

**Mukhriz tells PM : do the right thing**  
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi faced mounting calls to quit today after his ruling coalition suffered a humiliating setback in elections seen as a referendum on his leadership.  
MCPX

abdullah ahmad badawi polling day vote 080308 05A visibly exhausted Abdullah conceded there was a question mark over his future after the Barisan Nasional coalition turned in its worst ever results Saturday, losing its two-thirds parliamentary majority and four states.

Asked if the outcome was a vote of no confidence in his leadership, which has been criticised as weak and ineffective, Abdullah responded: "Maybe. There are a lot of messages from the people."

"There is no pressure at this time," he said when asked if he faced calls for him to resign.

But pressure did come, notably from former premier Mahathir Mohamad, who handed over to Abdullah in 2003 after two decades leading the Umno which dominates the Barisan Nasional coalition.

"My view is he has destroyed Umno, destroyed the BN and he has been responsible for this," Mahathir told reporters.

He suggested Abdullah should resign, and admitted he had made a mistake in selecting him as prime minister.

"I think he should accept responsibility for this. He should accept 100 percent responsibility," he said.

mukhriz mahathir gaza fund 010208 seriousMeanwhile, his son Mukhriz (left), a member of Umno's powerful youth wing who was elected to parliament for first time on the weekend, urged Abdullah to "do the right thing".

"It is yet to be seen what he will do but I think it's a very clear message that there is wholesale dissatisfaction with the prime minister for the way he has been running the country these four years," he said.

"I hope he takes heed of that message and does the right thing," he told AFP. "We need to really do some soul searching."

**Very difficult for him to stay on**

Bridget Welsh, a Southeast Asian expert at Johns Hopkins University in the United States, said it was a "very tense" time for the party as it digested a vote that was a mandate for reform.

"The factions in Umno are already asking for Badawi's resignation and this is a very significant development," said Welsh, who is currently in Malaysia.

"It's going to be very, very difficult for him to stay in power. The warlords in the system will

push him because his administration has failed to address the voters' issues."

Ibrahim Suffian, of the Merdeka Centre research firm, said Abdullah faced a torrid time at Umno party elections later this year if he did not resign.

"There will be some tough questions asked there," he said.

Under Umno tradition, Najib is heir apparent to Abdullah and expected to become Malaysia's next prime minister, but Welsh said other contenders could emerge in a leadership battle.

Abdullah won 91 percent of parliamentary seats in the 2004 elections, but analysts said he was being punished this time for high inflation, rising crime and mounting ethnic tensions.

He has also faced flak for failing to act on election promises to eradicate corruption.

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