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Concern over US targeting other Muslim nations

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed concern that the United States and its allies will target other Muslim countries accused of having iron-fisted governments.

Dr Mahathir said although the US, in justifying its attacks against Iraq, had claimed that the war on Iraq was imperative to free its people from the iron-fisted rule of President Saddam Hussein, he believed that there were other hidden motives.

He said the war was not between Christians and Muslims as many Christians were also against the war, including the Pope (John Paul II), who strongly opposed the military attack.

"We are concerned that in the end, other Muslim countries will be their next target. We know that the Axis of Evil also includes Iran, so maybe after the attacks on Iraq, their next target will be Iran and other nations like Sudan and Libya. These countries have been accused of being ruled with an iron-fist and the US has claimed that they want to liberate the people," he said after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the party headquarters.

Dr Mahathir who is on a two-month vacation, returned last night after a four-day visit to Brazil.

He said Malaysia strongly opposed the US-led military attack on Iraq.

"War is not the solution to end any problem or to settle any differences of opinions among countries. We do not believe that by killing others we can settle any disputes. War means killing people and this is definitely not a solution."

Dr Mahathir said although the United Nations did not allow such attacks and a decision had yet to be made by the Security Council, the US had proceeded to attack Iraq without seeking approval from the UN.

Such actions only showed that other smaller nations cannot depend on the UN if a superpower decides to attack these nations based on their belief that these nations had committed a wrongdoing.

"More scary is that a nation which has been recognised as very civilised has decided to resort to employing assassination tactics to achieve its purpose. We have actually gone back to the primitive ways of doing things.

"The superpowers, including the US, Britain and Spain, have such low morals to the extent they are supporting assassination as a weapon of national policy. This is very scary as we do not know who is going to be the next victim," he said.

The US, Dr Mahathir said, had wrecked a system which was formulated to avert war and had clearly destroyed the international system.

"They have asked all countries to follow the rule of law but clearly those who strongly preached this have disregarded and failed to abide by the rule of law. Maybe after this we should not follow the rule of law and be free to do what we want but then again there will be chaos in the world as there will be no respect for the law."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was very saddened as the war against Iraq clearly showed that Muslim countries were being targeted.

"We do not say that Christians are attacking Muslims but the US Government has attacked Muslim countries like Afghanistan and now Iraq. But we do not treat the Christians as our enemies as they are also against the war. Many believe that the war will not be long and will end in one or two days; however if they want to end the war that quickly then there must

be intense bombardment which will kill many innocent people."

Later, Dr Mahathir said as the Non-Aligned Movement chairman, he had written to all the countries in the Security Council and had during his visit to Brazil discussed the matter with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to ask UN secretary-general Kofi Annan to convene a special meeting to discuss the matter.

On the UN's failure to stop the war, Dr Mahathir said he did not think they could stop the US from attacking Iraq but Malaysia had to take a stand on the matter.

Also present at the Press conference were Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, vice-presidents Datuk Seri Mohamed Najib Razak, Tan Sri Muhammad Muhd Taib and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein and Puteri Umno chief Azalina Othman Said.