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Israel heading for third election in 12 months

Israel's political leaders have almost given up trying to form a grand coalition and are instead blaming each other for the likely dissolution of the Knesset on 12 December and a fresh election in February or March 2020.

- Yisrael Beteinu leader *Avigdor Lieberman*, the potential kingmaker for the last two and half months, said: "Netanyahu and Gantz were playing a blame game. I tried to apply real pressure to them, but unfortunately both of them have made a strategic decision not to go to unity, so both parties bear responsibility for another election."
- *Benjamin Netanyahu* said: "I don't want to serve half a year, I want to serve two years, but the possibility of serving half a year arose because of the president's proposal, and that is the maximum flexibility, since there should be contiguity. I will now make a supreme effort, despite Blue and White's opposition, to avert these unnecessary elections"
- *Benny Gantz* said: "Netanyahu should not seek out others to blame.. He needs to look me and the citizens of Israel in the eyes and tell us what he thinks and what he wants, instead of deflecting responsibility. No prime minister has ever placed himself and his needs before those of the State of Israel like Netanyahu is currently doing."
- The major stumbling blocks remain the same: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's insistence that he serve first in any premiership rotation agreement, as well as Likud's demand that its right-wing and ultra-Orthodox allies be part of any national unity government.
- Blue and White rejected the idea of Netanyahu remaining Prime Minister, even for six months, given his recent indictments on corruption charges. Blue and White

argue that party leader Benny Gantz should serve as Prime Minister for the first two years, with Netanyahu rotating in for the last two years, contingent on his criminal cases being resolved.

- The full indictment letter listed 333 witnesses against Netanyahu in his three corruption cases, including fellow politicians, security officials, and various foreign billionaires including Arnon Milchan, James Packer, Larry Ellison and Sheldon Adelson. Netanyahu used the occasion to once again blast legal authorities, arguing that any case dependent on so many witnesses was by definition weak.
- Netanyahu has argued that he should remain Prime Minister in order to take advantage of "historic opportunities," primarily annexation of the Jordan Valley in the West Bank and signing a mutual defence pact with the US.
- Blue and White rejected the idea of a defence pact with the US, arguing that for decades Israeli security officials opposed such a move because it could limit Israeli military action.
- The Central Election Committee said they would be ready to hold elections from 25 February, but 3 March and 17 March have been suggested as possible dates.



NEW FEATURE:
"AFL 1on1" Podcast
Today: MK Yoav Kish

(12.4.2019) A short podcast interview with Member of Knesset Yoav Kish (former IAF F-16 pilot and one of the vocal, idealistic and up and coming young Likud MKs), about his thoughts on the potential upcoming 3rd elections.

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New polls shows strength of post-Netanyahu Likud

A new Israeli poll reveals that Likud would lose two seats in the next election if Benjamin Netanyahu were to be replaced as Likud leader by Gideon Saar.

- According to polling by the *Smith Consulting polling institute*, Likud under Netanyahu would win 33 seats and the right-wing bloc would win 54 seats. Under Gideon Saar Likud would receive 31 seats but the right-wing bloc would increase to 56 seats. Blue and White would win 35 seats against Netanyahu or Saar.
- An *Israel Hayom* poll found that the gap between a Likud led by Netanyahu and Saar was slightly larger, with Netanyahu receiving 33 seats and Saar 28 seats. Blue and White would win 35 seats against Netanyahu and 33 against Saar. The poll also said that Netanyahu was a more suitable candidate for prime minister than Gantz, with 45 per cent against 39 per cent. The poll found that if elections were held today, neither the right-wing bloc nor the centre-left-Arab bloc would have a majority 61 seats, leaving Israel in the same political stalemate.
- *Channel 12 News* reported that Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein would consider standing as Likud leader if the party held a leadership contest. The report said Edelstein has spent the last few days laying the groundwork for a potential leadership run. So far, only Saar has officially announced his intention to stand in any leadership primary. Edelstein's office has denied the report.

- After Netanyahu and Gantz both failed to form a government following the 17 September election, the Knesset was given 21 days to try and agree to another candidate, and there is speculation that Saar or Edelstein are using the period to gather the support of 61 MKs and find a way to form a coalition.
- The most likely political outcome in Israel is a third election. If that happens the focus will shift to the Likud leadership, whether and how they hold a leadership election and how many candidates stand, potentially splitting the anti-Netanyahu vote allowing him to win.

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Recent AFL Exclusive Briefings and Conference Calls

PM NETANYAHU INDICTMENT: WHAT'S NEXT?

(11.26.2019) Yonah Jeremy Bob, Legal Analyst at the Jerusalem Post, discusses PM Netanyahu's Indictment. What's Next?

[Click Here to Listen to the Conference Call](#)



RECAP - AFL Leadership Mission to Israel November 17-20, 2019

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