

PM: Not the time to play the blame game
Malaysiakini.com
September 4, 2011

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today chastised those looking to find fault in the death of Bernama TV cameraperson Nuramfaizul Md Nor while covering a humanitarian aid mission to Somalia.

"Let us not play the blame game now. I think that is a very callous thing to do," said the premier during a press conference at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base airfield in Subang, after observing the arrival of Nuramfaizul's body.

The 40 year old was shot dead on Friday while travelling in a convoy with the Umno Youth backed Putra 1Malaysia aid mission to Somalia.

He also evaded questions if Umno Youth should be blamed for the tragedy.

"This is an unwarranted question that I shall not entertain," said Najib (left) as he brushed the question aside.

Opposition leaders and journalist organisations have called for Putra 1Malaysia to be held accountable for the death of Noramfaizul.

They say it has failed to provide adequate protection and training for journalists embedded in its aid mission.

Najib added that when in conflict zones, aid missions will have to depend on the host authorities like UN peacekeepers or the local government to see to their security requirements.

He said that Malaysia cannot insist or make its own arrangements. Even the issuance of bullet proof vests is tied to the local requirements, he said when asked if this would be part of the preparations for future missions.

Stray shots

However he believed that it was an unforeseen incident that resulted in the death of Nuramfaizal, saying that the security arrangements provided were sufficient.

"It was an unexpected event. They were hit by stray shots which were not aimed at our convoy."

He also advised all parties not to jump to conclusions as the fatal shooting is being thoroughly investigated by the Somali government adding that a full report was promised to him by the Somali president himself.

The premier also said that future Malaysian missions will endeavour to be better prepared subject to what the host authority can provide.

"But sometimes even if you are prepared, you cannot get 100 percent guarantee. Even if you wear a bullet proof vest, there is no guarantee.

"We have soldiers assigned as peacekeepers, equipped with bullet proof vests, who have lost their lives."

'Part and parcel'

Even if the government were to make more stringent steps, he insisted that such dangers are inherent to active conflict zones swarming with armed combatants.

"When many weapons are in the hands of unprofessional men, there is danger," warned Najib.

He also set aside questions on whether proper training should be given to journalists prior to dangerous conflict zone assignments, saying that such missions and its inherent risks were part and parcel of the profession.

"There's a limit to what you can prepare for any eventuality. Insyallah (God willing), we'll try our level best in the future to prevent such a thing from happening again. No one can guarantee anything. But if you're not prepared to take the risk, then stay home.

"This is part and parcel (of journalism). You can take precautionary and safety measures but there's no absolute guarantee (of safety) once you're in places of conflict such as Libya, Egypt and Gaza where lives of journalists have been lost," he said.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/174783>