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Mahathir-Violence

DR M BLASTS WESTERN MEDIA FOR DISTORTING SPEECH AT OIC

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- Describing himself as anti-violence, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today lambasted the Western media for distorting his opening address at the 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference yesterday and potraying him as anti-semitic.

"These (what he said in his speech) are facts of history and to tell me that I cannot mention facts of history is to deny me my right to free speech. I hope, please do not distort and misinterpret me," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this at a packed press conference at the end of the two- day 10th OIC summit at the Putrajaya Convention Centre here today.

The Prime Minister said in his speech at the opening of the OIC Summit he called for an end to all the violence and killings including suicide bombings and massive retaliation and that Muslims should pause to think before taking further action.

"In other words, I am against violence, against terrorism and yet apparently this part of my speech was not noted, instead I am accused of being anti- semitic. You will appreciate of course the Arabs are also semitic people so being anti-semitic means I'm against Arabs and Jews as well. That is very even- handed because I am against both, not just one," he said.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir, in his speech, said: "The Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them".

He told the leaders from 57 Islamic nations that Muslims had achieved "nothing" in more than 50 years of fighting Israel and suggested the use of political and economic tactics, not violence.

This remark, highlighted by the Western media, drew sharp criticism from the European Union, United States and Australia, with Britain summoning the Malaysian High Commissioner in London to explain Dr Mahathir's statement.

He was also labelled as an anti-semitic among other things by leaders of those nations, with some suggesting that Dr Mahathir put a stop to his vocal criticism of Western nations.

However, Islamic leaders attending the summit said today that Dr Mahathir's speech was not anti-semitic at all but in fact he was stating the fact.

"In fact, what I stated about Jews or Arabs or Europeans, they are just based on facts. This is what happened and this is my perception of things," Dr Mahathir said at the press conference.

On the suggestion something be done to stop him from making statements, he said this suggestion was quite contrary to the advocacy of free speech, which was championed by Western nations.

"I am quite surprised that anybody should suggest that I should be stopped from making statements of whatever kind. Lots of people make nasty statements about us, Muslims. People call Muslims terrorists and they even say that the prophet Muhammad was a terrorist," he added.

He said those who make such statements were able to get away with it but if he said anything at all against the Jews, he was accused of being anti-semitic.

He said if Muslims can be accused of being terrorists, then others too could accuse the Jews of being terrorists.

On the reaction of Western leaders towards his speech, Dr Mahathir said: "The fact is that they are biased, most of them are biased, not all,

but most of them. They feel that while it is proper to criticise Muslims and Arabs, it was not proper to criticise Europeans and Jews.

"Apparently, they think they are privileged people but we don't think so. We don't think anybody has privileges, if you can criticise us, we have the right to criticise them," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was not anti-West but was only stating the facts and "I think I have much right to state facts as anybody else."

He said from the criticism, he had received due to the speech it seemed that there were people who do not appreciate his suggestion that all acts of terror should stop.

He said these people wanted the acts of terror to go on and perhaps this would give them an excuse to take pre-emptive action against any nation.

He said the idea of some Western states that massive retaliation was the only way to deal with terrorism was not correct and "will not work."

"What I said in my speech is that we should stop killing each other, we should stop the Jews from killing the Arabs, the Arabs from killing the Jews, we should stop terrorist acts like what was seen in Bali.

"Instead, we should pause, we should think and employ strategies. Obviously, Muslims are being oppressed and it is their right to think of a way out of this to prevent people from oppressing them.

"If people have weapons of mass destruction against them (Muslims) aren't they allowed to defend themselves... without the weapons of mass destruction but all least defend themselves with the only way they can," he said.

He said it was grossly unfair and a manifestation of biasness against Muslims that they were not allowed to criticise the Jews without being called an anti-semitic but on the other hand Jews and others could call Muslims terrorists.

"There are other terrorists, there are Christian terrorists, Protestant terrorists, Catholic terrorists in Northern Ireland, there are Hindu terrorists and even Buddhist terrorist and yet, when they commit acts of terror nobody ever takes into consideration their religion," he said.

The fact that the Palestinians were chased out of their homes and the land given to the Jews was a historical fact which cannot be denied by anyone.

"That is the fact of history. Are we not supposed to mention it," Dr Mahathir added.

-- BERNAMA

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