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REGISTER NOW: **AFL Leadership Mission, NOVEMBER 17-20, 2019**

As you know, after Prime Minister Netanyahu and the parties of the Right Bloc failed to secure the minimum 61 seat coalition, Blue & White leader Benny Gantz has been given a chance to form the government. Negotiations are continuing every day and whether a unity government with a rotational premiership will be the result or an unthinkable third election is anybody's guess. As you can imagine, the timing of our Mission will place us right in the thick of it. Monday, the Knesset officially began its winter session. Generally speaking, this means that the Knesset will be working on November 20th and despite not having a governing coalition in place, I expect many of the Ministers and MKs to be in the building. As such, I am working to have all of our meetings on Wednesday, November 20th, take place at the Knesset. This has necessitated some Mission schedule maneuvering and I will continue to keep you updated. The current tentative itinerary is below.

- Adam Fishman
National Executive Director

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Israeli Coalition talks deadlocked

Blue and White Party and Likud leaders said Wednesday there was only a small chance that they would reach a compromise agreement and be able to form a unity government. Both sides warned that a third election was the more likely outcome. Despite the pessimism, the two parties are due to meet again for talks.

Political sources have suggested that events of the last few days have moved the parties further apart. A Blue and White official told *Israel's Channel 12 News* that in light of Likud's involvement in the harassment of a state witness in one of the corruption cases against the prime minister, they would be inappropriate coalition partners.

- The Likud accused senior Blue and White figures of blocking a unity deal, declaring “the continuation of negotiations is a waste of time”.
- Blue and White leader Benny Gantz was more optimistic, writing on Facebook that what is being presented in the media is not necessarily accurate, noting there are still three weeks until his deadline to form a government expires. He said it is: “Just the beginning of a process at the end of which a broad liberal unity government will be formed that will serve all citizens of Israel.”
- Gantz suggested earlier in the week that the idea of forming a minority government remains an option if he is unable to set up a grand coalition.
- So far, the Likud remains committed to representing the entire 55-seat right-wing bloc and insisting Netanyahu should go first in a rotating premiership arrangement.

Gantz received the mandate to form a government last week and he has 21 days remaining. If he fails, any member of Knesset who has the support of 61 MKs can have a go. However, if no one can achieve this, the Knesset automatically disbands and there will be new elections in March 2020.



Netanyahu highlights threats from Iranian missiles

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned of the increasing threat from Iranian precision missiles when he met on Monday with US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

Netanyahu said: “Iran is seeking to develop precision-guided munitions, missiles that can hit any target in the Middle East. They are developing this in Iran. They want to place them in Iraq and in Syria, and to convert Lebanon’s arsenal of 130,000 rockets to precision-guided munitions. They seek also to develop that, and have already begun to put that in Yemen, with the goal of reaching Israel from there too.” Netanyahu thanked the US for their generous military assistance and the increased sanctions on Iran.

In his remarks (Monday, 28 October), at the Menachem Begin Heritage Center in Jerusalem, to the Jewish Agency Board of Governors; Netanyahu said: “The only way to secure the Jewish future, the necessary condition for securing the Jewish future is to secure the future of the Jewish state. The Jewish state, I believe has responsibility for the Jewish communities around the world.

Iran wants to develop nuclear weapons. It’s transgressing on its agreement and commitment. Iran wants to develop precision guided missiles that can hit any target in Israel within five to ten meters. It’s doing that. Iran wants to use Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen as bases to attack Israel with statistical missiles and precision-guided missiles. That is a great, great danger. To ward off this danger, we have to do two things. First we must unite, because in the face of danger, we unite. This is not a spin, this is not a line, this is a real thing that is happening as the power balance in the Middle East changes.

We will have to change our priorities now, because the first thing we must do is ensure the security and safety of the Jewish state. It is well within our powers. We have the ingenuity. We’ve already developed what we need, offensive and defensive weapons.

But we need a lot. We enjoy the friendship of the United States and the solid alliance, but always we remember the principle that I announce time and time again, during every year as my tenure as prime minister, Israel must be able to defend itself, by itself, against any threat. And this now requires a national commitment, a broad based national commitment to arm the State of Israel so that we can defend ourselves by ourselves against any threat.”

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Israeli Justice Minister slams justice system

Israeli Justice Minister, Amir Ohana, publicly criticised the country's criminal justice agencies during a press conference Tuesday, accusing the National Police, State Prosecutor's Office and Attorney General investigating Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's corruption cases of being politically motivated. Ohana is a senior Likud lawmaker and Netanyahu confidante who was appointed to the post in June as part of Netanyahu's caretaker government.

- Ohana said there was a "State Prosecutor's Office within a State Prosecutor's Office" that, in collaboration with a small media "cult," sought to topple Netanyahu and by extension subvert Israeli democracy.
- Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit and State Prosecutor Shai Nitzan quickly rejected the accusations, stating: "We reject the attempt to find any fault in the work of the police and the State Prosecutor's Office without any factual basis. The law enforcement system will not be dragged into the political arena."

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November 17-20, 2019

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