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05.19.22

MK Zoabi resigns from Meretz coalition, handing Knesset majority to opposition

05.19.22

Meretz MK Zoabi resigns from coalition, handing Knesset majority to opposition
Left-wing lawmaker stuns rickety coalition with surprise departure; her Meretz factions demand she resigns from Knesset and vacates seat; right-wing elements in opposition rejoice

Yuval Karni | Published: 05.19.22, 14:06

Meretz MK Ghaida Rinawie Zoabi stunned Israel's rickety governing coalition on Thursday after she announced her resignation, breaking a fragile parliamentary deadlock in favor of the opposition.

The renegade legislator announced her resignation to Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Alternate Prime Minister Yair Lapid, leaving the coalition with just 59 members in the 120-seat legislature.

Her Meretz faction members, who were not notified of the move in advance, demanded she resigns from Knesset and vacates her seat.

This is a breaking news story

05.19.22

Gantz visits White House & Pentagon, to discuss Iran's nuclear ambitions

05.19.22

Gantz begins U.S. visit with high-profile talks in effort to drum up Iran pressure
Defense minister meets U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and is later set to hold talks with counterpart Lloyd Austin at Pentagon, with Gantz emphasizing need to 'prepare for future scenarios' with regards to Tehran

i24NEWS, Ynet | Published: 05.19.22, 12:33

Defense Minister Benny Gantz began his first official visit to the United States early Thursday by meeting with a host of high-ranking officials at the White House in an effort to drum up support for applying pressure on Iran over its nuclear ambitions.

The defense minister said two days ago that Iran has made significant strides vis-à-vis its nuclear program, and the cost of attacking the Iranian nuclear capabilities right now is much lower than a potential attack a year from now.

Upon his arrival, Gantz met with U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. A press release from Gantz's office said during the meeting the two emphasized the unique bond between the two countries as "one based both on shared values and mutual interests". He thanked Sullivan for the U.S. and President Joe Biden's commitment to the security cooperation between the respective defense establishment.

Gantz and Sullivan also discussed Iran's progression in its nuclear program alongside its destabilizing regional activities, emphasizing the need to work closely to prepare for any future scenarios.

"This would be conducted within the framework of Israel's excellent defense cooperation with the U.S. and growing ties with regional partners," the press release added.

Gantz debriefed Sullivan on the recent wave of terrorism that claimed 19 lives inside Israel and the West Bank. The two discussed Israel's ongoing operational activities, Gantz emphasizing that Israel will take "the measures necessary to defend its citizens and sovereignty."

"He added that Israel's defense establishment is continuing its policy of promoting confidence-building measures vis-a-vis Palestinian civilians that are not involved with terror activity," the press release stated.

The defense minister later in the day is set to hold talks with his American counterpart Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin at the Pentagon.

The two are likely to discuss Iran's nuclear ambitions, the war in Ukraine and its impact on the Middle East.

05.19.22

Iron Dome triggered on Lebanon border after misidentification of Israeli drone

05.19.22

Iron Dome triggered on Lebanon border after misidentification

Missile defense system operators, who believed a Hezbollah drone entered Israeli airspace from Lebanon, fired two interceptors at Israeli drone, which was not harmed in the incident; Air Force launches probe

Elisha Ben Kimon | Updated: 05.19.22, 11:29

Air raid sirens sounded off near Israel's northern border after the Iron Dome missile defense system misidentified and launched interceptors at Israeli drone.

Iron Dome operators, who believed a Hezbollah drone entered Israeli airspace from Lebanon, fired two interceptors at the drone, which was not harmed in the incident.

"Due to a misidentification, the air defense soldiers launched interceptors and as a result an alert was activated," the military said.

There were no reports of injuries or damage. The Israeli Air Force has opened an investigation into the incident.

Nofar, a resident of Moshav Even Menachem near the Lebanese border, told Ynet about her experience during the alarm.

"I heard the siren and then we heard blasts. The noise was really loud and I ran to the bomb shelters with the girl because I'm not taking any chances," she said.

"They sent us a message that an alarm was triggered after an aerial target was intercepted and then let us know that we can go back to normal. It was scary."

Last month, a rocket was launched from Lebanon into northern Israel and crashed in an open field near the town of Shlomi. No sirens sounded and there were no reports of injuries or damage in the incident.

Two hours later, the IDF fired artillery shells at several targets in south Lebanon.

The top security officials were preparing for rocket fire by pro-Palestinian actors hitting the southern Galilee as a "symbolic act" amid rising tensions around the al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan.

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05.18.22

Mount Meron Lag B'Omer festivities allow 16,000 people, 8,000 police

05.18.22

A year after disaster, thousands flock to Mount Meron for Lag B'Omer festivities

Attendance at this year's holiday event limited to 16,000 people who had to secure their tickets in advance; world's biggest hillula begins with lighting of candles in memory of 45 worshippers who perished during last year's stampede

Associated Press, Ynet | Published: 05.18.22, 20:44

Thousands of worshippers flocked to a Jewish holy site in northern Israel to pray and light memorial candles Wednesday under heavy police presence, a year after a chaotic stampede left 45 people dead there.

This year's Lag B'Omer holiday festivities at Mount Meron appeared orderly and began with a memorial ceremony for the victims of last year's tragedy, the largest civilian disaster in the country's history.

"We will remember the souls of the 45 pure saints who ascended to heaven," said the voice over the speaker as the names of those who perished were read one by one, and the Rebbe of the Boyan Hasidic dynasty lit 45 candles in their memory before lighting the traditional bonfire.

After the names had been read, Psalms were recited in the memory of the dead, followed by the prayer for the healing of the wounded.

Highways leading to the mountain were gridlocked hours ahead of the celebrations.

An independent commission of inquiry launched after the disaster last year looked into major **safety** lapses and overcrowding at the mountaintop site and recommended **limiting attendance** and revamping safety protocols and infrastructure.

Attendance this year is limited to 16,000 people who had to secure their tickets in advance. Police said around **8,000 police officers** would be **stationed** around the site to maintain order.

The **site** is believed to be the **burial place of a prominent second century rabbi**, and has drawn Jewish pilgrims and worshipers for centuries. The springtime festival is marked by large bonfires, singing and dancing.

On **Tuesday**, **police** said they **stopped** a **minibus near Mount Meron** carrying members of a **radical ultra-Orthodox** sect in possession of **box cutters, wire cutters, paint bombs** and other tools that officers suspected were **meant to vandalize** infrastructure at the site. At least **three** people were **arrested**.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said ahead of the holiday's commencement at sundown Wednesday that "the government of Israel has made a large investment in order to allow wide and safe participation."

"I ask the public to **act according** to the published guidelines and to **arrive with a ticket** in order that we can hold the festival safely," he said.

05.18.22

Thousands join civil defense, training civilians in seven sessions for armed patrols

05.18.22

Thousands of Israelis join civil defense amid terror wave

As security **forces** continue to **battle the terror wave**, the Israeli Police and Defense Ministry **launch the 'Home Guard' campaign**, **training civilians to participate in armed patrols in their hometowns** and be first responders **in the case of terror attacks**

Meir Turgeman | Published: **05.18.22**, 13:26

Amid an ongoing terror wave, **4,000 Israelis** have thus far stepped forward to **volunteer** in the **new civil defense** established **by** the Israel **Police** and the **Defense Ministry**.

Civilians will **undergo a short training period**, after which they would be **assigned to patrol the streets** of their residential areas, **armed** with weapons.

Yael Lahav, one of the 4,000 volunteers, is a 44-year-old mother of three from the northern city Kiryat Motzkin. Last Friday, Yael and 27 other volunteers completed the last of the project's **seven training sessions, qualifying them to carry arms** while on duty. "I'm counting down the minutes until I can put on the vest, sign on a weapon and go on patrol in the streets of my city," she said.

Yael said that she enrolled in the campaign one day after hearing of it because she had grown afraid for her **security amid the terror war**. "It was scary to wander the streets," she said. "I was worried for the children."

Adam Hakim, a 33-year-old from Tel Aviv, had recently completed his training.

Hakim is a doctor who specializes in neuroscience, and a new father to a four-month-old girl. He claims that taking part in the civil guard could give him a feeling of security to deal with potential terror attacks in future.

"Like many civilians, I had **no qualifications**, but the **course gave me basic tools** that would **allow me to respond in the case of a terror attack**," he said.

He also admitted that he does **not think volunteering is cause for praise**.

"I'm **protecting my family, friends, and surroundings**," he said. "It is the most **basic and necessary thing to do** as an Israeli civilian."

While participants are asked to devote a **minimum of four hours each week**, most sign up for more.

The new volunteers who enrolled since the public campaign was **launched six weeks ago**, make up **26% of the civil defense**, which has a total of 24,000 people registered.

Most of the volunteers are **assigned to help the Border Police** and forces **enforcing traffic laws**.

The volunteers are made up of 85% men and 15% women, and while **77% are Jewish**, **12% are Muslims**. The Jewish volunteers say they want to be first responders in case of an attack, and the Muslims are mostly concerned for their safety in the face of increasing violence across the Arab communities.

Security officials expressed their gratitude for the collective effort of civilians.

"The Israeli Police is small for the scope of its tasks and there was a dire need to incorporate civilians **especially to deal with the terror wave**," an official said.

"It is moving to discover that thousands of civilians responded to our campaign and came forward asking to volunteer and put into action the **slogan** we chose - '**Home Guard**', it is as simple as it sounds," he said.

05.18.22

Thousands of soldiers & reserve in three-week exercise; simulate attack on Iran

05.18.22

Israel to simulate attack on Iran in military drill

Thousands of soldiers and reservists are set to participate in the 'Chariots of Fire' exercise, as preparation for potential military strike against Iran; Gantz to travel to U.S as USCENTCOM commander arrives in Israel to meet Chief of Staff
i24NEWS, Ynet | Published: 05.18.22, 12:03

The IDF will simulate a strike on targets far from the country's borders by deploying many aircraft on different fronts in a large-scale exercise called "Chariots of Fire," Israel's military announced Tuesday.

The army, which is considering several military options against Iran in the event of a failure of nuclear talks between the West and the Islamic Republic, will train for one of the possible options.

Thousands of soldiers and reservists are participating in the exercise, which involves all commands, the air force and navy, as well as regular and reserve forces.

The purpose of the three-week exercise is to improve the readiness of the entire military and examine troops' ability to conduct a robust and sustained campaign against enemy forces on multiple fronts simultaneously.

According to the military, if a comprehensive campaign erupts in the country's north, Iran could act against Israel. In addition, Israel's military is also preparing for the possibility that Tehran's proxies in Yemen, Syria and Iraq could target Israeli territory with missiles or suicide drones.

Simultaneously, the IDF is continuing to conduct military exercises within Israel's borders, amid the ongoing terror wave that has thus far claimed the lives of 19 Israelis over the last several weeks.

On Tuesday, the IDF decided to abort a planned military exercise in the city of Umm al-Fahm, the third-largest Arab city in Israel, answering to the city's mayor requests.

On the sidelines of the stalled Iranian nuclear talks and while domestic counterterror efforts were continuing, Defense Minister Benny Gantz traveled to the United States to meet with his American counterpart Lloyd Austin for discussions on the Iranian issue and the evolving changes and threats in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the Commander-in-Chief of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), General Michael Erik Kurilla, arrived in Israel for talks with Chief of Staff Aviv Kochavi on bilateral collaborations in intelligence and operations.

05.17.22

Iran working on 1,000 advanced centrifuges at new underground sites, Gantz warns

05.17.22

Iran working on advanced centrifuges at new underground sites, Gantz warns
Defense minister says Tehran making an effort to complete manufacturing and installation of 1,000 additional advanced centrifuges; adds the price of stopping Iran now would be lower than a year from today
Reuters, Ynet | Published: 05.17.22, 11:57

Defense Minister Benny Gantz warned Tuesday that Iran has made significant strides vis-à-vis its nuclear program, partly by installing advanced uranium centrifuges at new sites near its Natanz nuclear facility.

Speaking at a conference by the Institute for Policy and Strategy at Reichman University, the defense minister said that "Iran is making an effort to complete the manufacturing and installation of 1,000 additional advanced IR6 centrifuges in its nuclear facilities, including new facilities being built at underground sites near Natanz".

Gantz's statement echoed a March 3 report by the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which stated that Iran had installed or planned to install a total of three IR6 cascades, amounting to around 660 machines - as well as IAEA chief Rafael Grossi's April report, which stated that Iran had set up a new underground Natanz workshop for making centrifuge parts, an apparent precaution against attacks.

The defense minister further stated that "the cost of such a future war, which we hope will not happen, can be prevented or reduced [with tougher negotiations by world powers]."

Gantz added that the Iranian threat is not exclusively nuclear, but also regional: "[Tehran] is developing operational systems throughout the region with accurate capabilities of cruise missiles, surface-to-surface missiles and UAVs, all with a range of thousands of kilometers.

"The amount of strategic weapons in Iran's arsenal has increased significantly in the past year," said Gantz, adding he intends to bring up all these challenges in his meeting with the U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin - scheduled to take place Wednesday at noon. Gantz also referred to the recent flurry of terror attacks around Israel, saying that the attacks "are connected to each other and were inspired by terrorist organizations via incitement that does not receive sufficient condemnation from the world and the leaders of the region."

According to Gantz, a political initiative is crucial if Israel intends to address the situation and simmer the rising tension levels.

"We will continue our political effort to strengthen our relations with our neighbors in the region and our supporters around the world, out of willingness to make efforts to reduce the conflict, and strive for political arrangements between us and the Palestinians." Gantz further referred to the war in Ukraine, which taught Israel that "it's right to exercise one's economic and political power, and if needs be military force, as early as possible in order to maybe prevent a possible war."

Reuters contributed to this story

05.17.22

Hezbollah & allies lose majority in Lebanese Elections, Christian party is winner

05.17.22

Hezbollah and allies lose majority in Lebanese parliament, final results show

Elections reflect polarized split between pro and anti-Hezbollah lawmakers, hampering desperately needed reforms for the poverty ridden country; nationalist Christian Lebanese Forces party emerges as biggest winner

Reuters| Published: 05.17.22, 17:05

Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group and its allies lost their parliamentary majority, final elections results showed Tuesday, while more than a dozen independent newcomers gained seats.

The outcome signaled a shift in a country devastated by an ongoing financial meltdown and soaring poverty.

Final results for Sunday's elections showed no clear majority for any group, indicating a fragmented and deeply polarized parliament, divided between pro and anti-Hezbollah lawmakers who will find it difficult to work together to form a new government and enact desperately needed reforms.

The Hezbollah-led coalition won 61 seats in the 128-member legislature, a drop of 10 members since the last vote was held four years ago - a loss largely due to setbacks suffered by the group's political partners. The loss was not expected to weaken the Iran-backed group's domination of Lebanese politics, and all 13 Hezbollah candidates who ran got elected.

Still, the results were hailed as a breakthrough for groups opposed to Hezbollah and the country's other mainstream political parties blamed for the collapse, introducing more new independent faces than was expected.

Hezbollah's most vocal opponents, the nationalist Christian Lebanese Forces party, emerged as the biggest winner, while its Christian rival, the Free Patriotic Movement founded by President Michel Aoun, suffered a political setback.

Though Christian, the Free Patriotic Movement is an ally of the Shiite Muslim Hezbollah. The Lebanese Forces now has the largest bloc in parliament with 21 seats, overtaking the Free Patriotic Movement, which now holds 18 seats, a drop of three seats from the previous vote.

Despite the setback, Hezbollah and its main Shiite ally, the Amal group of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, retained the 27 seats allocated to the Shiite sect.

Independents and newcomers, including those from the 2019 protest movement, scooped 14 seats. That was a major achievement considering they went into the vote fragmented and facing intimidation and threats by entrenched mainstream parties.

Their showing sends a strong message to ruling class politicians who have for decades held on to their seats and despite an economic meltdown that has impoverished the country and triggered the biggest wave of emigration since the 1975-90 civil war.

"The results show that the Lebanese mood is against this ruling class and is also against the political alignment with Iran," said Lebanese Forces official Wissam Raji. "The Lebanese know that the situation has become disastrous and the solution is not in the hands of the ruling class."

"The solution lies in radical change in the political map of Lebanon at all levels," said Raji, whose group took part in most governments until October 2019.

The results also portend a sharply polarized parliament, divided between pro and anti-Hezbollah lawmakers who will find it difficult to work together to form a new government and pass laws needed to enact reforms for a financial recovery in Lebanon. With two main blocs - Hezbollah and the Lebanese Forces - opposed to each other, analysts said the results could lead to more paralysis at a time when the country desperately needs unity.

The spokesman for the U.N. Secretary-General, Stephane Dujarric, called for the "swift formation of an inclusive government" that can finalize an agreement with the International Monetary Fund and accelerate the implementation of reforms necessary to set Lebanon on the path to recovery.

The U.N. urged "the new Parliament to urgently adopt all legislation necessary to stabilize the economy and improve governance," Dujarric said.

The biggest loss came to Hezbollah's allies with close links to Syrian President Bashar Assad's government, including deputy parliament speaker Elie Ferzli, Druze politician Talal Arslan who had held a seat for three decades, Asaad Hardan and Faisal Karami, son of late Premier Omar Karami.

Sunday's parliamentary elections were the first since Lebanon's economic meltdown began in late 2019. The government's factions have done virtually nothing to address the collapse, leaving Lebanese to fend for themselves as they plunge into poverty, without electricity, medicine, garbage collection or any other semblance of normal life.

The vote is also the first since a deadly explosion at Beirut's port in August 2020 that killed more than 200, wounded thousands and damaged parts of the capital.

05.16.22

Bennett and Netanyahu lampoon one another in Knesset tempest

05.16.22

Bennett and Netanyahu lampoon one another in Knesset tempest
PM excoriates predecessor over handling of Hamas, pandemic and accuses opposition of pushing for endless election cycles; opposition leader equates government to sinking of Titanic

Moran Azulay | Published: 05.16.22, 23:35

A rowdy Knesset session Monday saw Prime Minister Naftali Bennett bash his predecessor Opposition Leader Benjamin Netanyahu who responded in kind with his own scathing criticism.

Speaking at the plenum during a discussion initiated at the request of 40 members of the opposition, Bennett responded to criticism leveled at him from the opposition benches, all while accentuating his coalition's achievements.

"We are now almost a year after the formation of the Israeli government. This year, we have saved the country from a state of deep neglect," the premier said.

"One year ago, I talked about the level of unemployment which today is minuscule. We took responsibility and there hasn't been a single day of [coronavirus-induced] lockdown. It's called management."

The prime minister also touched on the rising security tensions around the country, as well as Hamas leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar — who was released in 2011 under Netanyahu as part of a prisoner exchange deal with the terror group.

"The leader of Hamas was released by my predecessor. And unlike the policy of the previous government that only could get hit by rockets — 13,000 rockets — and do nothing, we are attacking," added Bennett as he continued blasting Netanyahu's previous governments and the current opposition.

"Don't even get me started on the massive Iranian abyss you left us. You preferred more and more elections. The opposition's vision is elections, and the government's vision is jobs and livelihood."

Shortly after, Netanyahu took the stand, and blamed the recent flurry of terror attacks on what he described as the government's weakness and lack of deterrence.

"Terrorism rears its head, claims victims, harms wonderful people, including the brave service men and women who protect us," said Netanyahu.

"We all see the raging incitement of our adversaries, the calls to expel Jews, the T-shirts with rifle prints, the [Palestinian Liberation Organization] flags flying at the Jaffa Gate and in Mamilla [in Jerusalem] and in the center of Lod," Netanyahu said, winning jeers from MK Ayman Odeh, the head of the predominately Arab Joint List.

"Naftali Bennett... you established this fraudulent government, you said that an experiment is being done here. The State of Israel is not an experiment, everyone understands that your experiment did not pan out. You are gambling with the lives of all of us, and we are all paying the price. Like compulsive gamblers, you don't know when to quit. And like on the Titanic, the orchestra on deck keeps playing as the ship sinks. Everyone understands that what is sinking this government is its lack of morals," added

Netanyahu, who further claimed that world leaders were calling him to express their concerns about the situation in Israel.

"In a short time span, you transformed the State of Israel into a country no one gives two licks about. ... Into a country one can't walk around in the streets, your weakness exudes." The opposition leader also lauded former coalition whip Idit Silman and MK Amichai Chikli, both of whom are members of Bennett's Yamina party who resigned from the coalition, saying "they represent the public that sent you to the Knesset."

05.16.22

Israel looks to double gas output to Europe via liquefaction & pipelines

05.16.22

Israel ramping up gas output, looks to help supply Europe

Expanded production aims to replace Russian supply as Ukraine war worsens energy crunch across continent; Energy Ministry official says hopes sides can reach a framework agreement by summer

Reuters| Published: 05.16.22, 18:41

Israel is boosting offshore natural gas output and aims to reach a supply agreement with Europe in the coming months as the continent looks to replace Russian supply.

The country is on track in the next few years to double production to about 40 billion cubic meters (bcm) from about 20 bcm as it expands current projects and brings new fields online, industry officials say.

Israel currently supplies its own market and through a local network of pipelines exports to neighbors Egypt and Jordan, while much of the additional gas is earmarked for Europe.

"The hope is to create a relatively fast working process and already during the summer to reach a framework agreement," said Lior Schillat, director general of the Energy Ministry, during a recent visit to the drillship at Karish, a gas field some 90 km off Israel's coast due to come on line later this year.

Its owner, London-based Energean, recently discovered more deposits nearby.

"At the beginning, it will be small amounts and slowly, as production and delivery capacities rise, (the amounts) will increase," Schillat said.

Agreements like this, he said, are usually first reached between governments and deals are then finalized in the private sector. Realistically this would help Europe no sooner than 2024, he said, without specifying which countries or groups would potentially be involved.

Choosing a supply route is a challenge that requires navigating the region's politics, but one option would be to export to Europe via liquefaction plants in Egypt and then pipe it north via pipelines which are in various planning stages.

A floating liquefied natural gas (FLNG) facility, also being discussed, would allow shipments to Europe directly from Israel.

Other possibilities include the proposed EastMed pipeline, an ambitious and costly project that would connect the gas fields to mainland Europe, or a shorter pipeline to Turkey.

Egypt is the quickest route to Europe, an FLNG would offer independence from any transit country, while a direct pipeline would provide the cheapest end-consumer price but take longer to build, gas consultant Gina Cohen said in a report presented to both Israel's Foreign Ministry and the European Parliament.

"Israel must act as quickly as possible as the window to sign contracts and become a significant gas supplier to Europe will only be opened for a limited time," Cohen said. Israel, Cyprus and Greece have already signed an agreement to build an underwater power cable linking their electricity grids and offer back-up power during emergencies.

Europe, due to the war in Ukraine, is looking to halt supply from Russia, provider of about 40% of its natural gas. Russian deliveries last year totaled around 155 bcm. Israeli gas would help Europe diversify, along with supply from others such as the United States and Qatar.

05.15.22

Netanyahu Case 4000 fourth hidden discrepancy to indictment; may declare mistrial

05.15.22

Prosecutors ask to revise indictment in Netanyahu corruption case

Request comes after former prime minister's defense managed to find discrepancies between allegations presented in indictment bill and evidence presented in court

Gilad Morag | Published: 05.15.22, 22:56

Prosecutors on Sunday asked the Jerusalem District Court to revise the indictment in Opposition Leader Benjamin Netanyahu's corruption case after the ongoing cross-examination of a key witness revealed contradictions.

According to a statement from the State Attorney's Office, prosecutors are seeking to change a line alleging that Netanyahu instructed state witness Shlomo Filber to provide regulatory benefits to communications mogul Shaul Elovitch during a meeting on an unknown date after appointing him director-general of the Communications Ministry, to a meeting on an unknown date after Netanyahu decided to appoint him to the post.

This comes after the defense managed to prove in court that the date of the meeting mentioned in the indictment bill contradicts the evidence presented.

Filber, a former confidant of the ex-premier, is a state witness in **Case 4000** which alleges that Netanyahu promoted regulations to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars to benefit Elovitch in return for **positive coverage on his Walla! news website**. Netanyahu is charged along with Elovitch and his wife. They all deny any wrongdoing.

Netanyahu claims he is the victim of a witch hunt orchestrated by hostile media, police and prosecutors.

Sources in Netanyahu's orbit doubled down on his claims and **called to declare a mistrial**.

"The **prosecution's wild lashing must end**. They **amended the indictment four times**, and they probably **will not rest until they get Netanyahu's head**," they said.

"**For two years, the prosecution hid from the court and the public the unequivocal evidence that contradicted its claim**. Enough, there is a limit."

Last year, prosecutors amended the **indictment**, **removing any mention of the Likud leader's family**.

05.15.22

Gantz to challenge Nation-State Law with equality bill to add Arabic language

05.15.22

Gantz to challenge Nation-State Law with fresh equality bill

Defense chief says **'time has come to enshrine individual equality into Basic Law'** in a move that could put him on **a collision course with PM Bennett** and his nationalist Yamina party

Moran Azulay | Published: **05.15.22**, 18:44

Defense Minister Benny **Gantz** and his **Blue & White party** **will table a bill** aiming to **amend** the controversial so-called Nation-State Law, Ynet has learned on Sunday, which could put him on a collision course with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and his nationalist Yamina party.

The quasi-constitutional Nation-State Law, or Basic Law: **Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People** as it is officially known, was **passed in 2018** and **enshrined** Israel's **Jewish identity into law**. It also **downgrades the Arabic language** spoken by the country's sizeable Arab minority from a co-official language alongside Hebrew to a "special status" language.

Non-Jewish and liberal Jewish groups have long **called to amend the law to include civil equality for all** citizens to safeguard the state's democratic character alongside its Jewish identity.

Gantz confirmed on Twitter his **intention to challenge the law** in the Knesset after any such attempts were put on the back burner in recent months after running into headwinds from Yamina.

"The time has come to enshrine individual equality into Basic Law. Led by [Blue & White faction chairman] MK Eitan Ginzburg, Blue & White will resubmit the Equality Law for a vote in the Ministerial Committee for Legislation, after it was rejected a few months ago," he tweeted.

"I call on all members of the government to support the law, and I hope we can promote it for the benefit of all citizens of Israel and the State of Israel."

The proposed bill will guarantee that all citizens of Israel are regarded as equal before the law and that no individual's rights are abridged on account of their faith, race, gender or any other reason.

The initiative comes as non-Jewish communities and some Israeli politicians renewed their calls to amend the law, chief among them is Israel's Druze population after the IDF revealed the identity of special ops commander Mahmoud Kehir el-Din from the Druze village of Hurfeish, who died in a botched intelligence operation in Gaza four years ago. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett hailed him as a hero who dedicated his life to the security of Israel.

Finance Minister Avigdor Liberman said it was the time for legislators from all sides of the political spectrum to consider amending the controversial legislation.

"There is a distinct gap between the Nation-State Law as it was passed, and the praise given to the heroic Mahmoud Kehir el-Din, may he rest in peace," Liberman said.

"This is the opportunity to amend the law and make the Declaration of Independence part of the Basic Law. I call on the coalition and opposition alike to reconsider their position on the Druze community beyond naming them 'brothers in arms,' and to do the right thing."

The Declaration of Independence is Israel's founding document and details the character of the state as envisioned by its founders, including full civil equality. However, the document has no binding legal status.

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid later retweeted Liberman's post, adding he agrees "with every word".

On social media, Druze citizens called on Liberman to take action to amend the law, which they say is offensive to the community that has traditionally served in Israel's armed forces.

On Sunday, Druze religious leader Sheikh Moafaq Tarif called on all Knesset factions to act together to amend the law to comport with the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

"I would like to believe and hope that elected leaders on the right, left and center will rise above their differences to heal an open wound," he said.

Blue & White's Ginzburg said a bill to enshrine the Declaration of Independence into Basic Law can be ready for a vote in the ministerial committee as early as Sunday.

05.15.22

Israel's Druze-Arabs call to amend Hebrew language Law to include Arabic

05.15.22

Israel's Druze renew calls to amend controversial Nation State Law

Druze advocates, backed by Liberman and Lapid, say supporting community only in words not enough and change to contentious bill is due, after IDF revealed identity of Druze special op's commander killed in botched 2018 Gaza operation

Daniel Salami | Published: 05.15.22, 15:29

The Druze community and some Israeli politicians on Sunday renewed calls to amend the controversial Nation State Law, which they say discriminates against the non-Jewish citizens of Israel.

The government passed the Nation State Law in 2018 amid states criticism that it targets Israel's Arab speaking minority. The law defines Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people and strips the Arabic language from its status as an official language alongside Hebrew, defining it as a language with "special status".

The calls from community leaders shortly after the IDF revealed the identity of a special op's commander - Mahmoud Kehir el-Din from the Druze village of Hurfeish - who died in a botched intelligence operation in Gaza four years ago.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett hailed him as a hero who dedicated his life to the security of Israel.

Finance Minister Avigdor Liberman said it was the time for legislators from all sides of the political spectrum to consider amending the controversial legislation.

"There is a distinct gap between the Nation State Law as it was passed, and the praise given to the heroic Mahmoud Kehir el-Din, may he rest in peace," Liberman said.

"This is the opportunity to amend the law and make the Declaration of Independence part of the Basic Law. I call on the coalition and opposition alike to reconsider their position on the Druze community beyond naming them 'brothers in arms,' and to do the right thing," Liberman said.

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid later retweeted Liberman's post, adding he agrees "with every word".

On social media, Druze citizens called on Liberman to take action to change the law, which they say is offensive to the community that have traditionally served in Israel's armed forces.

On Sunday, Druze religious leader Sheikh Moafaq Tarif called on all Knesset factions to act together to amend the law based on the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

"I would like to believe and hope that elected leaders on the right, left and center, will rise above their differences to heal an open wound," he said.

Blue & White faction chair MK Eitan Ginzburg said a bill to make the Declaration of Independence into a Basic Law can be ready for a vote in the ministerial committee as early as Sunday.

05.15.22

West Bank settler avoids prison for shooting Palestinian after plea deal

05.15.22

West Bank settler avoids prison for shooting Palestinian after plea deal

Eitan Ze'ev to serve six months of community service and pay his victim NIS 80,000 in compensation; defense lawyers say they are pleased with plea agreement as evidence lacking in prosecution's case

Gilad Cohen| Published: 05.15.22, 14:09

A West Bank settler who shot and wounded a Palestinian will remain out of jail, according to a plea bargain agreement with the prosecution.

Eitan Ze'ev was sentenced to six months community service and will pay his victim NIS 80,000 in compensation, both sides agreed.

According to an indictment filed in September of 2020, Ze'ev was charged with causing grievous bodily harm after he shot a Palestinian man during a confrontation between settlers and Palestinian farmers. The man was injured and taken to hospital where he underwent an operation to treat wounds to his leg and upper body.

Following the plea bargain, the charges were amended to claim Ze'ev intended to fire a warning shot near the ear of one of the Palestinians, but the bullet wounded a man standing behind him.

Settlement officials said the altercation occurred when dozens of Palestinians carrying sticks and iron bars, confronted a number of settlers working land they claimed ownership of.

The Palestinians said the settlers accosted Palestinian farmers near the Dolev settlement, and when others from a near by village arrived at the scene, the Ze'ev opened fire and wounded two of the Palestinians.

Lawyers for the defendant said they were pleased with the results of the plea bargain agreement which they claim showed the difficulty of the prosecution to provide evidence of wrong doing on the part of their client.

05.15.22

Arab students at Tel Aviv University clash with pro-Israel protesters on Nakba Day

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Arab students at Tel Aviv University clash with pro-Israel protesters on Nakba Day
Police say 3 pro-Arab demonstrators arrested for assaulting an officer and disturbing the peace during the rally; right-wing movement activists claim to have been attacked by Arab protesters at the scene

Adam Kotev | Published: 05.15.22, 13:57

Pro-Israel demonstrators on Sunday clashed with Arab students at Tel Aviv University during a demonstration marking the Nakba Day, which mourns the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

According to the police, two Jewish demonstrators were pushed after attempting to reach the Arab side of the rally, while three pro-Palestinian protesters were arrested for assaulting an officer and disturbing the peace during the protest commemorating the so-called Palestinian Catastrophe.

The demonstration saw dozens of Arab students telling stories about "civilians killed by occupation soldiers," and reciting poems by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. The pro-Israel protesters, meanwhile, shouted various anti-Nakba slogans, and called for "the terrorists" to "go home".

Activists of the right-wing "Im Tirtzu" movement claimed to have been attacked by Arab protesters at the scene. "Palestinian terrorism rears its head," said Matan Asher, the movement's spokesperson.

"I myself was attacked. Arab students attacked our activists with their fists, and one of them was taken to the hospital."

Yossi Levy, 50, who took part in the pro-Israel protest, said he had come to demonstrate against "Palestinian cancer" and against those "who are taking over educational institutions, the Knesset and every place in the country".

Joint List MK Aida Touma-Sliman, meanwhile, tweeted that she herself attended the Nakba Day "ceremony" at the university, praising the "impressive young people who insist on holding an event that reveals the truth about the history of this place."

In addition, the Knesset member called the pro-Israel demonstrators Israel "fascists".

Joint List Chairman Ayman Odeh also expressed support for the protesters in a tweet. "Now, at Tel Aviv University, male and female students mark Nakba Day, not succumbing to arrests and police violence."

Sarah Cohen, 45, who came to support the Arab demonstrators, said: "I came to support the freedom of the Palestinian people. I am disgusted by what is happening on the far-right [led by lawmaker Itamar Ben Gvir] and his ilk, who are destroying our country."

The police said in response: "The Israel Police will allow the freedom of protest but will not allow a breach of public order in the place".

05.15.22

Condolences on death of UAE President; US will be represented by VP Harris

05.15.22

World leaders pay respects in UAE after death of pro-West president

President Herzog due to travel to UAE as France's Macron, UK's Johnson, and other leaders expected to arrive in Gulf nation Sunday and Monday; de facto leader Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed assumes role of president

Reuters| Published: 05.15.22, 12:20

World leaders began descending on the United Arab Emirates on Sunday to offer condolences on the death of President Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan, who was succeeded by his half-brother and de facto leader Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed.

President Issac Herzog, representing Israel, with which the UAE forged ties two years ago in a major realignment of the Middle East, drawing Palestinian ire, was also due on Sunday as was the Palestinian president and Britain's prime minister.

Sheikh Mohammed, now ruler of wealthy Abu Dhabi emirate, steered the Western-allied Gulf state, an OPEC oil producer and regional business hub, for years before being elected the UAE's third president by a federal supreme council on Saturday.

French President Emmanuel Macron, whose country holds lucrative business and military ties with the UAE, arrived in Abu Dhabi and in a Twitter post paid tribute to Sheikh Khalifa's "values of peace, openness and dialogue".

U.S. President Joe Biden, whose administration has had fraught ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia, will be represented by Vice President Kamala Harris, due to visit on Monday.

Several Arab leaders, including Jordan's king and Egypt's president, paid respects on Saturday. Saudi Arabia's crown prince, whose father King Salman entered hospital a week ago, sent a delegation.

Sheikh Mohammed, known as MbZ, has been a driving force in Middle East politics, championing Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the West as he rose to power and combating political Islam, seen as a threat to Gulf dynastic rule, around the region.

MbZ deepened ties with Russia and China as Gulf states increasingly questioned the regional commitment of traditional security guarantor the United States. Strains in U.S.-Emirati ties were highlighted by the Ukraine conflict as Gulf states refused to side with Western allies in isolating Russia.

After years of enmity Abu Dhabi has also moved to engage with Iran and Turkey as the UAE doubles down on economic growth amid rising regional competition and a global push away from hydrocarbons, the lifeblood of Gulf economies.

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Ynet-News, May 14, 2022 – Saturday

05.13.22 – Fr- - - News Placed in May 13 spot – Friday
PA journalist funeral riot, resumed raid on Jenin, an Israeli police officer killed

05.12.22 – Th- - - News
Likud activist & Netanyahu fan arrested for sending threatening letters to PM

05.12.22 – Th- - - News Placed in May 14 spot – Saturday
Israel approves 4,427 settler homes after demolish of 18 in W. Bank

05.12.22 – Th- - - News
NATO expect Finland & Sweden membership as Ukraine shut gas flows

05.11.22 – We- - - News Placed in May 12 spot – Thurssday
Kosovo moving embassy to Jerusalem: EU allies & Turkey tried to reverse decision

05.11.22 – We- - - News
Gaza weapons ship & three smugglers seized by Israeli Navy & Shin Bet

05.11.22 – We- - - News
Jordan king meets Biden Friday; issue of Jerusalem main topic for Waqf control