

EXPLAINER: Who's Who in the New Israeli Government

Parties in the new government span the ideological spectrum from progressive to Islamist to centrist to far-right, united by the common goal of defeating Netanyahu -- and little else. Although right-wing hardliner Naftali Bennett will serve first as Prime Minister in a rotation agreement with center-left leader Yair Lapid, he'll be far more constrained in his actions than Netanyahu was since he must maintain the backing of a much broader cabinet and coalition.

Here's a rundown of exactly who's who in the new coalition:



Naftali Bennett, Prime Minister | Yamina, 6 Seats

Bennett and his party Yamina are affiliated with the religious Zionist movement and closely tied to the settlement movement as well. They are situated on the right or far-right on issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They support annexation of much of the West Bank with Bennett going as far as to say that Palestinian statehood would be “national suicide” for Israel. He celebrated Donald Trump’s election by claiming “the era of a Palestinian state is over!”

Yamina will have three ministers: Bennet as PM, Ayelet Shaked as Minister of Interior and Matan Kahana as Minister of Religions.



Yair Lapid, Foreign Minister and Alternate Prime Minister | Yesh Atid, 17 Seats

The largest party in the new governing coalition, Yesh Atid, is a center-left party. Lapid led the complex and successful negotiations to bring this coalition together. He campaigned on ending corruption, strengthening oversight and limiting the power of the ultra-Orthodox in Israeli society. Yesh Atid favors a two-state solution and may seek to limit the construction of new settlements, though the Israeli-Palestinian issue is far from their top priority.

With 17 seats Yesh Atid will have seven ministers: Lapid as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and (after the rotation with Bennett) as Prime Minister, Merav Cohen as Minister for Social Equality, Yoel Razbozov as Minister of Tourism, Karin Elharar as Minister of Energy, Meir Cohen as Minister of Welfare, Orna Barbivay as Minister of Economy and Elazar Stern as Minister of Intelligence. Yesh Atid will also have Miki Levy as Speaker of the Knesset.



Benny Gantz, Defense Minister | Blue and White, 8 Seats

Gantz was Netanyahu’s main opponent through a series of elections in 2019 and 2020, but ultimately joined with Netanyahu to form a unity

government as the pandemic intensified. That controversial move split his party's alliance with Yesh Atid and angered many of their voters. He will remain Defense Minister in the incoming government, a position with significant authority over the occupied territories. Blue and White is not pro-settlement per se, but the party has said in the past that it plans to strengthen the main settlement blocs in the West Bank.

With eight seats Blue and White will have four ministers: Gantz as Minister of Defense, Pnina Tamano-Shata as Minister of Absorption and Immigration, Hili Tropper as Minister of Culture and Sports, Orit Farkash Cohen as Minister of Science and Innovation.



Merav Michaeli, Minister of Transportation | Labor Party, 7 Seats

The Labor Party, once the most dominant force in Israeli politics, has flirted with electoral oblivion in recent elections. Now, however, the party is relatively resurgent under the progressive, unapologetically anti-Netanyahu leadership of Merav Michaeli, who campaigned on gender equality, economic justice and supporting a two-state solution. While Labor does not tend to prioritize the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the party is likely to be a voice against settlement expansion and other

destructive measures.

Labor will have three ministers: Michaeli as Minister for Transportation, Omer Barlev as Minister of Internal Security, Nachman Shai as Minister for Diaspora Affairs.



Nitzan Horowitz, Minister of Health | Meretz, 6 Seats

Meretz is the most ideologically and stridently progressive member of the coalition, offering loud and enthusiastic support for a Palestinian state and Palestinian equality in Israel. They will likely be one of the few members of the coalition consistently raising concerns about the ongoing occupation and the cycle of injustice and violence. The party also campaigns on equal rights, social justice, LGBTQ+ rights, and action on climate change and will be in charge of the Ministry of Environmental

Protection. Its leader Nitzan Horowitz is the first openly gay leader of a major Israeli political party.

With six seats, Meretz will have three ministers: Horowitz as Minister of Health, Tamar Zandberg as Minister for the Environment, Issawi Frej as Minister for Regional Cooperation.



Gideon Sa'ar, Justice Minister | New Hope, 6 Seats

The New Hope Party is on the opposite side of the coalition's ideological spectrum from Meretz. Sa'ar is a former leading member of Netanyahu's Likud Party who split off in the midst of Netanyahu's corruption trials in an attempt to create a new, Netanyahu-less Likud. New Hope is committed to permanent control of the West Bank, supports settlement expansion and opposes Palestinian statehood.

New Hope will have four ministers: Sa'ar as Minister of Justice, Yifat Shasha Biton as Minister for Education, Zeev Elkin as Minister of Housing and Yoaz Hendel as Minister of Communication.



Avigdor Lieberman, Finance Minister | Yisrael Beiteinu, 7 Seats

Lieberman is another former Netanyahu disciple who has positioned himself as something of a powerbroker and wildcard in the making and breaking of governments. His party, supported primarily by Israel's large minority of Russian and Soviet immigrants, is right-wing on many issues. Lieberman himself trafficks in anti-Arab rhetoric, but tends to focus on domestic issues and works with secular Israeli parties in countering the influence of the ultra-orthodox.

Yisrael Beiteinu will have three ministers: Lieberman as Minister of Finance, Oded Furer as Minister of Agriculture and Hammed Amar as Minister in the Ministry of Finance.



Mansour Abbas | Ra'am / United Arab List, 4 Seats

For the first time in decades, this Israeli government will include a party of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel. Ra'am is a socially conservative Islamist party that finds some common ground with conservative Israeli Jews. Ra'am's support for the coalition hinges on promises to benefit Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel in urban planning, housing and protection from violence. Abbas is also looking to repeal discriminatory laws which privilege Jewish Israelis to the detriment of Arab Israelis.

Despite holding four seats, Ra'am will have no ministers in the new government. They will, however, have a significant say in policies related to Palestinian citizens of Israel.