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Malaysia-Memo

M'SIA LODGES PROTEST ON TREATMENT OF TALIBAN PRISONERS

KUALA TERENGGANU, Jan 25 (Bernama) -- Malaysia sent a memorandum to the United States Embassy in Kuala Lumpur today to protest against the harsh treatment of Al-Qaeda and Taliban prisoners at the American naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Malaysia shared the view of many countries and world bodies like the International Human Rights Commission that the detainees should be treated properly as prisoners of war.

"America which led the war on Afghanistan in its campaign against terrorism should treat the Al-Qaeda and Taliban detainees as prisoners of war according to the procedure set out under the Geneva Convention," he told reporters after receiving Umno membership application forms from 176 PAS members here today.

He said Malaysia viewed seriously the harsh treatment given to the Al-Qaeda and Taliban detainees.

"We are not against efforts to combat terrorism but we feel that the Taliban and Al-Qaeda detainees are prisoners of war and therefore should be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war," he said.

"The present conditions, I think, are not satisfactory and the treatment given does not seem humane and is considered harsh," Syed Hamid said.

On the "Black Hawk Down" film which has been criticised by Malaysia, Syed Hamid said the government had made its stand known and there was no need to make an official protest to the US Embassy.

"The (US) Ambassador has also admitted that the film is inaccurate and to Malaysia this is adequate," he said.

The film has omitted mention of the Malaysian Battalion's (Malbatt) role in the rescue of American soldiers who were surrounded by rebels loyal to Gen Aidid in Somalia.

Meanwhile, Syed Hamid said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had directed the Defence Ministry to send a 30-member medical team to Afghanistan.

The government felt that there was no need to give financial aid and instead decided to offer humanitarian assistance, he said.

He said Malaysian medical volunteers in Afghanistan were now treating 300 to 400 Afghan refugees daily.

In KOTA BAHARU, Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) member Datuk Lee Lam Thye said it would also lodge an official protest against America's treatment of the prisoners.

"We will hand over a memorandum to the Foreign Ministry for submission to the United States government," he said.

"We (Suhakam) regret such actions (treatment of the prisoners) which clearly contravene international regulations on the rights of prisoners," he told reporters after launching the Crime Prevention Club of Sekolah Menengah Chung Hwa today.

Suhakam hoped that the US would stop treating the prisoners so harshly, he said.

-- BERNAMA

MNR BD YBY

