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Mahathir-Palestine

M'SIA READY TO SEND TROOPS AND MOUNT DIPLOMATIC CAMPAIGN FOR PALESTINE

By: Mohd Arshi Daud and Khairdzir Yunus

RABAT, April 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is prepared to deploy its troops to Palestine if the United Nations decides to send peacekeeping forces there to stop the fighting between the Palestinians and the Israeli troops, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Wednesday.

The prime minister noted that many countries now felt the necessity to have UN troops in Palestine to separate the two combatants, although when Malaysia advocated it previously, it was rejected, especially by Israel and the United States.

Speaking at a dialogue with Moroccan Islamic intellectuals, think tanks and parliamentarians here, he said that today the world was divided over the Palestinian issue.

"The European countries are not in favour of what (Israeli Prime Minister) Ariel Sharon has been doing," he said.

Even Germany, which had been feeling guilty about the World War Two holocaust, had now decided to condemn Israel and cut off arms support to the that country, he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was not only prepared to help Palestine by dispatching troops there but also to carry out diplomatic campaigns to win support for that country.

"I'm quite sure that if all of us do the same, we will be able to achieve success," he added.

He also said that the Palestinians' act of self-defence, including suicide bombing, should not be condemned as they were desperate and had no means to defend themselves.

"But we can't say that suicide bombing is not a terror attack. It is, but it is justified because there is no other way out," he said.

The prime minister said that if the world wanted an end to terrorism, it must put a stop to Israel's aggression on the Palestinians.

He said that in trying to resolve the conflict in Palestine, what was needed was to do what was possible.

"Today, the problem that we face with Israel is that it has become a very powerful country backed by a (similarly) very powerful country (the US)," he added.

On another note, Dr Mahathir said that when Malaysia earned global respect, it was not his ambition to be a Muslim leader in the world, but to contribute "a little" to Malaysia.

"If people think Malaysia is a good example, by all means copy it. But what we are trying to do in Malaysia is to prove that being Muslim is not an obstacle to progress," he said.

He said Malaysia attained stability and was thus able to progress because Malaysian Muslims were able live not only among themselves but also among the non-Muslims

Meanwhile, at a meeting and dialogue with Malaysian students here, Dr Mahathir said he discussed the Palestinian issue in an audience with King Mohammed VI of Morocco in Agadir, a resort by the Atlantic Ocean south of Morocco, Tuesday.

He said he was scheduled to visit the United States next month and King Mohammed VI also proposed to go there, so they discussed the Palestinian issue so that both countries could present a common stand when they meet President George W.Bush.

He said he would also discuss the same issue with Libyan leader Muammar

Gaddafi at their meeting later.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to visit Libya and Bahrain after Morocco.

-- BERNAMA

MAD KHY JK