

01 NOV 1999

Mahathir-Muslims

MUSLIMS ARE IN FACT THE VICTIMS OF ORGANISED TERROR- DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 1 (Bernama) -- Muslims are in fact the real victims of organised terror in the world, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the general feeling worldwide that Muslims tend to be extreme and violent, not able to govern their countries well and inclined towards terrorism was mostly due to media hype.

"When acts of terrorism involve Muslims, the terrorists are always described as 'Muslim terrorists'. Yet when there are Christian, Hindu and even Buddhist acts of terror, the terrorists are never linked to their religions."

"They are never referred to as Christian terrorists or Hindu terrorists or Buddhist terrorists. Yet their terrorism is no less unthinking and violent than those of the Muslims," Dr Mahathir said in his article published in the "Mainichi Shimbun" today.

As a result of the media invariably referring to Muslim terrorists, he said most people had associated Islam and Muslims with terrorism.

Dr Mahathir said that in Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Chechnya, Palestine, Iraq, Iran and Libya, Muslims had been massacred and bombed by anti-Muslim groups and even by democratic governments and as a result hundreds of thousands of Muslims had been tortured, raped and killed.

"There is nothing they can do as not a single Muslim country is strong enough to protect Muslims or even to protest over the ill-treatment and constant terrorising of the Muslims and their countries," he said.

The Prime Minister said the oppression and terrorising of Muslims and their countries had been going on for decades and they were the victims of worldwide terrorism.

Bitter and frustrated by their continued and worldwide oppression, unable to get any protection from anyone, the Muslims saw in the acts of terrorism invented by Christian Europeans a means to hit back.

"If their countries cannot protect them, if the World Muslim Community cannot help them, then they must hit back the only way they can and that is by indiscriminate terror attacks. Terrorism offers them the only way to hit back at even the greatest military powers," he said.

The Prime Minister said the vast majority of Muslims in the world were peaceful people and against terrorism.

"But they cannot help sympathising or at least understanding the bitterness of these people. In many instances they fear these so-called terrorists because they will be regarded as traitors if they go against them."

"Ordinary Muslims and even their Governments are not likely to actively suppress this violent fringe of their society. And so the acts of unthinking violence by these bitter and frustrated Muslims will continue," he said.

Dr Mahathir said putting pressure on Muslim countries to curb "terrorists" would not work as the people in Muslim countries would go against their government and revolt if the government acted against the terrorists.

As to curbing "terrorist" acts by Muslims, talks of Muslim terrorists and Muslim terrorism should be stopped and if there must be reference to Muslim terrorists there must also be reference to the religions of other terrorists, he said.

He said the grievances of the Muslims and their countries, their sense of being oppressed, the attacks against their countries and people must be redressed and if action was to be taken against them, it must be sanctioned by the UN.

"Unilateral acts of terror against them by certain governments only fuel their desire for revenge," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the media attacks and vilification of the Muslims and their countries should be balanced with factual reports about the non-Muslims who launched terror attacks against them.

He said the Western media was responsible for stereotyping Muslims as fanatical mindless killers and the Muslims could not be blamed if they thought everyone was against them, and as a result they harboured ill-feelings towards them.

The Prime Minister said the talk of the Islamic nuclear bomb should also be stopped as many non-Muslim countries possessed and tested nuclear devices with impunity.

Citing the event when Pakistan tested its nuclear device, he said the world had talked of the threat of Pakistan's bomb without considering the very real fears of the Pakistanis against India's nuclear test.

"For that matter, the whole Muslim world felt threatened by the huge arsenal of nuclear weapons owned by the people who have no liking for them," he said.

In Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said the government curbed a Muslim party which tried to promote Islamic extremism by arguing with them in accordance with the teachings of Islam.

He said by and large the Muslims in the country were willing to keep to the true teachings of Islam and reject the kind of fanaticism which led to violence.

"Malaysian Muslims are able to adjust to the rapid progress of the modern world without losing or weakening their faith in Islam. Indeed their faith is very strong as can be seen by their steadfast performance of the rituals of faith and their adherence to the true teachings of Islam as found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Prophet," he said.

Dr Mahathir said their faith had in no way impeded them from building a modern industrialised country.

Malaysian Muslims were able to govern Malaysia together with non-Muslims and to be fair and just to everyone regardless of race or religion.

He believed there was much that the Muslim countries and people could do to improve the image of Islam.

Various groupings of the Muslim countries such as the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the D-8 Group of Developing Islamic nations should help to refocus their people and government on governing their countries and developing them.

-- BERNAMA

HS AAM