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OIC-Mindanao

OIC AND ASEAN SHOULD BE MORE ASSERTIVE ON MINDANAO'S MORO ISSUE

KUALA LUMPUR, June 28 (Bernama) -- A group of Malaysian NGOs today urged the international community especially the OIC and ASEAN to be more assertive in efforts to resolve the simmering Moro issue in the Southern Philippines.

A spokesman for the group Dr Mohd Hatta Md Ramli said just as the regional countries pressured the United Nations to take action to resolve the East Timor turmoil last year, the same thing could be done for the Moros.

The OIC had been playing a role in helping to alleviate the plight of the people in Mindanao but concrete efforts must be taken by the countries in the region through ASEAN, he said at a joint press conference organised on behalf of 21 non-governmental organisations and political parties.

He said the struggle of the Moros was legitimate as they had been oppressed for hundreds of years ever since the archipelago was colonised and the UN can only take action if there was pressure from the regional countries involved.

The press conference was held in conjunction with the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers here. Dr Hatta is a central working committee member of the opposition PAS party

A joint statement addressed to Prof Dr Azeddin Laraki, the secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, that was distributed at the press conference, called on the OIC to play host and initiate negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF in a neutral country.

Among other things, the statement also called on the OIC to pressure the Philippine government not to use the kidnapping incident by the so called Abu Sayyaf to justify their attacks on the MILF.

The group said the Islamic grouping should also pressure the Philippine government to step up relief and rehabilitation assistance for the refugees affect by the conflict in Mindanao.

The NGOs and political parties which endorsed the statement include Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), Malaysian Sociological Research Institute (MSRI), PAS and Keadilan.

The four-day ICFM meeting was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday. Kuala Lumpur is playing host for the second time, the first being in 1974.

-- BERNAMA

GM AAM