

**Mahathir, Khatami Call On OIC To Examine Sunni And Shi'a Muslims Divide In Depth**  
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PUTRAJAYA, May 22 (Bernama) -- Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami today called on the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to set up a task force to examine the Sunni and Shi'a Muslims divide, in depth.

In a joint appeal aimed at ending violence and bloodshed between both doctrines, the two prominent leaders said the task force could perhaps submit concrete proposals for the political and religious leaders of the ummah to act upon the matter.

Dr Mahathir said he only had a simple objective that was to see them stop the violence and the bloodshed among them.

"I don't have a very big agenda such as to unite the Muslim Ummah, because I think that is the task that can be left to other people, not to us. But whatever may be the differences, don't simply kill each other," he told a press conference before launching the first ever Joint Appeal on the matter by both statesmen, at the Perdana Global Peace Foundation building, here.

Representing Khatami was his special advisor, Dr Ali Khosroo while President of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST) Dr Chandra Muzaffar was also present.

Among others, the Joint Appeal which will be circulated online in five languages, including Malay, English, Arabic, Urdu and French, and there will also be appeals to concerned individuals and civil society groups all over the world to join in the endeavour.

Committed in ending the conflict between the two, Dr Mahathir said Muslims, regardless of sect and doctrines, needed to show the world that Islam is a religion that believes in peace.

"But at the moment we cannot claim this when we fight amongst ourselves. It is for that reason that I agree to join Dr Khatami, who is a shi'a, to make this appeal to our Muslim brothers whether sunni or shiah, so we can at least live in peace with each other and face the dangers that we are facing today," he said.

Asked whether there might be any third party involvement in disrupting the peace between the two doctrines of Muslim, Dr Mahathir said there were evidence to show such parties do exist.

"Because it will serve their purpose, they don't have to kill us, we are killing each other, so it saves them everything because we are doing the job for them, the enemies of Islam will do harm to you. It does not help us if we were to make matters worse," he said.

Meanwhile, Khatami in his video message said it was indisputable that Sunni-Shia antagonism and conflicts which resulted in massacres have tarnished the image and dignity of the ummah in the eyes of the world.

"It has clearly weakened the Muslim Ummah. It has made us more vulnerable to the manipulations and machinations of outside elements determined to subvert the unity and

integrity of ummah," he said.

Dr Chandra lauded the effort by the two leaders of a Sunni majority state and overwhelmingly Shi'a nations, said it was the first time two major leaders in the contemporary Muslim world had come together.

"The idea of the appeal emerged through a conversation in May 2011 when I met Dr Khatami in Iran. I suggested to him the appeal and Tun M was also very supportive of the idea. It (The appeal) is largely because of the sincerity and commitment of these two great men," he said.

After from the Appeal, Dr Chandra said a seminar and a workshop on the matter with the participation of both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims will be organised soon.

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