

**SPEECH BY THE HON TUN DR MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
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“A Report on the State of the Ummah”

May I, upon my own initiative and without being conferred any authority by anyone, make a report on the State of the MUSLIM Ummah presently. I would like to do this because we often talk of the ummah, as if we belong to one MUSLIM community. But the reality is that we don't. We act as nation states mostly but if we seek unity across the borders of our nations, we identify ourselves as members of different sects of Islam, as Sunnis, Shiahs, Wahabis etc. Together with the nations that we belong to, the differences between our sects splinter us into more groups of majorities and minorities in Muslim and non-Muslim states.

2. Today the Muslims are divided into more than 50 nation states and more than a thousand sects and sub-groups which do not behave as members of the ummah, the Muslim community, but rather as followers of religions which they claim to be Islam but which others who claim to be Muslims do not accept to be their brothers in Islam. Such are the differences between them with regard to their interpretations of Islam and beliefs that they are, in some cases, ready to fight and kill each other. I am not sure but I think that more Muslims are killed by Muslims than are killed by the unbelievers. Even as we are attacked by non-Muslim enemies, we help them by killing fellow Muslims. For our enemies the different sects that we belong to is irrelevant. For them we are all Muslims – we are all their enemies.

3. Islam had no nation states at the beginning. From the time of the Prophet the Muslims belong to the community of Muslims, the ummah. Irrespective of race or colour or geographical domicile, all Muslims were brothers and they all belong to one Muslim community – the ummah.

4. The head of the Community was the Khalifah or Caliph. For the purpose of administration of the vast lands of the ummah, Governors were appointed by the Caliph. They were Governors who administered territories on behalf of and in the name of the Caliphs. They were not kings, certainly not independent kings. The loyalty of the Muslim ummah was not to the Governors but to Islam, the ummah and the Caliphs, or Amir-ul-Mukminin.

5. The Prophet did not set up a dynasty. Instead the ummah chose his successors. But the refusal of the Bani Umayyah to accept Saidina Ali r.a. some of whose followers considered him to be the true successor of the Prophet, split up the ummah into two. And instead of choosing a Caliph to succeed a deceased caliph, the Bani Umayyah set up a dynasty. In distant parts of the land of the ummah the Governors began to assume titles of their own, to declare themselves as monarchs with ruling dynasties and even to declare themselves as the Amirul-Mukminin and Caliph.

6. And so the ummah was split long before the European concept of nation-states came into being. We can blame the Europeans for splitting us into

numerous nations, but the fact is that we consented and we supported the split, because of greed and ambition.

7. And so today the ummah exists in name only. We belong to and our loyalty is with our nation states. As nationals of these nations we are ready to fight and kill each other. We are even ready to ally ourselves with the unbelievers in our wars against each other. And we have never been able to act together to defend the ummah because we uphold the states we belong to rather than the Community of Muslims, the ummah, as enjoined by the Al-Quran.

8. But we have not succeeded as nation states either. All the Muslim nations are weak, unstable and unable to develop. Since the demise of the Ottomans, no Muslim nation has been regarded as a world power. Indeed no Muslim nation can be considered as developed even.

9. The weakness of the Muslim states has led to their being colonised in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Even after achieving independence they have been forced to submit to foreign pressures. They have frequently been manipulated so that they fight against one another. They were never able to unite and protect the ummah.

10. When the people of Palestine were struggling to prevent their country from being made into the state of Israel, no Muslim country was able to come to the defence of the Palestinians. The Europeans together with the Zionist converted a part of Palestine into the state of Israel. The Muslim and Christian Arabs were expelled from Palestine, their houses, land and farms expropriated by the Zionists and they were forced to live in refugee camps ever since.

11. Attempts by a few Muslim nations to invade Israel and restore Palestine to the rightful people failed even though the Israeli military forces at that time was weak. Further attempts also failed, despite support from Russia.

12. The Muslim countries depended on weapons of war being supplied by sympathetic NON-MUSLIM countries. They have no capacity to develop and produce their own weapons. And this despite the injunction of the Quran that they, the Muslims must "Prepare their war-horses" and instil fear in their enemies with their strong defences.

13. Today practically the whole of Palestine is occupied by Israel Jewish settlements have been built on ALL Palestinian land. No one can visit Palestine without the permission of the Israelis. Whereas the whole world must recognise the state of Israel or be condemned, the Palestinians may not have a state of Palestine. The Israelis only allow a "Palestinian Authority" to function.

14. Anger and frustration over what happens to Palestine has led to futile attempts by disparate Muslim irregulars to retaliate. On Sept 11, 2001 the World Trade Center in New York was destroyed by suicide squads crashing hijacked commercial aircrafts into the buildings.

15. Since then Afghanistan and Iraq have been invaded, Syria and Iran threatened. Muslims everywhere have been humiliated and condemned as terrorists. Islam has been denigrated and the Quran desecrated.

16. The enemies and detractors of the Muslims have succeeded in turning Muslim countries into their satellites, forcing them to pay for the war against Muslims and even getting them to fight other Muslims on their behalf.

17. Truly the Muslims have descended to the lowest level ever, from the great heights that they had achieved in the past. The Great Muslim Civilisation is no more. The future holds no promise either. Even the akhirat holds no hassanah, for can the Muslim gain hassanah in the next world when collectively as the ummah they have allowed Islam, their religion to be desecrated to the point when their Prophet, MUHAMMAD s.a.w is called the leader of a terrorists creed, not THE PROPHET OF a great religion.

18. We are all sinners because none among us has the capability to defend our religion and the ummah. We have failed the injunctions of fardhu kifayah. All our ibadah as Fardhu Ain will not save us from the sin of failing to perform Fardhu Kifayah.

19. There is no point in blaming our detractors and enemies. If we say they are responsible for dividing us into states which are weak and prone to fighting each other, then why don't we just stop ourselves from being manipulated by them, from fighting each other. The fact is that we willingly allow ourselves to be divided and we knowingly do their biddings. The fact is that we choose to ignore the injunctions of our religion and we consciously make the decisions to disregard the brotherhood of Muslims and instead to help the non-believers in oppressing Muslims.

20. Allah has given some of us wealth which we cannot imagine. We have enough money to enrich all the 1.3 billion Muslims in all the Muslim and non-Muslim countries of the world. We can put an end to all poverty among the Muslims. We can ensure that they possess internal strength and capacity. But what have we done.

21. Money loses value all the time. Money that is not used depreciates rapidly. But knowledge and skills appreciate in value with experience and time. The oil wealth under the ground on which we live gave us no benefit because we had no knowledge and skill to get it out of the ground, to add value to it, to increase its uses.

22. Others have come with the knowledge and the skills to bring up the oil for us, to refine the oil, to sell the oil and to use the oil. After a century of their exploitation of our resources, with each one of the oil majors richer and more powerful than many of the countries of the world, we still do not know how to produce our own oil. We sit back in comfort receiving the royalties, totally dependent on these alien exploiters.

23. And yet, no religion places more importance on knowledge and skills than our religion. The first message received by the Prophet, Muhammad s.a.w is "Iqraq" which we interpret as Read. To read is to acquire knowledge.

24. Did this first message stipulate that the reading, the acquisition of knowledge should be confined to the religion of Islam? There was, at the time the message was received, no literature on Islam. On religion there was the Torah and the Christian Bible, but no Quran, not yet.

25. But the verse which followed "Iqraq" indicated the knowledge that needed to be acquired. It mentions how Allah has created Man from a small clot of blood, that Allah teaches through the pen and writing about that which Man had not known.

26. In this Surah nothing was said which proscribes reading i.e. acquiring knowledge other than about the religion of Islam. Yet 500 years ago we were told by ulamas and jurists that only the study of religion gains us merit in this life and in the akhirat. Other studies gain us no merit.

27. The early Muslims studied all knowledge including those pioneered by the Greeks. They rejected much of Greek philosophy but they focussed on science, mathematics, medicine, astronomy etc. They built the great Muslim civilisation which contributed to the power and greatness of the ummah. They were the most advanced people when the Europeans were still wallowing in the ignorance and superstitions of the Dark Ages.

28. It was after the Muslims disregarded studies other than of the religion of Islam that the Muslim civilisation declined and have sunk to the level that it is today. Incidentally, even as the Muslims decided that there was no merit in studying anything else other than religion, the Europeans began to study the works of the great Muslim scientists, mathematicians and physicians and using this knowledge dragged themselves out of the "Dark Ages" to begin building their modern civilisation.

29. But today we are still not obeying the first injunction of Islam – to read and acquire knowledge. We do not even know how to extract the wealth that Allah has endowed us with. Instead we merely sit and enjoy the wealth that others produce for us.

30. Allah has endowed humans with certain qualities which can help us enjoy hassanah in this world as well as preparing ourselves to gain hassanah in the next. He has made us such that if we do not use what He has endowed us with, then the gift or endowment would wither and become useless.

31. Thus the muscles of our body have to be used constantly if they are going to serve us for standing, walking and doing physical work. If we put in extra effort the muscles would actually grow and strengthen and we would be able to sustain more physical work. What is more we would develop greater power and greater skill with every time we use the muscles.

32. It is the same with our brain. If we use it, its store of knowledge and its sharpness will improve. We would be better in whatever we do because of the accumulation of knowledge and experience. If we don't, then the brain would not develop, would in fact atrophy in terms of capacity to think, to reason and to solve problems.

33. Many of us are now so rich that we just want to enjoy our life, to enjoy our wealth. With our wealth we can pay for other people to do our work for us, to think and solve problems for us, to manage our businesses. With our unlimited money we have become the consumers of everything. We produce nothing on our own. Others can do this for us. The resources that Allah endowed us with, we let others to extract and to sell. We merely receive the money. We make no effort to learn. Worse still we believe that Muslims cannot learn and acquire the knowledge and the skills the way others can, especially the Europeans. And so we trust them and we distrust those Muslims who may claim to be able to do what the Europeans do.

34. That we are incapable of thinking, of managing, of solving our problem is shown by the way we are handling our present predicament. Faced with the attacks against us we become bellicose and we go for short-term retaliation. We don't plan for ultimate victory, for a long-term solution. We merely seek revenge. If they kill our people, then we will kill their people. We don't really care who we kill as long as it is their people. They may be innocent, they may even be sympathetic to our cause. But if they are their people, the fact that they are innocent or actually helping us does not matter. They must be having evil intention and so we kill them. Those who really are guilty, the soldiers and the politicians who ordered them to kill, we avoid because it is difficult to get at them. It is easier to kill innocent people.

35. If we have a quarrel with any of our own people, this is also the time to kill them. Kill them wherever they may be, even when they are praying to Allah. And then deny that we have done so.

36. Our revenge against our oppressors and invaders have yielded us nothing. It has only damaged the image of Islam and the Muslims. The oppression and humiliation of the Muslims go on and gets worse with the passage of time.

37. Till now we have not sat down to think, to plan, to strategise, indeed to seek guidance from our religion on how to fulfil our duty to the ummah, how to perform fardhu kifayah so as to save ourselves, so as to absolve us from sins. We will spend hours, days, months and years in fruitless polemics on the numerous interpretations of our religion. We are good at this because that is how we use our brain all the time. But we cannot think about plans and strategies to defend the ummah, because our brains have not been used for this.

38. We condemn the suicide bombers. But that is the only thing they know how to do, that is the only thing they are capable of doing. If the ummah can offer a better way, if the ummah had obeyed the injunctions of the Quran to equip ourselves with the capacity to defend the ummah, to instil fear in our enemies as enjoined by our religion, they would not need to carry out suicide bombing, killing

innocent people more than those actually guilty of killing our people. But not only are we incapable, we actually do not want to be capable. We would let our Muslim brothers suffer as long as we do not suffer.

39. We are not interested in doing what is in our capacity to do in order to save the ummah. We are not even interested in hearing about how this can be done. Even when assured that the risk and the harm to ourselves would be minimal, we are not willing. We continue to do what harms the ummah because it brings us a false sense of security.

40. This is the state of the ummah. This is the depths to which we have sunk. What I have said here we, the ummah, or we the people in this very hall know very well. I am not telling you anything new. But are we just going to discuss the problems, to argue endlessly about them, about the causes and who is to be blamed; or are we going to do something about them. No problem is totally insoluble. We may not be able to completely overcome it. But we can at least alleviate it.

41. Revenge is not what we should seek. Revenge is short-term. It may give temporary satisfaction. But revenge begets revenge. They kill our people, we kill their people, then they kill our people again, and we kill their people again, and the killings will go on endlessly. On balance they have the edge. They are better equipped. Their strategy is to out terrorise us. They can invade our countries and they can manipulate our differences so that instead of attacking them we attack and kill each other. When this happens they can claim success, for we are doing their work for them.

42. We claim that this is not true, that it is their propaganda. But when a suicide bomber blows himself up in a crowded mosque full of Muslims praying, can we say with honesty that the suicide bomber is not a Muslim, or that he is a Muslim in the pay of the infidels. Such a suicide bomber would go to hell. It is Muslims killing Muslims, even though we might declare that those praying are not Muslims because they belong to a different sect, they are Shiah and we are Sunnis or they are Sunnis and we are Shiah.

43. If you are serious and a good Muslim, fight the enemy, fight the people who kill your people, fight the combatants. It will not be easy of course but you would die a good Muslim because you have not killed a Muslim as this is forbidden by the Quran, because you do not damage the good name of Islam.

44. As I said revenge is not the way. We need to plan for ultimate success. We need to build up our strength and capacity so as to instil respect and fear on our detractors, so that they will not bully us, attack us, oppress us, humiliate us.

45. It will take a long time. But think of the struggle of the Prophet, Muhammad s.a.w. He suffered defeat, he was stoned by his detractors, he was threatened, he had to flee from Mekah and he had to endure great hardships.

46. He is the Prophet of Allah and Allah could have made things easy for him if Allah s.w.t. wanted to. But Allah did not favour his Messenger by making things

easy for him. Alone Muhammad s.a.w had to struggle. But slowly he won over his enemies, he gained their support and their conversion to Islam. He fought and the beloved of Allah was himself wounded. But he continued his struggle.

47. Alhamdulillah, because of his determination and dedication to Islam, his struggle resulted in Islam being spread from Spain in the West to China and Southeast Asia in the East.

48. If he could struggle for 23 long years, who are we to wish for victory overnight. Being ordinary people, the ummah must be prepared to struggle much longer, to patiently plan a good strategy and to make the necessary preparations.

49. It may take decades or even a century. We may not live to see success or victory as the Prophet was not able to see the few followers he had in Madinah grow into the 1.3 billion ummah, that there are today. So we have to patiently plan our recovery in the world of the 21st Century of the Christian Era corresponding with the 15th Century of the Hijrah. We have to diligently implement our plan. And we have to regain the status, if not the glory of the Great Muslim Civilisation. We have to struggle hard to restore the greatness of Islam which Muhammad s.a.w. has left in our care.

50. Our detractors, our enemies will not just sit by and watch. They will put obstacles in our way. They will try to divide us as they have always done. But we must fight cunning with cunning and with Allah's help we will eventually triumph. Inshaallah.

51. There is always a way for those who seek for it. With Allah's guidance and our sincere and sustained effort we will find the way, and we will implement it. But remember that Allah will not change our fate unless we endeavour to change ourselves.

52. In Malaysia we have a slogan "Malaysia Boleh" or "Malaysia Can". We believe that we can do what others can do. We believe that Muslim can do what others, the non-Muslims can do, Inshaallah. Allah will determine whether we will succeed or not. But if we don't do anything there is no way we can succeed.

Brothers and Sisters,

53. I submit this as an unsolicited report on the state of the ummah. We have been endowed by Allah s.w.t. with all that we need to change ourselves and the unfortunate situation that we and Islam are in. If we do not avail ourselves of the gifts that He, Allah s.w.t. has endowed us with, then we can only blame ourselves. Remember that all that is good is from Allah s.w.t., and all that is bad is from us. Thank you.
