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Ahmad Zahid resigns as Umno Youth chief (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi today resigned as Umno Youth head but pledged to help the movement and the party in explaining to members the issues surrounding the sacking of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the Cabinet and Umno.

Zahid said he sent his resignation letter to party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Sept 29, followed by another yesterday to confirm that his decision to resign from the post was final.

In an almost immediate reaction, Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said Zahid would lose his seat in the supreme council.

He said this was because Zahid's position in the supreme council was by virtue of his position as Umno Youth head. As such, he was automatically disqualified upon his resignation.

He said Zahid's position in the supreme council would be taken over by his deputy Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein.

In today's Utusan Malaysia, Zahid said he would not resign from his post as Umno Youth head.

He was reported as saying that he would continue the party's agenda of struggle and unity.

Zahid, who is Bagan Datoh MP and division chief, said at a 10-minute Press conference at the Umno headquarters he made the decision to resign as Umno Youth head "voluntarily for the good of the movement".

"In making the decision I was neither pressured by anyone at the Umno Youth Exco, State, division or branch levels, nor by the memorandum sent by the Exco to the supreme council which questioned the credibility of my leadership.

"I made the decision solely based on the realisation that this is for the good of Umno Youth.

"This I view as my last sacrifice for Umno Youth because as a responsible leader I believe that this is the right thing to do, although I am still convinced that the process of democracy should have been the basis in determining my position," he told the packed Press conference.

Zahid said he would now concentrate on efforts to help Umno Youth and the party explain to the people about the sacking of Anwar from the Government and his expulsion from the party.

He also asked for forgiveness from all Umno Youth Exco members and its leaders at the State, division and branch levels but reiterated that he had never at any time been involved in Anwar's reformation movement, his roadshow or the anti-Government demonstrations.

"Now that I have resigned, I hope Umno Youth leaders at all levels can forgive me if my actions and statements while in office were not in line with their aspirations or have caused uneasiness among them," he said, adding that he was thankful for the full cooperation extended to him during his tenure as the movement's head.

He urged them to extend the same cooperation and support to Hishammuddin who would be the acting Umno Youth chief until the next election scheduled for next year.

Zahid, who was released on Tuesday after being detained under Section 731 of the Internal Security Act, also thanked the police for their professionalism in their treatment of him while in detention.

He said he was "treated very well" while in detention and the police only wanted to know if he had been involved in instigating Umno Youth

members to take part in anti-Government activities.

He said he did not suffer any harsh treatment or abuse, either verbally or physically, while in detention.

Zahid refused to entertain any question after the Press conference and left immediately after making his statements. He also did not reply when asked about his other posts related to his position as Umno Youth head, including the chairmanship of Bank Simpanan Nasional.

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