



Written by [James Murphy](#) on June 3, 2021

Amid Newly Formed Israeli Coalition, Netanyahu Nearly Out as Prime Minister

The 12-year reign of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appears to be nearing an end, as an ideologically diverse coalition of parties has finally agreed upon a new unity government for the Jewish state. The parties reached a late-night agreement on Wednesday, an hour before Yesh Atid party leader Yair Lapid's mandate to form a new government was set to expire.

The coalition is headed by the centrist Yesh Atid Party, which finished second in the March election having won 18 seats in Israel's parliament, the Knesset. Other parties include the left-of-center Blue and White Party; far-right Yamina Party, right-of-center Labor, Yisrael Beiteinu and New Hope Parties; the far-left-wing Meretz Party, as well as the Arab nationalist United Arab List Party.

Lapid officially notified President Reuven Rivlin and Knesset Speaker Yariv Levin of the agreement late Wednesday night.

"I commit to you, Mr. President, that this government will work to serve all the citizens of Israel including those who aren't members of it, will respect those who oppose it, and do everything in its power to unite all parts of Israeli society," Lapid told Rivlin at 11:35pm — a mere 25 minutes before the deadline.

Naftali Bennett, former Netanyahu aide and current leader of the Yamina Party, is expected to serve as the next Israeli prime minister. Under a rotation agreement, Bennett would serve until September 2023, at which time Lapid would take over as prime minister.

Bennett has said he joined the so-called "change coalition" in order to rescue Israel from the ongoing instability in Israel's government. The country has held four general elections in the space of two and a half years as a result of Netanyahu's inability to form a lasting governing coalition despite his Likud Party having garnered the most seats in all but one of the elections.

Netanyahu was able to come to a deal with the Blue and White Party's Benny Gantz to form a unity government after the March 2020 general election, but that coalition fell apart in December 2020, when it was unable to come agree on the country's budget.

Bennett claimed that his decision to join with ideological opposites was made in order to prevent "dismantling the walls of the country, brick by brick, until our house falls in on us."



AP Images



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One would assume that the deal allowing Bennett to ascend to prime minister as the leader of a small party had something to do with it as well.

If finalized by a vote in Israel's Knesset, the 36th government in the State of Israel will include an Arab party as a signatory to a coalition for the first time, as the United Arab List, led by Mansour Abbas, agreed to join the government.

"The decision was hard and there were several disputes but it was important to reach agreements," Abbas told reporters after signing the deal. Abbas reportedly gained many concessions by playing Netanyahu against the coalition and said there were "many things in this agreement for the benefit of Arab society."

The vote to finalize the new government is expected by the middle of June, which leaves some time for possible defections of members of the Knesset (MKs).

The new coalition is an especially fragile one with left-wing, right-wing and centrist parties all participating. The one and only thing all of the parties seem to have in common is that they all wish to replace Netanyahu as prime minister.

In a last-ditch effort to retain power, the current prime minister called for "all Knesset members elected by right-wing votes" to oppose the new coalition, which the current prime minister has labeled a "dangerous left-wing government."

While it seems Netanyahu has lost some influence in Israel with his legal issues and his inability to create lasting coalitions in the past three years, he should remain an important figure in Israeli politics. Provided he's not jailed on bribery, breach of trust, and fraud charges, Netanyahu will remain the head of the country's largest opposition party, Likud, and his longtime experience as prime minister will make him a formidable opponent to the delicate coalition poised to take his place.

It would be a mistake to write off Netanyahu completely. Israel's current prime minister has survived a host of challenges to his authority. As a trusted war-time leader — always a concern in Israel — he remains popular with a wide segment of Israeli society.

And it will be a Red-Sea miracle if the coalition scheduled to take his place holds together in the long term.



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