

COOPERATION

MALAYSIA, TURKIYE TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA

Erdogan asks Anwar to be present at UN general assembly to discuss issue

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Malaysia will work closely with Turkiye to form a movement aimed at tackling Islamophobia at the international level.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said this was one of the matters discussed with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a phone call on Saturday afternoon.

“We discussed Islamophobia. Erdogan and I agreed to head this effort together.

“Erdogan asked if we could both start a movement and do something to counter attacks against Islam, especially in the

United States and Europe.

“I said please (let’s)... I agreed and I said we will prepare a paper and discuss the matter and he replied that he intended to come to Malaysia as soon as possible,” he said at the “Prime Minister with the People” gathering at Dataran Rakyat Guar Perahu, here on Saturday night.

Anwar said Erdogan had also asked him to be present with him at the United Nations General Assembly in September to hold meetings and discuss how to tackle Islamophobia.

He said Islamophobia, especially in Western countries, led to acts like the burning of the Quran in Sweden.

“On Quran burnings, I issued a very strong statement condemning such acts.”

Anwar said Malaysia would contribute one million copies of the Quran, including translations into the Swedish language, to address misunderstandings of Islam in the West.

He said he made the commitment during the meeting with Erdogan.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim talking to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a virtual meeting on Saturday. PIC COURTESY OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

He said 15,000 copies of the Quran would be translated into Swedish, as Sweden was the country most recently associated with Quran burning.

“I firmly state the stance of the unity government, which rejects all forms of violence and will not compromise with any party involved in such matters in our country.

“I also took this opportunity to inform President Erdogan about Malaysia’s efforts to combat Islamophobia, specifically addressing the burning of the Quran in Sweden.

“I strongly condemned this act, which hides behind the freedom of expression upheld by the West,” he said.

Joining the prime minister in the call was Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir.

On Hari Raya Aidiladha eve, a

man set fire to the Quran outside a mosque in Stockholm, Sweden.

The 37-year-old man, identified as Salman Momika, an Iraqi citizen living in Sweden, had reportedly stomped on the Quran before setting it alight.

It is understood that Swedish police had granted him a permit in line with free speech rights.

However, they later began investigations into the act over “agitation against an ethnic group” as the burning had taken place close to a mosque.

The Turkish government condemned the decision of the Swedish authorities to allow the burning of the Quran outside the mosque in Stockholm, just before Hari Raya Aidiladha celebration.

The Malaysian government, too, had issued a statement condemning the act and summoned the Swedish ambassador to

Malaysia to express its concern and displeasure.

The same measures were also taken by several other Muslim countries.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference also issued a protest note following an extraordinary general meeting, urging its 57 member nations to take “unified and collective measures” to prevent the recurrence of the such incidents.

The Swedish government also condemned the burning of the Quran, calling it an Islamophobic act.

“The burning of the Quran, or any other holy text, is an offensive and disrespectful act and a clear provocation.

“Expressions of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance have no place in Sweden or in Europe,” the Swedish Foreign Ministry said.