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Mahathir-Palestine

WORLD HAS THE POWER TO STOP ISRAELI ATROCITIES IN PALESTINE

PUTRAJAYA, April 4 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the world has the power, if it wants, to put a stop to state terrorism committed by Israel against the Palestinians as demonstrated by its ability to end the massacres perpetrated against Bosnians by the Serbs.

The prime minister said the world did nothing for a long time until almost 200,000 Bosnians were killed but when it decided to put a stop to it, the world just did it and was now even bringing the perpetrators to justice.

"So the world has the power to put a stop to acts of terror committed by the Israelis," he said during a meeting here with about 20 international journalists who covered the just-concluded Special Session of Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism.

However, Dr Mahathir said, the world community did not seem to see the Palestinian problem as something relevant to them as compared to the Sept 11 terror attacks which prompted immediate action on their part.

Most of the powerful countries in the world appeared to adopt the attitude that they had nothing to do with the fate of the Palestinians who had been fighting and dying in their struggle against Israeli occupiers for the past 50 years, he said.

"Of course, some of the European countries have begun to say something. But you know, Europe is still feeling guilty about the Holocaust. It dares not say anything against Israel.

"And as a result, the Palestinians have to pay a price for the Jews being killed in Europe during the last (world) war," he said.

Dr Mahathir said one of the causes of terrorism was the Palestinian issue and this had to be removed.

He said the world must take action to tackle the Palestinian quagmire through the United Nations (UN) and the agreement of the United States (US), the strongest power in the world, was also needed.

"The whole world must put pressure on Israel to stop its acts of terror. Until they stop it, they cannot blame the Palestinians for suicide bombings of Israelis, including their civilians," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that what the Israelis were doing was to attack a country and kill civilians without declaring war and even to conduct a de facto arrest of the leader of a country.

"All this is wrong and the Palestinians, not having any other way of defending themselves, have to resort to this act of blowing themselves up even if their victims are civilians," he said.

The prime minister said the Palestinians were fighting back with everything they had.

"It may be termed as terrorist attacks but what choice have you? You have no choice, so you attack. When people use terror against you, it is legitimate to use terror (in return)," he added.

Dr Mahathir said it must be acknowledged that such actions could only end if the world pressured Israel to stop its attacks against the Palestinians and evacuate all Arab lands it occupied.

The prime minister said: "When people are angry they are prepared to do anything. If they (Israelis) do not stop, they have to face the possibility of more suicide bombing attacks or whatever attacks."

He said Palestinian President Yasser Arafat had been accused of not being able to stop his people from making such attacks but the fact was

that the 40,000 Israeli troops in Palestine too had apparently failed to stop them.

Asked on the Saudi-mooted Arab peace plan, Dr Mahathir said the proposal was a good basis to work on although it needed to be further refined.

He said it was a "great concession" made by the Arab countries for the peace proposal stipulated that the Arab countries would recognise Israel in return for full Israeli withdrawal from territories it occupied following the 1967 war.

"We have to be realistic about this thing. We have to accept the fact that there is an Israel and the world has acknowledged the state of Israel. What we need to demand for is that they stay within their borders," he said.

He told those attending the meeting that as far as Malaysia was concerned, it did not have diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said he that since the Sept 11 attacks on the United States he had been writing to the heads of government of Europe, the Muslim countries and the US on the need to address the causes of terrorism.

"I explained these things to (US President George W.) Bush in Shanghai (last year). He seemed to understand my view. I also explained that he should accept differences of opinion. If I differ from him, it is because it is my right to differ from his views.

"I think I have established contact with President Bush to the extent that I can communicate with him and the others," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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