

Knesset to Consider Netanyahu's Bid for Immunity from Prosecution

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

Global Research, January 21, 2020

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

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Charged with bribery, fraud, and breach of trust by attorney general Avichai Mendelblit, Netanyahu is fighting for his political life and personal freedom.

According to Mendelblit, Netanyahu “damaged the image of the public service and public trust in it (by abusing his office), knowingly “taking a bribe as a public servant in exchange for actions related to your position.”

Attempting to dismiss charges against him last fall, he falsely claimed there’s “an attempted government coup against the prime minister through blood libels and a biased investigation process (sic),” adding:

“I will not allow lies to win (sic). I will continue to lead this country, according to the letter of the law” he breached, according to serious charges against him.

His last recourse is seeking Knesset immunity, in early January saying:

“I intend to approach the speaker of the Knesset in accordance with chapter 4C of the law, in order to fulfill my right, my duty and my mission to continue to serve you for the future of Israel (sic),” adding:

“It’s my intention to stand before the court to shatter all the fabricated accusations against me (sic).”

“The immunity law is meant to protect elected officials from tailored lawsuits, from serving political cases whose aim is to harm the will of the people (sic).”

In April and September 2019 elections, his Likud party won 26% and 25% of Knesset seats respectively, around three-fourths of the Israeli electorate (“the will of the people”) voting against him.

On Sunday, Knesset speaker Yuli Edelstein said the body will convene in special session next week to vote up or down on forming a panel to consider Netanyahu’s immunity from prosecution bid, adding:

“Even though I disagree with the position of the Knesset legal adviser (Eyal Yinin), I believe that, in order to maintain trust in the institution of Knesset speaker by all the factions, it is important to accept it.”

He considers Netanyahu's bid "invalid...constituting contempt of the legislature" that's in recess ahead of March 2 elections.

As things now stand, his immunity request from prosecution in three criminal cases with considerable evidence against him is expected to be rejected.

He and Likud party members supporting him sought to delay Knesset action, knowing a majority of its members likely oppose his immunity bid.

He wants things delayed until after March 2 elections, hoping for a mandate to rule along with coalition partners he failed to achieve in April and September elections.

Key Likud political opponent Blue and White party leader Benny Gantz said the following:

"Netanyahu is applying every possible form of pressure in an attempt to prevent the discussion of the immunity request, but despite the delay tactics, the immunity discussions will begin next week, will be conducted in a to-the-point manner and fairly, and will be completed before the election."

Hard-right Yisrael Beiteinu party leader Avigdor Lieberman said if Edelstein tries to postpone Knesset debate on Netanyahu's immunity bid, he may try to oust him as speaker.

According to Israeli media, Knesset debate on this issue is likely to begin next week and continue until about two weeks before March 2 elections.

Last year, Israeli police and state prosecutors recommended Netanyahu be indicted. AG Mendleblit published detailed information on charges against him.

Polls show most Israelis oppose immunity. According to a yearend 2019 Channel 12 poll, 51% of Israelis oppose immunity. Only 33% support it.

Israeli Law Professor Suzie Navot said immunity is unlikely for bribery, fraud and breach of trust, only for minor offenses under Israeli law.

On December 30, Haaretz editors called Netanyahu's immunity bid an attempt "to garner public support for his reckless conduct and his flight from the arm of the law," adding:

His request "for immunity is tantamount to an admission of guilt."

"His attempt to portray this as something temporary...reaches new levels of cynicism, constituting a blatant attempt to avoid a trial."

"Requesting immunity is a cowardly act by someone who has something to hide."

Have years of wrongdoing caught up to him? Will this year be his time of reckoning?

Will he be denied Knesset immunity, prosecuted, convicted, and imprisoned later this year, ending his political career and personal freedom?

No Israeli politician or military official was ever held accountable for crimes of war, against humanity, apartheid persecution, illegal occupation, and state terror — far more serious offenses than civil wrongdoing.

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Award-winning author Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG)

His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html>

Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com.

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About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html> Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

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