

Malaysia's judicial mechanism in UN security council to take Rohingya crisis to next level

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By Samantha Tan

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 5 (Bernama) – Malaysia is taking the plight of the Rohingyas to the next level following its proposal to the United Nations (UN) Security Council to establish an international judicial mechanism against those responsible for the atrocities in Myanmar, says a scholar.

Universiti Sains Malaysia's Associate Professor of the School of Social Sciences, Dr Benny Teh Cheng Guan said Malaysia's proposal during the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on Sept 26, was a reflection of the country being equally vocal about the Rohingya crisis apart from the Palestinian issue.

"I think Malaysia can and should do more for the Rohingya problem. Malaysia may need to look beyond ASEAN and try to mobilise the international community to view the plight of the Rohingya more earnestly.

"Therefore, Malaysia's proposal to the UN Security Council to establish an international judicial mechanism on the issue is a step forward," he said in an e-mail interview with Bernama.

Teh explained why Malaysia should look beyond ASEAN to continue raising the plight of the Rohingya in Myanmar, as ASEAN despite becoming a community in 2015, had been slow in seeking a solution to the issue.

"Last year, Malaysia did get some assurances from Myanmar to resolve the problem during the 31st ASEAN Summit but no official joint statements were issued nor was the issue in the official agenda," he noted.

He said Malaysia's voice had been loud and clear at the world stage in international issues, especially related to Palestine as well as combating extremism and terrorism.

"Malaysia is among the over 30 countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel because of their support for the Palestinian cause.

"It (Malaysia) has often voted in favour of Palestine at the UN such as the 2011 Palestinian membership in UNESCO, the 2012 UN resolution that upgraded Palestine to non-member observer state status in the UN, and even co-sponsoring the 2018 UN resolution that called for greater protection for Palestinians," he noted.

On Malaysia's Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad who repeatedly called for reform of the UN, Teh said the reform was specifically on the Security Council, for a more equitable power distribution that would provide the much needed spaces for effective conversations where small and middle powers could uphold their interests.

"I might be wrong, but I believe that Malaysia's frustrations may have stemmed, in part, from the ineffectiveness of the Security Council in resolving the Palestinian issue that Malaysia strongly supports, and the failure of the proposed UN resolution to set up an international tribunal on the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 (in July 2014), both due to the use of veto power," he added.

The veto power refers to the power of the permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States) to veto any substantive resolution.

On the new Malaysian Government's priority issues, Teh said Dr Mahathir's speech during the UNGA had mentioned that his new government would ratify all core UN instruments on human rights.

“I think this is of particular importance, not only to ensure better protection for Malaysians but also to ascertain Malaysia’s commitment to universal principles of human rights. Laws that violate basic human rights should be reassessed and repealed, if necessary,” he added.

Teh said good governance would be another issue where institutional reforms would be needed to preserve and uphold democracy, as well as further strengthen Malaysia’s law enforcement capabilities.

“The unveiling of institutional reforms, including the decentralisation of powers mentioned by Dr Mahathir during the Mid-Term review (11th Malaysia Plan) in Parliament recently, is therefore an important step forward in improving transparency and accountability

“Hopefully, it can drastically reduce if not eliminate corruption. But, strong political will is needed to sustain the reform process,” he noted.

Edited by Gerald Raja

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