

Surprise Israeli Election Results. Netanyahu Has a Narrow Lead over Benny Gantz

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Pre-election polls showed a likely dead heat between Netanyahu's Likud party and lead challenger Benny Gantz's Blue and White party.

Both parties were projected to win 33 of 120 Knesset seats. A 61-seat majority coalition is required to form a government.

Vote counting continues on Tuesday. Exit polls projected Likud to win 36 or 37 seats to Blue and White's 34.

With coalition partners, Netanyahu's Likud is expected to have 59 Knesset seats — two short of a ruling majority, based on early vote counting. See an update below.

Ahead of efforts by him and Gantz to try cobbling together enough support to form a new government, impasse continues following Israel's third general election since last April.

It's unclear whether either leading candidate can break it.

An update with over 90% of votes counted gives a Likud-led coalition a 59 - 54 seat margin, still two seats short of a ruling majority — Likud winning 36 seats, Blue and White 32.

Joint List is projected to win 15 seats, an historic high for an Arab party. Yet in apartheid Israel, it's powerless.

Privileged Jews run things for their own self-interest, how things work in the West and most other countries.

In Israel, ordinary Jews and Arab citizens have no say over how the country is governed. Dirty business as usual wins every time elections are held.

As vote counting continues, further updates will follow later on Tuesday. It's too early to know if either leading candidate can form a ruling majority, but based on exit polls and vote counting so far, Netanyahu is ahead.

Despite facing bribery, fraud and breach of trust charges, his trial beginning on March 17, conviction likely meaning prison time, more Israelis supported him over alternative candidates.

What does that say about the Israeli electorate? Do enough of its members favor continuity over the rule of law?

Do they support Netanyahu's leadership they know over a former IDF chief of staff with no

political experience?

Post-election analysis will provide insight into how a prime minister facing serious criminal charges outdid his rivals.

According to Haaretz editor-in-chief Aluf Benn, victory for a Likud-led “bloc will permanently cripple the rule of law in Israel, under the guise of ‘judicial reform’ and ‘reining in the High Court of Justice.’”

In a separate editorial, Haaretz warned of the danger if a new government is formed under “power-hungry (Netanyahu) who has lost all restraint and who seems determined to keep his seat forever,” adding:

Above all, he seeks so-called “judicial reforms...to save him from facing justice, from the humiliation of appearing in court and perhaps even from imprisonment.”

If he manages to remain prime minister, he’ll “destroy” what remains of “the rule of law” in Israel.

“(A) wave of persecution against civil servants and politicians, prosecutors and judges, who will be labeled enemies of the state and be forced have to prove their loyalty to the ruler (who’s) above the law.”

Indicting him on bribery, fraud and breach of trust, major civil charges, attorney general Mendelblit denounced him strongly, saying:

He and his wife engaged in “an improper relationship” with individuals from whom they “received (special) favors” — actions amounting to a “serious and ongoing conflict of interest,” adding:

He “took advantage of the bribe offered him...us(ing) his power as prime minister to receive personal favors, while fundamentally harming the integrity of the public service and trust.”

His “conduct deeply and profoundly harm(ed) the rule of law, moral integrity and public trust.”

If he remains prime minister and avoids accountability, he’ll likely be unrestrained to do what he pleases because who’ll stop him.

Civil charges against him pale in comparison to his high crimes of war, against humanity, and slow-motion genocide against long-suffering Palestinians.

Nor does he face accountability for years of undeclared war on Syria and Lebanon’s Hezbollah, as well as partnering with US wars — the world community largely turning a blind eye to his Nuremberg-level high crimes.

A Final Comment

The Jerusalem Post reported that absentee ballots from soldiers and others will be counted Tuesday night local time, adding:

“Legally, the final results do not need to be published until next Monday.”

Here’s where things stand with over 90% of votes counted:

“Likud: 1,210,939 voters – 36 seats predicted

- Blue and White: 1,085,932 voters – 32 seats predicted
- The Joint List: 536,028 voters – 15 seats predicted
- Shas: 320,999 voters – 10 seats predicted
- UTJ: 255,159 voters – 7 seats predicted
- Yisrael Beytenu: 242,218 voters – 7 seats predicted
- Labor-Gesher-Meretz: 235,934 voters – 7 seats predicted
- Yamina: 208,638 voters – 6 seats predicted
- The Right-religious bloc has 59 seats
- The Center-Left bloc has 39
- The Joint List has 15
- Yisrael Beytenu has 7”

Turnout was 71% of registered voters.

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