



Erdogan becomes first Turkish PM to join Karbala mournings

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### **World Bulletin / News Desk**

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has said he sees the problems faced by members of all religious groups in Turkey as his own, as he appealed to thousands of Jafaris in İstanbul who mourned the murder of Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and the son of Imam Ali, and 72 of his companions in 680 in Karbala, part of modern-day Iraq.

Erdoğan is the first prime minister of Turkey to attend a ceremony organized to commemorate the tragedy at Karbala.

Erdoğan delivered a speech during a ceremony in İstanbul, which took place in the Halkalı district's Zeynebiye neighborhood. Arriving in Aşure Square, thousands of people in black garb mourned the tragedy, which took place 1,370 years ago.

“We have been feeling the pain of Karbala for 1,370 years. We have to feel that pain in our hearts. We remember Hussain whenever an innocent person is killed,” the prime minister said as he began his speech.

Recalling some past incidents in which Turkey's Alevi and Shiite community clashed with Sunnis, Erdoğan referred to such incidents as provocations.

“This country is ours, these lands are all ours, this history, this civilization is ours. Nobody can claim superiority to any other. We are equal to each other and we are all brothers in these lands. We are all first-class citizens of this country. The problems of all religious groups in my country are mine. That's why we are struggling to address century-old problems through consensus. Aren't there those who oppose us? Of course, there are. But we will overcome this with patience,” the prime minister said.

In addition to the prime minister, State Minister Faruk Çelik, Republican People's Party (CHP) Secretary-General Süheyl Batum, İstanbul Governor Hüseyin Avni Mutlu and ruling Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) İstanbul Provincial Chairman Aziz Pabuşçu were in attendance.

During his speech, Erdoğan put emphasis on the National Unity and Brotherhood project of his government, which aims to address problems of various ethnic and belief groups in Turkey.

“We have voiced problems that could not be mentioned for years. Most recently, Shiites participated in a commission that gathered to revise the textbooks used in religious courses. We will solve all problems through dialogue and consensus and glorify our brotherhood,” Erdoğan asserted.

Speaking at the ceremony, the leader of Turkey's Jafaris community, Selahattin Özgündüz, said the prime minister's participation in the Karbala commemoration ceremony had disappointed those who hoped to cause conflict among different sects in Muslim society.

Özgündüz thanked Erdoğan for his attendance as he underlined that Erdoğan is the first Turkish prime minister to attend Karbala ceremonies.

“Your presence here is very important and meaningful. The presence of those who are from different ethnic groups or sects but feel the same thing is very important. This picture is a very good lesson to some marginal groups that ignore our brotherhood and serve outside forces that have bad intentions for this region,” he added.

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