

Malaysia's persistence on Myanmar's Rohingya crisis can be effective, via UN platforms

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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 1 (Bernama) – While Malaysia has been consistent in voicing issues over the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, it can however, be done more effectively by continuing to raise such issues, via the United Nations (UN) platforms, particularly the General Assembly and Security Council, says a scholar.

“Malaysia needs to keep engaging other international platforms like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and ASEAN to pressure the UN to eventually take appropriate action,” said Dr Asri Salleh, a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies of the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Sabah.

He noted Malaysia had always been vocal in highlighting, as well as drawing international attention and reaction to issues, especially involving third and developing countries, notably its voice in the Palestinian issue and terrorism which had always been respected and carried weight among parties of interest, especially in the Middle East.

“The world took note of Malaysia's engagement of Myanmar. For example, the OIC once appointed Tan Sri Syed Hamid Albar as its special envoy to Myanmar. Other than that, the UN had also appointed its former permanent representative to the UN, Tan Sri Razali Ismail as UN Special Envoy to Myanmar,” he told Bernama in an interview recently.

On how Malaysia could work with other countries to have a louder voice at the world body rather than veto power, Dr Asri said Malaysia needed to align or join forces with any of the five permanent members of the UN (United States (US), China, France, Russia and United Kingdom) to ensure that its voice gained the necessary traction and momentum.

“Otherwise, it has to play a more active role in other regional organisations like ASEAN, OIC and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). One must remember though, being a small country does limit Malaysia's impact on the world. I can only foresee the continuity of the veto power in the foreseeable future,” he added.

On the call to reform the UN by Malaysia's Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the recent UN General Assembly (UNGA), Dr Asri said the call had been around for the past three decades or so, especially in the 1990s when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) collapsed in 1991, leaving the US as the sole superpower.

“A new era requires new approach. The UN has to undergo reforms. But the UN first has to reduce its dependency on the US financial support before any of the reforms can take place. As of now, the US remains the largest contributor to the UN. One should not wonder why such a reform is difficult, if not impossible, especially if the reforms go against the wishes of the US. The UN would definitely fail without the US money,” he noted.

On the challenges faced by Malaysia in today's politics in the UN stage, he said the most challenging one was how best to get the UN's permanent members to act on certain issues, fairly and equally.

“In addition to that, Malaysia has little comparative advantage in terms of financial and military powers as opposed to many other countries.

“Next is, Malaysia has to struggle against the structural deficiency of the UN itself. For the past 70 years or so, reforming the UN continues to pose a big challenge for Malaysia because it continues to ‘marginalise’ small and developing countries,” said Dr Asri.

Edited by Gerald Raja

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