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Mahathir-Iraq (People)

DR MAHATHIR CALLS ON NGOS TO PRESSURE US AND ALLIES TO STOP WAR ON IRAQ

KUALA LUMPUR, March 24 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on the non-governmental organisations in Malaysia to contact their counterparts in the United States and Britain to try and influence their governments to stop the war on Iraq.

The prime minister said that only American and British citizens could stop their governments from attacking Iraq and return to the United Nations (UN) fold.

"If the governments (now) which reject the UN are rejected by their own citizens, maybe their new governments will return to the UN fold," he said when tabling a motion on the attacks by the US and its allies on Iraq.

Dr Mahathir said the government was aware that the US and its allies were uneasy about Malaysia's stand which was highly critical of the unilateral action taken by their governments against Iraq.

He stressed that Malaysia had no quarrel with Americans nor harboured any hatred for them, nor did it want to be foes with the US or Britain or anyone else.

"But we cannot close an eye to the injustice and oppression. What's being done to Iraq is very unfair and increases the oppression on the Iraqis who, for 12 years, have faced sanctions on food and medicines," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that although the Iraqi government was accused of being cruel and dictatorial, the sanctions imposed on the people of Iraq after the Gulf War in 1991 were even more cruel.

Killing the people of a country to ensure that democracy was accepted was immoral and against the very principles of democracy, he said.

He said Malaysia, as a democratic country, acknowledged that its people had various views and stands on various matters as well as their own political ideologies.

"But on the issue of violation of international laws and unilateral attacks on Iraq, I hope that we Malaysians and the political parties can have a common stand," he said.

He said that any dispute among the people on this issue would only cause problems and weaken the country.

"We should realise that now it's Iraq's turn. No country will be safe after this. Defending Malaysia is the responsibility of all Malaysians," he added.

The prime minister said that although all efforts to save humanity from this war had been made, it was not too late for the Muslims and people of other religions to pray and seek God's protection in their own way.

He said that the government called on all mosques nationwide to hold special prayers for the war to stop immediately.

"God willing, through all our efforts and prayers, not many Iraqis will be killed or injured and America and Britain will stop thier violent attacks on Iraq immediatally," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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