

01 APR 2002

Mahathir-UN

UN SHOULD SEEK A COMMON DEFINITION OF TERRORISM, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, April 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the United Nations should take the initiative to organise an international conference to define terrorism because there are some countries practising double standard in defining the act.

"When the act of terror is being carried out by their friends, it is excusable, but when the act is being carried out by someone whom they do not care for or like, that is not excusable," the prime minister said.

"That is the problem with double standard. We must have one standard and one action taken by the whole world," he said at a news conference after delivering his keynote address and opening the special session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (OIC) on Terrorism, here.

He was asked to elaborate on his call for an international agreement on the condemnation of any particular incident or incidents as acts of terror by terrorists through the initiative of the United Nations.

Asked on the escalating acts of terror by Israel on Palestinians, Dr Mahathir said the United States had been rallying support from the world against terrorism, "but unfortunately the US supported the action by the Israel government which also amounted to terrorism."

"It is difficult for the world to unite against terrorists when there is double standard...we have to have one stand," he said.

He said that an international conference, which is not only confined to Muslim countries, needed to be held to define who is terrorist and what is an act of terror so that a consensus could be achieved, and "make us commit to whatever resolution that is taken."

"Otherwise, you cannot expect everybody to act when each one would define certain acts as acts of terror, while others disagree," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had invited all the Muslim countries to the special session of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) so that they could agree on the definition of terrorist and the actions the Islamic countries should take.

"That is the important thing...of course there may be differences in opinion. In my view, minor differences should not prevent us from reaching agreement on the action of our views and actions that we should take," he said.

"The Muslim countries are weak, but if they speak with one voice, it will have the effect, if not on all the countries, then on a big number of countries," Dr Mahathir said.

He said that when there was a universal agreement on who is terrorist and what action should be taken, even the US would have to listen to the voices of their own allies, especially the European countries.

"Now we see that the US is the only country that has a difference of opinion (on terrorism)...many of the European countries have now voiced very strong objections to what the Israelis are doing in Palestine," he said.

Dr Mahathir also stressed the importance for the Muslims and Muslim governments to act rationally in facing injustices against them and Islam.

-- BERNAMA

AKT HK ZS JK