

Malaysia's ex-PM Mahathir wants Iraq war leaders on war crimes charges

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LONDON (AFP) — Former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad has called for an international tribunal to try Western leaders with war crimes over the war in Iraq, a spokesman for the organisers said.

In a speech at Imperial College, London, Mahathir called for a tribunal to try US President George W. Bush plus former prime ministers Tony Blair of Britain and John Howard of Australia for their part in the conflict, said a spokesman for the Muslim group the Ramadhan Foundation, which set up the event.

Spokesman Mohammed Shafiq told AFP that Mahathir, who was in office from 1981 to 2003, wants to see the trio tried "in absence for war crimes committed in Iraq.

"It was a opportunity for students to put a range of questions about war crimes and the international situation.

"He said that people have to stop killing each other and use arbitration, negotiation and discussion as an alternative to violence, war and killing."

On the war in Iraq, Mahathir spoke about "the thousands dying, the economic war, the power of oil and how we could utilise some of these tools to have a leverage against the people who commit countries to war," Shafiq said.

He purposely did not speak about or answer questions from students on the political situation in Malaysia, said Shafiq.

Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is facing growing demands to quit, following an unprecedented electoral setback in March.

More than 450 people attended the speech and about 200 more had to be turned away.

Mahathir was in Cuba earlier this week to take part in the first International Conference of the Cuban Centre for Studies on Defence Information.

The Ramadhan Foundation is a leading British Muslim youth organisation working for peaceful co-existence and dialogue between communities.

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