

Malaysia will continue to call on the International community to pressure Israel to withdraw from all Arab territories, including Holy Bait Al-Maqdis, until the rights of the Palestinian people to a sovereign state in their homeland is recognized and fulfilled.²⁹

He also proudly referred to the recent decision to upgrade the status of the PLO representation in Malaysia by saying:

It gives a great pleasure for me to announce that, consistent with our policy on the Palestinian question and our desire to further strengthen relation with the PLO, the government has decided to extend full diplomatic status to the of office and the representative of the PLO in Kuala Lumpur, as accorded to other resident diplomatic missions here³⁰

The increasing role of the Malaysian government in the Palestinian issue could be clearly noted throughout the 1980's. Apart from its annual contribution of US\$5,000 (in 1981) to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) operating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Malaysian government contributed M\$100,000 in 1982 to the camps' dwellers, following the Israel invasion of Lebanon.³¹ Humanitarian aid came in other forms like medical assistance, scholarship for Palestinian students at Malaysian universities and occupational training centers.³²

It is also interesting to note that awareness of the Palestinian issue had widely spread throughout the 1980's among the Malaysian public. It was largely spearheaded by the government itself, the Malaysian dailies, and the non-governmental movement such as ABIM and PERKIM. Further illustration on Tun Dr. Mahathir's commitment on the Palestinian

29. *Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, Vol.14, September 1981, pg. 271

30. *Ibid*, pg. 272

31. Shanti Nair, *op. cit.*, pg. 207

32. *Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, Vol.17, No.3, September, 1984, pp. 24-25.