

Malaysia Played Proactive Role In Securing Votes For Palestine, Say Muslim NGOs Bernama

Oct 5, 2015

By Mohd Hisham Abdul Rafar

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- Mention Palestine and what comes to mind is a territory torn apart by war, destruction and senseless killings of innocent people.

While years of Israeli aggression have led to the sound of gunfire perpetually echoing through its streets, Palestine's plight has nevertheless always grabbed the attention of the world, particularly the Muslim community.

Now, however, Palestine can afford to smile a little as its flag is flying high at the headquarters of the United Nations (UN) in New York City, giving the beleaguered state fresh hopes of freeing itself from the clutches of the Zionist regime.

In a historic ceremony on Oct 1, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas hoisted his nation's flag at the UN's Rose Garden, witnessed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman also attended the ceremony.

The Palestinian Authority had obtained its non-member observer status at the UN in 2012.

On Sept 10 this year, the UN General Assembly voted in favour of raising Palestine's flag at the UN headquarters following a 119-8 vote with 45 abstentions.

The eight nations which had opposed the resolution were the United States, Australia, Canada, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Tuvalu and Israel.

MALAYSIA'S ROLE EFFECTIVE

Can Palestine's small but symbolic success be attributed to the hard work put in by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which include Malaysia?

Chairman of Muslim non-governmental organisation Pertubuhan Pribumi Perkasa Malaysia's (Perkasa) Islamic Affairs Bureau Dr Amini Amir Abdullah said Malaysia and OIC member nations' tireless efforts in lobbying for support for Palestine were finally beginning to bear fruit.

"Malaysia has been playing an effective role in voicing out its concern about Palestine and the future of its innocent people, who are being oppressed by Israel.

"Today, the Islamic community is proud of what Palestine has achieved and it was made possible with the undying support of Malaysia and other OIC countries. It has given the (global) Muslim community a glimmer of hope that Palestine will (one day) become a free state," he told Bernama.

NGO Pertubuhan Ilmuan Malaysia Secretary-General Ustaz Ahmad Fazrin Yahaya, meanwhile, expressed his hope that Palestine would go on to chart bigger victories.

"We're delighted with the recent development and hope that Palestine will rise up and achieve even more," he told Bernama in a telephone interview from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

He was also hopeful that the raising of the Palestine flag at the UN headquarters would act as a spur to speed up the peacemaking process between Tel Aviv and Ramallah.

"I hope it will help free Palestine from the clutches of Israel. We're praying for the best..." he added.

Ahmad Fazrin said Malaysia was instrumental in helping Palestine to taste success as it had been consistent in its stand against the violation of the beleaguered nation's rights by Israel.

Last month, clashes between Palestinian worshippers and Israeli forces had been occurring almost daily at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem. On Sept 21, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak condemned the Israeli aggression and attempts to impose regulations at the place of worship to segregate worshippers.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been going on for about six decades following Israeli occupation of the state.

Since 1948, more than 70 resolutions have been passed by the UN Security Council to help resolve the conflict but to no avail.

MALAYSIA, A MODEL ISLAMIC NATION

Amini Amir, who is also a lecturer at Universiti Putra Malaysia's Faculty of Human Ecology, said besides the support of Muslim nations, Palestine's recent victory could also be largely attributed to the concept of moderation which Najib had been promoting repeatedly.

"Yes... the Global Movement of Moderates (GMM) espoused by our Prime Minister has to some extent been fruitful and it has, in fact, managed to command the attention of the international community.

"Malaysia has proven that it believes in taking the moderate approach (to resolve conflicts), which the international community finds acceptable. Malaysia is also being seen as a model Islamic nation, hence the Malaysian element would have played a part in influencing the UN General Assembly to vote in favour of Palestine," he said.

In his maiden speech at the UN on Sept 27, 2010, Najib called on all countries to "choose moderation and reject extremism".

He also spoke about his GMM proposal, saying that it was aimed at rallying leaders and

intellectuals of the Islamic world to come forward and state their stand openly and firmly against extremism.

He said moderation was neither an alien concept nor only existed in theory as history has documented that it had been successfully practised by leaders of past civilisations.

The GMM initiative had also attracted the attention of world leaders attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth in October 2011 and even formed part of their 17-point joint declaration issued at the end of the meeting.

In 2013, Najib was awarded the 2013 Global Peace Award by the Global Peace Foundation for his efforts in building cross-cultural relationships and pioneering the Global Movement of Moderates, as well as for his role in resolving the Bangsamoro conflict between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

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