

Violence in Syria is New Karbala, PM Erdogan says

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a strong critic of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, drew a parallel between the bloody campaign against civilians by the Syrian government and the Battle of Karbala during a speech on Friday, Today's Zaman reported

"What happened in Karbala 1,332 years ago is what is happening in Syria today," Erdogan said at an international conference titled "Arab Spring and Peace in the Middle East: Muslim and Christian Perspectives."

Erdogan stated that the Karbala tragedy would never be forgotten and that this painful incident must be a lesson to all, referring to a battle between supporters and relatives of Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husain ibn Ali on the one side and a military detachment from the forces of Yazid I, the Umayyad caliph, in what is now Iraq in the year 680.

Islam considers human beings the most sacred of all creatures regardless of their faith, sect or status, he said, adding that Turkey doesn't have any prejudice against any ethnic origin, religion or sect.

The prime minister on Wednesday also condemned the brutal crackdown of the Assad regime during a meeting of his ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party), saying that Assad has created a terrorist state in Syria.

Anti-government protests have continued in Syria for over 18 months.

According to UN, the total number of victims of the conflict in Syria is nearing 20,000 people. More than 230,000 people become refugees with around three million in need of humanitarian assistance. The Syrian authorities say they oppose the well-armed militants.

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