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Mahathir-Bosnia

MAJALYSTA WILL NOT WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM BOSNIA, SAYS PM

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KUALA LUMPUR, April 19 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will not withdraw its troops serving with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina despite the government's apprehension over the situation there, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"The government cannot recall its troops because the move will be similar to the measures of the United Nations which we criticise," he said when asked to comment on the latest situation in Bosnia.

"The government is aware of the dangers faced by our soldiers but we cannot allow the Bosnians to be killed just like that by the Serbs," he told a news conference after presenting excellence service awards to Home Ministry staff at the Prime Minister's Department, here.

The prime minister said the government was concerned over the Malaysian soldiers because they were not equipped with adequate weapons as their duty was only peacekeeping.

He also said that if the Malaysian soldiers were entrapped, he feared that the other UN soldiers might not go to their assistance as was the case when the Bosnians needed help. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said that even so, the government would not withdraw the 1,500 Malaysian soldiers, most of them from the 23rd battalion Royal Malay Regiment stationed in several Bosnian towns including Sarajevo, because the government did not only speak of justice but also practised it.

On the other hand, he said, the people who always spoke of justice and human rights merely watched while others were killed before their very eyes.

"I have lost faith in them altogether," he said.

Earlier, the Prime Minister criticised the UN and the Security Council for not doing anything to help the Muslims in Gorazde.

He said that they were actually not interested to help and purposely allow the Serbs to kill the Bosnians and occupy the town.

"When the Serbs advanced, they did not put a stop to it and now they are merely saving the UN troops and leaving the Muslims without any help," he said. -- more

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At the same time, he said, they purposely forbid arms to be supplied to the Bosnian defence forces as though allowing them to be killed outright by the Serbs.

"We no longer believe that should anything happens to us the UN will help us," he said.

"The UN was no longer a body which defended the weak but a tool by the superpowers to impose pressure to have their policies implemented, he said.

On the letter sent to him by Bosnia-Herzegovina President Alija Izetbegovic who sought his support and assistance, Dr Mahathir said that the government had limited capability to render help.

"We are prepared if the UN were to attack the Serbs ... we will be with them ... we hope we are given adequate weapons but they have no intention whatsoever to defend the Muslims in Bosnia and merely expose them to the Serbs," he said. -- more

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He said that the best way was to provide arms to the Bosnian Muslims to defend themselves because in any part of the world, it was the right of a race to defend themselves if others were unwilling.

Asked whether Malaysian troops would serve under the UN in future, Dr Mahathir said that the government would discharge its duties and responsibilities although it was no longer convinced of the sincerity of the UN Security Council or the UN Secretary-General to provide help to the weak.

On whether the government would reconsider its membership in the UN, the Prime Minister said that there was no such proposal for now.

But, he said, the government was actually very disappointed with the UN, as the body only pressured the weak.

As for further steps to be taken by Malaysia, he said: "We can exert pressure ... that is all we can do. As for sending troops, we have done so and we have given an undertaking to follow whatever directives given by the UN, including going to the front if necessary."

"But we can see that our membership is futile," he added. -- Bernama

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