

Israel's Far-right Government Removes the Mask that Enabled Western Complacency

Maybe the West will have to accept that there is no legal or moral difference between the occupation in Ukraine and the occupation in Palestine

By [Gideon Levy](#)

Global Research, December 20, 2022

[Middle East Eye](#) 16 December 2022

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the **Translate Website** button below the author's name.

To receive Global Research's Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

To the onlooker, [Israel](#) is visibly changing. The shift is most conspicuous from the outside: the world sees a western liberal democracy moving with alarming speed towards ultra-nationalism, fundamentalism, racism, fascism and the breakdown of democratic structures as a result of the [recent election](#).

While correct, this view is also distorted. It assumes that until now, Israel was indeed a western democracy, and that it is now visibly becoming something else. The truth, however, is less about Israel fundamentally changing, and more about it shedding its masks and disguises.

What is changing is the appearance. The cracks appearing in Israel's image bear little relation to the underlying essence. From this standpoint – and this standpoint only – the new government can be viewed as a harbinger of a positive message: the truth about Israel will come to light, albeit at a heavy cost in terms of the oppression of [Palestinians](#) and the rupture of fragile democratic structures that hitherto served Israel's Jews.

The new government will be the most right-wing and religiously conservative in Israel's history. The truth, at least in terms of the ideology of most of its ministers, is that it will also be the most extremist government anywhere in the West today. The extreme right in Israel is much more extremist than the right in Europe, and perhaps even than in the [US](#).

It will now rule Israel and control the most senior positions. A government in which **Benjamin Netanyahu** is the standard-bearer for the secular and liberal is a very extremist

government indeed.

Threats lie in wait from all sides: destruction of the justice system, harm to minorities, a shameless ramping-up of Jewish supremacy, the heavy hand of religion in everyday life, and an [occupation](#) ever more cruel to its Palestinian subjects. It is difficult at such an early stage to know which of these will actually come to pass.

Israel has already had right-wing governments and extremist parties whose ascension to power had a moderating effect on their plans, for all kinds of reasons. “Things look different from here than they did from there” is the usually-accepted explanation. But it is certainly within the realm of possibility that Netanyahu’s new partners are made of sterner stuff and will carry out the looming threat of regime change in several areas of crucial significance for Israel.

Hitting the panic button

Faced with a potential actualisation of this extreme scenario, the Israeli left and centre have hit the panic button, notably by embarking on a campaign of attempted intimidation. Not a day passes without another [prophecy of doom](#) – and some, if not all, of these predictions will surely be borne out.

Nevertheless, one cannot help but ask: is the threatened change really such a radical one? Was Israel truly such a lone outpost of democratic norms, equality under the law, protection of [human rights](#) and sanctity of judicial systems that this new government could enter stage right and destroy it all?

Was that Israel of the “good old days” – the one before the new government – a country so far removed from fascism, ultra-nationalism and [apartheid](#) that the new government can come to power and change everything, so that Israel turns into that kind of country now?

Obviously not. Without downplaying the dangers posed by the new government and its chosen path, one cannot help but notice that the alarmist campaigns in response to its declarations seem to have a covert subtext about how good it was here when the Zionist left and centre were in power; how all of that will come to an end now, and how bad it will all be. That picture, however, is far from accurate.

Consider the 166 Palestinians, including at least 39 children, who died by acts of the Israeli military and settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since the beginning of this year. An additional 49 Palestinians, including 17 children, who were killed in Gaza during Israel’s three-day onslaught in August on the besieged strip.

Were they killed under the terrifying new government featuring [Itamar Ben-Gvir](#) and [Bezalel Smotrich](#), or under the so-called “[government of change](#)” featuring the liberal promises of **Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz**, whose tenure is now ending?

The difference between regimes will most likely be, first and foremost, one of rhetoric: the centre-left tries to gloss over the facts, whereas the extreme right will hide nothing. In some ways, this may prove advantageous.

The new government, by word and deed, may force Israel’s allies, along with the almost non-existent leftist camp in Israel, to look honestly at Israel and acknowledge the reality.

With a government like the one that's coming, no longer will there be an option to ignore, avert the gaze and obfuscate, attempting to make do with weak condemnations and clinging to a fictitious "peace process" or a [two-state solution](#) that has long been unrealistic.



The new government will force the West to look at Israel and admit, at least to itself: this is an apartheid state. Continuing the masquerade ball with Israel will become untenable. The new government may even compel Israel's allies to move one step forward and, for the first time in Israel's history, take practical actions against it.

Reason for hope

Not all of this may happen. Israel may not radicalise to the extent that some would have us fear; or, despite its radicalisation, the West – especially the US – may go on insisting that rhinestones are diamonds, claiming that Israel is the West’s frontline outpost in the Middle East and insisting that criticism of the state is forbidden because of the Holocaust.

But there is also another possibility. When Israel legislates appalling ultra-nationalist laws; when [house demolitions](#) and expulsions in the occupied West Bank soar; when Israel’s Supreme Court is stripped of all power; when the army kills unimaginable numbers of Palestinians and the [annexation](#) of the occupied territories becomes a fact no longer deniable – perhaps then, the West will have no other option than to turn its back on its beloved Israel, world champion of impunity, for whom almost everything is permissible.

Perhaps then, the West’s position will have to change. Maybe the West will finally understand that there is no legal or moral difference between the [occupation in Ukraine](#) and the occupation in Palestine, and that the measures it took immediately against the [Russian](#) occupation can finally be considered against the Israeli occupation, after 55 years that only postponed the ultimate outcome?

It is true that the new government, and especially some of its ministers, may take irreversible steps that could further amplify inequality, oppression, deprivation, discrimination and Jewish supremacy in all areas of life. Also true is that the first to pay the price for all this will be Palestinians in the occupied territories and Palestinian citizens of Israel. Their lives could certainly change, but let us bear in mind that their situation has already been intolerable for decades.

A handful of human rights activists in Israel may also pay a price, along with freedom of expression, which is already facing significant attempts at curtailment.

In addition, the expected damage to governmental checks and balances could endanger the entire state structure, from a planned “[override clause](#)” undermining the power of the Supreme Court in a country without a constitution, to proposed legislation designed to allow [convicted criminals](#) to serve in government. Many opinion pieces have already been written to warn against these dangers, which should not be taken lightly.

Meanwhile, the time has come for Israel to undergo a fundamental shakeup, including in the attitude of its friends in the West. For more than five decades, Israel has claimed that the occupation of 1967 [was temporary](#), and the world bought into that bluff.

The new government will put an end to that. The occupation will be permanent, not temporary, and there will clearly be no intention to ever grant national rights to half the people living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

This demands an international response; it is not an internal Israeli matter. Anyone who thinks that Israel will ever change course willingly, of its own accord, does not know Israel very well. Israel has no reason and no incentive to do so. The world has thus far accepted Israel with its apartheid and its oppression, while Israel ignores the international community, its institutions and its decisions.

No other country can thumb its nose at international law as Israel does and not pay a price.

But apparently, there is a point at which a critical mass of insolence, arrogance and over-confidence could leave the world no choice but to take action. The hope is that this new government will bring Israel closer to precisely that point – apart from which, few hopes are evident in the vicinity.

*

Note to readers: Please click the share buttons above. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter and subscribe to our Telegram Channel. Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

Gideon Levy is a Haaretz columnist and a member of the newspaper's editorial board. Levy joined Haaretz in 1982, and spent four years as the newspaper's deputy editor. He was the recipient of the Euro-Med Journalist Prize for 2008; the Leipzig Freedom Prize in 2001; the Israeli Journalists' Union Prize in 1997; and The Association of Human Rights in Israel Award for 1996. His new book, *The Punishment of Gaza*, has just been published by Verso.

Featured image is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

The original source of this article is [Middle East Eye](#)
Copyright © [Gideon Levy](#), [Middle East Eye](#), 2022

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Gideon Levy](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca