

## **Democracy, political stability in Middle East cannot be promoted over dead bodies -**

**Dr M**

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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 23 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said democracy and political stability in the Middle East cannot be promoted over the dead bodies of Yemenis, Syrians, Iraqis and others, and it cannot be built upon the rubble of bombed-out cities.

The prime minister said cynics have every reason to conclude that all the talk about exporting democracy or building a new world order or even fighting terrorism was increasingly a false construct to cover naked aggression and dominate a resource-rich region.

“And if we are honest as well, we will have to acknowledge that all the billions that have been spent on weapons have done nothing to improve the security and stability of the region. Indeed, the Middle East has experienced almost two decades of continuous war. Millions have been killed, wounded or forced to flee from their homes.

“Whole cities have been laid waste and vital infrastructure destroyed. One has only to survey the landscape of much of Iraq, Libya, Syria and now Yemen to see the grim reality of it all,” he said at the "Stand With Yemen" Symposium and Photo Exhibition organised by Suhakam and the Stand with Yemen Coalition here today.

His speech of text was read by Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah.

Dr Mahathir said in the Middle East, disunity was at the heart of much of the instability as Muslim countries had been all too quick to demonise and attack each other instead of trying to resolve their differences peacefully as brothers and followers of a shared faith.

He also questioned, among others, the sense of Islamic brotherhood, the sense of community as followers of the Prophet, commitment to the ummah that some were even prepared to cooperate with Israel to destroy other Muslim nations.

On Yemen, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia called upon all the Yemeni factions to the conflict to give peace a chance and allow the peace agreement worked out recently in Stockholm an opportunity to work.

“The highest priority must be given to immediately ending the fighting and the bombing so that civilians can receive emergency food assistance and medical attention. The people of Yemen deserve it; our faith demands it.

“If both Yemeni factions to the conflict need time to regain trust and confidence in each other, they should consider immediately declaring the port city of Hodeidah an open city under temporary UN control so that a safe zone can be established and emergency set up to provide urgently needed humanitarian assistance. It is time for killing to stop; it is time to start rebuilding Yemen again,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said the war in Yemen was now entering its fourth year with the cost in human suffering was beyond imagination where thousands of innocent civilians were killed while millions more had been displaced and adversely impacted by famine and disease.

He said what began as a civil war had now drawn in outside powers ready to fight to the last Yemeni child in order to advance their own agendas and ambitions and as usual, the merchants of death – the arms manufacturers and dealers were quick to profit from the misery of war.

“Nations that styled themselves as the bastion of democracy and human rights have fuelled the conflict in Yemen with billions of dollars in armed sales to the region, arms that are now being used to indiscriminately bomb, kill or maim innocent civilians, including children.

And they are doing this without any regard to international conventions or even to their own laws.

“Let’s call a spade a spade; It is utterly hypocritical to talk about human rights and democracy while participating in the mass murder of innocent civilians,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said as a manifestation of Malaysia’s continuous and unwavering support of efforts to address the critical humanitarian needs of the people of Yemen, Malaysia pledged to contribute US\$100,000 towards the humanitarian appeal for Yemen during the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, which will be held in Geneva, Switzerland on Feb 26.

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