

Netanyahu to Be Investigated for Bribery and Fraud

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Last June, Israeli police quietly began examining allegations of Netanyahu accepting about \$1.1 million from accused French fraudster Arnaud Mimran in 2009.

His case in France was called the “heist of the century.” Netanyahu’s office denied receiving illegal donations, accusing Mimran of distracting attention from his own case.

Netanyahu’s wife Sara faced possible charges of using public funds for personal use. Rejecting police chief Roni Alsheich’s recommendation, Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit declined to press charges while continuing to probe her activities.

Separately, Jerusalem’s Labor Court found her guilty of subjecting former employee Guy Eliyahu to humiliating treatment. Judge Dita Pruginin fined her around \$30,000 in damages.

Following months of police inquiry into undisclosed Netanyahu financial activities, Attorney General Mandelblit approved opening a formal criminal investigation into alleged bribery and fraud.

Netanyahu’s spokesman responded, saying “(s)ince (his) victory in the last elections and even before, hostile elements have made heroic efforts to attempt to bring about [Netanyahu’s] downfall, with false accusations against him and his family.”

“This (latest attempt) is absolutely false. There was nothing and there will be nothing.”

Last year, Israeli State Comptroller Joseph Shapira reported evidence of significant Netanyahu financial improprieties, saying a criminal investigation is warranted.

Shapira indicated his expenditures for two personal residence in Jerusalem and Caesarea were excessive and improper without integrity or transparency. Large sums were involved.

He used government funds for various personal expenses, including food, hospitality, cleaning, maintenance, electrical work, makeup, hairstyling and personal travel. Shapira barely stopped short of calling him a thief.

He spent hundreds of thousands of shekels on food alone, even though his official residence employed a chef.

His office employees at times were forced to pay for his personal expenses - without reimbursement, Shapira saying:

“When a PMO employee is forced to pay from his own pocket for an expenditure by the

prime minister, this is improper administration, and it makes no difference whether the sum is large or small.”

He spent \$20,000 on his weekend residence for water alone, another \$2,500 for ice cream, over \$100,000 to install a bed in his plane for a five-hour flight.

His budgeted expenses “were made without a process that analyzed needs of determined estimated” amounts needed, Shapira explained.

“This did not meet a single criteria for the rules of proper management, and hurt the ability to carry out proper auditing and oversight.”

An Israeli Justice Ministry spokeswoman said an inquiry into Netanyahu’s financial affairs remains ongoing. It’s “neither confirmation nor denial of what has been alleged.”

“The attorney-general, the police and prosecutors are working in close cooperation and a public announcement will be made in due course about the investigation.”

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