

By : DATUK SERI SYED HAMID ALBAR
Venue : MCDONALDS CENTREPOINT, BANDAR UTAMA
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Title : SPEECH AT THE CHEQUE PRESENTATION CEREMONY TO THE IRAQI PEOPLE'S HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FUND

Encik Ng Su Onn,
Vice Executive President
McDonald Malaysia

Patrons,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very delighted indeed to be present here this afternoon to receive from McDonald Malaysia a sum of RM 62,278 for the Tabung Kemanusiaan Pembelaan Rakyat Iraq. I understand 6,278 employees of McDonald Malaysia contributed RM 10 each from their hard earned income to the Fund.

2. For the record, allow me to express my gratitude and appreciation to McDonald Malaysia for initiating this Fund Raising Event. A big hand also for the 6,278 employees of McDonald Malaysia for their contributions. I value your support for this worthy cause. I hope and would like to encourage other companies to come forward and initiate similar fund raising events and join hands with the government and contribute to this noble cause. Every ringgit and sen contributed would go a long way towards uplifting the sufferings of the Iraqi people. This is where Malaysians can play an active role in providing humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people.

3. Malaysians have always been a generous and charitable lot willing to go an extra mile to extend a helping hand. They have never failed, be it in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and now Iraq to answer the clarion call and come to the aid in the name of humanity to help those in distress and hardships. This bodes well for the country and such charitable spirits should be encouraged and nurtured. It is important to inculcate community values of sharing and giving in all aspect of life to mold a caring society in Malaysia.

4. "Tabung Kemanusiaan Pembelaan Rakyat Iraq" was launched by YAB Acting Prime Minister on 26 March 2003 in response to the event unfolding before us in Iraq. The government has contributed RM 10 million to the Fund. In recognition to your invaluable support, any contribution made under "Tabung Kemanusiaan Pembelaan Rakyat Iraq" would be exempted from taxation. Wisma Putra has been appointed by the Government to be the trustee of the Fund.

5. As trustee, Wisma Putra will ensure that the Fund will be disbursed without delay and that it reach its intended recipients – the people of Iraq. Wisma Putra will channel the Fund by giving financial assistance to Malaysian NGOs such as MERCY Malaysia and Red Crescents and even international organizations to purchase

medicines and equipments to provide humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people. MERCY Malaysia, I am told has plans to adopt an Iraqi hospital and even set up a BHU (Basic Health Unit) in Iraq to provide medical assistance. A BHU is a self-contained unit comprising a general-purpose tent, male and female consultation tent, kitchen, hostel and even an operation theatre.

6. The Iraqi people have gone through a lot of deprivation and miseries since the United Nations imposed sanctions on Iraq soon after the 1991 Gulf War. Some 1.7 million Iraqis mostly children died due to the hardships that they face. As if that was not enough, now under the pretext to liberalize Iraq and to rid Iraq from weapons of mass destruction, the Coalition Forces have invaded the sovereign state of Iraq defying the international community call to use diplomacy instead of military might.

7. Since the outbreak of war on 20 March 2003, we have seen disturbing images and sufferings of war beamed into our living rooms on a daily basis. The images of innocent civilians particularly the elderly, women and children being shot at, killed or maimed by the invading troops are very appalling indeed. Those who are injured lacked the proper medical care. As we speak, many more are awaiting basic treatment.

8. Before I conclude, may I say that I am encouraged by the response thus far. To-date Wisma Putra has collected more than RM500,000. I would like to acknowledge and express our appreciation to the contributions made thus far. Nevertheless, I would also like to call for more caring Malaysians to come forward to assist the Iraqi people in their hour of need.

9. Let us pray that peace and justice will prevail for the people of Iraq.