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Nahdatul Ulama's Salahuddin denies endorsing Keadilan website letter

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - A leader of Indonesia's most influential Islamic organisation today denied signing an open letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad asking that all charges against Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim be dropped.

The vice-chairman of the 40-million strong Nahdatul Ulama (NU), Salahuddin Wahid, said he sought clarification from NU's secretary-general Muhyiddin Arudusman after being informed about the letter.

"His answer to me was `No'... NU feels that this is an internal problem of Malaysia, so it's none of our business," he told reporters on the sidelines of the national seminar on Islamic Development and the Threat of Deviant Teachings, at Seri Kembangan, near here.

Salahuddin is the younger brother of Abdurrahman Wahid, who headed NU before becoming Indonesian President.

The open letter, addressed to Dr Mahathir, was posted on Keadilan Youth's website ([http://pemudakeadilan.tripod.com/kenysurat terbuka.htm](http://pemudakeadilan.tripod.com/kenysurat%20terbuka.htm)).

Signed by 33 Islamic and social organisations, the letter called on Dr Mahathir to free Anwar from all charges.

This is the second time in recent months that Salahuddin has denied supporting Anwar.

In September, Salahuddin, during a one-day visit to Malaysia where he made a courtesy call on Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi in Kuala Lumpur, reportedly issued a "strong denial" that NU was supporting Anwar's cause.

Dr Mahathir, who opened the seminar, advised Muslims not to profess blind devotion for certain religious leaders.

The actions and advice of these religious leaders were clearly not in the Quran and accepted hadith.

"When this happens, Muslims will be split and our religion will suffer."

Dr Mahathir said it was important that Muslims in Malaysia know how to detect such teachings.

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