

TURKEY'S PM SAYS FOR ALL RELIGIONS WHAT ASSAD IS DOING IS TRUE TYRANNY

Published: 08 Eylül 2012, Cumartesi

Speaking at a conference attended by prominent religious figures from the Middle East, Prime Minister **Erdoğan** stated, "The persecutors and the oppressed may differ, however what is happening in **Syria** right now is exactly the same as what transpired in Karbala 1,332 years ago."



During his opening speech for a conference entitled, '**Arab Awakening and Peace in the New Middle East: Muslim and Christian Perspectives**,' Prime Minister Recep Tayyip **Erdoğan**, warned that what is happening now in **Syria** are simply "new Karbalas." **Erdoğan** was of course drawing on the historical Battle of Karbala in which the killing of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson and his supporters and relatives led to a division amongst Muslims.

The international conference, organized by the Islamic Studies Center and the Marmara University Middle East Studies Institute held on September 7th at Istanbul's Le Meridien Hotel, was attended by Department of Religious Affairs President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Görmez, Egypt's Grand Mufti Sheikh Ali Gomaa, Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem, leader of the Kataeb Party and former President of Lebanon Amine Gemayel as well as a number of other prominent Muslim and Christian figures from the Arab world.

Erdoğan began his opening address by extending his condolences to the nation and families of the 25 soldiers killed in an explosion of an ammunition depot in Afyonkarahisar on Wednesday.

The following are a series of excerpts from the Prime Minister's influential speech:

A WOMAN IS BEING MASSACRED RIGHT NOW: "While we are meeting here, at the same time somewhere in the Middle East, somewhere in the world, a woman is being massacred, or left widowed, orphaned or having lost her child.

KILLING IS FORBIDDEN: Killing is not only forbidden in all sects of Islam, but it is also forbidden by all other religions of the book. Just how killing is religiously forbidden for Sunnis, it is the same for the Shiites. Killing is also forbidden in Christianity and in Judaism. Therefore, how are we supposed to make sense of this painful situation, these killings and this massacre?

TYRANT DICTATORS: Of course throughout Islamic history there have been painful moments that have wounded us deeply which we will never forget, such as the Karbala incident. However, that ill-starred incident in which the Prophet's blessed grandson and his family were murdered should not be perceived as something to divide us, we must instead see it as a reference for brotherhood, unity and oneness.

Right now in Syria there is an oppressive, dictatorship and ruthless regime. While they are using heavy weapons

to conduct a mass massacre on their own people, there are some that are remaining silent to this oppression, or even applauding and inviting it all in the name of sectarian bigotry. I am clearly stating that what is happening in Syria right now is exactly the same as what transpired in Karbala 1,332 years ago. The persecutors and the oppressed may differ, however what is happening are simply new Karbalas.

WE DO SELF-CRITICIZE: As Turkey, we openly discuss the painful incidents in our history. We self-criticize and if there were errors made on our behalf then we acknowledge it open-heartedly. We perceive every religion and sect within the Turkish Republic and especially in Mardin, Hatay and Istanbul, as being part of this nation's prosperity and we sincerely support every member of every religion and sect being able to live in peace and contentment as first-class citizens of this nation.

SUCCESS DOESN'T HAPPEN FROM MORNING TO NIGHT: The course of events that transpired in a number of Middle Eastern and North African nations has come about as a natural response. It would be wrong to expect these new administrations in place today to become successful over night. Just how those who perpetuated an autocratic regime and oppressed these countries for dozens of years were simply watched externally and internally, these new administrations must also be granted a grace period.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS: Of course, politicians hold the top responsibility for shaping the future of a country. However, religious and opinion leaders have a much more vital obligation to not only shape the future but also shape the people and their spirits. Religious leaders need to have a stronger presence in order to educate the community and instill peace, harmony and tolerance.

IF WE CAN DO IT, THE WORLD WILL FOLLOW: We are the inhabitants of a geography and land sacred to all religions from where Abrahamic religions were born and from where they were spread throughout the world. If we are good to one another, believe and trust in ourselves, then the world will be a better place. If we are able to solve the discrepancies amongst ourselves with ease, believe me the rest of the world will follow."

A MEANINGFUL LOGO

The 'Arab Awakening and Peace in the New Middle East: Muslim and Christian Perspectives' conference held by Turkey's **Directorate of Religious Affairs** Islamic Research Center (ISAM) and Marmara University Middle Eastern Studies Institute used a very meaningful and eye-catching logo. A tree, representing peace and unity depicted figures of people from different segments of Middle Eastern communities as the trunk of the tree.

This is a translation of an article originally written by Hasan Ay.

<http://english.sabah.com.tr/national/2012/09/08/turkeys-pm-says-to-all-re...>