

A PLEDGE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

TIME TO RENEW OUR FAITH IN THE U.N.

The United Nations Day on 22nd October, 1968. was a day of special significance because it was also the twentieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Speaking on that occasion Tun Razak referred to the vital contribution that the U.N. has made for peace and progress of mankind. His comments are:

This year has got added significance in that it is also the 20th Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and which has also been proclaimed the International Year for Human Rights by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The compelling desire of men everywhere to come to an understanding for the encouragement and respect for Human Rights and for fundamental freedoms reached its climax as a result of their abhorrence and sense of horror at the events that led to the Second World War and the untold miseries and sufferings that resulted therefrom.

The Second World War had convinced everyone by and large, that there was a relationship between the outrageous behaviour by a Government towards its own citizens and aggression against other nations. There was the realization that fundamental to the maintenance of peace and harmony was the respect for Human Rights.

Thus when the war ended in 1945. 47 nations met in San Francisco on this same day to sign the Charter of the United Nations which was to form a foundation for peace and harmony and which would, among other things, "facilitate solutions of international economic, social and other humanitarian problems and promote respect for Human Rights and fundamental freedoms." They pledged that the United Nations would promote.

among them, universal respect for an observance of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

Realizing the importance of Human Rights as fundamental to the success of the United Nations and all the objectives and purposes of the Charter, various Committees had to the best of their ability, done thorough groundwork and examined all aspects of Human Rights before their recommendations were finally accepted in 1948, the year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Declaration of Human Rights considered subjects like civil liberties, the status of women, the protection of minorities, the question of refugees, racial discrimination and so forth. The Declaration, since its adoption, has exercised a powerful influence throughout the world, both internationally and nationally.

The United Nations now consists of 128 member nations, all of whom are pledged to the upholding of the Charter.

However, like anything human, the United Nations is not all that perfect. It has not found solutions to a number of problems as evidenced by tensions and armed conflicts taking place in various parts of the world. We still have South Africa with its evil apartheid policies which constitutes a flagrant and blatant violation of Human Rights, flouting openly the principles of the United Nations, even though that country was one of the original 47 founder signatories of the United Nations Charter. You have South Africa extending her evil influence over South West Africa even though the United Nations has time and again stated that she has no jurisdiction over South West Africa which was a mandated territory of South Africa before World War II.

You have Rhodesia, illegally and unilaterally declaring herself independent, drawing inspiration from her neighbour South Africa, and yet there is very little that the United Nations has been able to do except by appealing for various sanctions in the economic field. This in spite of the realisation that the success of the United Nations was dependent on the respect for fundamental Human Rights.

We have other problems all over the world like the Middle East crisis, the re-unification of Korea towards which the United Nations

is pledged, and other trouble spots for which the United Nations has been unable to find just and prompt solutions. Also here in Southeast Asia, we have the case of a country, the Philippines, making a claim to another State, Sabah, which had expressed its undoubted determination to remain a constituent State of Malaysia. Despite this expression of self-determination by the people of Sabah on more than one occasion, endorsed by the United Nations, the Philippines continue to pursue her claim.

It is, therefore, clear that unless countries who are members of the United Nations, are prepared to abide by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, it will be difficult for the United Nations to find solutions to many problems in the world and to maintain peace and harmony among nations. But in spite of its short-comings, at least mankind has attempted, and all are determined to make this Organisation, the only hope for the safeguard of international peace and security, a success.

The United Nations has made vital contributions of inestimable value in a number of fields which we must not overlook and for which we must all be thankful, and for which we are having this special observance today.

We in Malaysia, like all those in the other 124 countries, are pledged to uphold, the U.N. Charter and we should re-dedicate ourselves, like all our brethren elsewhere are doing, to spur the Organization towards more vigorous and imaginative efforts towards making it the effective body it was intended to be.

Let us today, on this twenty-third anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and on this twentieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, re-dedicate ourselves to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and renew our determination to ensure for ourselves, our children, their children and for posterity, a world free of war, where the rule of law prevails and where social and economic progress and better standards of life are motivating factors that guide mankind.

Our only hope is the United Nations. We cannot allow it to fail. Its success therefore depends on its members and in its last analysis on your attitude and mine.