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Letter from America

## Mahathir's wake-up call

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With his October 16 address to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad ran into immediate trouble in the West. But why? He did NOT advocate violence. Instead, he condemned suicide bombing, as every Muslim must, and gratuitous violence, which is harming the Muslims. Had Mahathir uttered a single word that could have been remotely construed as support for violence, he would have been thoroughly discredited as a "terrorist" and attempts would have been made to slap US and UN sanctions on his Malaysia. With Mahathir refusing to provide the rope for his own hanging, the West played the Jewish card and accused him of Jew-baiting. At the Apec forum in Bangkok, President Bush, according to reports, took Mahathir aside and told him that he totally disagreed with what Mahathir had said, and that such comments are "divisive." Israel's thug-in-chief Ariel Sharon had the gall to call Mahathir's comments "slandorous," and demonize the Arabs: "It will take more time for the Arab world, and particularly Palestinian society, to understand that violence and extremism will only lead them to incalculable disaster." And all Mahathir talked about was nonviolence!

Such acts of moral righteousness are not only hypocritical; they are also amusing. Nobody has accused Mahathir of being wrong about his comments that "Jews rule the world by proxy"; and "get others to fight and die for them" (whose interest are dead American soldiers serving in Iraq? Israel's, not America's!) Such moral indignation is comical because Jews and non-Jews denounce Islam and Muslims with a hundred times more vitriol in the American print and electronic media, with President Bush on down turning a deaf ear to Muslim complaints. On October 18, the "liberal" The New York Times in its editorial was quick to denounce Mahathir's "Islamic Anti-Semitism." It singled out the comments of Ahmed Maher, Egypt's Foreign Minister, ("a very, very wise assessment") and Afghan President Hamid Karzai (the speech was "very correct."). This was a not-so-subtle threat to Egypt, which receives over two billion dollars US aid per year, and Karzai, who is struggling to receive 1 billion this year, that endorsement of such "anti-Jewish" sentiments could jeopardize US aid to their nations! The same day on page A6, the Times published the comments of Lt. Gen. William G. Boykin, a deputy under secretary of defense, who likened the war against Islamic militants as the war against Satan, adding that militant Islam wants to destroy America because "we are a Christian nation." He told an evangelical gathering while in full uniform "Muslims worship idols, not real God." "The Defence Secretary Rumsfeld said he could not prevent military officials from making controversial comments." There was no editorial from the Times or words from President Bush condemning General Boykin's inflammatory bigotry!

Mahathir is absolutely correct in stressing that Muslims must shun violence. Violence is counterproductive. A nation born in terrorism never enjoys peace. Israel, born out of the violence of the Irgun and Stern terrorist gangs, has not seen peace ever since. After they embraced violence, the Palestinians have not experienced peace either. Mahatma Gandhi's and Nelson Mandela's nonviolence creed, on the other hand, is making India and South Africa world powers. Muslims should not be nitpicking every word in the "Mahathir Manifesto;" instead, they should embrace all of it wholeheartedly. No document is perfect. President Thomas Jefferson's "The Declaration of Independence" is one of the most revered documents in the history of the United States. At one place in it Jefferson chastises "the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and condition." Yet, even today no one criticizes Jefferson or the document for those racist comments embedded in it about the Native Americans.

Let us not be deceived by semantics. "Jews" in Mahathir's speech do not mean ALL Jews. It is common knowledge that 5 per cent of the Israeli Jews subscribe to the "Peace Now" movement, whom the right-wing Jews call pro-Palestinian traitors and the Palestinians call "peace Jews." Suicide bombing is so reprehensible because it kills innocent Jews. There are many, many Jews in Israel and in America who bleed for the suffering of the Palestinians. But they, or the Noam Chomskys of the world do not formulate America's Israel policy or rule Israel. Backed by American Jewish neoconservatives like Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, William Kristol, Walter Libby, Douglas Firth, Daniel Pipes and hundreds of journalist and television commentators, Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu use American F-16 planes, American Apache helicopters, American missiles and American tanks to murder Palestinian civilians. It is those Sharon-Netanyahu-Wolfowitz-Bush Jews, whom Muslims will never be able to satisfy regardless of how much they oblige them, who are jumping all over Mahathir, not the Chomsky-Jews. While every television talk show is teeming with pro-Israeli Jewish commentators, Noam Chomsky or his friend, the late Edward Said were never invited. No mainstream US publisher dare publish Chomsky's books anymore. The Zionists have successfully marginalized all the pro-Palestinian Jews like Chomsky as "self-hating Jews." So when Mahathir says "Jews," pro-Palestinian and human rights activist Jews like Chomsky understands what he means; so should we. Besides, it is fruitless to appease one's detractors. As the holy Quran says, (I paraphrase) "Your enemies will never be satisfied until you adopt their religion."

Mahathir Mohamad is the first Muslim leader in the writer's lifetime who is smart enough, knowledgeable enough, foresighted enough, brave enough and politically, militarily and economically strong and independent enough to "plot a course" to solve a uniquely Muslim problem on Muslim terms, not western terms. It will be a mistake, therefore, to constantly check how the Muslims strategy is playing in the west. Muslims do not need their religion, custom, achievements or their strategies validated by the west. That is why the writer was disappointed when the Daily Star went overboard with joy at Shirin Ebadi's Nobel Peace Prize; it was not an award for Shirin Ebadi, the prize was politically motivated AGAINST the Iranian government (To "put the Islamic regime on notice," according to TIME magazine). Muslims should resist the temptation to forsake the right path for the sake of western accolades such as the Nobel Prize. Even Rabindra Nath Thakur, the first Asian recipient of the Nobel Prize, was annoyed at the extra affection the Nobel garnered from his countrymen in 1913.

Mahathir is right; Muslims must embrace the pursuit of knowledge. The real Golden Age for the Muslims was the 13th century. As Europe entered the Dark Age, the centre of the world's enlightenment shifted to Baghdad. Knowledge seekers from Europe trekked to Baghdad to learn mathematics, philosophy, astronomy and medicine. But, the Muslims were so engrossed in acquiring knowledge that they forgot about self-defense. The Mongols hordes sacked Baghdad, killed 60,000 Muslims in one day and destroyed the Muslim civilization. It was a moment of truth for the Muslims: do they progress or regress? Unfortunately, they decided to close the "gates of Ijtihad" (independent reasoning) and regress to the other "Golden Age," the Prophet's time (seventh century). This is exactly what the Taliban attempted to do in Afghanistan - go back to the seventh century, literally! Of course, Taliban's was a gross distortion of what the seventh century was all about. What the Prophet and Islam did in the seventh century Arabia was revolutionary. Unlike Europe, in Muslim Middle East women could own property, engage in commerce and divorce their husbands! The Prophet's first wife, Khadija, was a businesswoman who hired the Prophet for his honesty. Imagine Mullah Omar working for his wife! If Muslims are to emulate the seventh century, women should be at the forefront, not oppressed in Burkhas, and Muslims should be spearheading the world's search for knowledge, not play second fiddle to the west. Those Muslims who shun modern knowledge should remember that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had urged the Muslims to "go to China," if necessary, to acquire knowledge.

Muslims must not forget the other lesson of the 13th century. As Mahathir correctly observes: "Today, we the Muslim ummah are treated with contempt and dishonour. Our religion is denigrated. Our holy places are desecrated. Our countries are occupied.

Our people are starved and killed. None of our countries are truly independent. We are under pressure to conform to our oppressor's wishes about how we should behave, how we should govern our lands, how we should think even. We need guns and rockets, bombs and warplanes, tanks and warships for our defense. But because we discouraged the learning of science and mathematics etc. as giving no merit for the akhira, today we have no capacity to produce our own weapons for our defense. We have to buy our weapons from our detractors and enemies." And those enemies are out to disarm the whole Muslim world and keep them disarmed. They are the ones that decide that Jewish Israel, armed to the teeth with American weapons, can have the nuclear bomb, but Muslim Iran cannot. Zionists on American television threaten that Israel will not tolerate Iran acquiring the nuclear bomb! President Bush has labeled Iraq and Iran as "evil" nations. Did they vaporize 20,000 Japanese civilians with atomic bombs to earn that honour?

Mahathir is also absolutely correct about the power the Muslims possess right now but are afraid to use: "In today's world we wield a lot of political, economic and financial clout, enough to make up for our weakness in military terms. We are now 1.3 billion strong. We have the biggest oil reserves in the world. We have great wealth. We control 57 out of 180 countries in the world. Our votes can make or break international organisations." The first organisation that the Muslims should break by leaving it en masse is their number one oppressor, The United Nations. As the recent events have so vividly demonstrated, every time a Muslim nation goes to the UN Security Council begging for justice, they get kicked in the teeth by a US veto. Before Muslims can take on the world, Mahathir wisely advises: "We must build up our strength in every field, not just in armed might. Our countries must be stable and well administered, must be economically and financially strong, industrially competent and technologically advanced." Mahathir reminds Muslims the Quranic verse that, "Allah will not change the fate of a community until the community has tried to change its fate itself." And most importantly, Mahathir reminds Muslim ummah that they must not underestimate the power of prayer: "You can and should pray to Allah S.W.T. for in the end it is He who will determine whether we succeed or fail. We need His blessings and His help in our endeavours."

Before President Bush lectures Mahathir Mohamad again he should learn some facts and the meaning of the word "fair." Is it fair Mr. President, to veto a UN resolution that simply pleaded that Ariel Sharon not murder Yasser Arafat, the democratically elected President of the Palestinians? Mr. President, do you know that it is Israel that occupies Syrian territory, The Golan Heights? As such, was it fair that that you vetoed a resolution that condemned Israeli attack on new Syrian territory? Mr. President, are you aware that Israel has been stealing Palestinian lands since 1919? Therefore, was it fair that you vetoed the resolution that asked Israel to stop building a fence twenty miles inside the Palestinian territory, grabbing more Palestinian lands? Mr. President, the whole world was against these three vetoes. Your veto does not make it right; it makes it doubly wrong. You are destroying America's credibility and America's moral authority by exercising vetoes to legitimize Israel's crimes. By being so unfair to the Muslims in general and Palestinians in particular,

and by blatantly condoning all of Israel's atrocities you are exposing America to possible future retaliation. Mr. President, does it occur to you that America's long-term prosperity and security outweigh the expediency of your reelection campaign?