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Najib: End Rohingya crisis

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Muslim unity: Najib greeting Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi before a group photo session at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. On Najib's left are Dr Ahmad Zahid (fifth from right) and Anifah (fourth from right).

PM calls on Muslims worldwide to help persecuted minorities

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KUALA LUMPUR: The plight of one of the world's most persecuted minorities – the Rohingya – is in the international spotlight again at a gathering of Islamic ministers with a call for Myanmar to end the violent crisis.

Malaysia has taken the lead with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak calling on the Muslim world to come together to help hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State.

"I call on the OIC, in the name and spirit of Islamic solidarity, to recognise that it is our collective responsibility to assist our brothers and sisters in Rakhine State.

"We cannot stand by and do nothing. We represent 57 countries and a combined population of over 1.6 billion," Najib said in his keynote address at the extraordinary session of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers on the Rohingya which was held here.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has said that as at Jan 12, 66,000 new arrivals from Myanmar have been recorded in

Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh since October 2016.

The exodus was triggered by a campaign of violence against the community after an attack on police outposts in Oct 9 allegedly committed by Rohingya insurgents.

Malaysia is currently hosting around 56,000 displaced Rohingya men, women and children who had to flee Rakhine State.

OIC secretary-general Dr Yousef Ahmed Al-Othaimen, foreign ministers and representatives from member countries attended the meeting yesterday.

Addressing the delegates at the plenary hall of the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, Najib said Malaysia was a strong supporter of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign countries.

"Having said that, I wish to emphasise that if the domestic affairs of a country results in instability which affects other countries in the region, they cannot be expected to remain silent, or hope for the best and pray that it does not get worse," he said, to applause from the audience.

"As a true and long-standing friend to Myanmar, I say this from the bottom of my heart: It is time to

end this crisis."

The Prime Minister reminded Myanmar that the Asean Human Rights Declaration clearly states that every person has an inherent right to life, personal liberty and security, and freedom of religion.

"No one can say that these rights are currently being adequately defended in Rakhine State," said Najib.

He said everyone in Asean must live up to the values which the Asean Community stands for.

"Otherwise it would be a community in name only, a disgrace to the visionaries who came together to found Asean 50 years ago," he said.

Najib expressed fear that if the crisis was not properly addressed, militant elements could infiltrate and possibly radicalise the oppressed community.

He said Malaysia also did not want a repeat of the 2015 "boat people" crisis where 1,158 illegal immigrants, including Rohingya, were dumped by human traffickers on the shores of Langkawi.

He also announced a RM10mil contribution by Malaysia to assist in humanitarian efforts and social rehabilitation projects in Rakhine State.

He urged Myanmar to provide

unimpeded access for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the affected areas and facilitate the safe and dignified return of refugees to their homes.

Najib also called on the Myanmar government to stop all discriminatory actions and attacks against the Rohingya immediately, and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

"This must happen now, the Rohingya cannot wait," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman were also present.

Dr Yousef Ahmed said that with the United Nations clearly identifying serious human rights problems in Myanmar and potential crimes against humanity, the plight of the Rohingya could not be ignored as an internal matter for the country.

"It is a human rights issue and one of global concerns," he said in his statement which he read out before Najib's speech.

Watch the video
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