

# Netanyahu in the Dock? Bribery, Fraud and Breach of Trust

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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VISIT MY NEW WEB SITE: [stephenlendman.org](http://stephenlendman.org) ([Home - Stephen Lendman](#)). Contact at [lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net).

*He's been investigated for over a year for alleged bribery, fraud, and breach of trust, including for accepting about \$1.1 million from accused French fraudster **Arnaud Mimran** in 2009.*

His chief of staff and close confidant for years, **Ari Harow**, signed an agreement to turn state's witness against him. As the saying goes, he knows where the bodies are buried.

A gag order in place until September 17 prevents information about the case from coming out.

On Thursday, a statement from Netanyahu's office denied wrongdoing, "reject(ing) the unfounded claims made against the prime minister. The campaign to change the government is underway, but it is destined to fail, for a simple reason: there won't be anything because there was nothing."

The same day, **Attorney General Avichai Mendelblit** said "we're making progress." The prosecution is "working with police" on getting Harow to turn state's witness.

He's suspected of bribery, fraud, breach of trust, and money laundering. A US-born Jew, he emigrated to Israel with his family in 1985.

He was first linked to financial irregularities in the so-called Bibi Tours scandal years earlier - involving double-billing and luxury travel financed by foreign businessmen and groups, without appropriate accounting and approval.

He and others involved were never charged with wrongdoing. He may be sentenced to six months of community service and fined \$193,000 on breach of trust charges in exchange for testifying against his former boss.



Ari Harow with PM Netanyahu (Source: [Miriam Alster, FLASH90/Channel 2 News](#))

Netanyahu's trusted colleague may become his worst enemy to save himself from harsher punishment, including possible imprisonment.

According to former Netanyahu communications director **Yoaz Hendel**,

Harow "sat on the seam between the political and the personal, between the family of Netanyahu and the nation, between the bureau and the home. On these seams, all the gray episodes happened."

Netanyahu could be charged in so-called Cases 1,000 and 2,000 - the first on suspicion of inappropriately or illegally receiving lavish gifts from wealthy supporters, amounting to possible bribery.

The second case involves him getting caught red-handed on tape, negotiating a quid pro quo with Yedioth Ahronoth publisher Arnon Mozes for more favorable broadsheet coverage in return for legislation prohibiting distribution of the free daily Israel Hayom, YA's main competitor, owned by Netanyahu supporter **Sheldon Adelson**.

Mozes was caught on tape, saying

"(i)f we can come to an agreement (for legislation prohibiting Israel Hayom's free distribution), I will do all I can to make sure you stay (in power) as long as you want. I'm looking you in the eye, and saying this as clearly as I can."

Former State Prosecutor's Office financial investigations department head **Avia Alef** said if the above report is true,

"there is no question that this is bribery."

Netanyahu reportedly agreed to a quid pro quo deal, enough under Israeli law to hold him accountable for bribery even if no follow-through occurred.

Harow apparently has detailed information on both cases. He was Netanyahu's chief of staff when events relating to both cases were ongoing.

On Friday, police recommended indicting Netanyahu. It's for state prosecutors to decide if charges are made.

If prosecuted and punished, it won't be the first time for an Israeli prime minister. After leaving office, **Ehud Olmert** was convicted and imprisoned for municipal corruption, including taking bribes worth around \$450,000, connected to various real estate deals.

In May 2014, he was sentenced to six years imprisonment for bribery. In late December 2015, Israel's High Court reduced his sentence to 18 months - extended to 27 months for obstruction of justice.

In mid-February 2016, he began serving his sentence. On July 2, he was released after serving one-third of it provided he undergo rehabilitation and perform community service.

If Netanyahu is prosecuted and convicted, he'll likely get off as easily, maybe avoid prison time altogether.

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### About the author:

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

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