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Umno Youth exco supports PM

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A MAJORITY of Umno Youth exco members have closed ranks to declare their undivided support for Umno President and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his decision to expel Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the Government.

A group of 16 exco members met in Kuala Lumpur yesterday following the absence of a firm stand by Umno Youth since Anwar's expulsion from Umno and his sacking as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister last week.

Speaking to reporters later, Umno Youth deputy chief Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the 16 exco members and five others who could not attend agreed to stand firmly behind Dr Mahathir as Umno President and Prime Minister.

He said all 25 Umno Youth exco members were informed of the gathering. Those present were Abdul Rahin Said, Abdul Azim Mohd Zabidi, Mohd Supardi Md Noor, Zein Isma Izmail, Zulkifli Mohamed Alwi, Nur Jazlan Mohamed, Aziz Sheikh Fadzir, Kadir Daud, Datuk Abdul Fatah Iskandar, Nordin Mohd Noor, Wahab Din, Azizan Yaakob, Fatah Abdullah, Zaiyadi Awang Noh, and Jema Khan Abdul Majid.

Hishammuddin said the five that did not attend but stated their support were Samli Juasih, Jamal Nasir Rasdi, Khaled Nordin, Suhaimi Abdul Rahim, and Mokhzani Mahathir.

The four exco members absent were Dr Rahim Ghouse, Saifudin Nasution, Ruslan Kassim, and Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

"We also expressed our absolute belief in the Umno Supreme Council and its decision to expel Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the party. We do not support nor are we part of Anwar's reform movement.

"We vehemently criticise any Umno member, particularly Umno Youth members, who support either in principal or physically, this reform movement which is clearly against the party and Government," Hishammuddin said.

Ahmad Zahid and several other Umno leaders have been criticised for being present at Anwar's residence and appearing to support the former Deputy Prime Minister's reform movement. Some have even called for Ahmad Zahid to resign.

Ahmad Zahid said in a statement on Monday that he will not step down as Umno Youth chief as it is an elected post. He had reiterated Umno Youth's stand in relation to the Barisan Nasional Youth meeting on September 3 which pledged support for Dr Mahathir. His presence at Anwar's house, he said, was to show his sympathy to the latter's family.

Hishammuddin said a decision regarding Ahmad Zahid's position and the formal stand of Umno Youth will be discussed at a special Umno Youth exco meeting on Thursday September 10 1998 at 10am.

"We ask all Umno Youth members to remain calm and put their trust in the Umno Youth exco until the meeting on Thursday," he added. Hishammuddin said he had informed Ahmad Zahid about the outcome of the discussion via a telephone conversation, but declined to say what was his response.

Asked if the exco members will table a no-confidence vote against Ahmad Zahid, Hishammuddin said it is too early to discuss such matters.

On what action will be taken against Umno Youth leaders and members clearly supporting Anwar, he said the party has channels and mechanisms to address this issue and will discuss it further on Thursday.

Asked about Ahmad Zahid's statement that his position could only be

determined by delegates who elected him, Hishammuddin said: "Yes, we took that into consideration."

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