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Keadilan chief admits team lobbied American congressmen

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The president of Parti Keadilan Nasional today admitted that a movement, headed by one of her top lieutenants, was in charge of lobbying a group of American congressmen and women to file a resolution calling for Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's retrial.

Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, asked about the filing of the resolution, said: "Ask the FAC (Free Anwar Campaign movement). I think it's by the FAC, because these matters fall under their framework."

She was speaking to reporters at Parliament lobby today.

Keadilan media co-ordinator Raja Petra Kamarudin is the director of the FAC secretariat.

On Oct 27, seven members of the US House of Representatives filed the resolution calling on the Malaysian Government to dismiss all charges against Anwar or hold a retrial. The congressmen and women who sponsored the petition were Chris Smith of New Jersey, Robert Wexler and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, Tom Lantos, Dana Rohrabacher and Ed Royce of California, and Neil Abernethy of Hawaii.

Wexler had, in 1998, submitted a resolution in the House attacking Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for what he alleged was "inflammatory anti-American and anti-Semitic statements" and called on him to step down.

The move was in response to Dr Mahathir's comments at the time disclosing that speculators in the West were responsible for Malaysia's economic downturn.

Then Deputy Prime Minister Anwar was quoted to have attacked the resolution, saying that it had "exceeded the norms of diplomatic engagement and a polite, decent message".

Nevertheless, Dr Wan Azizah said she hoped the gesture by the seven would not be misconstrued.

"This shows that they (the US Congress) are fighting for human rights, democracy, and this was what was written about (in the resolution)," she said, adding that Congress had in the past issued statements in support of Anwar.

On Oct 9, 1998, the US House of Representatives filed a motion to the Committee on Foreign Relations "expressing the sense of the Senate with respect to developments in Malaysia and the arrest of Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim".

She said the filing of the resolution was a symbol of protest at the injustice in which Anwar's trial was conducted.

She denied that Keadilan Youth chief Ezam Mohd Noor had smeared the country as reported or that he had initiated the lobbying.

The Singapore Straits Times recently reported that some supporters of Anwar had engaged a Washington-based lobby firm, Janus-Merritt Strategies, to lobby for Anwar's cause.

Meanwhile, Pas president Datuk Fadzil Noor said the filing of the resolution was not something surprising.

"If we can object to the cruel actions of Israel, if we can object to the cruel actions of Serbia, then why do we want to question the actions of outsiders over cruel and unjust actions in our country?"

Fadzil said in a globalising world, "we cannot limit people's right to express their views".

"If we accept globalisation, we must also accept matters pertaining to

human rights, which must be discussed by all in society."  
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