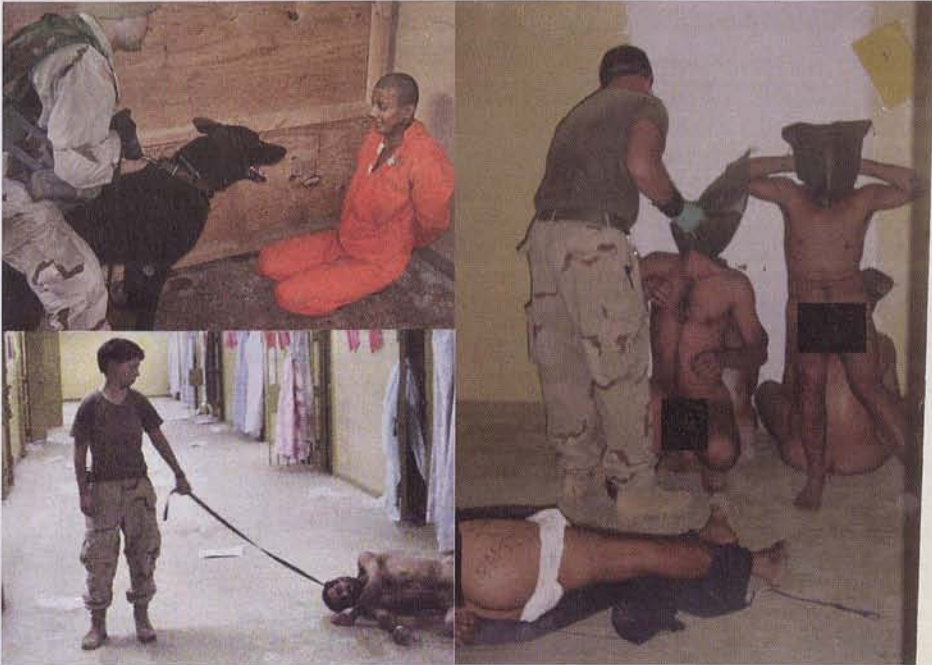


Ali Shalah, an Iraqi who was tortured by the Americans at the prison, is one of the highlights of the third Perdana Global Peace Forum that is being held from 5th to 7th February in Kuala Lumpur.

On the table at this conference are issues on war and war crimes. Participants will discuss how the act of war itself can be declared a crime.

The Perdana Peace forum, which has been successfully held in the past, is essentially an initiative by former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Despite the worldly title, the forum is still little ▶▶▶▶



more than a talk-shop for people who are for peace and against the war, but Dr. Mahathir feels it is a start for a worldwide movement.

“We have conceived this forum because we feel that war is wrong and we are trying to plant the idea that killing people to solve disputes is not right.

The common belief is that you go to war to solve disputes but that is as wrong as killing people by individuals.

If we continue to believe that we have to kill people to solve problems then no one is safe.”

Dr Mahathir, who is the main speaker at the forum said the forum is important because the global situation is now imbalanced, where powerful nations are becoming

more powerful and weaker countries are not able to defend their beliefs when it comes to war – the stronger countries simply use their weapons to impose their will.

“Killing people in war is the same as murder. Even if we use cruise missiles or helicopter gunships – it is still murder and the people responsible for war should be charged in court.

“If you punish a murderer, you must also punish people who launch wars.”

He said under present international laws, nations are not punished when they kill people. He said when the the US attacks with bombs and rockets and kill innocent people, the world accepts it as legitimate.

One of the highlights of the forum is a mock tribunal where US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair will be tried in absentia for initiating war on innocent peoples.

“What we are trying to do in this forum is to promote the idea that war is a crime, that murder in the name of war is a crime.

“At the moment, war is not considered a crime, although you have the situation where if you win a war the leaders of the winning country can try the leaders of the defeated country. In





the end, Might is right.”

He said the peace forum is a way to plant the idea in the minds of people to reject war and who starts a war must be made accountable for their actions.

If Saddam was tried for starting a war, then Blair and Bush must also be brought to court.

Dr Mahathir said it was important to change our attitude towards war because war is no longer confined to combatants.

“It used to be when countries go to war it is a battle between armies.

“It was soldiers versus soldiers and there is a battlefield.

“When the army loses the battle, then the issue is decided. The country loses the war.

“But today the scene is different. The war is not confined to the battlefield and combatants. The whole population is exposed to attack, men, women children even young babies. You can be killed and we think there is nothing wrong with that.”

He said war has also become more destructive in an age where a single bomb can kill 250,000 people as well as less civilised.

“Dresden, a very big city in Germany, was wiped out in 24 hours of non-stop bombing by the Allies in

World War II. That was brutal, and more, it is uncivilised.”

Dr Mahathir said people need to realise that if powerful countries continue to be allowed to wage war on any excuse the world has ceased to be safe.

“At this rate people have no safety. Today there is no honour in war.

“Today whoever is stronger is always right. Today Might is Right.”

He said the Americans are producing better and better weapons to kill people.

“If the US decide we need a change of Government, and we resist, then they will come in with guns blazing.

“We saw that when the US attacked Iraq, on the excuse that it was producing weapons of mass destruction. When no weapons ▶▶▶▶





were found they changed their tune and said they came in because they wanted to remove Saddam.

“However it is ironic that in order to remove Saddam, you have to kill more of his people.”

Dr Mahathir said the US has created an atmosphere of anarchy and fear in Iraq, where people are tortured and killed and detained – there is no law there.”

He said war is only justifiable in self defence but it should be up to the international community to decide what is justifiable self-defence.

Take for example the Israeli incursion in Lebanon and Gaza, he said, the leadership of the Lebanese people and the Palestinians are defending themselves. If you oppress a people and back them into the corner they will fight back.

He said in the case of the Palestinians they have no weapons to fight back, so that is why they strap bombs to their bodies. It is not because they like to kill themselves but they have no weapons no aeroplanes or warships.

“Soldiers are not criminals but war makes them kill people.”

Tun Mahathir also commented against the US imposing its will against another country – Iran.

“If the US can have 10,000 nuclear warheads why can’t Iran have its own nuclear programme for peaceful means. If you have

a country with nuclear power that can dictate who should have and who should not have because it has that power, then the world is not a safe place.

“The best way is to destroy all nuclear weapons, no one should have them.”

He said international law is now one-sided, because it gives power to the powerful and prevents weaker nations from protecting themselves.

“If you need nuclear weapons to prevent other countries from having them, then control over that nuclear weapon should be under international control.”

He said the American people, especially, must realise that whatever their Government decides, it has repercussions on the rest of the world.

He said even though there is the United Nations, the major powers can choose to support or not to support it.

“We have to change the minds of the US people, who are so used to waging war on others far from their shores.

“Some warmongers in the US like the idea of killing people because they have never been attacked at home. As long as the Americans don’t think that war is dangerous, the world will always be a dangerous place.”

We hope the outcome of this forum is to link up peace activists and movements and common people across the world in a united movement against war and warmongers.

“If we can get the message ingrained in the common people, we hope people will eventually choose their leaders from amongst those to don’t like war. We hope in the future people will insist their representatives declare that they are against war. We hope it will become an election issue in the future.

“It may take many years but we hope that the world will be filled with people who do want their countries to go to war. ■



■ The conference and exhibition in Kuala Lumpur wants to educate and enlighten participants that wars are wantonly destructive and essentially unnecessary.

It also wants to promote the idea that warmongers should be held accountable for their crimes against humanity.

The War Crimes exhibition that is part of the conference is the first of its kind to be held in a Muslim country and will highlight the atrocities committed in Bosnia, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Vietnam as well as the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There is also an interactive exhibition, where visitors are exposed also to the horrors of the tortures inflicted on detainees held in the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo prisons.

Among the international panel of speakers include.. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad; Mr Hans von Sponeck, Former UN Assistant Secretary General; Prof Michel Chossudovsky, Michael Carmichael, Author and founder of the Planetary Movement; Leuren Moret, expert on depleted Uranium; Cynthia McKinny, US Congresswoman and Ali Shalah who was a prisoner tortured by the Americans at Abu Ghraib.

