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Mahathir-Bosnia

MALAYSTA WANTS IMMEDIATE DEPLOYMENT OF ISLAMIC TROOPS IN BOSNIA

from Zainoor Sulaiman

TIRANA, July 13 (Bernama) -- Malaysia today called for the immediate

deployment of troops from Islamic countries in the United Nations peace-keeping force in Bosnia in the light of the proposed lifting of the arms sanction in the besieged Balkan state.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia was concerned about the possible massacre of Muslims by the Serbs in Bosnia upon the withdrawal of the British and French troops from the former Yugoslav republic.

The Bosnians were not, fully equipped to face a possible onslaught by the Serbs, he said in a joint press conference with his Albanian counterpart; Aleksander Meksi, here, capping his three-day official visit to Albania.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia had sent its envoys to several Islamic countries seeking their participation in a Muslim-led peace-keeping team to enforce the UN-mandated safe havens for Muslims in Bosnia.

He said troops from Islamic countries should be sent quickly to take the place of the French and British soldiers should they decide to leave Bosnia.

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Dr Mahathir did not name the OIC countries to which Malaysia had sent its envoys to discuss a Muslim-led option for Bosnia.

It is understood, however, that they include Indonesia, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Replying to a question, the prime minister said Malaysia had no specific peace plan for Bosnia. However, it was concerned that Western powers would "surrender Bosnia to the Serbs".

To prevent this, troops from Islamic countries should be deployed in Bosnia to protect the people against the Serbs, he said.

Reiterating Malaysia's stand of rejecting the policies of Serbia, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was the first country to close its mission in Belgrade and sever diplomatic ties with Serbia.

Malaysia also rejected the religious persecution of Muslims by Serbs in that country, he said.

"If they (the Serbs) are not stopped in Bosnia, they may threaten neighbouring countries," he said.

He cited the situation in Kosovo as an example where the population, mostly of Albanian descent, was being placed under tremendous pressure by the Serbs. -- Bernama

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