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Mahathir-Brotherhood

PM TELLS MUSLIMS TO REKINDLE BROTHERHOOD, STRIVE FOR PEACE

By: Abdul Muin Abdul Majid

CAIRO, Jan 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has sent a heartfelt message to all Muslims in the world on the need for them to embrace each other as brothers and return to the true teachings of Islam, or risk being continuously oppressed and their religion treated with contempt.

The Prime Minister said that peace and the brotherhood of Muslims were fundamental teachings of Islam, and if this injunction of Islam alone was upheld, there would be Muslim unity and the Muslims would be strong.

However, Dr Mahathir said that Muslims now were so disunited to the point that in the pursuit of the interests of their respective countries, they were quite prepared to fight their Muslim brothers from other countries and be divided to join opposing camps, even those of their non-Muslim enemies.

Delivering a hard-hitting speech focusing on Muslim unity at a gathering of international scholars and students at the Al Azhar University here Wednesday, he said: "Unable to protect themselves from other Muslims and from other enemies, they allow themselves to be manipulated against their co-religionists.

"They become pawns in the games other people play. Truly they have lost self-respect. Truly they are not following the teachings of Islam."

Dr Mahathir arrived in Cairo from Lebanon Tuesday evening for a three-day working visit to Egypt. His trip to this key Arab nation comes amidst the spectre of war in Iraq and heightened tensions over the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The Prime Minister said that disunited, confused about Islam, fighting each other for power, lacking in essential knowledge and skills, misapplying their God-given wealth, the Muslims of today had reached the lowest point in their development.

But this, he lamented, did not stop them from continuing to do what was prohibited by Islam and they were not willing to see the reality of the situation or to admit that they had deviated from the teachings of their religion.

The Prime Minister said that frustrated and angry, some Muslims had resorted to terrorism, with many believing that they had been successful in this.

"All that has happened is that the enemies of Islam have found justification for putting more pressure on the Muslims, attacking and killing them, treating them and their religion with contempt," he said in describing the adverse impact of acts of terror on the Muslim ummah.

Dr Mahathir noted that Muslims would fight and die not in order to achieve any real objective like freeing themselves from oppression, but do so in order to retaliate, take revenge or vent their anger.

Blaming others for the sad fate of Muslims, he said that might could only be partially correct as it would be better for the ummah to overcome their own faults and weaknesses themselves.

"Muslims must surely know what is it that they are doing which is wrong. Certainly their disunity, their rejection of Islamic brotherhood is wrong. They do not have the right priorities either, emphasising the avoidance of minor sins while openly committing major sins," he said.

Furthermore, Dr Mahathir said, no thanks to the misinterpretation and deliberate ignoring of Islamic teachings, the Muslims of today found

themselves to be backward, lacking in knowledge, unable to defend themselves and their religion, and forced to resort to terror to seek revenge.

He said that the Muslims had clearly lost their way and were nowhere near achieving the greatness that was once Islam.

"How long can we go on doing this? Will what we are doing today restore the greatness of our religion and the fitrah that it should be to mankind? Will it deliver us from oppression by our detractors? Frankly I don't think so.

"It is not because we are incapable of developing ourselves to the level where others would be forced to respect us and our religion.

"It is simply because we refuse to adhere to the true teachings of Islam and to strive to better our lot on this earth as much as we prepare for the life in the hereafter," he said.

Touching on the divisiveness of Islam, Dr Mahathir said that Prophet Muhammad brought only one Islam but today there were many Islamic religions like the Sunni and the Shi'ite, each divided into numerous groups by the different imams and tarikats.

All the divisiveness, Dr Mahathir said, came only after he (Prophet Muhammad) had passed away, the result of differing interpretations about Islam by different scholars through the centuries.

He said that as a result of reading Quranic verses partially and ignoring the contexts and parts which qualify the injunctions in the main parts of the verses, Muslims missed the message completely as the focus fell instead on the form.

To demonstrate this point, Dr Mahathir said: "Thus when we are asked to prepare war horses so as to deter and defeat the enemy, it is not deterring and defeating the enemy that we take note of. It is the keeping of horses."

Given the confusion and division due to the varied interpretations and teachings of Islam, he said, it was time for Muslims to really return to the fundamentals of the religion as embodied by the Quran and the verified Hadith, and the original teachings of the Prophet.

Asserting that the most fundamental of all was that Islam stood for peace, Dr Mahathir noted that Muslims would greet each other with the wish for peace but he questioned whether it was uttered with any sincerity.

"If we want peace then shouldn't we strive for peace, at least among ourselves as Muslims first, and then with people of other faiths. Apart from Islam advocating peace, surely brothers most not fight each other but should love each other, being as they are in the same family," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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