

Muhyiddin ready to be punished after backing Umno rebels

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Umno deputy president Muhyiddin Yassin said he was prepared to face punishment after joining a protest at the Umno headquarters today in support of nine Umno rebels who were summoned to face the party's disciplinary board.

The nine were among 13 branch leaders from the Telok Kemang Umno division who in October called for Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, who is also Umno president, to step down.

"Even though I do not want to be sacked, but if they (party leaders) want to punish me, I will accept," he told reporters at the lobby of the Umno headquarters in Kuala Lumpur today.

He was responding to a question on whether he feared being sacked for openly supporting Umno members who called for Najib's ouster.

Muhyiddin also defended the nine Umno branch leaders.

"Under the current tense situation and circumstances, what they did is good and not something bad.

"Views and reminders need to be given. Do not be too hasty in wanting to punish people even though if they are minor leaders," he said.

Muhyiddin added that the grassroots leaders can no longer tolerate the situation in the party.

"The situation has not improved. There has not been any forthcoming answers on many issues," he said.

Muhyiddin, together with Umno vice-president Shafie Apdal, were in July dismissed from the government for their criticism of Najib's handling of 1MDB.

However, the two leaders have yet to be removed from the party after some Umno supreme council members opposed the move for fear that it might cause further division in the party.

Nonetheless, Muhyiddin has since been sidelined, with most of his major functions stripped from him and he has also been barred from speaking at the Umno general assembly next week.

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