

NETANYAHU'S ULTRA RIGHT-WING COALITION GOVERNMENT: A DOSSIER



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I. KEY EXTREMISTS MEMBERS OF NETANYAHU'S COALITION GOVERNMENT

The new government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rewarded some of the most extreme figures in Israeli politics with key roles. The bigoted and anti-democratic views of the individuals below go far beyond the usual range of mainstream Israeli politics. Information regarding additional notable members of the new coalition government can be found in this [paper](#).

- **Itamar Ben-Gvir:** A convicted supporter of terrorism, Ben-Gvir was [found guilty](#) by an Israeli court of racist incitement and supporting the Jewish supremacist Kahanist terror organization. Famous for his threats against Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin before the latter's assassination, he was [exempted](#) from compulsory military service due to extremist activities. A [proponent of unilateral West Bank annexation](#) by Israel and revoking the citizenship of Palestinian Israelis deemed "disloyal," Ben-Gvir has personally provoked and sought to escalate clashes with Palestinian residents of sensitive neighborhoods of occupied East Jerusalem. Netanyahu crafted the enhanced position of National Security Minister for Ben-Gvir, in which he will oversee Israel's police, including its border police. The latter is a force with both military and police functions which is used in demonstrations and riots, and operates in Israel's non-Jewish and "mixed" cities and in the occupied Palestinian territory. Ben-Gvir attempted to [oust](#) the police's Tel Aviv district commander for not sufficiently cracking down on Israeli pro-democracy protesters. Israel's Police Commissioner has since [instructed](#) officials under him to avoid direct contact with Ben-Gvir. He is advancing the [establishment](#) of a "national guard" under his command. Ben-Gvir's top advisor Bentzi Gopstein, a "[notorious Kahanist](#)" who has been banned from running for the Knesset, advocated burning churches, and runs the far-right racist and anti-LGBT group [Lehava](#), is facing charges of inciting racism and terrorism. He is [reportedly](#) "very involved in many decisions regarding the police top brass and its conduct." Ben-Gvir's Chief of Staff Chananel Dorfman once [said](#), "The only problem with the Nazis is that I was on the losing side." Ben-Gvir leads the ultranationalist Jewish Power Party.
- **Bezalel Smotrich:** During Israel's disengagement from Gaza in 2005, Smotrich was [arrested](#) by the Shin Bet on suspicion of planning to blow up cars on a major highway; he was caught in possession of 700 liters of gasoline. Smotrich co-founded [Regavim](#), a right-wing NGO which works to prevent development by Bedouins and Palestinians in Israel and the West Bank. Recently, he proudly called himself a "[fascist homophobe](#)," and he has called for [segregated maternity wards](#) in hospitals for Jews and Arabs because "Arabs are my enemies." He published [Israel's Decisive Plan](#), in which he advocated for the annexation of the entire West Bank. As a Member of Knesset, he [threatened](#) to expel an Israeli Arab MK and other Muslims who do not "know that the Land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people," and later [told Arab MKs](#): "You're here by mistake; it's a mistake that [Israel's first Prime Minister David] Ben-Gurion didn't finish the job and didn't throw you out in 1948." His far-right Religious Zionism Party advocates for Israel to become a Jewish [theocracy](#). The Biden administration condemned Smotrich's recent call for Israel to "wipe out" the Palestinian town of Huwara after a pogrom there by Israeli settlers. The Jordanian government accused Israel of "reckless incitement" and violating the Jordan-Israel peace treaty after Smotrich gave a [speech](#) in which he claimed "there's no such thing as Palestinians" behind a map that depicted Jordan and the occupied Palestinian territory as part of Israel. The US State Department also [denounced](#) Smotrich's remarks

as “dangerous,” and Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Egypt issued [condemnations](#), as well. Regarding the Palestinian village of Khan al-Ahmar, Smotrich [stated](#) that it “will be evicted not because it’s illegal” but because it is located “in a strategic area ... that will determine if God forbid there will be Arab territorial contiguity that will connect [major Palestinian cities] Bethlehem, Nablus and Ramallah.” Smotrich serves as Minister of Finance and effectively as civilian governor of the West Bank as an additional minister in the Defense Ministry. He [lives](#) in the West Bank settlement of Kedumim.

- **Avi Maoz** chairs the anti-Arab, anti-LGBTQ [Noam faction](#), which pushes for strict interpretation of Jewish religious laws. He opposes gay pride parades and calls LGBTQ people a threat to the family. He opposes mingling between Jews and Palestinians and went to the “mixed” city of Lod during a recent period of intercommunal violence to warn that “the blurring of the Jewish identity is the cause of the Arab enemy raising its head.” He sees Israel’s future as a battle between Israel’s religious and secular Jewish communities. After [resigning](#) from the government for three months over claims that it was not living up to commitments in the Noam-Likud coalition agreement, Maoz has [returned](#) to his post as a Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office. He will head a new National Jewish Identity, where his purview will include [oversight](#) of educational programming by external groups in public schools, raising concerns that Maoz will cancel programs related to peace-building, LGBTQ issues, and Jewish pluralism.
- **Zvika Fogel** is [Chair](#) of the Knesset’s National Security Committee and a member of Ben-Gvir’s Jewish Power Party. He retired from the IDF with the rank of Brigadier General; his last post in active duty was Head of Southern Command. Following the swearing in of the Netanyahu government, he declared that “the [occupation is permanent](#)” and Israel has a right to “stop surrendering to different kinds of people that never existed and suddenly popped up.” He has stated that the concept of proportionality, required under international law, “should [cease to exist](#).” Fogel has said, “If it is between one Israeli mother crying, or a thousand Palestinian mothers crying, then a thousand Palestinian mothers will cry.” He has also said, “An Arab who throws a stone at a soldier [needs a bullet in the head](#); a Jew who throws a stone needs to be educated.” Fogel accused opposition leaders Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz of “[treason against the state](#)” for fomenting resistance to the Netanyahu government’s judicial overhaul plans and called for them to be arrested. Israeli police have opened an [investigation](#) into MK Fogel for alleged incitement to terror following his full-throated endorsement of a pogrom by Israeli settlers in the Palestinian town of Huwara. Fogel tweeted, “A closed, burnt Huwara – that’s what I want to see.”
- **May Golan** is Minister for the Status of Women, a newly created Cabinet position, despite her [hostility toward feminists](#) and having described “radical feminism as a hate movement.” Golan first came to prominence for her xenophobic activism against African asylum seekers, to whom she refers as “infiltrators.” Golan has [characterized](#) south Tel Aviv as “occupied” by asylum seekers, introduced a bill last year to allow Israel to expel them, and stated that she is “[proud to be racist](#).” She [first ran](#) for Knesset in 2013 with the defunct far-right Power for Israel Party, a forerunner to the Jewish Power Party. Like its leader, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, she has spoken at the annual memorial ceremony for [Meir Kahane](#). She is now a member of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s Likud Party, and has emerged as one of the Knesset’s strongest supporters of the [radical judicial overhaul](#) spearheaded by Justice Minister Yariv Levin. Golan was [one of the seven Cabinet ministers](#), and the only one from the Likud Party, to participate in the [march to Evyatar](#)

to demand the re-establishment and “legalization” of the evacuated outpost. Following the resignation of Asaf Zamir, Netanyahu has offered Golan the position of [Israeli Consul General in New York](#). In a letter, former Israeli ambassadors and high-level diplomats said they were “shocked” by the offer, [writing](#), “Golan’s appointment is outrageous as she is a racist and divisive figure, which is the exact opposite from what Israel needs in such a critical place.” Former US Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk [stated](#) the appointment “will be seen by the American Jewish community as a sign of utmost disrespect.” Regarding May Golan’s history of racist comments, [State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel said](#), “...We would condemn such kind of rhetoric and believe that such kind of language is also particularly damaging when it’s amplified in leadership positions.”

- **Orit Strock** is National Missions Minister, which gives her authority over the settlement division, pre-military preparatory schools, national service, and Jewish culture. A member of the Religion Zionism Party, Strock is a [leading figure](#) in the Jewish settlement of Hebron and the founding chair of a controversial settlement group known as the Human Rights Organization of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). A leader in Knesset’s Land of Israel lobby, she has stated that “legalizing” illegal settlement outposts is “[a moral and Zionist duty](#) of the first order.” Strock has pointed to [Israel’s Supreme Court as an “obstacle”](#) in accomplishing that mission, noting, “so long as we do not get it back down to its natural size, we will not be able to get anything done.” Her [son was convicted](#) of kidnapping and abusing a Palestinian boy. She has [suggested](#) that doctors can refuse to see LGBT patients on religious grounds.
- **Zvi Suktot** is a Member of Knesset, former director general of the Jewish Power Party, and a founder of the illegal settlement outpost of Evyatar. He has been [arrested several times](#) for orchestrating and taking part in violent attacks against Palestinians and Israeli security forces. In 2010, he was arrested on suspicion of setting a mosque ablaze but released due to lack of evidence. In 2012, Suktot was one of 12 far-right activists temporarily expelled from the West Bank by Israeli authorities. He moved to an [outpost](#) outside [Yitzhar](#), a West Bank settlement whose residents are notorious for violent attacks against Palestinians in surrounding areas, in order to [prevent](#) the creation of a Palestinian state.

II. WHAT THE NETANYAHU COALITION GOVERNMENT HAS PLEDGED TO DO

Following general practice, the Likud Party and the other parties that now compose Prime Minister Netanyahu's government signed [coalition agreements](#) that set guidelines for the new government. One thing that is particularly noteworthy about this set of agreements is their level of specificity. More than is typical, they in many cases appear to provide detailed work plans. From those coalition agreements, we highlight the following pledges by the Netanyahu government. Additional information is available in [this report](#).

- **Annexation of the occupied West Bank:** The coalition agreements make clear that Israel is moving toward the annexation of the occupied West Bank, in what might be characterized as creeping *de jure* annexation, complementing galloping *de facto* annexation on the ground. While it is unlikely that there will be an announcement of annexation or enactment of a specific annexation law by Knesset due to the anticipated international reaction to such a patently illegal move, Likud's coalition agreements with the Religious Zionism and Noam parties expressly mention "applying sovereignty" in the West Bank. "Application of sovereignty" is [synonymous](#) with (and a euphemism for) annexation. Specific measures outlined in the coalition agreements which together amount to annexation include the following:
 - *Declaration of Jewish supremacy in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory:* The first guiding principle of the new government [states](#), "The Jewish people have an exclusive and indisputable right to all parts of the Land of Israel. The Government will promote and develop settlement in all parts of the Land of Israel - the Galilee, the Negev, the Golan and Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]." In other words, Jews alone have rights to settle "the Land of Israel," which includes not only the sovereign state of Israel, but also the occupied territories it controls.
 - *Implementation of structural changes to Israel's military regime governing the West Bank:* The coalition agreements provide for several structural changes to Israeli military regime in the occupied territory, among the most consequential of which is the creation of an additional minister in the Ministry of Defense – who would have authority over the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) and the Civil Administration. Until this point, laws applying to [Palestinians in] the West Bank were drafted by military lawyers, who answered to the General of Central Command – the governing authority of the West Bank, per international law. Now, these laws may be written by civilian lawyers who will answer to the new additional minister in the Ministry of Defense – a civilian leader with a political agenda. This minister, Bezalel Smotrich, can be expected to use this position to further violate Palestinian rights and expand Israeli presence and permanent control in the occupied territory. Notably, Israel's Military Advocate General and Defense Ministry legal adviser warned PM Netanyahu that international bodies, including the International Court of Justice in The Hague, could [view the transfer of authority to Smotrich as de facto annexation](#) of the West Bank by Israel.
 - *"Legalization" of unauthorized settlement outposts:* Included in several of the coalition agreements between Likud and its partners are provisions for "legalizing" or "regularizing" unauthorized settlement outposts and unauthorized construction that

extends authorized settlements. The government will form a ministerial team tasked with regularizing outposts – the Ministerial Team for the Regulation of Young Settlement in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] – to be headed by the Prime Minister. The agreements indicate that the government will use a variety of tactics to “regularize” *all* illegal Israeli construction in the West Bank – including not only outposts, but also farms, shepherding and grazing areas, and the extensions to existing settlements. Settlers motivated by the ideology of securing the entire West Bank for Israel and preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state establish the wildcat outposts, choosing specific locations that help to advance these goals. Thus, “legalization” of outposts would significantly extend the amount of the West Bank consumed by settlements – and would represent a clear step toward annexation by the Israeli government. The coalition agreements specifically call for “regularization” of the Homesh outpost and also mention promotion of the Evyatar settlement plan.

- *Vast expansion of the illegal settlement enterprise:* There are several clauses in the coalition agreements that indicate the new government will incentivize large-scale migration of Israelis to the West Bank. These include tax breaks for settlers, massive funding for road development and services, removal of barriers to the construction of settlements, incentives for Israeli farmers in Area C, and inclusion of settlement enterprise needs in national planning. In addition, there are plans for expanding the settlement in Hebron.
- *Expanding application of Israeli law to Israeli settlers:* The coalition agreements reference systematic application of Israeli laws to Israeli settlers in the West Bank via military orders. Within the West Bank, this would further institutionalize a dual legal system in which a system of military law (without political rights or civil liberties) applies to Palestinians, while Israel’s civilian legal system (with the full range of such rights, liberties, and protections) applies to Israeli settlers.
- **Radical weakening of Israeli democracy:** The new government’s guiding principles specify planned reforms of the judicial system – including the enactment of an “override clause” – that will undermine judicial oversight of the government and thus drastically weaken the powers of the only institution with the ability to act as a check and balance on Israel’s essentially fused legislative-executive branch. Justice Minister Yariv Levin announced a package of radical reforms within the new government’s first week in power that put this guiding principle into an action plan. (See Section III below.)
- **Provision of immunity to settlers and security forces for anti-Palestinian violence:** While Israeli soldiers already benefit from [de facto impunity](#), the new government has pledged in its coalition agreements to enact laws resulting in immunity for soldiers who harm Palestinians and their property. They also indicate that the Minister of National Security (Itamar Ben-Gvir) will examine, and have the power to change, the open-fire regulations governing the actions of police in the West Bank. Ben-Gvir has been granted extensive powers over police policies and priorities – including provision of impunity for Israeli settlers who commit offenses against Palestinians.
- **Targeting of Israeli human rights, peacebuilding and civil society organizations:** The coalition agreements contain several provisions regarding the reduction of freedom of political expression of critical voices within Israel. In particular, they outline steps for

targeting Israeli human rights and civil society organizations that challenge government policy in the West Bank – by delegitimizing them, limiting their operations and targeting them financially. Specifically, the coalition agreement between Likud and the Jewish Power Party states that the government will pass a [law to tax donations](#) by foreign governmental entities to nonprofit civil society organizations within 180 days of being sworn in. Likud MK Ariel Kallner [submitted this bill](#) to the Knesset in February; for details and analysis, see Section III below.

- **Curtailing of the Law of Return by amending the “grandchild clause”:** Under the coalition agreements, the new government has pledged to review and possibly amend the Law of Return’s clause which guarantees Israeli citizenship to any person with at least one Jewish grandparent who does not practice another religion. Likud’s coalition partners, and even some Likud lawmakers, favor amending or repealing the clause – despite [strong opposition](#) from Diaspora Jews, who have emphasized both the symbolic and practical impacts of such a move. On March 29, Noam Party MK Avi Maoz [submitted a bill](#) to [repeal](#) the “grandchild clause” from the Law of Return. He submitted it as a private bill, rather than a government-backed bill.
- **Restrictions on mixed-gender prayer and freedom of worship at the Western Wall:** The coalition agreement between Likud and the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party states that men and women will pray in two separate sections at the Western Wall (Kotel), and that “laws and regulations will be enacted to ensure and enforce” this provision “if and when it is required.” In accordance with the coalition agreement, Shas [introduced a bill](#) to impose extensive restrictions on freedom of worship at the Western Wall. The bill, which Shas sought to fast track, would have banned egalitarian, mixed-gender prayer at the section of the Kotel where it is currently allowed; banned visitors from wearing “immodest” dress; and effectively criminalized the activities of the [Women of the Wall](#) prayer rights group. Violators of the law would have been penalized with six months in prison or a fine of nearly \$3,000. After news of the bill provoked an uproar, PM Netanyahu [froze](#) the bill, but would not rule out some form of it being advanced in the future.

III. WHAT THE NETANYAHU COALITION GOVERNMENT HAS DONE TO DATE

- **Major annexationist moves to boost the settlement enterprise:** Amid an escalation in deadly violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem — including terror attacks that killed Israeli civilians, including two young children, and Israeli raids against militants that also killed Palestinian civilians — Israel's new ultra right-wing government [decided](#) on February 12 to move forward with a series of steps toward West Bank annexation: 1) the Security Cabinet approved “legalizing” [ten outposts](#) in the occupied West Bank that are illegal under both Israeli and international law, turning them into nine new, authorized settlements; 2) the Security Cabinet also authorized connecting dozens of other still-illegal outposts to Israeli state-provided infrastructure like water and electricity; and 3) the Higher Planning Council of Israel's Civil Administration in the occupied West Bank advanced the planning and building of [over 7,000 new settlement housing units](#), outstripping the number of approvals in 2022 and 2021. The moves were condemned by the international community, including by the [UN Security Council](#) and in a [joint statement](#) issued by the foreign ministers of the US, France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Peace Now's Settlement Watch team [noted](#) that about 80 percent of the new housing units advanced by the Higher Planning Council will be built in settlements located deep in the West Bank, in areas that would need to be included in a viable Palestinian state. Subsequently and despite the Netanyahu government's pledges at [Aqaba](#) and [Sharm El Sheikh](#) for a temporary moratorium on settlement expansion and retroactive authorization of outposts, Israeli authorities also approved plans for [6,500 housing units in East Jerusalem](#). In addition, the government's proposed [budget](#) contains [7 billion](#) shekels (\$1.9 billion) over five years for West Bank roads. In a highly significant move, Israel's Civil Administration [announced](#) it is advancing construction of a segregated road for Palestinians in the strategically consequential area of E1. Dubbed the “[Sovereignty Road](#)” by then-Defense Minister Naftali Bennett when he gave permission to begin planning it in 2020, construction of the road is a major step in enabling the Israeli government to annex the major settlement of Ma'ale Adumim to Israel and move forward with construction plans in E1. The new artery, which the Civil Administration calls a “fabric of life road” for Palestinian drivers, will make it possible to block Palestinian traffic from reaching a vast area at the heart of the West Bank. That area [includes](#) Palestinian communities such as [Khan al-Ahmar](#), which stand to be expelled. Meanwhile, the National Missions Ministry led by Minister Orit Strock intends to [double](#) the funds it provides to settlers for drones and inspectors to monitor Palestinian construction in Area C of the West Bank. The budget may also be used for infrastructure to prevent Palestinians from “unauthorized land use” as part of Israel's “campaign for Area C.” On June 26, the Higher Planning Council approved roughly 5,700 additional settlement units and retroactively authorized three outposts. The latter is a clear violation of Israeli commitments at Aqaba and Sharm El Sheikh, which included a pledge not to approve any additional outposts for six months. The 5,700 units include an additional 1,000 housing units in the settlement of Eli, [announced](#) by Netanyahu, Smotrich, and Gallant as a “response” to the Palestinian terror attack near the settlement. This brings the total of housing units promoted in the West Bank by the Netanyahu government in its first six months in office to 13,000 – making 2023 already a [record-breaking](#) year. In July, Smotrich [stated](#) at a meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that he is developing a plan according to which Israel could demolish buildings in Areas A and B, if it deems them “national security threats.” This would mark a significant shift in Israeli policy, since Israel agreed to Palestinian Authority control over Areas A and B when it signed the Oslo Accords. Smotrich

indicated that the plan, which he hopes to finish within a month, will also declare PA activities to be foreign hostile activity in order to confiscate funds from the PA. [For more, see this issue brief: "[Annexation Steps Taken by the Netanyahu Government](#)."]

- **Advancement of legislation to radically weaken Israel's judiciary:** The government [advanced](#), in initial readings, bills that form the core of the Netanyahu government's plan to neutralize Israel's judiciary. The votes were the first of three needed in order to enact the bills, which would amend the Basic Law on the Judiciary, into law. Legislators cast their votes as tens of thousands of pro-democracy protesters rallied outside the Knesset against the bills. One of the bills allow the governing coalition to pack the judiciary with judges of its own choosing, in contrast to the [current system](#) which requires judges and politicians to achieve a consensus upon the appointments of new judges to Israel's Supreme Court and all other civil courts. The government has "[softened](#)" the proposed law slightly from an [earlier version](#). In its newer formulation, the bill would ensure that six of eleven members of the selection committee would be members of the coalition government, giving it full control over the first two appointments to the Supreme Court via majority vote. Additional Supreme Court appointments would require support from at least one selection committee member outside the governing coalition. A second bill would functionally [terminate](#) the Supreme Court's power of judicial review on foundational issues by preventing the Court from considering the validity of Israel's Basic Laws – which stipulate civil rights and the powers and functions of Israel's governing bodies, in the absence of a formal Constitution – or amendments to them. A [third bill](#) requires unanimity among all 15 Supreme Court justices in order to strike down unconstitutional laws in those cases in which the Court retains the ability to conduct judicial review. (The Court will be able to review "regular" laws and not "basic" laws.) In addition, that bill would institute an "override clause" for cases in which the Supreme Court does strike down legislation. This would allow a bare majority of Israel's 120-member Knesset (61 MKs) to overturn Supreme Court decisions. The government had indicated its [intention](#) to pass the first law – altering the composition of the committee on judicial appointments – during the Knesset session that ends in early April prior to the Passover break. Netanyahu doubled down on this plan in a March 23 speech and [pledged](#) to become more directly involved with the judicial reform legislation, despite a 2020 conflict of interest agreement – which prompted a [response](#) from the Attorney General. On March 25, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [called](#) on the government to pause the judicial overhaul, warning that "the growing rift in our society is penetrating the IDF and security agencies," which "poses a clear, immediate, and tangible threat to the security of the state." When Netanyahu's office announced [Gallant would be fired](#), massive nationwide demonstrations ensued and a [general strike](#) announced by the Histadrut (Israel's largest labor union) ground the country to a halt. Netanyahu [relented](#) and [announced](#) a "timeout for negotiations," which are being [brokered](#) by President Isaac Herzog. Meanwhile, however, the government [placed](#) its bill to change the composition of the judicial selection committee on the Knesset table, allowing for an expedited vote. In order to obtain National Security Minister Ben-Gvir's support for pausing the judicial overhaul, Netanyahu [pledged](#) to move ahead with the creation of a "national guard" with Ben-Gvir at the helm. Following months of negotiations in which Prime Minister Netanyahu claimed the opposition's "intention was just to waste time," he [announced](#) in June that the government would "commence with active steps" toward judicial overhaul. They moved an [amendment](#) to the Basic Law on the judiciary, which would limit judicial review by barring the Supreme Court from invalidating decisions made by the Prime Minister or other elected officials on the grounds that they

are “extremely unreasonable.” The Supreme Court has [agreed](#) to hear eight petitions against the law on September 12, and in an unprecedented move, a panel consisting of all 15 Supreme Court judges will hear the cases. Prime Minister Netanyahu has refused to [commit](#) to abiding by the ruling of the Supreme Court. [For more on the bill and its potential consequences, see “[The Netanyahu Government’s Dangerously Unreasonable Amendment](#).” Netanyahu has indicated his [intention](#) to move ahead next with the bill to change the composition of the judicial selection committee.

- **Deal reached to hand over most authority over West Bank policy to Bezalel Smotrich:** Making good on the coalition agreement to transfer significant authority over Israel’s occupation of the West Bank to civilian control by Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who is also a minister in the Defense Ministry, PM Netanyahu announced on February 23 he had approved an [agreement](#) between Smotrich and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant regarding control over the Civil Administration and COGAT. Smotrich’s office reported that he will assume authority over most of the Civil Administration, including approval of settlement construction and enforcement against illegal construction in the West Bank (nearly all of which is against building by Palestinians). Smotrich will appoint a deputy head of the Civil Administration – a civilian official who will wield powers in his stead – and will create a new “Settlement Administration” charged with improving services and infrastructure in West Bank settlements. The IDF will have the authority to act regarding construction that is both “new and invasive” and “urgent in a security context.” Netanyahu will settle any disputes between Gallant and Smotrich regarding evictions. Smotrich reacted, “We have a long way to go, but this is a day of celebration for residents of Judea and Samaria [Israeli settlers in the West Bank] and the State of Israel.” Barak Ravid [reported](#) in Axios two weeks earlier that “the Biden administration warned the Israeli government that it would consider any transfer of civilian authorities in the occupied West Bank to far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich as a step toward annexation.” Since assuming authority over the Civil Administration, Smotrich has been instructing relevant government ministries to prepare for the [addition of 500,000 Israeli settlers](#) in the West Bank – which would double the number there to one million. (This figure excludes the settlers in East Jerusalem, of whom there are more than 200,000.) Smotrich presented his plans to the various ministries, reportedly “demanding their immediate implementation” over the next two years. The plan calls for improved infrastructure for all Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including unauthorized outposts (which the Netanyahu government intends to legalize). Smotrich’s plans address transportation, infrastructure, education, and employment, among other issues. Defense officials will likely [oppose](#) significant parts of Smotrich’s plan, particularly involving unauthorized outposts in areas heavily populated Palestinian areas, and the plan will likely be challenged by Israel’s Supreme Court. [For more on the deal to hand over West Bank authority to Smotrich and its significance, see “[Bezalel Smotrich’s West Bank Takeover Is What Annexation Looks Like](#).”]
- **Adoption of expedited process for approving new settlement activity, under Smotrich’s authority:** On June 18, the Cabinet [adopted](#) new regulations governing the approval and promotion process of new settlement activity. These new rules will eliminate some of the key points at which elected decision makers have till now been able to intervene to stop or delay approvals, which they have done at times for security reasons or due to international pressure. Under the previous procedure, which had been in place since 1996, there were numerous stages of authorization at which the Defense Minister had

to provide approval. That will be reduced to a single approval which will now come from Smotrich in his role as a minister within the Defense Ministry. This makes it virtually certain that the expansion of settlements will move forward at a faster pace than ever. In lauding the move, head of the Benjamin Regional Council in the West Bank Yisrael Gantz said it would “reduce international scrutiny and criticism over construction in the settlements.”

- **Repeal of key clauses of the 2005 Disengagement Law and movement toward “legalization” of the West Bank outpost of Homesh:** Newly sworn-in, the Netanyahu government [indicated](#) it would reverse prior state policy and allow Israeli settlers to remain in the unauthorized outpost of Homesh, which is built on private Palestinian land. The government also stated that it would amend the 2005 Disengagement Law under which Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip and from Homesh and three other settlements in the occupied West Bank. Israel’s Supreme Court [responded](#), requiring the government to explain within 90 days why the illegal outpost at Homesh should not be evacuated and why it should not take steps to provide the Palestinian owners access to their land. The [Biden administration affirmed](#), “The Homesh outpost in the West Bank is illegal. It is illegal even under Israeli law.” On March 20, the Knesset [passed](#) a bill to repeal the clauses of the 2005 Disengagement Law that ban Israelis from living in the region of the northern West Bank in which Homesh and the three other settlements (Ganim, Kadim, and Sa-Nur) were located. The bill’s explanatory notes [state](#) that its purpose is to “expunge, to some extent, the national and moral stain...on the State of Israel” purportedly caused by the 2005 evacuations. Ahead of the vote, US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides [told The Jerusalem Post](#), “We have been very clear [that] we oppose the bill.” Further, Nides noted that the bill is at odds with the 2004 understanding between former US President George W. Bush and then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. In an [exchange of letters](#), President Bush offered strong support for Sharon’s Disengagement Plan as consistent with his Road Map to a two-state solution and provided Sharon with US assurances as a result. The most significant of these was that the US would not expect Israel to fully withdraw to the pre-1967 lines, due in part to the existence of large Israeli settlement blocs over the Green Line. State Department spokesman Vedant Patel [told reporters](#) after the vote, “The United States is extremely troubled that the Israeli Knesset has passed the legislation rescinding important parts of the 2005 Disengagement Law,” which he called “provocative” and a “clear contradiction,” of both the pledge by PM Sharon and also assurances made two days prior by the Netanyahu government. Patel added, “The US strongly urges Israel to refrain from allowing the return of settlers to the area covered by the legislation, consistent with former Prime Minister Sharon and the current Israeli government’s commitment to the United States.” In an unusual move, the Biden administration underscored its displeasure by [summoning](#) Israeli Ambassador Michael Herzog to the State Department. [For more, see [“Why the Netanyahu Government’s Disengagement Repeal Is So Problematic for the Biden Administration.”](#)] Two months later, following an agreement between Ministers Smotrich and Gallant, the military commander of the West Bank signed a [decree](#) allowing Israelis to enter Homesh. Following a visit of European diplomats to the Palestinian village of Burqa, on whose private land the Homesh outpost is built, settlers (reportedly accompanied by Israeli soldiers) [invaded](#) Burqa, set homes on fire, and injured several Palestinians. Meanwhile, the Israeli government [told the Biden administration](#) it would not turn the Homesh outpost into a new settlement. Days later, however, the yeshiva (Jewish religious school) at Homesh was [rebuilt](#) in an area Israel classifies as “state land.” To enable it to guard the outpost, the Israeli military set up several caravans near the yeshiva. In the process, and on the

order of Smotrich and Gallant, the IDF disregarded the counsel of its own legal adviser and [broke Israeli law](#) by circumventing the Civil Administration's review process. The State Department [said](#) it was “deeply troubled” by the move, noting again Israel’s violation of the 2004 Bush-Sharon understanding and recent commitments made by the Netanyahu government. Israeli National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi [stated](#) he was unaware of any commitments Israel had broken.

- **Visit to Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif by National Security Minister Ben-Gvir:** In the “[first international incident](#)” sparked by the Netanyahu government less than a week after coming to power, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir visited the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound on January 3. The move was seen as an attempt to undermine the critical “Status Quo” on the Temple Mount, according to which Muslims would enjoy freedom of access and prayer, while Jews would have freedom of access to the Temple Mount platform, but worship at the base of the Western Wall (where Palestinians are not permitted). While prime minister in 2015, Netanyahu had [directed](#) Israeli police to bar Israeli politicians from entering the site. Previous visits by senior Israeli political figures to the Temple Mount and other perceived challenges to the Status Quo have triggered clashes and even sustained rounds of violence. Ben-Gvir’s visit has so far provoked [international condemnation](#) and led to a [special meeting](#) of the UN Security Council.
- **Imposition of sanctions on Palestinians over ICJ appeal:** In response to the Palestinian Authority’s formal request for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, the Netanyahu government imposed [expansive punitive sanctions](#) against Palestinians and their leadership in January. The announced measures include diverting millions of dollars of Palestinian taxes [collected by Israel on behalf of the PA](#) to a fund for Israeli victims of terror attacks by Palestinians, prohibiting any new construction by Palestinians in Area C of the occupied West Bank, revoking Palestinian officials’ VIP privileges, and taking action against human rights organizations operating in the occupied territory. In signing the decree to block the transfer of Palestinian tax revenue to the PA, Finance Minister [Smotrich remarked](#) that he was not concerned that the move could bring about the PA’s collapse. To the contrary, he indicated that he has “no interest for it to continue to exist.” In response, [more than 90 countries signed a statement](#) expressing “deep concern” and “reject[ing] punitive measures in response to a request for an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice.” On July 9, the Security Cabinet [decided](#) to ‘prevent collapse of the Palestinian Authority’ but it did not approve any concrete measures to do so. Economic concessions that require the approval of the Finance Ministry under the leadership of Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich – such as fuel discounts and debt relief – were rejected, amid opposition from Smotrich and Ministers Ben-Gvir and Gallant. A committee will be established to examine proposals for specific forms of relief. At the same time, the Security Cabinet determined that Israel will [demand](#) that the PA to “refrain from acting against Israel in the international legal and political arena, from incitement in its media and education, from paying the families of terrorists and murderers and from illegal building in Area C.” Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh responded by referring to Israel’s refusal to turn over Palestinian taxes, stating that “Israel must return these funds unconditionally and without any form of extortion.” [For related background, see this issue brief: “[Palestinian Authority Instability](#).”]
- **Removal of Palestinian flags from public spaces ordered by National Security Minister Ben-Gvir:** In his Twitter announcement of the move, Ben-Gvir made clear that he defines

waving the symbol of Palestinian national identity as an act of terrorism. He [wrote](#), “Today, I directed the Israeli police to enforce the prohibition of flying any PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization] flag that shows identification with a terrorist organization from the public sphere and to stop any incitement against the State of Israel. We will fight terrorism and the encouragement of terrorism with all our might!” Flying the Palestinian flag is [not illegal](#) under Israeli law, but Israel’s attorney general ruled in 2014 that police may confiscate a flag if they believe its display is disrupting public order or indicating support for terrorism. On April 26, Israeli police raided the Nazareth branch of the Hadash Party and [confiscated Palestinian flags](#). Police sources said they removed the flags because waving them on Israeli Independence Day would be “provocative” and they would return the flags after the holiday. Hadash responded that the “only purpose” of the confiscation of Palestinian flags “is to defy and suppress and harm freedom of political expression.”

- **Passage of a budget that provides massive funding for West Bank settlements and infrastructure:** The 2023-24 [budget](#) passed by the Knesset in May will inject several billion shekels into West Bank settlements and the infrastructure that serves them, further deepening the occupation. A significant majority of the funds will go to building new highways and upgrading existing ones, including roads that will allow Israeli settlers to bypass Palestinian cities and towns. At least 25 percent of the Transportation Ministry’s budget for road infrastructure is allocated for the West Bank, though only 5 percent of Israel’s population of nearly 10 million citizens live there. The hundreds of millions of shekels that will go to other settlement projects include funds earmarked for illegal outposts. Settlement municipal authorities will receive millions to monitor unauthorized Palestinian construction. Notably, Minister Bezalel Smotrich’s [plan](#) to double the number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank will require major additional funds beyond the amounts included in the 2023-24 budget.
- **Passage of a law to deport Palestinian citizens of Israel convicted of terrorism:** The [new law](#) gives Israel’s interior minister to revoke the citizenship and residency status of Arab citizens of Israel who are convicted of terrorism as defined by Israel’s 2016 Counter-Terrorism Law, served a prison sentence, and received funding from the Palestinian Authority. The law [also applies](#) to Palestinians who are East Jerusalem permanent residency holders. A large majority of MKs (94), including many from opposition parties, voted for the bill; 10 voted against it. Aimed specifically at recipients of Palestinian Authority funds, the law is designed to apply to Palestinians (citizens of Israel and residents of East Jerusalem) convicted of terrorism and not Jewish Israelis. When Arab Israeli MK Ahmad Tibi stated that the law should also apply to Yigal Amir (the Jewish Israeli who murdered Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin), a Likud lawmaker [replied](#), “I prefer Jewish murderers to Arab murderers and as a general rule in the Jewish state I prefer Jewish to disloyal Arabs here.”
- **Passage of law to prevent the High Court from ordering a prime minister to recuse himself due to a conflict of interest:** In March, Knesset [passed](#) into law an amendment to the Basic Law on the Government which would bar the High Court from hearing a request to declare the prime minister unfit to serve. Significantly, this is the first piece of the Netanyahu government’s judicial overhaul package to be passed into law by the Knesset. According to the amendment (which one opposition lawmaker [noted](#) appeared to be “tailored exactly to Netanyahu’s measurements”), it will only be possible to declare incapacitation for physical or mental inability – rather than for conflicts of interest. As *Times of Israel* [reported](#), the legislation is widely seen by Israelis as a reaction to the governing

coalition's "fears that the High Court of Justice could force Netanyahu to step down, due to the potential conflict of interest created by him overseeing his coalition's bid to dramatically overhaul the judiciary while he is himself on trial for multiple corruption charges." Following passage of the law, a declaration of incapacitation of the prime minister would have to be made by the PM himself or by a vote of 75 percent of the full Cabinet. If the prime minister refuses to step down following such a vote by the Cabinet, 90 (of a total of 120) MKs may authorize removal. Hearing petitions against the amendment (which are supported by the Attorney General for the first time ever), Supreme Court Justice Uzi Vogelman stated that "the fact is that the law is personal." The Court [ordered](#) the government to justify immediate implementation of the law, to which coalition heads responded, "The court does not have the authority to annul Basic Laws or to rule that a Basic Law will enter into force at a later date." Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana (Likud) added, "For the sake of democracy, the court must respect the Knesset's decisions."

- **Passage of law banning all leavened bread products in hospitals during Passover:** Knesset [passed](#) a controversial law banning "chametz" (leavened bread products that are not kosher for Passover) from hospitals during the Jewish holiday. The bill was sponsored by the ultra-Orthodox United Torah Judaism Party. In 2021, the High Court ruled that hospitals were not permitted to ban bringing chametz into hospitals on Passover. When former Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz insisted that hospitals must comply with the ruling in 2022, MK Idit Sliman defected from the coalition, depriving it of its bare 61-seat majority and eventually bringing down the government. Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara determined that the bill violates Israelis' rights and "raises considerable constitutional difficulties." Labor MK Gilad Kariv, a reform rabbi, warned that the law "is the first harbinger of an unprecedented wave of religious legislation...that violate[s] freedom of religion and conscience." Israel Hofshit, an NGO dedicated to advancing religious freedom, has filed a [petition](#) with the High Court against the law.
- **Passage of a bill expanding the Admissions Committees Law:** Among a [number of steps](#) to encourage Jewish families to move to the Galilee, a region in northern Israel with a large Arab population, the Knesset [passed](#) a bill to expand the 2011 Admissions Committee Law. The 2011 law allows towns of up to 400 households to screen those who want to move there; the government's bill expands the law so that communities of up to 700 families may set up "admissions committees." The existing law was [conceived](#) as a way to get around a Supreme Court ruling banning communities from leasing land only to Jews. While it does not allow for disqualifying applicants for residents on the basis of their race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, or political affiliation, it allows admissions committees to reject candidates they find to be "inappropriate for the social and cultural fabric" of a community. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) [charges](#) that the law is an opening to arbitrariness and discrimination and opposed expanding it. MK Ahmad Tibi [claimed](#) that already "about 900 communities are out of the question today when it comes to housing for an Arab citizen in the State of Israel." National Missions Minister Orit Strock of the Religious Zionism Party, who promoted an alternative version of the bill [referred](#) to it as a means to "Judaize the Galilee." Justice Minister Yariv Levin recently [complained](#) that Jews who "don't want to live with Arabs" were leaving the Galilee because "Arabs buy apartments in Jewish communities" there. Levin, who has driven the government's attempted judicial overhaul continued, "We need to ensure that there are judges in the Supreme Court who understand this." Additional proposed measures to Judaize the Galilee

being considered by the Cabinet include government [subsidies](#) for the cost of land in Jewish communities, but not for land in Arab towns in the region.

- **Passage of a law adding harsher penalties for ‘nationalistically’ motivated sex crimes:** The new law [amends](#) the penal code to make terrorist, nationalist, or racist motivations an aggravating factor in crimes of sexual assault and sexual harassment to enable harsher sentences and [double compensation](#) fines when perpetrators are judged to harbor such motivations. The bill’s co-sponsor, Jewish Power MK Limor Son Har-Melech, made clear that the law is intended to target Palestinians who commit sexual crimes against Jews, as she [stated](#) it would provide “proper and correct treatment to female Jewish victims.” She continued, “It can’t be the case that the honor of Jewish women is violated by miscreants who get away with no or ridiculous punishments.” The bill was opposed by the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel and the ultra-Orthodox feminist group Nivcharot. A position paper from the latter asked, “Does an ultra-Orthodox man who rapes a 12-year-old girl cause less hurt or damage than an Arab-Palestinian who rapes a 12-year-old? I support harsher sentences for all sexual harassers and rapists, but for everybody, with no distinction between religion, race or gender.”
- **Advancement of a law barring the Supreme Court from invalidating ministerial appointments:** The Netanyahu government [advanced](#) the ‘[Dery Law](#),’ which would enable PM Netanyahu to reinstate Aryeh Dery to Cabinet posts following the Supreme Court’s ruling that the Shas Party Chairman’s appointments as both Health and Interior Minister reflected “extreme unreasonableness” given his recurring corruption convictions and violation of his 2022 plea bargain.
- **Advancement of legislation to give vast new powers to rabbinic courts:** Under the proposed legislation, which [passed](#) a preliminary vote, the powers of rabbinical courts would expand beyond family disputes to enable them to rule on a wide range of civil matters. In effect, rabbinical courts would achieve a status equal to that of civil courts, creating a parallel legal system governed by Jewish religious laws. The rabbinical courts stand to gain a massive increase in their budget as a result. Every aspect of rabbinic courts is controlled by ultra-Orthodox Jewish men. [Critics fear](#) that “the first to be harmed will be religious women,” who will be pressured into consenting to have cases involving them heard in rabbinic court.
- **Advancement of bill to bring police investigations under government control:** The Knesset plenum [approved in a preliminary reading](#) a bill that would bring the Police Internal Investigations Department (PIID) under the direct control of the justice minister – potentially making it subject to political influence. The PIID previously operated under the State Attorney’s Office. The PIID’s powers will be expanded to allow it to conduct probes into the State Attorney and state prosecutors. To become law, the bill must still pass three full Knesset readings.
- **Advancement of bill to establish death penalty for Palestinian terrorists (but not for Jewish ones):** In a preliminary Knesset reading, the government [advanced](#) a bill to impose a death sentence on those who commit nationalistically motivated murders of Israeli citizens. The death penalty would not apply to Israelis who murder Palestinians. In order for the death sentence to apply under the proposed law, the perpetrator must be acting with the goal of “harming the State of Israel and the rebirth of the Jewish nation

in its homeland.” Israeli law professors associated with the Israel Democracy Institute [commented](#), “Not only does this bill degrade the sanctity of life and human dignity, it is also racist and discriminatory, in that the death penalty would only apply based on ethnic-nationalist criteria. Such a bill has no place in a democratic country. The entire world will view it as an inherently racist law.”

- **Advancement of bill to defund East Jerusalem schools that teach the Palestinian curriculum:** Members of the governing coalition are [sponsoring a law](#) that would end funding to schools in East Jerusalem that teach the Palestinian curriculum, defunding most East Jerusalem schools as a result. While a growing number of Palestinian students in Jerusalem have switched to studying the Israeli school curriculum – hoping to attend Israeli university and/or integrate into the Israeli job market – 85 percent of these students still learn the Palestinian curriculum. The explanatory notes to the bill allege that the official Palestinian curriculum includes “incitement to terrorism,” despite the fact that Jerusalem municipality supervises, censors, and reprints the textbooks before distributing them to schools – which has itself led to [strikes](#) by students in East Jerusalem schools. Some Israeli officials in the Jerusalem municipality [criticized](#) the bill as unnecessary and likely to have the unintended consequence of harming their efforts to get more Palestinian schools in East Jerusalem to switch to the Israeli curriculum.
- **Advancement of “Arnona Fund” plan to redistribute local taxes and benefit right-wing constituencies:** The government’s Economic Arrangements Bill that accompanies its 2023-24 budget contains a controversial “Arnona Fund” plan that led [several major municipalities](#) to go on strike. [Arnona](#) is property tax, which is set and managed by each municipality. With the stated goal of lowering housing prices by incentivizing localities to earmark land for residential properties instead of commercial use, the Israeli government will oblige “wealthy local authorities” to contribute to the Fund a portion of the taxes they collect on commercial real estate. The executive committee of the Fund will then reallocate money to the localities by giving them a set amount for each residential housing unit they market. There are many [reasons](#) that the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel and others oppose this bill. Of particular significance are the winners (among them, constituencies that support the Netanyahu government) and losers (including Arab communities). Ultra-Orthodox communities, which are economically disadvantaged and stand to gain substantially from the redistribution, will benefit from the Fund. So will West Bank [settlements](#), which will receive money from the Fund but are not obliged to contribute to it. Meanwhile, Arab cities and towns, while financially struggling, do not have the urban planning needed to market many residential housing units, and thus will receive less from the Fund. Cities with commercial centers and many local businesses (including Tel Aviv, Haifa, Eilat, and Ashdod) will be [among the losers](#). Another [concern](#) raised by the Arnona Fund plan is that nationalizing municipal tax revenues will strip localities of their autonomy and [increase](#) their dependence on the central government.
- **Advancement of bill to ban displaying the Palestinian flag and impose jail time for offenders:** The Knesset is [advancing](#) a bill to ban flying the Palestinian flag in public and make doing so an offense punishable by up to a year in prison. Gatherings of three or more people at which the Palestinian flag is waved would be forbidden and could be dispersed. The bill, sponsored by Jewish Power MK Almog Cohen, applies to Palestinian flags and flags of any “state, entity, or body that are not friendly to Israel or that don’t allow displaying the Israeli flag in their jurisdiction”). This is a particular attack on the freedom of

expression of Palestinian citizens of Israel and a restriction on their freedom of assembly. In addition, the Knesset passed in its preliminary reading a [separate bill](#) sponsored by far-right Religious Zionism MK Zvi Sukkot to impose fines of 10,000 shekels (over \$2,7000) for waving the flags of terrorist groups. The bill eliminates the oversight of the Attorney General and thus “will allow arbitrary abuse of citizens by the police” and curb freedom of expression, according to Mordechai Kremnitzer of the Israel Democracy Institute. Unlike MK Cohen’s bill, this one does not apply to the Palestinian flag, though that would change if the Defense Ministry were to designate the Palestinian Authority as a terrorist organization.

- **Advancement of bill to transfer powers from the Israel Bar Association:** After Israeli lawyers elected Amit Becher (who opposes the Netanyahu government’s attempted judicial overhaul) to be the head of the Israel Bar Association (IBA), the Knesset [passed](#) in its first reading a bill that would strip key powers from the IBA – including its two seats on the nine-member judicial selection committee. According to the bill, sponsored by Likud MK Hanoach Milwidsky, a new Lawyers Council would be formed that would take over IBA’s authority to grant licenses, administer the bar exam, and sanction lawyers for misconduct. The Council would be chaired by a district court judge, appointed by the Justice Minister. The coalition decided to advance the law after Amit Becher, the candidate supported by Israel’s parliamentary opposition, [won](#) the election for the chairmanship of the IBA by a large majority.
- **Submission of bill to grant immunity to Israeli security service personnel:** MK Zvika Fogel submitted a bill in accordance with the Likud-Jewish Power coalition agreement that would immunize Israeli personnel in the security services from prosecution for actions committed during operations. The bill was due to be [discussed](#) by the Ministerial Committee for Legislation, but the coalition decided to postpone that following the issuance of a legal opinion by Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara that [warned](#) the bill would expose Israeli security forces “to investigation and criminal prosecution abroad.” Dozens of Israel Air Force pilots [informed](#) IAF Chief Tomer Bar that they will no longer participate in training or service in part due to the fear that the conduct of the Netanyahu government could expose them to prosecution by the International Criminal Court and other global tribunals.
- **Submission of bill to tax donations to civil society organizations by foreign governments:** On February 13, Likud MK Ariel Kallner [submitted a bill](#) that fulfills the coalition [agreement](#) between Likud and the Jewish Power Party to pass a law to tax donations by foreign governmental entities to nonprofit civil society organizations. The bill would levy a tax of *almost two-thirds (65 percent)* on funds received by non-profit civil society organizations from “a foreign state entity.” Such a tax is expected to have the greatest impact on human rights and pro-peace groups that depend on these donations, many of which come from European countries and intergovernmental organizations. The bill could impact the implementation of the Middle East Partnership for Peace Act ([MEPPA](#)), under which the US government will disburse \$250 million in funding for peacebuilding and Palestinian economic development partnerships over five years, and likely also Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) and public diplomacy funding by the State Department. This raises the prospect the US taxpayer money appropriated by Congress could be seized by the Israeli government. The legislation described in the coalition agreement would not impact right-wing organizations favored by the Netanyahu government (such as the [Kohelet Policy Forum](#)), since their overseas donations come from private individuals

and organizations. Renowned Israeli human rights lawyer Michael Sfard has [warned](#) that such legislation “will be a fatal blow to the human rights community in Israel.” The bill was one of four anti-democratic measures to be [considered](#) by the Ministerial Committee for Legislation on May 28 for official government endorsement and advancement to votes in the Knesset. Amid strong [international pressure](#), including [from the US](#), the Committee decided to defer advancement of the bill. (For more, see Section II above, as well as the Tel Aviv University Institute for Law and Philanthropy [explainer](#) on the bill.)

- **Submission of bill to translate the Nation-State Law into policy:** Minister of the Negev, Galilee, and National Resilience Yitzhak Wasserlauf of the Jewish Power Party [announced](#) that he would promote a bill to make Zionism “a guiding and decisive value” in shaping law, policy, and all actions by every part of the government. It is the first attempt by a member of the Netanyahu government to translate Israel’s highly problematic 2018 [Nation-State Law](#) into policy. Wasserlauf [stated](#) that the law “will enable us to give preference to IDF soldiers and army veterans, entrench the Jewish people’s connection with its land and strengthen the Negev, the Galilee and Judea and Samaria [the West Bank].” Among concerns raised by the bill, it would enable preferential treatment for Jewish Israelis in planning and housing construction inside Israel, while providing further impetus for expansion of Israel’s illegal settlement enterprise in the occupied West Bank at the expense of its Palestinian residents. The proposal [fulfills](#) a clause in the Likud-Jewish Power coalition agreement which pledges that “a government decision will be made according to which Zionism, as defined fundamentally, will be considered a primary value, guiding and having decisive weight in shaping public administration policy, domestic and foreign policy, legislation and the actions of the state and all its units and institutions.” Dr. Amir Fuchs of the Israel Democracy Institute [warned](#) that the bill would contradict both the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty and Israel’s Declaration of Independence if it granted “unique benefits to Jews in budgets or land allocations.” Attorney General Baharav-Miara [opposed](#) the bill, as did ultra-Orthodox parties in the government because of the preferential treatment it would give to soldiers in the IDF (in which most ultra-Orthodox Jews do not serve). Due largely to the opposition of the latter, a vote by the Ministerial Committee for Legislation on advancing the measure was [deferred](#), and the next step for the bill will be deliberation by heads of the parties that compose the governing coalition.
- **Submission of bill to expel university students who display the Palestinian flag:** In a dramatic move to curtail academic freedom under the guise of fighting terror, this bill [introduced](#) by Jewish Power MK Limor Son Har-Melech would amend the students’ rights law to [prohibit](#) students from waving the Palestinian flag, providing for a 30-day suspension for violators and expulsion from university by repeat offenders. The bill indicates these actions are necessary in order to deal with “terror-supporting” students and for “breaking up terror-supporting cells.” Israel’s Attorney General opposed the bill and university chiefs [condemned](#) it as “fascistic,” stating that the bill’s goal is “to turn academic institutions into branches of the Israeli Police and the Shin Bet” obliged to “monitor hundreds of thousands of students while imposing penalties on actions that are currently under the protection of freedom of expression.” They also warned that the bill “will justify all arguments by BDS organizations, and will lead to a wave of academic boycotts of Israeli institutions worldwide.” Tel Aviv University President Ariel Porat [wrote](#), “The Palestinian Authority is not an enemy state and is not a terror organization. Waving the Palestinian flag is an act that is protected under freedom of expression. If we are to act according to this law, we

would probably have to ban most of our students, who would rightly object to this form of oppression and will not hesitate to wave the Palestinian flag.” Amid the public outcry, the government’s Ministerial Committee on Legislation [postponed](#) its planned discussion of the bill.

- **Submission of bill to permit application of Israeli law to Jewish historical sites in the West Bank and Gaza:** [Introduced](#) by Likud MK Danny Danon, this [bill](#) would amend the law on national parks, nature reserves, national sites and memorials to authorize the Interior Minister to designate national sites in the West Bank and Gaza that would be governed by Israeli law. The bill would also permit Israel to prosecute those who deface these sites. The bill’s explanatory notes state, “56 years after the liberation of Judea and Samaria, the history of the Jewish people must be recognized in every piece of land in Judea and Samaria. It is therefore proposed that the Minister of the Interior will also be allowed to declare sites in Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip as national sites.” This is one of four controversial bills slated for discussion by the government’s Ministerial Committee on Legislation on May 28 on which action was deferred.
- **Submission of bill to allow National Security Minister Ben-Gvir to order administrative detention of Israeli citizens:** MK Zvika Fogel of the Jewish Power Party [submitted a bill](#) to give the party’s chairman, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, the power to order the administrative detention of Israeli citizens. The bill was specifically introduced in the context of a major spike in murders in Israel’s Arab communities. Administrative detentions – in which suspects are held without trial or being shown evidence against them for up to six months, renewable indefinitely – would be approved by Ben-Gvir based on request of the Police Chief and approval of the attorney general, the state prosecutor, or one of their deputies. The bill would give Ben-Gvir substantial additional [powers](#), such as requiring people to surrender their passports to the police, banning them from living in or leaving particular areas, requiring them to report to a police station at set times, and imposing limitations on their employment and internet communication. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) [condemned](#) the bill and cautioned that “under the guise of fighting crime in the Arab society, Ben-Gvir is establishing separate policing and enforcement mechanisms for the Arabs.” The State Attorney’s office warned that the proposal “presents a deep and fundamental threat to the democratic character of the country.” Ben-Gvir and Prime Minister Netanyahu are pushing to involve the Shin Bet in the fight against crime in Arab communities, but the Shin Bet opposes this. Currently, Israel’s Defense Minister possesses the authority to order administrative detention against terror suspects, and the practice is utilized in the occupied Palestinian territory.
- **Submission of bill to outlaw the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee:** The Knesset’s National Security Committee [debated](#) a bill, cosponsored by Limor Son Har-Melech (Jewish Power) and Amit Halevi (Likud), to outlaw the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee (HAMC). Composed of Arab MKs, representatives of political movements, members of local Arab authorities, and civil society organizations, the HAMC is considered to be the umbrella organization for Palestinian civil society within Israel. The bill claims that the HAMC “covers for terror organizations through its work.” Former MK Mohammed Barakeh, the HAMC’s Chair, responded that the such bills show a clear trend “to narrow Arab society’s space for discourse and political activity by delegitimizing it among the public in general.” He said coalition members are trying to create a situation in which discussion of any political issues, and the occupation and its repercussions, will be outlawed by attacking the bodies

representing the Arab community.” During the debate, Chair of the National Security Committee Zvika Fogel charged that the HAMC’s “deeds harm Israel and its very existence as a Jewish and democratic country.” (See Fogel’s profile in Section I.)

- **Submission of new Basic Law to exempt Haredim from conscription:** MKs from the United Torah Judaism Party proposed “[Basic Law - Torah Study](#)” to exempt Haredim from conscription by identifying Torah study as a “critical service” of “fundamental value in the heritage of the Jewish people.” Likud [denied](#) that it would advance the bill to a vote, though the coalition agreements between Likud and the ultra-Orthodox parties pledged to pass the bill together with the state budget (which passed in May). In 2017, the Supreme Court [invalidated](#) the current conscription law, which exempts full-time religious scholars. The Knesset has not passed a new enlistment law, and the government’s fifteenth extension of the deadline to do so expired at the end of July.
- **Attempted ouster, and subsequent resignation, of Tel Aviv police chief:** Angered that Tel Aviv police were not enacting his policies against pro-democracy protesters who were blocking the Ayalon Highway, Ben-Gvir [ordered](#) Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai to oust Tel Aviv district police commander Ami Eshed from his position on March 9. Shabtai would later [claim](#) that Ben-Gvir “forced the move on me against my will” and Attorney General Baharav-Miara froze the decision, leaving Eshed in place due to [concerns](#) that Ben-Gvir was acting according to political motives. She would later [state](#) that Ben-Gvir may have “crossed the line” both in his command to remove Eshed and by giving operational instructions to police when he has authority only over policy matters. On April 17, the Attorney General [ruled](#) that a new decision must be made after Eshed “gets an opportunity to voice his position, and after reviewing the relevant considerations in accordance with police procedures and relevant procedures.” Baharav-Miara noted that Ben-Gvir removed Eshed just after publicly stating his disapproval of Eshed’s handling of the anti-government protests, which “raises concern of a causal link” between that disapproval and Eshed’s attempted ouster by Ben-Gvir. The Attorney General wrote: “This conduct [by Ben-Gvir] is likely to have a chilling effect and may harm police operations and independence, especially in the sensitive contexts of preserving freedom of speech and protection of human rights.” In July, Eshed resigned from his position. Referring to Ben-Gvir’s demands, Eshed said: “I sinned by not being able to meet the expectations of the ministerial level, which included violating the rules, protocols, organizational structure and culture in decision-making and in operational judgment... We could have cleared [Tel Aviv’s Ayalon Highway] in minutes at the cost of breaking heads and crushing bones... It is possible and necessary to allow protest while also setting clear boundaries for it, in accordance with the law. Regrettably, for the first time in three decades of service I encountered the illusory reality in which achieving peace and order is not a required achievement, but exactly the opposite.” Protests [occurred](#) in Tel Aviv and across Israel after Eshed announced his resignation.
- **Cancellation of funding for program to combat violence in Palestinian Arab communities by Ben-Gvir:** National Security Minister Ben-Gvir [terminated](#) funding for “Stop the Bleeding,” a violence reduction program in the Palestinian Arab communities in Israel. The program was part of a government campaign to address increasing crime in Arab communities, and focused on seven municipalities – including the “mixed city” of Lod, in which fierce Jewish-Arab clashes occurred in May 2021. Ben-Gvir’s rationale for defunding the program is his claim that the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee,

which helps to run the violence reduction program, is a “leftist organization.” Ben-Gvir’s attack on the “Joint” – a large, mainstream, apolitical Jewish American organization that has helped Jewish communities in need and engaged in global humanitarian aid efforts for over a century – prompted a [rebuttal](#) from the Jewish Federations of North America.

- **Incitement-laden speech delivered by Finance Minister Smotrich in Paris:** Bezalel Smotrich [stated](#) in a speech that “there’s no such thing as Palestinians,” as he stood at a podium covered with a [map](#) that depicted both Jordan and the occupied Palestinian territory as part of Israel. In response the Jordanian government summoned the Israeli ambassador in Amman and the Jordanian Foreign Ministry accused the Finance Minister of “an act of reckless incitement [as well as] violation of international norms and the peace agreement” between Israel and Jordan. State Department spokesman Vedant Patel [said](#), “The latest comments by Mr. Smotrich, which were delivered at a podium adorned with an inaccurate and provocative map, are offensive. They are deeply concerning, and candidly, they’re dangerous.” In addition to the US and Jordan, Abraham Accords signatories [UAE](#) and [Morocco](#) condemned Smotrich’s remarks, as did [Saudi Arabia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Qatar](#).
- **Approval by the Cabinet of Ben-Gvir’s push for establishment of new “national guard”:** In order to keep Ben-Gvir in the coalition when Netanyahu prepared to announce pausing the judicial reform legislation – since the National Security Minister had threatened to quit – Netanyahu signed an agreement with Ben-Gvir in which he [pledged](#) to bring the creation of a new “national guard” up for a Cabinet vote. The Cabinet subsequently [voted](#) to form the new approximately 2,000-member force and passed a 1.5 percent budget cut across ministries in order to raise NIS 1 billion (\$278 million) to fund it. Former senior police commanders have [denounced](#) the plan, with one warning that Ben-Gvir could use his own armed force to launch a coup. Current Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai [warned](#), “Establishing a national guard that will be subordinate to [Ben Gvir’s] office is an unnecessary move that will have a very heavy price, to the point of harming the personal security of citizens” and could “lead to the disintegration of the Israel Police from within.” Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara indicated there is a “legal hindrance” to the proposal as currently formulated. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) [wrote](#) to the Attorney General about its concern: “A police force subject to a political official is a clear and present danger to democracy and human rights,” noting that the guard was particularly likely to be deployed against the Arab community. Protesters have [rallied](#) against “Ben-Gvir’s militia,” with MK Ayman Odeh, the leader of the predominantly Arab Hadash-Ta’al Party addressing Ben-Gvir: “We won’t allow you to form fascist militias in the service of Kahanism.” Even within the coalition, there is some [opposition](#) to Ben-Gvir taking control of the new force. According to the resolution passed by the Cabinet, the national guard will combat “nationalist crime,” terrorism and “restoring governance where needed.” A [committee](#) drawn from different security bodies and government agencies will have 60 days to submit recommendations to Ben-Gvir regarding implementation, areas of operation for the new force, and other key issues. Retired IDF Col. Avinoam Emuna is [reportedly](#) one of the top candidates to lead the guard. In 2022, he was filmed telling soldiers ahead of an operation in the Gaza Strip to “kill them as they run away,” an apparent reference to Palestinian militants. In an interview with Channel 13, Ben-Gvir [mentioned](#) La Familia, “[infamously racist ‘ultras’](#) who support the [soccer] team Beitar Jerusalem,” as the kind of people he’d like to see enlist in the new national guard.
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- Police raids on al-Aqsa mosque during Ramadan, followed by escalating violence:** On the evenings of April 4 and 5, Israeli police broke into al-Aqsa Mosque atop Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif (TM/HAS), [beating protesters](#) they claimed had barricaded themselves inside the mosque with rocks and fireworks. Palestinians had gathered following [calls](#) by a radical religious Jewish movement (“Return to the Mount”) to hold a Passover goat sacrifice on TM/HAS in violation of the “status quo” there. (As in previous years, Israeli authorities apprehended activists who were attempting to ascend to the Temple Mount with goats.) Following widespread dissemination of the video of the beatings inside al-Aqsa, [missiles were fired on Israel](#) from not only the Gaza Strip, but also from southern Lebanon. Israel launched retaliatory airstrikes on both territories. The raids sparked a [crisis in relations](#) between Israel and Jordan, whose monarch is the custodian of Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. Jordan blamed Israel for the escalation and condemned the raids on al-Aqsa, issuing at least 11 statements and tweets condemning and criticizing Israel’s policy regarding the holy site. Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman [Safadi told CNN](#) that Israel “is pushing all of us into the abyss of violence, making it very difficult for us to continue to engage in peace talks undermining the peace treaty with Jordan and Israel, with Israel and other Arab countries, and making it impossible to engage in all that we’ve been talking about in terms of regional cooperation...” Jordan initiated emergency meetings of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and also pushed for a UN Security Council meeting on the situation in Jerusalem. According to Israeli and US officials, the Biden administration [blocked](#) the UNSC from issuing a statement condemning Israel. Other countries condemning Israel for the raids included [Saudi Arabia](#) and Abraham Accords signatory [UAE](#). The cycle of violence continued on April 7 when a Palestinian [terror attack](#) targeted a car driving through the West Bank’s Jordan Valley, killing three British-Israeli women from the settlement of Efrat. On the same day, an [Italian tourist was killed](#) and several British citizens were wounded in what may have been an intentional car ramming in Tel Aviv.
- March to evacuated Evyatar outpost headlined by Cabinet ministers:** Led by [seven of Netanyahu’s Cabinet ministers and 20 additional MKs](#), roughly 20,000 Israeli settlers and supporters [marched](#) a mile through the West Bank to the evacuated, illegal Evyatar outpost built on a hilltop above the Palestinian village of Beita, located south of Nablus. The march was organized by the Nachala Settlement Movement, with the goals of pushing the government to fulfill its pledge to legalize the outpost and expressing that the answer to terror attacks against Israelis is strengthening the settlement enterprise. National Security Minister Ben-Gvir [told the crowd](#): “We do not blink. We are returning home to the Land of Israel, returning home to the Temple Mount and Jerusalem... We legalized nine outposts, and with God’s help, we will legalize more and build more. The response to terrorism is to build... Jewish blood will not be spilled in vain.” In his speech, Finance Minister and Minister in the Defense Ministry Bezalel Smotrich [said](#), “This place will be bustling with life – Jews, upright, proud, lovers of the land and of the Torah, and just like Evyatar will be formalized, so to will [other] existing settlement [outposts] and new settlements, since this is our land.” He vowed to double the population of Israeli settlers in the West Bank by adding another half a million. The settlers’ march to Evyatar received [heavy protection](#) from Israeli security forces – with an IDF battalion that had been searching for the terrorists that killed the Dee family reassigned to secure the marchers, along with 13 border police companies. Israeli troops were [filmed](#) tear-gassing Palestinian journalists in press gear who were covering the event. [Casualties were reported](#), with more than 100 Palestinians (some

of them journalists) suffering from gas inhalation and 22 Palestinian counter-protesters wounded when IDF soldiers shot them with rubber-tipped bullets.

- **Harsh treatment of Christian worshipers celebrating Orthodox Easter ritual:** Church officials [criticized](#) Israeli police for restricting attendance at the Holy Fire celebration at Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre during Orthodox Easter. Roughly 3,000 worshipers were allowed in and outside the church, compared to about 10,000 in previous years. Israeli authorities claimed the restrictions were due to safety considerations. Police clashed with, and in some cases "violently beat worshipers trying to make their way through their barricades," according to a Haaretz [report](#), which also noted footage that "showed Israeli police dragging and beating several worshippers, thrusting a Coptic Priest against the stone wall and tackling one woman to the ground."
- **Ban on bereaved Palestinians entering Israel for joint Memorial Day ceremony:** Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [rejected](#) a request to allow bereaved Palestinian families to attend the annual joint Israeli-Palestinian ceremony commemorating Israel's Memorial Day. The organizers of the event, Combatants for Peace and Parents Circle-Families Forum, alleged that the move violated previous High Court rulings in 2018 and 2019 that ordered the government to permit Palestinians invited to the joint Memorial Day ceremony to attend it. The organizations have [filed a petition](#) with the High Court, challenging Gallant's decision and seeking to allow the Palestinians to enter Israel and attend the ceremony, subject to a security inspection.
- **Operation Shield and Arrow:** Israeli [launched](#) this operation against Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) targets in Gaza on May 9. By the end of the five-day operation, Israel had [killed](#) six PIJ commanders. Twenty-seven more Palestinians in Gaza (including six children and other civilians) were killed, with Israel claiming at least four deaths were caused by failed PIJ rocket launches. One Israeli civilian was killed in Rehovot (central Israel) by PIJ rocket fire; a Palestinian resident of Gaza died after sustaining shrapnel injuries while working in a field in southern Israel. Operation Shield and Arrow began a week after PIJ fired over 100 rockets into Israel to protest the death by hunger strike of [Khader Adnan](#), a former PIJ spokesman who was held by Israel in administrative detention (without charge). During the ensuing week after Adnan's death and the PIJ barrage, Prime Minister Netanyahu received harsh criticism from far-right elements of his coalition who felt Israel did not respond forcefully enough. Ben-Gvir's Jewish Power Party increased pressure on Netanyahu by [boycotting](#) Knesset votes. Following the ceasefire agreement, Netanyahu claimed Israel had "flipped the script" and taught "Israel's enemies, in Gaza and beyond" that Israel "can and are willing to reach them at any time." One Israeli military analyst characterized the campaign as "[Operation Broken Record](#)" noting that a next round of fighting is "inevitable" and Israel is already "counting down to the next conflict with the Gaza Strip."
- **Jerusalem Day Flag March and coalition MKs' visit to Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif:** Tens of thousands of right-wing Israeli Jews, including many young people, participated in the [Jerusalem Day Flag March](#). Despite concerns that their ultranationalist provocations directed at the city's Palestinian residents could lead to serious violence, particularly given the recent and shaky ceasefire between Israel and militants in Gaza, the Netanyahu government allowed the march to proceed and even proceed through the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. Police instructed Palestinian shopkeepers to [close stores](#) along the parade route. Jewish participants hurled verbal provocations – with [chants](#)

including “Death to Arabs,” “A Jew is a soul, an Arab is the son of a whore,” and “May your village burn down” – and some physically assaulted Palestinians and journalists. The Cabinet member with authority over the thousands of Israeli police overseeing the march, National Security Minister Ben-Gvir, participated in the March and gave a keynote speech from the balcony overlooking the plaza at the Western Wall. Coalition lawmakers (including from Netanyahu’s Likud Party) were among hundreds of Jews to visit the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif (TM/HAS). This provoked a rebuke from senior Likud lawmaker David Bitan, who said, “Netanyahu could have called them and told them not to go. It is not proper for Likud MKs to visit the Temple Mount... People have become extremists.” Three days later, National Security Minister Ben-Gvir [toured](#) TM/HAS for the second time since the Netanyahu government took power, proclaiming, “We are in charge here... We are in charge in Jerusalem and in all of the Land of Israel.” The State Department [stated](#) its concern with Ben-Gvir’s “provocative visit” and “the accompanying inflammatory rhetoric, while reaffirming “the longstanding US position in support of the historic status quo at Jerusalem’s holy sites...” Additional countries denouncing the visit included Jordan, Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar.

- **Response to settler rampages against West Bank Palestinian villages:** Following a Palestinian terror shooting in the settlement of Eli that killed four Israelis on June 20, hundreds of ultranationalist Israeli settlers attacked several Palestinian villages in the West Bank – including Turmus Ayya, where the majority of residents are US citizens. A [US permanent resident](#) who was the husband of an American citizen was [killed](#) by Israeli police. The attacks were reminiscent of the [pogrom](#) mounted by settlers in the village of Huwara in February. While the IDF, Shin Bet, and Israel Police [condemned](#) the attacks as “nationalist terrorism” and committed to arresting perpetrators and preventing further attacks, few settlers were [arrested](#). Following this statement, National Missions Minister Orit Strock compared the security establishment to the Wagner Group and [said](#), “I’m against these events, but it’s a disgrace to call this nationalist terror.” MK Simcha Rothman, a leader of the government’s push for judicial overhaul, [compared](#) the settlers to Israel’s pro-democracy protesters. Prime Minister Netanyahu [called](#) for an investigation following claims that Israeli security forces had used excessive force against Israeli settlers. Meanwhile, settlers established several new unauthorized [outposts](#) following the Eli attack. Political officials were aware of the illegal construction, but no enforcement measures were taken against them. Dozens of settlers [entered](#) the evacuated outpost of Evyatar, which had been closed by military order for the past two years; government officials reportedly asked security officials to allow them in. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir visited Evyatar and called on settlers to establish a “full settlement” there and “in all the hills around us.” Ben-Gvir stated, “We should settle the Land of Israel, and at the same time, launch a military operation, take down buildings and eliminate terrorists. Not just one or two, but dozens and hundreds and if needed, thousands.”
- **Major IDF operation in Jenin refugee camp:** On July 3, The IDF launched its [largest military operation](#) in the West Bank since the Second Intifada in the densely populated Jenin refugee camp, describing the mission as an “extensive counter-terrorism effort.” Roughly 1,000 to 2,000 soldiers – [supported](#) by at least 10 drone strikes on buildings, armored bulldozers, and snipers – participated in the two-day joint aerial and ground offensive. Thousands of Palestinians [fled](#) their homes as a result of the attack, during which at least 12 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were [killed](#). Massive destruction to

infrastructure resulted, with 40% of the camp's residents [lacking water](#) a week after the assault and an estimated \$5.2 million needed to address immediate humanitarian needs. Israeli troops uncovered an explosives manufacturing facility during the course of the operation and [confiscated](#) the weapons. Despite the Israeli goal of [restoring deterrence](#), reprisal attacks included a [car ramming](#) in Tel Aviv and [rockets fired](#) by Palestinian militants in Gaza. A prominent former State Department negotiator [warned](#) that after the Jenin incursion, "Israelis and Palestinians remain trapped in a volatile, bloody cul-de-sac with little prospect of a way out" and that "ongoing efforts to annex the West Bank in everything but name" are "undercutting the PA [Palestinian Authority] and boosting Hamas's stock." In a statement in which he noted that "I strongly condemn all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror," UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres [said](#), "obviously in this situation, there was an excessive force used by Israeli forces." He called on Israel "to abide by its obligations under international law," including by utilizing only proportional force.

- **Ban on programming in schools by bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families of Parents Circle-Families Forum:** The Education Ministry announced it had removed [Parents Circle – Families Forum](#) (PCFF) from the list of approved external programs in Israeli schools, [stating](#) that the organization's goals "are in contradiction to the values of the Education Ministry." The Ministry official continued, "Any comparison between the bereavement of families of soldiers or victims of terror and the bereavement of victims of defensive IDF operations is unacceptable. It seriously hurts the memory of the fallen and the feelings of their families." Of the roughly 8,000 organizations whose educational programs are currently approved by the Ministry of Education, PCFF is "the [only one](#) that deals directly with content related to casualties of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, soldiers and civilians alike."
- **Attack on funding for Israeli Arab cities and educational programs in East Jerusalem:** A dispute within the Netanyahu government emerged following the [refusal of](#) Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich (Religious Zionism) to distribute funds for both Israeli Arab municipalities and higher education preparatory programs for Palestinians in East Jerusalem. Smotrich claimed, without any proof, that the funds "often fall into the hands of crime and terror organizations which have taken over the tenders and budgets in many of the Arab municipalities." Interior Minister Moshe Arbel (Shas) demanded that Smotrich release the funds previously appropriated for Israeli Arab municipalities and Prime Minister Netanyahu [pledged](#) to transfer the funds budgeted for the Palestinian citizens of Israel after unspecified monitoring mechanisms are put into place. Opposition leader Yair Lapid (Yesh Atid) excoriated Smotrich for "mistreat[ing] Arab citizens simply because they are Arabs." East Jerusalem preparatory schools [face](#) the risk of closure due to Smotrich's decision to end funding to promote higher education there. Israel's defense establishment [maintains](#) that funding such programs in East Jerusalem decreases terrorism and facilitates Arab integration. Closing the preparatory programs would likely reduce future participation by East Jerusalem schools in the Israeli curriculum, according to officials in the Education Ministry.

IV. WHAT EXPERTS AND KEY PARTIES ARE SAYING

Israeli Political Leaders:

- [President Isaac Herzog](#): “For a long time we have not been in political argument, rather on the brink of constitutional and societal collapse... I feel, we all feel, that we are a moment before collision, a violent collision even, that the powder keg is about to explode, and that we are on the brink of bloodshed... The Israeli judicial system is the pride of our country. The court and the judges of Israel protect society and the country — that is the truth — from crime, from outside attacks on IDF soldiers, from the loss of the foundations of justice, law, and morality, and yes, also from the destruction of human and civil rights. We are a country of laws, for which we should thank our professional, responsible, independent, and autonomous judiciary. Millions of citizens here, along with the Jewish diaspora and important supporters of Israel around the entire world, see in this reform a real threat to Israeli democracy.”
- [President Isaac Herzog](#): “The last few weeks are tearing us apart. They harm Israel’s economy, security, political ties, and especially Israeli cohesion... Those who think that a civil war is something that we could not reach, have no idea. Precisely now — in the seventy-fifth year of the State of Israel — the abyss is within touching distance. I tell you today what I told them: a civil war is a red line!” ([full March 15, 2023 speech](#))
- [Opposition Leader and Former PM Yair Lapid](#): The Netanyahu government’s judiciary overhaul legislation “threatens to destroy the country at breakneck speed. What the government wants to bring to the Knesset is not a first reading [of the bill] but rather a tearing apart of the people of Israel, of Israeli democracy, of coexistence. If this legislation passes, the democratic chapter in the life of the state will end.”
- [Opposition Leader and Former PM Yair Lapid](#): “We are losing the US. There are multiple signs, one after the other. We are losing our national unity, we are hurting our economy, and we are losing the US... We’ve been asking the US to intervene in our affairs time after time for 74 years. The MOU for \$38 billion, Iron Dome cooperation, are all US interventions in our affairs and are all positive results of this... The Americans say to us clearly ‘our close relationship is based on shared democratic values and vision, and if Israel does not adhere to those the friendship may be over.’ The Americans are terrified of what’s happening here. This is not a secret, they are not hiding it. They speak to me all the time.”
- [National Union Party Leader and Former Defense Minister Benny Gantz](#): “If you [PM Netanyahu] continue on the path you are following, you will be responsible for civil war in Israeli society.” The Netanyahu government’s judicial overhaul plan “will have a fatal impact on national security — both in the sense of the resilience of citizens from all parts of society, and in the ability of the High Court of Justice and the legal system to be our legal iron dome vis-à-vis the world.”
- [Labor Party Leader Merav Michaeli](#): “The conduct of the [Netanyahu] coalition proves without a doubt that they have no desire for dialogue... Their stated goal is to trample democracy, while they set traps and snares for us in the form of ‘dialogue.’ The time has come to stop falling into their traps and join the determined struggle of hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens who are taking to the streets week after week to stop the coup with their bodies. It’s the only way to win.”

- [Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert](#): “I was never this worried as I am now for the future of the State of Israel. This government is completely based on extremism, nationalism, intolerance, and arrogance. Now I come to you...and particularly to J Street... The support that we need is the support for the state against the government of Israel. You have to speak out everywhere you can, to every Member of Congress...every member in the administration and tell them that what the Israeli government is doing is going to break the basis for the bond between the State of Israel and America. That it is going to break the basic values which hold us in common and held us in common for generations. That America will not be able to support a State of Israel which is utterly and expressly running a policy which is violating the basic human rights of other people as we do in the Territories in every moment, every day... We have to speak up and we have to speak up with force... We will win. We will be stronger. We will defeat them. But we have to fight.”
- [Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak](#): “We have a social contract around liberal democracy, as defined in the Declaration of Independence. We don’t have a social contract with a dictator. History will remember those who gave orders and those who followed them. They will go down in infamy.”
- [Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak](#): “Negotiations cannot [take] place under a gun to the temple of the nation, namely with those [judicial overhaul] legislation... already on the table, already passed the preliminary and first readings and could be completed within a few hours in the Knesset. You cannot run any negotiation under such a gun to your temple.”
- [Former Foreign Minister and Vice Prime Minister Tzipi Livni](#): “It’s not just one bill and there’s a need to stop everything because... we discovered that these are not judicial reforms. It’s about what is the nature of Israel, if Israel will remain a Jewish, democratic state, or non-democratic... dictatorship, or a more religious country. It’s really about the soul and it’s about the nature and the identity of our country. And this is why it is so encouraging to see a new camp that was born, believing in the Declaration of Independence, fighting for it, believing in democracy.”
- [Former Defense Minister and IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon](#): “When you talk about Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, they have a rabbi. His name is Rabbi Dov Lior. He is the rabbi of the Jewish Underground that intended to blow up the Dome of Rock and, before that, the buses in Jerusalem. Why? In order to hasten the ‘last war’... Read the article [Smotrich] published in ‘The Shiloh’ in 2017. First of all, this concept rests on Jewish supremacy – Mein Kampf in reverse... Therefore he says: ‘My wife won’t go in one room with an Arab.’ It is anchored in ideology. And then actually what he aspires to is as soon as possible to get to a big war, a war of Gog and Magog... How can you ignite it? A massacre like the Cave of the Patriarchs [in Hebron in 1994]... This is what goes into the decision-making process in the Israeli government.”
- [MK Rabbi Gilad Kariv \(Labor\)](#): “Israel belongs to its citizens, but also to all Jews around the world. This is a core element of what Israel is all about. Taking part in the current protest is maybe one of the most influential things that American Jews can do today in order to secure the future of Israel as a well-established, advanced democracy, which is also the nation-state of all Jews... For 75 years we hear that this *brit*, this alliance, covenant between the US and Israel is based on shared values, and this ‘reform’ is going directly against those shared values. So if we want to strengthen and to protect the status of Israel

in the eyes of Americans, we definitely need to protect Israel's democracy.”

- [Defense Minister Yoav Gallant](#): “The growing rift in our society is penetrating the IDF and security agencies. This poses a clear, immediate, and tangible threat to the security of the state. I will not lend my hand to this... “We must not harm our unity. There must be no doubt in the hearts of the mothers, who will be sending their sons and daughters to serve in the IDF. The victory of a single side, whether it be in the halls of the Knesset or on the streets of our cities, will lead to a loss for the State of Israel... For the sake of Israel's security, for the sake of our sons and daughters, the legislative process should be stopped now, to enable the nation of Israel to celebrate Passover and Independence Day together, and to mourn together on Memorial Day and Holocaust Remembrance Day.”
- [Justice Minister Yariv Levin](#) (addressing criticism of the original version of the bill to change the composition of the committee to select judges): “They contend that in a system where an unlimited number of judges can be appointed by a coalition majority, we will find ourselves in a situation where that coalition – which controls both the cabinet and the Knesset – will be able to take over the Supreme Court while in power and, in fact, create a situation where all three branches are turned into one. That argument is, in fact, that it could eventually lead to a constitutional crisis, a claim that cannot be ignored – that such a thing could never exist in a democratic country. I think that [claim] should have been acknowledged, so what we did was to simply come and say, ‘This is a valid concern, and we are responding to it.’”

Israeli Security Experts:

- [Commanders for Israel's Security “Generals Letter”](#): “The seemingly technical, administrative decision to appoint a second minister in the defense ministry...conceals a major change of strategic proportions, one with grave legal, military and international implications. Not only will it impair Israel's operational military capability, but it will detract from our ability to manage civilian life for Israelis and Palestinians alike, including our capacity to ensure security... Enforcement and supervision agencies are now likely to pursue explicitly political agendas rather than working in concert with military authorities. This will also be the case in matters such as construction in Israeli settlements, the takeover of Palestinian private, public or abandoned lands, building permits for Palestinians, trade between the Palestinian Authority, Israel and the world, communications, and agriculture. Basically, **it will mean de facto annexation.**” [emphasis original]
- [Commanders for Israel's Security](#): “We, the undersigned, former senior officers in the defense establishment and foreign services, members of Commanders for Israel's Security and others, accuse the government of Israel and its leader of instigating and spreading ruinous dissension, hatred, fear, and a culture of falsehood, and of inflicting a mortal blow to social cohesion... We accuse the government and Prime Minister of disrupting the chain of command in the IDF and Israel police, undermining the essential integrity of responsibility and authority, which might be paid for in blood. We accuse the government and Prime Minister of fueling and fanning the flames of conflict in the West Bank and East Jerusalem by manifestly illegal declarations of government ministers... We accuse the government and Prime Minister of promoting legislation that could subject members of the security forces, past and present, to legal proceedings at the International Criminal Court in the Hague and elsewhere... We accuse the government and Prime Minister of fomenting a

real crisis with the US administration – the source of crucial support for Israel’s security, of isolating Israel internationally, and of alienating world Jewry, which is a vital component of our national resilience.”

- [Institute for National Security Studies “Strategic Alert”](#): “In view of this looming crisis, the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), for the first time ever, sees it as its duty to issue a strategic alert: Pursuing the judicial reform has already generated an unprecedented internal confrontation that weakens Israeli society and intensifies the security, geopolitical and economic threats facing it. We warn that pushing forward with the reform will further diminish social resilience; degrade the spirit that animates the IDF as well as its operational capabilities; undermine Israel’s ability to face its enemies and to preserve the support of its friends, particularly the USA; and weaken its economy as well as its flagship high-tech sector. Hence, the reform legislation must be stopped immediately, so as to focus instead on the severe threats to Israel’s national security, and on the restoration of social cohesion and resilience.”
- [Open Letter to Americans from Retired Senior IDF Generals and Officers](#): “We stand against the self-coup attempt led by the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. This attack against our democratic institutions, misleadingly called ‘legal reform,’ is intended to destroy the checks and balances of the Israeli system of governance. Extremist, mercurial elements in this government could then seize control of Israel’s instruments of power, especially the military, without restraint. This immediately endangers both Israel’s national security and the entire region’s stability. We ask you to take a clear stance in helping us protect Israeli democracy, other shared values with the United States, and the freedom of the citizens of Israel.”
- [Brigadier General \(res.\) Udi Dekel](#): “The subordination of the Civil Administration to the Minister of Settlement [Bezalel Smotrich] and the subordination of the areas it oversees to other government ministries connotes that this is no longer a slow process of annexation, but rather, accelerated annexation. In face of increasing and extensive criticism from the international community, Israel will find it difficult to provide explanations and claim that the future of the West Bank has not yet been decided...”
- [Former Defense Minister and IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon](#): The Netanyahu government’s legislative program reveals “the true intentions of a criminal defendant [Netanyahu]” who is “ready to burn down the country and its values...in order to escape the dock. Who would have believed that less than 80 years after the Holocaust that befell our people, a criminal, messianic, fascist and corrupt government would be established in Israel, whose goal is to rescue an accused criminal.”
- [Former Shin Bet Director Nadav Argaman](#): “If these laws [the judicial overhaul the Netanyahu government is moving through the Knesset] are passed, Israel will find itself on the threshold of dictatorship and if Israel finds itself on the threshold of dictatorship, we could witness the collapse from within of state bodies. People in the [Shin Bet] service, the Mossad, the IDF and the standing army who decided that they will serve can just as easily decide one day that they will no longer serve. And if they see that a dictatorship is emerging here and they decide that they do not want to serve this ruler or another, they could decide to leave the organization... That is extraordinarily frightening, but we could find ourselves there.” [\[English translation of full interview\]](#)

- [Israel Air Force veterans' letter](#) (sent by 1,198 IAF veterans, including former IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz, to Israel's top legal echelon): "We were all prepared to sacrifice our lives for the country during the years of our service as combat pilots... The common denominator among all of us today is the fear that democratic Israel is in danger. You are the last line of defense, and you have the ability to stop the process of destroying democracy. Israel won't be able to continue in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence if it yields its liberal democratic character. We expect you to use all the legal tools at your disposal, without fear, and do everything in your power to stop the tragedy suddenly happening to the country."
- [Commanders for Israel's Security Letter to PM-Elect Netanyahu](#): "Recently, statements by politicians who are slated to serve in your government, have challenged the judgment of commanders and incited against them. In so doing, they have compromised IDF discipline and chain of command. If not stopped, this will end in internal divisions and conflict between officers and troops, insubordination, anarchy and ultimately, the disintegration of the IDF as an effective fighting force."
- [Former Director of the Shin Bet Yuval Diskin](#): "If we don't stop this crazy gallop led by a prime minister accused of crimes who is on trial, this will be a country that is headed for a storm. The end of the Jewish democratic state. A country may remain, but it will no longer be the country that the founding fathers established, it will not be the country for which the Declaration of Independence is its beacon, the country that my friends, you and I fought for over decades."
- [139 Recipients of the Israel Defense Prize](#): "The suggested changes to the state's legal system... [are] no less than a regime revolution that will badly hurt Israeli democracy, cause the economy to deteriorate, lead to a 'brain drain,' and decrease activities of international companies in Israel. In the long run, [they] will damage academic research and military R&D along with the ability of Israel to cope with the great security challenges it faces. We call for an immediate halt to the dangerous process."
- [Commanders for Israel's Security Executive Committee Member Nimrod Novik](#): "There is a sense that Washington is still in a mode relevant to last year — a combination of expressions of concern with anticipation of a need to tend to the issue once or twice a year, when firefighting is called for. This is hardly adequate given the nature of the emerging new Israel. The breadth and pace of change, which threaten Israeli democracy, our security and regional stability, call for a much more forceful application of the brakes. And there is only one player [the US] with the power to apply those brakes effectively."
- [Former Mossad Chief Tamir Pardo](#): Transferring authority over civilian life in the West Bank from the IDF to Finance Minister Smotrich is "the most crooked thing and the greatest generator of anger and anarchy" which would "put Israel in a situation of risk. There is a deep anxiety that we are approaching the abyss. I am not a lone voice, in my opinion it is the majority [who believes this]. Enemies think we've gone crazy, [that] this country will destroy itself."
- [Former Mossad Chief Ephraim Halevy](#): "I am very concerned because I believe that what happened in Huwara [reference to the settler rampage on February 26] is a disgrace and a shame for Israel. It also only shows how the... illness of the Israeli system has seeped into the IDF, as well. We have now a general who was only recently commanding a major

force in the West Bank [apparent reference to Jewish Power MK Zvika Fogel], who is now a member of parliament, and he said that he believes that the solution for what happened would be... simply demolishing a whole village. So I believe here you have an example of the damage done by the policies of the current new government.”

- [Former IDF Deputy Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. \(ret.\) Matan Vilnai, former Shin Bet Director Admiral \(ret.\) Ami Ayalon, former Mossad Director Brig. Gen. \(ret.\) Tamir Pardo, and former Special Ambassador Nimrod Novik:](#) “[O]ur 500 colleagues, all retired generals and equivalents from the IDF, Mossad, Shin Bet and police, as well as senior foreign service officers, who comprise ‘Commanders for Israel’s Security’ (CIS)... all view the threat to our democracy as the culmination of a militant process driven, inter alia, by Jewish extremists dedicated to the annexation of the West Bank. For the first time ever, their messianic leaders serve in our government. This development is a struggle over the soul of Israel. It compels us to sound the alarm both as citizens committed to Israel’s democracy and as retired senior defense officials, committed to its security... We believe there is no security without democracy, and democracy is unsustainable while we occupy another people against its will.”
- [Former Coordinator of Government Activity in the Territories \(COGAT\) Maj. Gen. \(Ret.\) Yaakov \(Mendy\) Or:](#) “With his ascension to Israel’s cabinet, [Bezalel] Smotrich has never been closer to realizing this annexation-apartheid program. It is moving apace, out of public view and without the approval of Israel’s National Security Council and defense agencies... He and Itamar Ben-Gvir were able to secure the cabinet posts they demanded thanks to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s fecklessness and willingness to mortgage Israeli security to his own political survival... At stake is the Zionist vision that has guided us for the past 130 years and which is embodied in Israel’s Declaration of Independence.”

Israeli Diplomats:

- [Consul General in New York Asaf Zamir’s resignation letter:](#) “Today’s dangerous decision to fire the Minister of Defense, convinced me that I can no longer continue representing this Government. I have become increasingly concerned with the policies of the new government, and in particular, the judicial reform it is leading. I believe that this reform undermines the very foundation of our democratic system and threatens the rule of law in our country... It is now time for me to take actions and join the fight for Israel’s future alongside fellow citizens as we work together to build a better, more just and more equal Israel.”
- [Ambassador to France Yael German’s resignation letter:](#) “The statements of the ministers in your government and the intentions of their legislation go against my conscience, my worldview, and the underlying promises of the Declaration of Independence of a Jewish and democratic state.”
- [105 Ambassadors and senior diplomats’ \(retired\) letter to PM-Elect Netanyahu:](#) “We the undersigned, retired Ambassadors and senior Foreign Ministry officials who have proudly dedicated their lives representing Israel abroad in the service of Israel express our profound concern at the serious damage to Israel’s foreign relations, its international standing and its core interests abroad emanating from what will apparently be the policy of the incoming Government. This concern is compounded by public statements made by potential senior office-holders in the Government and the Knesset, by reports of expected changes in Israeli

policy in Judea-Samaria/the West Bank, by some possible extreme and discriminatory laws which are oppressive to minorities and by the potential damage to free speech and democratic values in Israel.”

- [Ambassador \(ret.\) and Former Inspector General of Israel’s Foreign Service Victor Harel](#): “The Israeli Foreign Ministry was once an important and prestigious office. It has now been pushed to the fringes of diplomatic activity, including, of course, in relations with Washington. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is happy about this, as it has long been his ambition to strip the Foreign Ministry of its main assets and scatter them among his minions. This mission is nearly complete.”
- [Letter from 23 Israeli Embassy in London Former Staffers](#): “Today...we could not in good conscience carry out the roles we were once so proud to hold... Our work involved communicating difficult truths to the British public about the tough choices a democratic state must take to defend its citizens from terror, and communicating positive facts about Israel as a vibrant, thriving, liberal democracy in stark contrast to the slanders of Israel’s enemies... Many of the arguments we used to make leaned heavily, and sincerely so, on the kinship of shared values between liberal democracies. But you cannot credibly strengthen the relationship between Israel and Britain on the basis of solidarity between democratic states while working for this government. A government that seeks to move Israel out of the camp of liberal democracies... It cannot be ‘business as usual’ and we urge those working at the Embassy today – both diplomats and staff – not to stand by while a cynical, extremist government threatens the very soul of the State of Israel.”

Israeli Jurists and Legal Experts:

- [Supreme Court President Esther Hayut](#): “Israel will soon mark 75 years of independence as a Jewish and democratic state. Unfortunately, if the people who made up this plan have their way, the 75th year will be remembered as the year in which Israel’s democracy suffered a fatal blow. This is an unbridled attack on the judicial system, as if it were an enemy that must be attacked and subdued... The planned override clause allows the Knesset, with the support of the government, to enact laws that would harm [human] rights without hindrance. Therefore, whoever thinks that the override clause ‘overrides’ the court is wrong. In fact, it is about overriding the human rights of each and every individual in Israeli society.” (Transcript of her full speech in Hebrew is [here](#).)
- [Supreme Court President Esther Hayut](#): “Israel will soon mark 75 years of independence as a Jewish and democratic state. Unfortunately, if the people who made up this plan have their way, the 75th year will be remembered as the year in which Israel’s democracy suffered a fatal blow. This is an unbridled attack on the judicial system, as if it were an enemy that must be attacked and subdued... The planned override clause allows the Knesset, with the support of the government, to enact laws that would harm [human] rights without hindrance. Therefore, whoever thinks that the override clause ‘overrides’ the court is wrong. In fact, it is about overriding the human rights of each and every individual in Israeli society.”
- [Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara](#): “Without judicial oversight and independent legal advice, we will be left with just the principle of majority rule, and nothing else. Democracy in name, but not in essence.”

- [Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara](#) (legal opinion on Justice Minister Levin’s proposed legislation): “Every one of the proposed arrangements raises substantial problems that go to the root of the principle of the separation of powers, judicial independence and the professionalism of the judicial branch, protection of the rights of the individual, the rule of law, and the preservation of proper governance... Adopting the proposed arrangement would lead to a governmental regime in which the executive and legislative branches would have broad and in practice unlimited authority.” (An unofficial translation of the introduction to the AG’s legal opinion is available [here](#).)
- [Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara](#) (letter to PM Netanyahu following his [March 23 speech](#)): “In your speech last night, you referred to the initiatives concerning the judicial system, and in particular to the composition of the committee for the appointment of judges, and announced that you are now directly involved in these initiatives. In doing so, you violated the ruling of the Supreme Court, according to which, as a prime minister accused of crimes, you must refrain from taking actions that give rise to a reasonable fear of the existence of a conflict of interest between your personal interests relating to the criminal proceedings and your role as prime minister. Last night you announced publicly that you intend to violate the Supreme Court’s ruling, and to act contrary to the opinion of the attorney general, which obligates you according to this ruling. Your statement last night and any further actions by you that violate that agreement are completely illegal and in conflict of interest.”
- [Deputy Attorney General Gil Limon](#) (stating the position of the Attorney General in a [hearing of the Knesset’s Constitution Committee](#) on Jan. 16, 2023): “If the set of bills that are currently proposed are passed in their current form, the government and its ministers will cease to be answerable to the law... Those who write the laws, then decide for themselves if they uphold those laws, while controlling the selection of the judges responsible for the judicial oversight of their decisions, and also have authority to then sidestep these judges’ rulings when they are not to their liking—those people are not in reality subject to the law. In this scenario, the government would not even be considered ‘above the law.’ The government would BE the law.”
- [Former Supreme Court President Aharon Barak](#): Justice Minister Yariv Levin “has collected all the bad proposals made over the years and connected them into a sort of chain that will strangle Israeli democracy.”
- [Former Supreme Court Justice and Attorney General Menachem Mazuz](#): “I don’t know of anything in the literature of political science that will enable a country [with a separation of powers as delineated by Levin’s plan] to be considered a democracy.”
- [Former VP of the Supreme Court and Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein](#): “I’m not sleeping at night. This is not just a figure of speech. I am truly anxious about the character of the country.”
- [Former Attorneys General and State Prosecutors’ Letter](#): “In the absence of a complete constitution, and without a full bill of rights, [Israel’s Supreme Court] is the body that controls the rule of law towards the government system, fights governmental arbitrariness and corruption, and protects human rights and the rights of minorities. The achievements of the High Court, which have advanced society and benefit every person, are now in grave danger.”

- [Former Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit](#) (who previously served as Netanyahu's cabinet secretary): "I think that there is a question everyone should be asking themselves. It's nothing new that these [judicial overhaul proposals] are the position of [Justice Minister] Yariv Levin. But Netanyahu for years never appointed him [as justice minister]. Why did he appoint him now to the position? My assessment and opinion is that Netanyahu wants to bring about a situation in which his trial does not come to an end in a proper manner."
- [Israeli Law Professors' Forum for Democracy Statement](#): "The changes being promoted by the government to the governmental and legal regime may be irreversible. The weakening of the balance and control mechanisms will enable the coalition majority to take, unhindered, additional steps that will entrench its rule for many years to come... As evidenced by the experiences of other countries of the world that have experienced democratic backsliding, limiting the power of the courts is expected to be only the first step on the way to abolishing democracy altogether."
- [75 Israeli Law Professors Statement](#): "In our assessment, it is impossible to separate the recent attempt at regime transformation in Israel, which seeks to remove all restraints on the government, from the current situation in the occupied territories. These changes could potentially enable the government to carry out actions that it would otherwise be unable to undertake within the current constitutional and legal framework, both in Israel and in the occupied territories."

Israeli Economic, Educational and Civil Society Leaders and Outside Economic Experts:

- [Bank of Israel Governor Amir Yaron](#): "As soon as certainty in the economy is undermined, then the certainty of doing business is also undermined. Since the beginning of the year [2023], the domestic capital market has underperformed global markets, and the credit risk premium on local government bonds has increased. The volume of capital raised in Israel relative to the US also declined markedly, returning to pre-2019 levels... The continued uncertainty [due to the attempted judicial overhaul] has considerable economic costs. Therefore, decision makers must restore stability and certainty to the Israeli economy by reaching broad agreement on the legal changes with all stakeholders while maintaining the strength and independence of institutions."
- [Former Bank of Israel Governors Karnit Flug and Jacob Frenkel](#): "Weakening judicial oversight is liable to allow the government to advance measures that will lead to economic damage as a result of a possible infringement on property rights, investors' fears of arbitrary and unpredictable decisions, and changes to the rules of the game in the absence of judicial oversight."
- [100+ High-Tech Industry Executives Letter to Netanyahu](#): "Harming the [Supreme C]ourt's status, as well as harming the rights of minorities based on religion, race, gender or sexual orientation" would "constitute a real existential threat to the glorious high-tech industry that has been built in Israel with great effort over the past three decades. In their wake, we may also see an [exodus] of technology companies, all of them international companies in essence, [out] of Israel, as well as their tax payments... This could have devastating consequences for the economy and society in Israel."
- [270+ Faculty Members in Economics and Management Statement](#): "The damage to the independence of the judiciary will significantly increase the likelihood of harming the credit

rating of the Israeli government and the raising of capital by Israeli companies... We issue this strong warning against the coalition's current initiatives, which mean a fundamental change to the system of the regime in Israel and a danger to the future of the Israeli economy."

- [Papaya Global CEO Eynat Guez](#): "No wealth holder will put money in a state where democracy is crumbling. The Start-Up Nation without democracy can't exist." She subsequently [announced](#) Papaya Global would "withdraw all of the company's funds from Israel... There is no certainty that we can conduct international economic activity from Israel. This is a painful but necessary business step".
- [Atera CEO Gil Pekelman](#): "What crazy person would want to buy a company in an autocratic country with no checks and balances... Living in a country that turns more ultra-right and ultra-religious, with no legal protections for minorities like the gay community or women, will be impossible for [Israeli high-tech workers]. They won't want to raise a family here."
- [Committee of the Heads of Universities](#) ("VERA," Jan. 23, 2023 statement): "[W]e send this warning that the legal reform that is starting to take shape could cause a mortal blow to the Israeli academy. This could lead to a brain drain and faculty members hesitating to join us; students, research scholars, post-doctorates, and international colleagues will not come to Israel; our access to international research funds would be limited; foreign industries will abstain from collaboration with the Israeli academy; and we will be excluded from the international research and education communities. All these are expected to have a far reaching and long term impact on the security, economy and societal strength of the state of Israel."
- [Coalition of 30+ Women and Equality Organizations](#): "It is inconceivable that in Israel in 2023, the Knesset will promote laws and measures that will allow the exclusion of women in the public sphere, will prevent women from being protected against any form of violence, dramatically reduce the representation of women (as currently reflected in the proposal to change the composition of the Judicial Selection Committee), expand the powers of the rabbinical courts, where even today they subject women to religious law that confine their fundamental freedoms, allow gender-based segregation in public institutions or legitimize discrimination in the provision of services.... All the proposed amendments are taking place in a grim reality of severe under-representation and even the complete absence of representation of women in public administration, government, and decision-making positions." (Jan. 25, 2023 letter to Minister Levin)
- [Moody's Investors Service Senior VP Kathrin Muehlbronner](#) on Moody's decision to downgrade Israel's credit outlook from "positive" to "stable": "With Israel, our main concern is the executive pushing through important changes to the institutional setup of the country at such a speed, and without any dialogue really, for us is not a sign of strong institutions... Having a strong and independent judiciary is important everywhere, but even more so in a system like Israel, where there are really only two branches of government, the executive and the judiciary. Other checks and balances that exist in other countries are relatively weak in Israel."

Additional Notable Israelis:

- [UnXeptable Co-Founder Offir Gutelzon](#): “The fight to stop the emergence of vigilante militias and crack down on acts of terror, destruction of property, and illegal settlement is inseparable from the struggle for democracy. Only a strong Israeli democracy can address terror and crime and set Israel on a path towards resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”
- [Historian Yuval Noah Harari](#): “What this government is doing is not reform. It’s a coup... Coups are not always carried out with tanks in the streets. Many coups in history were carried out behind closed doors with pen and paper. By the time people understood, it was too late to resist. First they use the law to gain power; then they use their power to distort the law. The legislative package the government is trying to pass will mean just one thing... The government will have unlimited power and it will be able to completely destroy our freedom.”
- [Matti Friedman, Daniel Gordis and Yossi Klein Halevi](#): “North American Jews and their leaders must make clear to this government that if it continues on the path to transforming Israel into a country of which Diaspora Jews can no longer be proud, there will be no business as usual. We and our families, along with many tens of thousands of other Israelis, are in the streets every week demanding the government end its war against our democratic values and institutions. We need your voice to help us preserve Israel as a state both Jewish and democratic.”
- [Former Likud Member of the Zionist General Council Gerald Strober](#) (op-ed addressed to PM Netanyahu): “Either out of an overarching quest for power or an effort to defuse legal action, you are tragically straying so far from the paths your Likud forbearers have paved... You are embarking on a lonely road, isolating the nation you lead from its allies as you increasingly submit to the will of Kahanists, religious fanatics and a clown car of rapacious rogues. I predict that your miscalculation will be your dark legacy.”

Biden Administration:

- [President Joe Biden](#): “I’m one of those who believes that Israel’s ultimate security rests on a two-state solution. I think it’s a mistake to think that, as some members of his [Netanyahu’s] Cabinet, and this is one of the most extreme members of Cabinets that I’ve seen... particularly those individuals in the Cabinet who say, ‘They [Palestinians] have no right to be [in the West Bank]... We can settle anywhere we want, they have no right to be here, et cetera’...”
- [President Joe Biden](#): “The genius of American democracy and Israeli democracy is that they are both built on strong institutions, on checks and balances, on an independent judiciary. Building consensus for fundamental changes is really important to ensure that the people buy into them so they can be sustained.”
- [President Joe Biden](#): “Like many strong supporters of Israel, I’m very concerned, and I’m concerned that they get this straight. They cannot continue down this road. I’ve sort of made that clear. Hopefully, the Prime Minister [Netanyahu] will act in a way that he can try to work out some genuine compromise, but that remains to be seen.” Asked whether he was going to invite Netanyahu to the White House, Biden replied, “No. Not in the near

term.” Questioned by a reporter about what he hoped Netanyahu would do regarding the bill to change the composition of the judicial selection committee, Biden [answered](#): “I hope he walks away from it.” (Netanyahu [responded](#): “...Israel is a sovereign country which makes its decisions by the will of its people and not based on pressures from abroad, including from the best of friends.” Several coalition MKs [reacted angrily](#), including Likud MK [Nissim Vaturi](#), Likud MK [Dan Illouz](#), and Knesset Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee Chair MK [Simcha Rothman](#). Israeli pro-democracy protesters [thanked](#) Biden for his support.)

- [US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides](#): “Our position is quite clear. We do not support annexation. We will fight any attempt to do so... Most of the Arab countries [feel the same way]... We have to stand up for the things that we believe in — that’s what American values are about... I will be pushing back aggressively on things that we disagree with.”
- [US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides](#): Prime Minister Netanyahu “understands the position of the United States, which is to keep the vision of a two-state solution alive. And he understands that we understand that massive settlement growth will not accomplish that goal... We’ve been very clear about the ideas of legalizing outposts, massive settlement expansion. It will not keep a vision of a two-state solution alive, [in] which case we will oppose it, and we’ll be very clear about our opposition.”
- [US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides](#): “The one thing that binds our countries together is a sense of democracy and democratic institutions. That is how we defend Israel at the UN, that’s how we stand up for the values that we share – and when we believe that those democratic institutions are under stress and strain, we’re articulating that... The Prime Minister wants to do big things... big things include Iran... He would like to expand the Abraham Accords with getting Saudi Arabia involved... In both cases, America plays an important role... We have plenty of things that we’re working collectively on, and as I’ve said to him, the Prime Minister, a hundred times, ‘We can’t spend time on things we want to work on together if your backyard is on fire.’”
- [US State Department Spokesman Ned Price](#): “The Homesh outpost in the West Bank is illegal. It is illegal even under Israeli law. Our call to refrain from unilateral steps certainly includes any decision to create a new settlement, to legalize outposts or allowing building of any kind deep in the West Bank, adjacent to Palestinian communities or on private Palestinian land.”
- [CIA Director William Burns](#): “I was a senior US diplomat 20 years ago during the Second Intifada, and I’m concerned — as are my colleagues in the intelligence community — that a lot of what we’re seeing today has a very unhappy resemblance to some of those realities that we saw then too. The conversations I’ve had with Israeli and Palestinian leaders left me quite concerned about the prospects for even greater fragility and even greater violence between Israelis and Palestinians.”
- [US State Department Spokesman Ned Price](#): “The US is deeply troubled by Israel’s announcement that it will reportedly advance thousands of settlements and begin a process to retroactively legalize nine outposts in the West Bank that were previously illegal under Israeli law. We strongly oppose these unilateral measures.”
- [US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield](#): “Now, let me add a clear, unequivocal

statement: We strongly oppose Israel's announcement that it will advance thousands of settlement units. And we strongly oppose Israel's announcement that it [will] begin a process to retroactively legalize nine outposts in the West Bank that were previously illegal under Israeli law. These unilateral measures exacerbate tensions. They harm trust between the parties. They undermine the prospects for a negotiated two-state solution. The United States does not support these actions. Full stop."

Former US Government Officials:

- [Former Director of National Intelligence, US Air Force Lt. Gen. \(ret.\) James R. Clapper](#): "The intelligence partnership between Israel and the US is close, deep and long-standing. In the past, it has been a pillar of stability and continuity when the binational relationship otherwise went through rough waters. Even that pillar could be jeopardized if the current disagreement about the essence of Israel's democracy continues. We are most comfortable sharing intelligence with democracies; I hope Israel stays in that camp."
- [Former US Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk](#): "What makes [the US-Israel relationship] special is that it's not only based on common interests – strategic interests in the region – but it's also based on common democratic values, and that is something that the Israelis have been very proud of, touting the fact that they're the only democracy in the Middle East. But the bipartisan support for Israel – which has long been strong, deep, broad – really depends on the fact that Americans see Israel as a fellow democracy in a dangerous part of the world."
- [Former US Ambassador to Israel David Kurtzer and Former State Department Negotiator Aaron David Miller](#): "The unprecedented nature of this coalition — democratically elected but possessing antidemocratic values inimical to U.S. interests — should prompt the White House to send clear messages... Israel should be told that, while the United States will continue to support its ally's legitimate security requirements, it will not provide offensive weapons or other assistance for malign Israeli actions in Jerusalem or the occupied territories. The United States specifically should warn against efforts to change the status of the West Bank and the Noble Sanctuary/Temple Mount, to 'legalize' settlement outposts, and to build infrastructure for settlers that is designed to foreclose the possibility of a two-state solution... Israel has never before embarked on such a dangerous course. Political will matters, and this is a moment for Biden to show American strength and resolve."
- [Former US Under Secretary of Defense Dov Zakheim](#): "Ironically, Netanyahu has always presented himself to the Israeli public as the guardian of its security. Yet his reckless drive to undermine Israel's separation of powers could jeopardize his country's security in another respect as well. Simply put, Israel risks losing the level of unstinting American support it has enjoyed for more than three decades."

Members of Congress:

- [Letter from 92 Members of Congress](#) to President Biden (led by Reps. DeLauro, Schakowsky, and McGovern): "We wish to commend your administration's efforts to deescalate heightened tensions in Israel and the West Bank, as well as share our deep concern regarding the planned changes to the structure of the Israeli judiciary, the fragile security situation in the West Bank, and the threat of partial or full annexation of areas that would most certainly be part of a future Palestinian state. We urge you to use all diplomatic

tools available to prevent Israel's current government from further damaging the nation's democratic institutions and undermining the potential for two states for two peoples."

- [Letter from 16 Jewish Members of Congress](#) to PM Netanyahu, President Herzog, and Opposition Leader Lapid: "We write to you as Jewish Members of the US Congress to express our profound concern about proposed changes to Israel's governing institutions and legal system that we fear could undermine Israeli democracy and the civil rights and religious freedoms it protects... The overhaul being proposed that passed on first reading appears to imbue the Knesset with supreme power, unchecked by the Supreme Court. If carried out to their fullest extent, these changes could fundamentally alter the democratic character of the State of Israel. A tenet of modern democracies is protections for those citizens with minority status, whether political, ethnic, or religious. We are deeply concerned about the impact these changes would have on people and groups not in the majority..."
- [Senator Michael Bennet](#): "There's a reason we didn't meet with the extreme parts of [Netanyahu's] coalition, because we didn't want to give them credibility, and it's the reason we met with the opposition... [That's Republicans and Democrats](#), that includes people that you... might say are the biggest hawks on Israel in the Senate... We were able to get them to agree that we were going to demonstrate that we've got conviction around our values on this subject [the attempted judicial overhaul]. And I think we have to continue to apply constructive pressure that Benjamin Netanyahu's going to have to respond to... Netanyahu has to be attuned to what our view as a country is about these issues and I think that the Israeli people are also fairly attuned to that, too, so let's look for ways to make a constructive difference. Let's not give up on our values or our long-term view."
- [Senator Ben Cardin](#): "Today, I speak to our friend and ally as a family member who is concerned. Out of love for the people of Israel and our shared values, I am fearful for the future of democracy in Israel as the right-wing Netanyahu government threatens to undermine the essential checks-and-balances that make democracies work. I urge the prime minister and his cabinet to listen to President Isaac Herzog and the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who have taken to the streets in peaceful protest to protect the independence of the judiciary."
- [Senator Dick Durbin](#): Netanyahu is "dangerously putting his own narrow political and legal interests – and those of the troubling extremists in his coalition – ahead of the long-term interests and needs of Israel's democracy." The Netanyahu government is on track to "not only harm key shared values between the United States and Israel, but also further undermine desperately needed lasting peace between the Israeli and Palestinian people."
- [Senator Tim Kaine](#): "Israel is a strong ally, and I've been closely monitoring the recent protests there. As tens of thousands of Israelis rally in support of democracy and judicial independence in their country, the Netanyahu administration should listen and avoid taking actions that threaten Israel's democratic institutions."
- [Senator Jeff Merkley](#): America's "robust 75-year alliance with Israel is built on a shared commitment to democratic values. Strong, independent institutions – especially the judiciary – are core to a healthy democracy. Concentrating all power in one person or one party is a threat to the rule of law."
- [Senator Chris Murphy](#): "The Israeli government's move to advance nearly 10,000 new

settlement homes and legalize nine outposts in the West Bank is deeply concerning. Unilateral decisions like these make a negotiated two-state future more and more difficult to achieve and undercut prospects for a just and lasting peace with the Palestinians. Moreover, under the new coalition government, this appears to be just the beginning of a policy of unprecedented expansion of settlements explicitly intended to expand Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank and prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. [I am] worried that the implementation of these extreme policies will make it increasingly difficult to maintain the broad bipartisan consensus that has sustained Israel's security for over 70 years... I'm a believer in the security of Israel, but I think the Netanyahu government often got it badly wrong. I can never speak for the people of Israel, but I worry that a lot of the decisions the Netanyahu government made are bad for Israel's security in the long run."

- [Senator Chris Murphy](#): "...the Netanyahu government is really fraying the bonds that have connected Israelis together and I worry that we are at a moment in which we are watching a future Palestinian state be obliterated by the pace of settlements by the legalization of outposts. And I think the United States needs to draw a harder line with this government... "If we're going to continue to be in the business of supporting the Israeli government, they have to be in the continuing business of a future Palestinian state — and that does not seem to be the policy of this government right now. So whether it's conditionality of aid to Israel, whether it's conditionality of visits to the United States, we've got to send a message that this assault on the two-state solution in particular, is very bad for the U.S.-Israel relationship in the long run."]
- [Senators Mitt Romney and Chris Murphy](#): "As bipartisan members of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee who care deeply about Israel, we welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu's decision to postpone consideration of judicial reforms. Shared democratic values have long underpinned the US-Israel relationship, and we hope this delay provides an opportunity to work towards a compromise and de-escalation of the current crisis."
- [Senator Bernie Sanders](#): "I am very worried about what Netanyahu is doing, and some of his allies in government, and what may happen to the Palestinian people. The United States gives billions of dollars in aid to Israel and I think we've got to put some strings attached to that and say, 'You cannot run a racist government. You cannot turn your back on the two-state solution. You cannot demean the Palestinian people there. You just can't do it and then come to America and ask for money'... I'm embarrassed that in Israel you have a government of that nature right now."
- [Senator Brian Schatz](#): Israel has "taken a turn in a very dangerous direction and I think lots of American Jews are deeply, deeply, concerned. The US-Israel relationship is strong, and will continue to be strong, but it has to be based on shared values... I think that the prime minister needs to understand that the American Jewish community is increasingly uncomfortable with the actions he's taken, and that can get in the way of a friendship."
- [Senator Brian Schatz](#): "I am in solidarity with all Israelis who are peacefully expressing their outrage. What Bibi is doing is alarming, appalling, and perilous for the relationship between our two countries. We stand for democracy."
- [Senator Chris Van Hollen](#): "An independent judiciary is a key hallmark of any democracy and serves as a safeguard of the people's rights and freedoms. "That's why the Netanyahu government's actions to undermine the independence of the Israeli judicial branch are

especially concerning.”

- [Senator Chris Van Hollen](#): “Mr. Secretary [Blinken], all of this raises the issue that Prime Minister Netanyahu says he has two hands on the steering wheel, meaning that he’s in control of this government. But we’re looking at actions his Ministers are taking – and actions in portfolios that are very significant – that go directly contrary to that. And Prime Minister Netanyahu, as we discussed this morning, specifically himself, disavowed the agreement reached in Aqaba within 24 hours of it having been reached. So I just go back to make my final point... I appreciate the statements that have been made by Biden Administration officials; I think, Mr. Secretary, it’s important for you personally also to continue to speak out, and I think we look weak when we see time after time actions taken inconsistent with our positions with no consequence at all.”
- [Senator Peter Welch](#) (December 2022): Netanyahu has “display[ed] a callous disregard for the principles of Israel’s Declaration of Independence. Why is he working to create a government that not only opposes a two-state solution, but one that would include ministers who would expel Arab Israeli citizens? I cannot support Netanyahu’s efforts to undermine the very aspirations of the democratic State of Israel by marginalizing, annexing and compromising rights of Arab Israeli citizens.” [February 2023 interview](#): “There’s alarm among many [Members of Congress] about the recent coalition backsliding on democratic norms.”
- [Congressman Colin Allred](#): “Protesting is an act of hope, and hundreds of thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets because they believe in their democracy and want to protect it. As Americans know well, sometimes moments of crisis remind us how tenuous our democracies can be.”
- [Congressman Jake Auchincloss](#): “I represent one of the most ideologically diverse Jewish constituencies in America. On this issue, there is unanimity. There are extreme concerns about the direction that Israel is headed, toward illiberal democracy.”
- [Congresswoman Becca Balint](#): “The far-right Israeli government...has openly advocated for annexing the West Bank without providing rights to Palestinians. This current [Netanyahu] government and judiciary also risk Israel’s democracy and civil rights that it should aim to protect. At a time when Israelis have taken to the streets to fight for their democracy, we cannot ignore that Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state depends on a negotiated two-state solution.”
- [Congressman Earl Blumenauer](#): “A radical overhaul of the judiciary is ill advised and appears to have severe implications for Israel. It is highly questionable, especially with such a closely divided government.”
- [Congressman David Cicilline](#): “The US-Israel relationship is built on our longstanding, shared democratic values and commitment to the rule of law, which includes checks and balances and independent judicial institutions. I stand with the hundreds of thousands of Israelis marching in the streets, demanding that their government live up to these democratic ideals, and echo former security officials worried for Israel’s regional stability. The sweeping judicial overhaul proposal championed by Israel’s new far-right government would be catastrophic for the future of Israeli democracy and our shared democratic values.”

- [Congressman Steve Cohen](#): “What happened in America, a threat to the rule of law and changing the balance of our Supreme Court politically to where it was a conservative right-wing court. What’s happened in Israel is a lot like what happened in America with Trump. Netanyahu is a lot like Trump in terms of his actions that have been seen to be outside of the law. His coalition— the most conservative ever in Israel — is apparently trying to change the judiciary in such a way that the executive and the legislature will have much more control and the independent judiciary will disappear.”
- [Congressman Gerry Connolly](#): “We have reached an inflection point in the U.S.-Israel relationship. For 70 years we have found common cause with Israel because they have been the only democracy in the Middle East... Netanyahu’s cabinet of right-wing extremists has put the very rights and political inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals, women, secular Jews, Palestinians, and Arabs alike in peril. As the United States continues to play a crucial role in supporting Israel, on a bipartisan basis, we must be clear that an aggressive anti-democratic tilt in Israel threatens our strong, longstanding partnership based on shared democratic values... When Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich made comments on March 3, 2023, suggesting the Palestinian city Huwara “needs to be wiped out, but the State of Israel needs to do it,” Arab nations involved in the Abraham Accords immediately condemned this abhorrent incitement of violence. To be clear, the actions of Ministers Ben Gvir and Smotrich to bless settler violence, incite violence against Palestinians, and threaten annexation of large portions of the West Bank imperil the Abraham Accords themselves, let alone the prospects for expansion to other Arab nations.”
- [Congressman Jason Crow, Congresswoman Chrissy Houlahan, and Congressman Andy Kim](#): “Democratic values have bonded the US and Israel together. That’s why, as some of the staunchest supporters of Israel, we are deeply concerned by Prime Minister Netanyahu’s proposal to overhaul Israel’s judicial system and subsequently fire Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for voicing his dissent. Prime Minister Netanyahu’s recent decisions would weaken democratic institutions, endanger the diversity of views and voices in Israel, and undermine regional and national security. Separation of powers and honest discourse are hallmarks of democracy and vital to Israel’s regional and national security. Independent institutions are fundamental to the stability and longevity of democracy. The overwhelming protests make clear that Prime Minister Netanyahu’s actions lack popular support. We stand in solidarity with the peaceful protestors who are decisively and collectively taking to the streets. We urge Prime Minister Netanyahu and Israeli leaders to permanently halt the proposed judicial changes and restore the people’s confidence in Israel’s democratic ideals.”
- [Congresswoman Sharice Davids](#): “The goal of a peaceful and secure Israel, with a real and lasting two-state solution, is more urgent than ever. Israel upholding its own democratic systems and ideals is vital to that, which is why I’ve been concerned about recent judicial reforms recently considered. These profound changes to the judicial system could threaten Israel’s democratic system of governance.”
- [Congresswoman Madeleine Dean](#): “By undermining the independent judiciary and disregarding the rule of law, sadly, Israel’s own Prime Minister threatens the very foundation on which Israel’s democracy depends. Israel must remain a democracy that protects and lifts all of its citizens, Israeli and Palestinians... I celebrate the estimated more than 600,000 Israeli protesters who took to the streets against the blatant disregard for institutions,

checks and balances, and an independent judiciary. I applaud their bravery that made it clear they will not tolerate undercutting their judicial system, compromising military readiness, and moving their country into the direction of authoritarianism... Israel must not abandon that genius of democracy, just as America cannot.”

- [Congressman Mark DeSaulnier](#): I am “deeply concerned by proposals in Israel to undermine its democratic institutions by dramatically overhauling the judicial system. This kind of overreach would have far-reaching implications beyond Israel’s borders.”
- [Congresswoman Anna Eshoo](#): “The strength of the US-Israel relationship is rooted in our mutual commitment to democracy. By moving forward with his proposal to gut the Israeli judiciary, Prime Minister Netanyahu is not only jeopardizing Israel’s democratic institutions, he is straining the critical relationship between our countries.”
- [Congressman Dan Goldman](#): “The US-Israel relationship is built on our shared democratic principles, and as a proud American Jew I care deeply and personally about the safety and security of the Israeli state. But part of that safety and security is an unwavering commitment to separation of powers and the rule of law, which must be upheld by a strong and independent judicial branch. As we have learned here at home, democracy is not something we can take for granted, and we must be vigilant about rooting out authoritarianism wherever it rears its ugly head, including with our closest allies like Israel.”
- [Congressman Steny Hoyer](#): “Friends ought to be candid with one another when they see things that they think are inconsistent with what we think are the proper steps to take... Neither Israelis nor Americans ought to be surprised that the other from time to time expresses disagreement with some things that the other is doing. That does not mean that we don’t have an enduring bond of friendship and alliance. It means that friends are saying, ‘I don’t think what you’re doing in this particular instance is in the best interest...of our alliance.’”
- [Congresswoman Sara Jacobs](#): “I was...honored to commemorate Yom HaZikaron and Israel’s 75th anniversary. While in Israel, I had many productive conversations with the Israeli government, opposition, and Palestinian civil society. In particular, I pressed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the concerns I had around his judicial reform plan, Israeli state excessive force, the demolition of Palestinian homes, settlement expansion, and his lack of commitment to a two-state solution. I firmly believe Israel will only be safe and secure once there is a viable, sovereign Palestinian state.”
- [Congresswoman Barbara Lee](#): “An impartial, independent judiciary is a vital cornerstone of democracy. I strongly condemn Netanyahu’s efforts to politicize Israel’s Supreme Court and dramatically expand settlement activity, and I stand in solidarity with Israelis and Palestinians working for peaceful coexistence.”
- [Congresswoman Betty McCollum](#): “Expressing concern about plans to annex more Palestinian land for settlements isn’t enough – [President Biden] should also vote for the UN Security Council resolution condemning these illegal settlements & take action to hold the Israeli government accountable for breaking international law.”
- [Congressman Jim McGovern](#): “I strongly oppose Netanyahu’s decision to dramatically expand settlement activity & gut the independence of the Israeli Supreme Court. These

actions are wrong, full stop. New settlements don't make anyone safer & only escalate tensions. [The] Biden administration was right to condemn."

- [Congressman Jerry Nadler](#): "I am the most senior Jewish Member of Congress, and I represent the district with one of the largest percentages of Jews in the nation... The alliance between [the US and Israel] is, in large part, rooted in these high democratic principles. I fear deeply that this critical relationship could be irrevocably strained should Israel move forward with the Justice Minister's proposed anti-democratic judicial amendments. I write these words out of love and as a representative of Americans for whom Israel is an essential element of their identity. I am heartened by the thousands who peacefully took to the streets recently to protest these changes and make their voices heard. It is incumbent upon all of us to speak out against these dangerous moves."
- [Congresswoman Ilhan Omar](#): "I am inspired by the hundreds of thousands of Israelis taking to the streets to protest the right-wing Israeli government's plans to overhaul the independent judiciary and centralize power. I am especially inspired by the demands from many protesters to end the illegal occupation of Palestinian land and halt Prime Minister Netanyahu's push for what amounts to full annexation of Palestinian land. Peace will not come at the barrel of a gun. The only way for Palestinians and Israelis to have full human rights and self-determination is if the people demand it. I am hopeful that these unprecedented demonstrations will lead to renewed hope for democratic governance, peace, justice, and accountability for the harm the occupation has caused."
- [Congressman Scott Peters](#): "Recent actions by Prime Minister Netanyahu's government put into question the future of Israel's democracy. In the past two weeks, the Israeli government has taken steps to give settlers control over Palestinian-owned land, advance legislation to eliminate judicial oversight, and cheered a violent mob that killed one person and destroyed hundreds of Palestinian-owned businesses and homes. The trampling of minority protections contradicts the values enshrined in Israel's declaration of independence. Israel must immediately end the judicial coup, its military and settler violence towards non-Jews, and return to the principles that tens of thousands of Israelis gave their lives defending. These developments violate the shared values which have made the U.S.-Israel relationship so strong and threaten the fragile viability of a two-state solution."
- [Congressman Jamie Raskin](#): "All over the world liberal democracy is under siege by right-wing autocrats and fanatical extremists who are in a coordinated global attack on freedom. Fortunately, the forces of strong democracy, judicial independence, human rights and women's equality, religious pluralism and the rule of law are on the march too – from the streets of Jerusalem to the streets of Tehran to the heroic people of Ukraine battling fascist invasion to all their powerful democratic allies in the United States and Europe. The struggle to defend the separation of powers, judicial independence and the rule of law in Israel is now a significant part of this global defense of democratic freedom against corrupt plutocrats and autocrats hellbent on power at all costs."
- [Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky](#): I am "deeply concerned by the far-right's proposal to restrict the independence and powers of Israel's judiciary. I fear it would jeopardize Israeli democracy and undermine the U.S.-Israel relationship." I agree "with President Biden that 'the genius of American democracy and Israeli democracy is that they are both built on strong institutions, on checks and balances, on an independent judiciary.' I hope the

protesters will be heard and that this plan will be abandoned.”

- [Congressman Adam Schiff](#): “I am very concerned about it, about the participation of certain elements in the Israeli government that have expressed bigotry and divisive policies and positions. Sadly, our last president gave guidance to would-be autocrats around the world.” Schiff also stated that he is “very concerned” about proposed measures by the Netanyahu government that “would make Israel less democratic or potentially place individuals above the law.”
- [Congressman Brad Sherman](#): “Before the current [Netanyahu] government does anything, just the makeup of that government is corrosive to support in the Democratic caucus... The fact is [Israel] need[s] the United States. They need us in international forums, they need us for so many reasons. Those who risk US support should know what they’re doing.”
- [Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin](#): “The [Netanyahu] government’s efforts to fundamentally alter the judiciary are now having concrete consequences, threatening Israel’s stability, its security, and its democratic values. The Supreme Court’s authority is fundamental to Israel remaining both a Jewish and a democratic state — something I and so many other Americans have always believed in. I urge Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, to listen to the overwhelming public opposition to these planned changes. Continuing on the current track is unsustainable, as the events of this weekend have made clear.”
- [Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury](#): “Across the world, modern democracies depend on systems of checks and balances to ensure the balance of power and ensure that governments remain accountable to their people and the rule of law.” I join “millions across the world who are deeply troubled by this effort to undermine that system of checks and balances which is foundational to democracy.”

UN Security Council and Multilateral Groups:

- [UN Security Council Presidential Statement](#): “The Security Council expresses deep concern and dismay with Israel’s announcement on February 12, 2023, announcing further construction and expansion of settlements and the ‘legalization’ of settlement outposts. The Security Council reiterates that continuing Israeli settlement activities are dangerously imperiling the viability of the two-State solution based on the 1967 lines. The Security Council strongly underscores the need for all parties to meet their international obligations and commitments; strongly opposes all unilateral measures that impede peace, including, inter alia, Israeli construction and expansion of settlements, confiscation of Palestinians’ land, and the ‘legalization’ of settlement outposts, demolition of Palestinians’ homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians. The Security Council condemns all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terrorism, and calls for the strengthening of ongoing efforts to counter terrorism in a manner consistent with international law, and for all parties to clearly condemn all acts of terrorism and refrain from incitement to violence, and reiterates the obligation of all parties regarding the pursuit of accountability for all acts of violence targeting civilians, and recalls the obligation of the Palestinian Authority to renounce and confront terror.”
- [Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the US, France, Germany, Italy, and the UK](#): “We...are deeply troubled by the Israeli government’s announcement that it is advancing

nearly 10,000 settlement units and intends to begin a process to normalize nine outposts that were previously deemed illegal under Israeli law. We strongly oppose these unilateral actions which will only serve to exacerbate tensions between Israelis and Palestinians and undermine efforts to achieve a negotiated two-state solution.”

Leaders and Governments of Arab States:

- [Jordan’s King Abdullah](#) (regarding a potential Israeli push for changes to Jordan’s custodianship of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in East Jerusalem): “If people want to get into a conflict with us, we’re quite prepared. I always like to believe that, let’s look at the glass half full, but we have certain red lines... And if people want to push those red lines, then we will deal with that... We have to be concerned about a next intifada. And if that happens, that’s a complete breakdown of law and order and one that neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians will benefit from. I think there is a lot of concern from all of us in the region, including those in Israel that are on our side on this issue, to make sure that doesn’t happen.”
- [United Arab Emirates](#): “The UAE today strongly condemned the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque courtyard by an Israeli minister [Itamar Ben-Gvir] under the protection of Israeli forces,” reiterating “its firm position on the need to provide full protection for Al-Aqsa Mosque and halt serious and provocative violations taking place there... Moreover, the Ministry stressed the need to support all regional and international efforts to advance the Middle East Peace Process, end illegal practices that threaten the two-state solution, and establish an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.”
- [Saudi Arabia](#): “Saudi Arabia condemns the provocative action of an Israeli official [Itamar Ben-Gvir] who stormed the courtyard of al-Aqsa mosque... The Ministry expresses the Kingdom’s regret at the practices of the Israeli occupation authorities that undermine international peace efforts and contradict international norms and principles of respecting religious sanctities... [and stresses its] “firm position in standing by the brotherly Palestinian people, and supports all efforts aimed at ending the occupation and reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue that enables the Palestinian people to establish their independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.”
- [Egypt](#): Arab diplomatic sources indicated there was “resentment” and “embarrassment” in President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s office due to Prime Minister Netanyahu’s failure to fulfill his personal pledge to al-Sisi not to allow Minister Ben-Gvir to visit the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. The sources added that Ben-Gvir’s visit complicated Egypt’s efforts to mediate a prisoner swap deal between Israel and Hamas, which is holding two Israelis and the remains of two Israeli soldiers. According to the sources, the lack of progress toward a deal “is a strong indication that Egypt’s mediation efforts have been affected by the formation of the most extremist government in Israel’s history.”

American Commentators:

- [The New York Times Editorial Board](#): “Mr. Netanyahu’s government...is a significant threat to the future of Israel — its direction, its security and even the idea of a Jewish homeland. For one, the government’s posture could make it militarily and politically impossible

for a two-state solution to ever emerge. Rather than accept this outcome, the Biden administration should do everything it can to express its support for a society governed by equal rights and the rule of law in Israel, as it does in countries all over the world. That would be an act of friendship, consistent with the deep bond between the two nations.

- [The New York Times Editorial Board](#): “...The pressure on Mr. Netanyahu and his government must be sustained by Israelis and by Israel’s true friends, especially the United States. The strong bonds that have long linked America and Israel are based on shared values, democracy first among them. President Biden was right to defend those values... The pressure must be sustained also because the attack on the judiciary was only the beginning of a broad campaign by the ultranationalist and ultrareligious parties, one that seeks to give Jewish settlers a far freer hand in further expanding and legalizing the West Bank settlements, change the status quo on the Temple Mount and relegate Arab citizens to a second-class status.”
- [150+ US Law Professors](#): “We, law professors in the United States who care deeply about Israel, strongly oppose the effort by the current Israeli government to radically overhaul the country’s legal system... We are all deeply worried that the speed and scale of the reforms will seriously weaken the independence of the judiciary, the separation of powers and the rule of law” which “would pose a dire risk to freedom of expression, to human and civil rights, and to efforts to reduce corruption...”
- [Thomas Friedman](#): “I have no illusions that Biden can reverse the most extreme trends emerging in Israel today, but he can nudge things onto a healthier path, and maybe prevent the worst, with some tough love in a way that no other outsider can... Israel and the US are friends. But today, one party in this friendship — Israel — is changing its fundamental character. President Biden, in the most caring but clear way possible, needs to declare that these changes violate America’s interests and values and that we are not going to be Netanyahu’s useful idiots and just sit in silence.”
- [Thomas Friedman](#): “Why should the US continue to defend the idea in the UN and the International Court that Israel is just temporarily occupying the West Bank — and therefore is not practicing some form of apartheid there — when this Israeli government appears to be openly hellbent on annexing the West Bank and has given two of the most active annexationists, Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, extensive security and financial powers over settlements in that region?”
- [Alan Dershowitz](#): “It would be a terrible, terrible mistake for an override to be permitted by the Knesset in Israel. It would be a terrible mistake to weaken the independence of the Supreme Court. It would be a terrible mistake for politicians to be able to dictate who is on the Supreme Court or how the Supreme Court decides cases... The Israeli Supreme Court has been the main argument Israel has been able to make to keep issues away from the International Criminal Court and other international courts.”

Jewish Communal Leaders and Denominations:

- [Former National Director of the Anti-Defamation League Abe Foxman](#): “If Israel ceases to be an open democracy, I won’t be able to support it... If Israel becomes a fundamentalist religious state, a theocratic nationalism state, it will cut Israel off from 70 percent of world Jewry.”

- [President of the Union for Reform Judaism Rabbi Rick Jacobs](#): “The extremist political agenda of this new government is profoundly distressing, representing radical policy shifts that are antithetical to the core values of liberal Jews... We will not stand idly by while the most important project of contemporary Jewish life, the State of Israel, is led down the road of autocracy by extremists. Instead, we will renew our dedication to the State of Israel as a safe home for all her citizens and the democratic, pluralistic homeland of all Jewish people.”
- [Union for Reform Judaism](#) (response to Israel’s election results): “Including Ben Gvir and Smotrich in the government will likely jeopardize Israel’s democracy and will force the country to reckon with its place on the world stage. It will almost certainly lead to challenging moments in US-Israel relations and will be painful for Jews worldwide who will not see the Israel they love and believe in reflected in these leaders, nor in the policies they pursue.”
- [Rabbi Josh Weinberg, VP of Union for Reform Judaism and ED of Association of Reform Zionists of America](#): “Former Prime Minister and the current leader of the opposition Yair Lapid commented to a colleague and friend this week that ‘he’s not sure that American Jewish leaders really internalize how dangerous the situation is right now, and that they [we] need to be doing more.’ Many Israelis are asking American Jews to speak up vociferously... Their cry for us to raise our voices brings up many questions and issues. We can ask: ‘What exactly do they have in mind?’ To begin, we can lobby our elected representatives to speak up and voice our concerns to Israel’s diplomats abroad. We can lobby the administration and refuse meetings with the Netanyahu government. If Israel transitions from democracy to autocracy, the real question becomes what to do with American foreign aid to Israel... When the MOU comes up again for renegotiation it will be very difficult for many in Congress to support continuing such financial and military aid to Israel. Such aid will certainly not have backing from the multitudes of American Jews who have walked away as a result of Israel’s current course of action. Right now, we don’t have a choice. Israel as a Jewish and democratic State is being threatened, and the damage being done is potentially irreversible. We must speak up, in the same way that we would mobilize and come together if Israel were facing a formidable external threat.”
- [Director of the Israel Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism Orly Erez Likhovsky](#) (remarks to URJ’s North American Board): “We have to make sure that the only Jewish state, which is the homeland of all Jews, remains a democracy. I ask you to do whatever you can...to raise this issue in any organization you’re a part of...to call your elected representatives to ask them to speak about this issue both toward the Israeli government and toward the Biden administration to see whatever we can to put more and more pressure... The fact that we have more pressure coming from North America and from other places in the world, together with the pressure from inside Israel, could really create a difference.”
- [Worldwide Conservative/Masorti Leadership Statement](#): “It is out of grave concern and our deep devotion to Medinat Yisrael [the State of Israel] that we are making our voices heard regarding the package of legal reforms proposed by Israel’s new government... Weakening Israel’s highly-regarded judicial system would undermine the message we have proudly and successfully promoted for decades around the world that Israel is both a Jewish AND a democratic state. With the mounting global disapproval of the proposed plan, moving

forward risks serious economic, diplomatic and strategic consequences... We understand the extraordinary nature of a call by a global movement representing more than two million Diaspora Jews regarding an internal matter of the State of Israel. But our love for Israel compels us to action, just as it has in every past crisis the State of Israel has faced. We call on all Jews worldwide to join us in making our voices heard at this historic juncture for Israel and the Jewish people as a whole. We are standing for and will always stand for a strong, vibrant and democratic State of Israel.”

- [Rabbinical Assembly \(Conservative Judaism\)](#): “We are deeply alarmed by the attempted subversion of the authority of Israel’s High Court by newly appointed Israeli Justice Minister Yariv Levin and his government... We call on lawmakers to speak out against these measures and others like them: the integrity of the State of Israel and the well-being of the entire Jewish people hang in the balance. We will continue to advocate against these measures and others like them in order to preserve Israel as the democratic and Jewish nation envisioned 75 years ago by the country’s founders and for generations to come.”
- [President of Reconstructing Judaism Rabbi Dr. Deborah Waxman](#) (response to Israel’s election results): “The prospect of Israel’s next government raising up the far-right, racist Jewish Power party of Ben-Gvir is frankly horrifying... I respect the Israeli electoral process and, as an individual and Jewish communal leader, feel compelled to voice profound worry about what we’re witnessing take place.”
- [Eric Goldstein, CEO of the UJA-Federation of New York](#): “The current proposed legislation [by Justice Minister Levin] raises dramatic concerns. It eviscerates the role of the judiciary by allowing Supreme Court decisions to be struck down by the barest majority of the Knesset — undermining the very foundations of Israel’s democracy and subjecting all minority groups to the tyranny of the majority.”
- [Jewish Leadership Call for Critical and Necessary Debate About Israeli Policies](#): “Our criticisms emanate from a love for Israel and a steadfast support for its security and well-being. Some will try to dismiss their validity by labeling them antisemitic. We want to be clear that, whether or not one agrees with a particular criticism, such critiques of Israeli policy are not antisemitic. Indeed, they reflect a real concern that the new government’s direction mirrors anti-democratic trends that we see arising elsewhere—in other nations and here in the US, rather than reinforcing the shared democratic values that are foundational to the US-Israel relationship. We are, for example, concerned about the Israeli Justice Minister’s plan to limit the Supreme Court’s power, proposed modifications to the Law of Return to change the status quo on conversions to Judaism, and calls by ultra-Orthodox coalition members to outlaw non-Orthodox prayer at the Western Wall. We are also concerned about provocative actions that seek to open the Temple Mount to Jewish prayer in defiance of long-standing international norms and coalition agreements, legitimize settlement outposts retroactively, and expand Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank.”
(signatories)
- [Jewish Federations of North America letter to PM Netanyahu & Opposition Leader Lapid](#): “We urge you to make clear that a simple majority of the Knesset is not sufficient to override a decision of the Supreme Court. The essence of democracy is both majority rule and protection of minority rights. We recognize that any system of checks and balances will be different than those in our own countries, but such a dramatic change to the Israeli

system of governance will have far-reaching consequences in North America, both within the Jewish community and in the broader society.”

- [National Council of Jewish Women CEO Sheila Katz](#): “[P]roposals from the new Israeli government seek to override the powers of Israel’s Supreme Court to review governmental actions and Knesset legislation and increase governmental influence over judicial appointments. Such an overhaul, paired with extremist proposals of members of the coalition government to restrict the rights of broad sectors of Israeli society — such as women, Arabs and the LGBTQ+ community — threatens the dignity, equity and justice of everyone in the region.”
- [JCRC \(Bay Area\) and Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund](#): “Following free and fair democratic elections in November 2022, the most right-wing governing coalition in Israel’s 75-year history coalesced. Across our community, the outcome provoked sadness, confusion, anxiety, and alarm, including in corners rarely expressing such reactions. Frequently raised are concerns about the coalition’s more extreme members, whose track records of homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, and anti-Arab racism stand in stark contrast to our beliefs and values. While it is difficult to predict what the new government will actually do, there is also great concern about its coalition platforms, agreements, rhetoric, and proposed legislation. Across the Israeli political spectrum, there is growing recognition that divisions are being exacerbated — much like America. More broadly, there are growing worries about Israel’s future: its democratic nature, the protection of minority rights, its relationship with diaspora Jews, as well as the viability of a future independent Palestinian state.
- [Rabbi Arthur Green, Rector Emeritus of Hebrew College Rabbinical School](#): “I give great credit to the vast number of Israelis who have come out week after week to demonstrate in favor of judicial independence and honest government. Sadly, however, most of them fail to make the obvious connection between the terrible legislation being proposed by Netanyahu and his camp and the root cause of it all, the twin Israeli/Palestinian problems: the refusal since 1948 in fully integrate Israel’s 20% Arab minority into the society and the settlement of the territories conquered in 1967, where Palestinians live without even a pretense at equality. The unspoken truth behind the anti-judicial campaign being conducted by the Likud and the religious parties is that they hope to create a legal veneer behind which to make the lives of Palestinians — both those currently holding citizenship and those trapped in the occupied territories — so miserable that anyone with self-respect and means will decide to emigrate, leaving behind an utterly disempowered and depressed remnant.”
- [Rabbi Sharon Brous, Founder of IKAR](#): “Dr. King was right, that there is nothing more tragic than to sleep through a revolution. And a revolution is happening [in Israel] today, one that demands a new mental outlook, a new language, a new discourse. I know that there is great resistance among our American Jewish community to opening our hearts and minds to a new approach, and yet we must. For the love of Zion, we must... If you’re feeling helpless about what’s unfolding over there, there is one way forward. We must follow the lead of Israelis and Palestinians in the streets who are speaking a language of shared destiny. They reject the false binaries of pro-Israel, anti-Israel, pro-Palestine.”
- [American Jewish Leaders Statement on Bezalel Smotrich](#): “As American Jews committed to Israel’s future as a secure, Jewish, and democratic state; to a robust US-Israel

relationship; and to Jewish peoplehood that fully encompasses Israeli and Diaspora Jewish communities, we are opposed to Bezalel Smotrich visiting the United States later this month in his capacity as Israel's finance minister, and we call on all pro-Israel Americans to understand that welcoming Smotrich here will harm, rather than help, support for Israel. Smotrich has long expressed views that are abhorrent to the vast majority of American Jews, from anti-Arab racism, to virulent homophobia, to a full-throated embrace of Jewish supremacy. To this list, we can now add his endorsement of violence against innocents based on their ethnic heritage. We reject the notion that someone must be accorded respect simply by dint of serving in the Israeli government. His presence in the US to address primarily Jewish audiences would be an affront to American Jewish values, and he should not be given a platform in our community, all the more so in light of his most recent comments about Huwara."

