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Mahathir-Jenin

M'SIA TO CONSIDER SENDING AID FOR PALESTINIANS IN JENIN

KUALA LUMPUR, May 7 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said he will submit a proposal to the government for Malaysia to send monetary, food or medical assistance to the victims of Israeli military attacks at the Palestinian refugee settlement in Jenin.

The Prime Minister said he had just received a report regarding the situation there compiled by a friend in Dubai.

"He showed pictures of destruction in Jenin which depicted as though there had been a massive earthquake there.

"He requested that we launch an effort to provide assistance and I will submit a proposal to the government that we provide monetary, food or medical assistance," he said at a media conference after delivering his keynote address at the Seventh Conference of the Ministers of Endowment and Islamic Affairs, here.

Dr Mahathir was critical of a United Nations' decision to disband a fact-finding mission to probe what had actually happened in Jenin amid claims that Palestinians had been massacred there.

The Prime Minister questioned the discriminatory practices of the UN as demonstrated by the world body's insistence that it be allowed to inspect Iraqi installations to keep its nuclear weapons programme in check.

"If they have to inspect, then the UN must inspect all or else the UN should not inspect anything at all," he said.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said it was his frank belief that more acts of terror would be committed as long as the West Asian problem was not resolved as Muslim anger was much greater now.

He said after the Sept 11 attacks on the United States, Muslim countries had expressed willingness to cooperate in the fight against terrorism but they now had to face discriminatory interpretation of terrorism.

"Israeli terrorism is not condemned whereas attacks by Arafat's people are condemned. That is grossly unfair. And therefore Muslims today are much more angry than they were before," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this was because Israel took the world opinion against terrorism as an opportunity to attack the Palestinians on the pretext that the Palestinians were terrorists.

"But Israeli attacks are state terrorism and in fact state terrorism is worse because it is sanctioned by a government. The acts carried out by Palestinians are not sanctioned by the (Palestinian) government," he added.

In fact, he said, the Palestinian government was prevented from having any control over its own people who took the law into their own hands out of desperation.

Stressing that that he did not condone suicide bombings, Dr Mahathir said one had to accept that the Palestinians had no choice as nobody was helping them.

Touching on the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), the Prime Minister said the umbrella body of Muslim countries must be reminded to be effective and tone down on differences.

"I know it is very sensitive for me to say that, but I feel I have a need to say it," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the OIC could issue strongly-worded statements on the situation in Palestine but nobody would bother as Muslims themselves were divided and appeared to be unable to do anything about it.

That was why, he said, Muslims must find more effective ways to address the issue, including by identifying their strength and weaknesses.

"I do not believe that the 1.3 billion Muslims in the world cannot do anything. We can, but we must think not to act out of frustration, out of anger. That's pointless," he said.

To a question on why Muslims especially the Arabs could not see eye to eye on issues affecting them, he said this was because Muslims in general only talked about Islam when in reality they did not follow the teachings of the religion.

"A lot of us talk about Islamic brotherhood and then we kill each other. Like in Algeria, they kill Muslims because of Islam. That is not right, that is not the teaching of Islam," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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