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Mahathir-Palestine

MALAYSIA TO DO ALL IT CAN TO HELP PALESTINIANS, SAYS DR M

PUTRAJAYA, Feb 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia does not think it can do much to alleviate the miseries of the Palestinians suffering from the Israeli aggression but will try its best to help them.

"I don't think we can do much, the only thing we can do is to arouse the conscience of Muslims and non-Muslims on the issue so that they can make a better judgement of the problem.

He told this to more than 20 Palestinians who had a dialogue with him at his official residence in Seri Perdana, here.

He said although the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli aggression was far higher than those killed in the Sept 11 terror attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001, many in the international community were not aware of the sufferings of the Palestinian people.

"We of course understand the sufferings you have gone through and you can be rest assured that we will do whatever we can to help," he said.

Dr Mahathir said with the looming threat of war on Iraq, the people of the world for the first time were realising how terrible war could be.

He said people were rising against war and if the world could reject war, then it could also understand the Palestinians' plight.

"We need to arouse the conscience of the world on this problem and that killing Palestinians was not the way to solve this conflict," he said.

Dr Mahathir said while the Sept 11, 2001 terrorist attack gave the impression that the perpetrators of the crime were terrible but what the Israelis were doing to the Palestinians was far worse.

He said he had told President Yasser Arafat that the Palestinian problem would take a very long time to solve but "the people love their country so much that they are willing to die for it."

Dr Mahathir said Muslims were not against Christians or Jews but when land belonging to Muslims were taken away, they had to react and reacting violently was the only avenue left.

"The world will not get rid of the terrorist attacks. Leaders should know that unless they solve the Palestinian problem, they cannot solve terrorism," he said.

Due to terrorist attacks, he said, people were living in fear where tanks were placed in airports and soldiers patrolling the streets.

"They are afraid to travel, to do business and this will not stop until we find an end to the Palestinian problem," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia faced the communist terrorist threat for 42 years but won the battle not only by arms but also by minds.

Dr Mahathir urged non-governmental organisations to fight for peace and tell their governments that peace was important to the world.

"What we can do is to prick the conscience of the world on the Palestinian problem because those who died in Palestine are far more than those who died at the World Trade Centre," he said.

He said the world needs peace and that war was not a solution to achieve this.

"War is a terrible thing. It kills people, maims people and innocent people are killed. We do not want war but some negotiated peace.

"Some NGOs are against war. As the momentum grows, you must remember that during the Vietnam War, the first protest was small but gathered momentum until millions of people were demonstrating against war and that

was only against the US," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said at present there appeared to be a huge anti-war movement in the world.

"I am against demonstrations but in this case, we have to show our oneness with other people in the world who are protesting against war," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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