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7.21.23 – Fr  
Netanyahu says efforts underway to reach judicial bill final vote Monday

7.21.23 – Fr

Netanyahu says efforts underway to reach compromise on judicial bill

Prime Minister says his proposed legislation would not make Israel less of a liberal democracy but divisions in the military would, referring to the growing number of volunteers saying they would no longer serve; protests held across the country  
Moran Azulay|13:13

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday that there were talks underway to reach a broad agreement on the final wording of the first bill in his judicial overhaul that is scheduled for a final vote on Monday and would prevent judicial oversight over the executive branch.

"A change to the reasonability clause will only strengthen democracy," Netanyahu said, "but refusing to serve in the IDF reserves, in endangering democracy because the military answers to the government and not the other way around and those who now refuse to serve must understand that others will do the same under different circumstances."

Netanyahu said that after three months of talks with the opposition, his opponents refused to reach an agreement, accusing them of pandering to the public protests that have been held for some seven months including during the prime minister's televised address. "Some seek chaos so that they can topple the government," he said and claimed that without the bidding of the opposition, he made changes to the bill. "I will not go into detail now but the claim that this law will destroy democracy is baseless," he said. He repeated his assertion that Israel would remain a liberal democracy and that he as the prime minister of all Israelis was working for their benefit.

Netanyahu had been in consultations with Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, a close ally, and Attorney Michael Rabello, who often represents him in litigation in front of the Supreme Court. According to sources, some of his advisers were pressuring him to make certain changes to the bill even without the opposition's agreement while coalition partners were exerting their pressure to pass the bill as it was approved earlier by the Constitution, Law Justice committee headed by Religious Zionism member Simcha Rothman, one of the architects of the judicial legislation and a far-right activist who has long preached against the Supreme Court.

Protesters took to the streets again on Thursday causing major disruption to traffic, and blocking highways in Tel Aviv, Ra'anana, Beer Sheva and other locations as police used mounted officers and water cannons to remove them.

A protest march to Jerusalem made up of the various groups opposed to the legislation: former members of elite IDF units including the Air Force, representatives of the High-Tech industry, medical professionals, academic groups and others - that began on Tuesday night is expected to end in a mass rally outside the Knesset on Saturday while the coalition and its supporters planned their own demonstration, in support of the judicial overhaul, next week.

Following the prime minister's speech another group of reserve soldiers serving in the military's special units said they will no longer serve.

7.20.23 – Th

Ben-Gvir & Zohar staged video of troop support denied for supporting reform

7.20.23 – Th

Ministers blast judicial reform criticism in army, face backlash

Video showing Air Force pilots demanding to know if the ground forces supported the judicial overhaul or not, likely means to whip up right-wing frenzy over refusal by some Air Force reservists to volunteer amid judicial legislation

Yoav Zitun, Ilana Curiel, Moran Azulay|Updated:10:31

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Likud's Culture and Sports Minister Miki Zohar on Thursday posted on their social media pages a staged video showing Israeli ground troops in Lebanon asking for air support in the middle of battle - and the pilots in response ask them whether or not they support the coalition's judicial reform. When the soldier does not respond, an explosion is seen on the ground, and a dying soldier then says: "My brothers, from right and left, don't play politics in the army."

After a barrage of condemnation, including from families of fallen IDF soldiers, Zohar deleted the clip but not before it was viewed 45,000 times and shared by many. Ben-Gvir did not remove it from his platforms where he received 7,600 likes and was shared 2,600 times. "I don't intend to remove the video, which illustrates well the danger of refusal," he said in a statement posted to his social media accounts.

A growing number of volunteers have said they would no longer serve after legislation to curb the power of the Supreme Court is passed in what they see as the first step in the coalition's assault on Israel's democracy. They mostly hold critical positions in the Air Force, intelligence and cyber warfare and in elite combat units.

"The video in question is meant to illustrate the concrete danger in the attempt by a tiny minority to refuse to show up for reserve duty and to incite others. Anyone who refuses to show up due to the reform, whether from the Air Force or another part of the military, endangers the security of the citizens of Israel," Ben-Gvir said adding, "I am happy that the vast majority of our heroic soldiers and pilots serve and protect us and our children unconditionally." Ben-Gvir himself had not served in the IDF because of his numerous arrests and his membership in the racist movement led by Meir Kahana who the U.S. had designated a terrorist.

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant took to his own social media to condemn the clip that he said was an attempt to sever the unity of servicemembers, on land, air and sea, apart. "There cannot be an attack on the IDF in order to score political points," he said. "Leave the IDF out of this."

While both Ben-Gvir and Zohar say they sought to underline a sense of fraternity, some have argued that the video appears to try to whip up a right-wing frenzy ahead of a

planned right-wing march on Sunday in solidarity with the government's legislation.

"We, bereaved families who lost their loved ones for the sake of a Jewish and democratic state, are shocked and hurt to the depths of our souls," a group of bereaved families said in a statement. "Distributing a video with the staged effects of a war dishonors our fallen and us. In the name of our loved ones who had the battlefield etched on their flesh, for the protection of a Jewish and democratic state, we are ashamed and embarrassed," they said, primarily directing their comments at Zohar.

IDF spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari called the clip an "attempt to sow internal discord" in the military. "We completely reject all statements against the commanders and fighters of the regular and reserve Air Force. These are the best fighters and commanders in the IDF, who risk their lives night after night." He also said that there was unquestioned camaraderie between the Air Force fighters and the ground troops, "who work together as one army for the security of the State of Israel."

Opposition lawmakers were also outraged. "Perhaps it is symbolic that the nuclear group that leads the judicial overhaul, except for Netanyahu, did not risk themselves on the battlefield, but enjoy preaching to those who did," said former IDF chief of staff and

"I'm turning to you after watching the shocking propaganda video you published against the refusal protest," IDF widow Hani Oren wrote to Zohar. "In the last seven months, I feel like I'm losing the country that I paid in blood for its existence. This film makes a caricature of fighters on the battlefield. It's a terrible injury, a complete lack of boundaries."

Hani Oren, who lost her husband David Cohen in the 1973 Yom Kippur War was horrified by Zohar's post. "It took tens of thousands of views to delete this shocking thing," she said. "Where did he get this monstrous idea from? It's not real. You don't understand what something like this does. It turns your stomach. It's unbelievable." Another bereaved brother wrote in families' WhatsApp group: "I am trembling all over. My brother's oath was to protect the democracy he was born into, certainly not for Miki Zohar, Dudi Amsalem, Netanyahu and the group of criminals, thieves and robbers who betrayed the fallen IDF soldiers and their families. This will not pass in silence." First published: 18:28, 07.20.23

7.20.23 – Th

President Herzog enthalls US members of Congress in historic speech

7.20.23 – Th

To the power of 30: President Herzog enthalls US members of Congress in historic speech

Amid the setting of Capitol Hill, US legislators stood up 30 times and erupted in cheers as Herzog addressed Iran, brought up the prospect of peace with Israel's neighbors and spoke of Tel Aviv's pride parade; In a speech echoing shared values, freedom and democracy, it became evident that despite judicial overhaul challenges, American support for Israel is steadfast  
Itamar Eichner|03:12

It's safe to say that President Herzog's speech in front of a joint session of Congress marks a significant highlight in his political career. No less than 30 standing ovations were noted during his speech by members of Congress, several of whom have substantial ties to Israel.

While political divisions between Democrats and Republicans are as deep as they ever were, these were nevertheless kept at bay with a speech that touched on democracy, protesters, shared values and the importance of liberty.

While Herzog's delivery did not exactly rise to JFK's "ask not" sweeping charisma, he does speak eloquent English, and the number of standing ovations could stand as a testament to that effect. He based his speech on the fortitude and independence of the Israeli Supreme Court and the ever-present Iranian nuclear shadow cast over Israeli consciousness, clarifying the unshakable bond between Israel and the United States.

At 35 minutes long, the speech was held in the spacious house chamber. U.S senators graced the front two rows, with Democrats on the right and Republicans on the left. The foreign diplomatic core sat further back, and included former Polish ambassador to Israel, Marek Magierowski. Out of a total of 535 members of Congress (435 House members and 100 senators), only five decided not to attend, citing Israel's treatment of Palestinians as the reason.

By comparison, in Netanyahu's 2015 speech, which primarily touched on the Iranian nuclear issue, attendees stood up 24 times in total, but that perhaps could be attributed to the controversial nature of the speech. In Herzog's speech, and most fervent of ovations were noted when the Israeli President brought up the LGBT pride parade in Tel Aviv. Unsurprisingly, it didn't particularly sit well with conservative Republicans who conspicuously remained seated, but other than that, it was a bipartisan affair.

In a marvelous familial coincidence, it was Herzog's father, Haim, who was the first ever Israeli President to address a joint session of Congress, with his son being the second. "This is the honor of a lifetime," Herzog said, visibly shaken by the commemoration of Israel's 75th anniversary. "I thank you."  
(The complete speech, courtesy of Forbes)

President Herzog mentioned the meeting held between his grandfather Aizik and former U.S President Harry Truman, thanking him for his support in establishing the state of Israel. Herzog then pointed out the presence of Truman's eldest grandson Clifton, a writer and PR executive, who then stood up to receive a standing ovation of his own. U.S. Representative Jerrold Nadler, a Jewish member of Congress representing New York's 12th congressional district, was particularly excited, waving the Israeli flag.

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who extended the invitation to Herzog and likes to ceaselessly mention Israeli poet Ehud Manor's song "Ein Li Eretz Aheret" ("I have no other land"), seemed to relish the occasion.

The crowd cheered when Herzog brought up Iran. Republicans stood up first, followed closely by Democrats. This was followed by an enthusiastic eruption when the Israeli President said it's unacceptable to let the Islamic Republic turn into a nuclear threshold state. Notable cheers were also registered upon the mention of the importance of establishing peace with Israel's Palestinian and Saudi neighbors, while not giving a pass to acts of terror against Israelis.

"True peace cannot be anchored in violence," Herzog said. "Terror is not a bump in the road. Terror is hatred and bloodshed. It contradicts humanity's most basic principles of peace. Israel cannot and will not tolerate terror and we know that in this we are joined by the United States of America."

A particularly moving moment occurred when Herzog brought up the issue of war prisoners and missing soldiers, which is when he presented to the crowd Leah Goldin, the mother of Hadar Goldin, the late Givati Brigade Lieutenant who died in 2014.

Israel's founding document, the Declaration of Independence, was mentioned twice in Herzog's delivery, perhaps mildly alluding to judicial overhaul protests rocking Israel to its core in recent months. While noting the "cracks" posed by the heated debate in Israeli society, Herzog nevertheless noted "I have great confidence in Israeli democracy. Although we are working through sour issues, just like you, I know our democracy is strong and resilient. Israel has democracy in its DNA."

Underscoring to those who may have forgotten, Herzog showed that Netanyahu is not the only Israeli official capable of carrying an entire speech in fluent English. He signed off by saying: "Am Israel Hai (Israel lives). God bless the State of Israel and God bless the United States of America."

7.19.23 – We

IAF commanders wobble as reserves refuse to serve, over judicial overhaul

7.19.23 – We

Israeli reservists warn Airforce chief: Situation is becoming critical

Maj. Gen. Tomer Bar tells reservists serving in critical roles in a heated discussion, that refusing to volunteer would cripple operational readiness; pilots who fly in military missions say they are concerned for the preservation of the military moral code

Yossi Yehoshua|04:48

In a tense discussion on Sunday, held at the IDF Air Force's headquarters 50 of volunteers in the reserves, among them senior officers, faced Maj. Gen. Tomer Bar and told him the force's operational capabilities were now in jeopardy.

"The threat is real. People won't turn up for reserve duty. You must alert the prime minister," one said. Another officer said that he expects everyone to be more assertive with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and make him understand the gravity of the situation. "We're being torn apart, people are losing trust," he said.

These senior officers, reserve personnel in the Air Force's operational headquarters, are the ones who oversee a significant part of the force's operations and some have even served as airforce base commanders in the past. They are tasked with planning attacks during times of war and fly regularly either as combat pilots or as flight school instructors, training the next generations of pilots and are an integral part of the force's operational capabilities.

The reservists warned against the growing wave of volunteers who will not show up for service until the government backs down its legislative push for a judicial overhaul. They avoided using the word "refusal" as much as possible and declared they were opposed to it but said there were many pilots who had said in private conversations that they would end their reserve service entirely should the bill to cancel the reasonableness standard be passed.

The officers were divided over their future course of action: some said they would leave the force completely if the law passed. Others admitted to being undecided. A smaller group told Maj. Gen. Bar, they would remain in the airforce even after the proposed law is passed.

"This is a critical week for you," Maj. Gen. Bar told the assembly. "I ask you to continue volunteering for service. You are important to the force. We have a responsibility for Israel's security." Bar acknowledged that he is aware of the airforce's unity being under threat and asked the senior officers for their help in preventing the fractures from becoming deeper still.

One of the former base commanders touched on a sensitive point for the pilots: the force's ethical code. He raised his concern that pilots may be ordered to carry out illegal missions while lacking the protection of the Supreme Court.

"Every mission is carried out according to the values of the IDF and the Air Force," Bar said in response. "I haven't encountered any mission that did not meet those standards." When asked if he was warning officials about the developing crisis in the airforce, Bar said, "I reflect an authentic picture to the IDF Chief of Staff and the Defense Minister." He then said in conclusion that he has chosen to continue to defend Israel. "I will be happy if you'd join me. Let's safeguard the Air Force."

As of Wednesday more reservists in the airforce were planning to announce the suspension of their volunteering for service. In conversations with many of them, they said they were still undecided. The reservists were aware of the sensitive security situation, especially regarding the threat on Israel's northern border.

"Squadron commanders said that they were trying to man all necessary positions but it's not easy for them. A senior officer in the Air Force said. "commanders end up facing a

unit of reservists – some of whom were their former superior officers, and don't know how to deal with the situation. No one prepared them for it.

"They don't sleep at night," a former air base commander said. "They worry about their units' readiness and cohesion, rather than worrying about their mission and routine functions. That's something they don't know how to handle."

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant was expected to take a much more aggressive stance.

"We can't use a refusal to volunteer as a means to impose a political position," he said.

According to him, the protests have become organized and political, and he'll act to prevent refusals from spreading in the military.

According to another senior airforce commander, the reservists' threats are an ineffective way to pressure the government, which could lead to any random group threatening to do the same over any matter. "They want to do something undemocratic, and I ask them to wait before crossing the Rubicon."

Yet, there's also a reason for optimism, despite the worrying situation in the airforce.

Many of the reservists are cognisant of their importance to Israel's defense, and some say that should the need arise they would not refuse to answer the call to serve.

7.18.23 – Tu

US Congress Declares 'Israel is not apartheid state'; vote 412-9

7.18.23 – Tu

US Congress Passes Resolution Declaring 'Israel is not an apartheid state'

After controversial statements made by several progressive Democrats in the US Congress, the resolution passes with a large bipartisan support affirming that Israel is not a racist or apartheid state.

Emily Schrader|Updated:17:58

The US House of Representatives on Tuesday evening approved a resolution that condemns antisemitism and affirms that Israel is neither a racist nor apartheid state by a vote of 412-9.

The resolution was proposed by Rep. August Pfluger, R-Texas, following a series of controversial statements by progressive Democrats in Congress.

Among those who voted against the resolution were the members of the Squad of progressive Democrats including Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar, Jamaal Bowman, Cori Bush, and Ayanna Pressley. The other Democrats who voted against the resolution were Reps. Delia Ramirez, Summer Lee, and Andre Carson. There were no Republicans who voted against the resolution.

"Israel is the United States' strongest partner in the Middle East," Pfluger told Ynetnews. "I am proud to introduce this resolution ensuring all Americans know where their representatives stand when it comes to supporting Israel and our Jewish communities."



The resolution states that “the State of Israel is not a racist or apartheid state, Congress rejects all forms of antisemitism and xenophobia, and the United States will always be a staunch partner and supporter of Israel.”

This week Israel was the subject of much controversy after Rep. Pramila Jayapal stated at a conference in Chicago that “Israel is a racist state.” She has since walked back the language she used in her initial comment, claiming that she supports a two-state solution but is opposed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policies.

Additionally, several members of Congress, all identifying as progressive Democrats, dramatically announced on social media this week that they would be boycotting the joint session in Congress where Israeli President Isaac Herzog will be speaking on Wednesday, due to Israel’s “apartheid policies” and “human rights violations.”

The members of Congress who confirmed they will be boycotting Herzog’s speech on ideological grounds are Reps. Cori Bush, Jamal Bowman, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, who all have long standing anti-Israel voting patterns.

In response to the boycott as well as Jayapal’s statements, Democratic Party leaders also released a statement Monday declaring that “Israel is not a racist state,” and that “our commitment to a safe and secure Israel as an invaluable partner, ally and beacon of democracy in the Middle East is ironclad.” The statement was signed off on by House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and Reps. Katherine Clark, Pete Aguilar and Ted Lieu. “Israel is our strongest partner in the Middle East and recent member comments denigrating Israel are unacceptable and disgusting.” Pfluger said in response to the recent anti-Israel statements from members of the Squad.

The House has approved several similar resolutions in the past.

First published: 22:37, 07.18.23

7.18.23 – Tu

Letter signed by 161 Israeli Air Force (IAF) reservists, resign from service

7.18.23 – Tu

161 Israeli Air Force operational headquarters reservists resign from service

Reservists say they are not willing to fulfill tasks imposed by a regime that tramples on the foundations of democracy; Air Force head Maj. Gen. Tomer Bar tells their commanders to order them to continue reporting for service

Ronen Bergman|Updated:13:54

At least 161 senior officers and commanders of the Israeli Air Force's (IAF) operational headquarters announced Tuesday their immediate resignation from reserve service.

“We are not willing to fulfill the tasks imposed upon us under a regime in which the foundations of democracy are trampled upon, and the path to full dictatorship is widening,” the letter, which was sent to Israeli Air Force Commander Maj. Gen. Tomer Bar said.

Hours later, Bar called on the reservists' commanders to order them to continue to report for service.

"This is a complex period and there have been a lot of announcements this evening. It is my guess that we will experience heavy discussion about it in the media in the coming week," Bar said in a message to the commanders. "We are finding out more about the details of the letter and its meaning. However, the responsibility assigned to us has not changed, continue a command dialogue with the reservists and regulars. Call on the reservists to continue reporting."

Bar's message continued: "For 75 years the Air Force has provided the aerial umbrella for the security of the citizens of the country, together with our dear reservists. This duty still rests on us today. The operational situation at this time is known to all of you - together, we will protect the state. Together, we will work to maintain the cohesion of the corps and its competence."

A senior reserve IAF officer told Ynet that: "This is a severe blow to the soldiers' control capabilities, both in the Air Force's command center and also to the representatives of the force in the military command center, as these war rooms rely heavily on reservists."

"However, not all reserve personnel are involved in this matter, as most senior commanders, who serve as control center commanders, have yet to announce their resignation," he added.

"Nevertheless, for those who have announced their resignation, there is no replacement. Their expertise, both in their original military occupation – combat pilots, helicopter pilots, transport pilots, intelligence operatives and control center operators – as well as in their experience in the control centers, cannot be replaced. Young pilots cannot take their place. Their absence from reserve duty may significantly reduce the number of operations the IAF can conduct," he also said.

Sources familiar with the drafting of the letter said IAF chief Bar received a message about it only on Tuesday, and at least some of those who signed the letter conveyed it through personal messages to their direct commanders.

The announcement is unusual for two main reasons. First, it is signed by a very large number of reserve officers, including both senior and high-ranking officers, who hold critical roles in the operational readiness of the military. Second, unlike other letters, messages or calls, these officers did not wait for the passage of the reasonableness bill in a second or third reading; instead, they immediately announced their resignation from duty.

First published: 21:26, 07.18.23

7.18.23 – Tu

Final wording to compromise a final vote on Judicial oversight next Monday

7.18.23 – Tu

Dozens arrested as protesters clash with police amid reports of talks to find compromise  
President says he supports any effort to bring broad agreement before a final vote on a  
bill that would curb judicial oversight of the government  
ynet correspondents|Updated:07:16

At least 19 people were arrested on Tuesday during protests around the country ahead of  
the final vote on a bill to curb judicial oversight of the government. Meanwhile,  
according to reports, Netanyahu was holding talks in order to change the wording of the  
law and remove some of its more controversial aspects.

President Issac Herzog who is traveling to the U.S. said he supports any effort that would  
bring to a broad agreement and end the crisis engulfing the country after seven months of  
mass demonstrations, and as reservists serving in elite units of the IDF have said they  
would no longer volunteer in the service of a non-democratic regime.

"There are serious discussions underway," Likud member and Netanyahu ally  
Katrin (Ket) Shitrit told Ynet in an interview. "I would not call it softening the bill but I  
believe an agreed wording would be found."

Law professor Yuval Elbasha who was involved in the negotiations on the Judicial  
overhaul conducted earlier this year said there is progress at the highest levels. "Talks  
were taking place including last night. I cannot say what will be the outcome but the  
current bill is bad, full stop," he said adding he knows that the coalition would be willing  
to compromise but cannot say the same for the opposition.

Earlier, Protesters blocked the entrance to the Israeli stock exchange early on Tuesday,  
carrying signs indicating the damage already caused to the economy amid the coalition's  
push for a judicial overhaul.

"The government's efforts to change Israeli democracy has pushed investors away,  
destroyed the hi-tech industry and is whipping out our pensions, Dror Selee, a tech  
entrepreneur and activist in the hi-tech protest movement said. "This government of  
destruction ignores all warning signs and is turning Israel into a pariah and impoverished  
dictatorship that will leave all of us without security, jobs and income."

The protesters began another day of disruption with the highway between Haifa and Tel  
Aviv blocked intermittently and protests held around the country. 200 women  
demonstrated outside the Rabbinical Court in Haifa while others marched in Tel Aviv  
calling for the legislative push to be stopped. Protests are scheduled throughout the day  
including planned disruptions to train travel during the day and mass rallies in the  
evening.

Meanwhile, the Knesset was preparing to begin a marathon session in the Constitution,  
Law Justice Committee ending with a final vote on the bill that would curb the oversight  
powers of the supreme court over decisions of the government. The opposition said that if  
passed, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will be free to fire Attorney General Gali  
Baharav-Miara and her replacement would then end the criminal proceedings against him.  
Netanyahu is on trial for corruption in the Jerusalem District Court, a charge he denies.

Observers said that **not only the AGs position was under peril but also all other gatekeepers** who were protecting Israeli laws in government ministries and publicly sector companies opening the door for mass corruption.

The committee will vote on 27,000 objections to the bill raised by the opposition parties and conduct 1,000 votes on them before the **bill can be passed, probably next Monday**. On Monday, U.S. President Joe Biden called Netanyahu to discuss the judicial legislation and the protests against it. According to the prime minister he and the president had a long and warm call. "focused on bolstering the strong bond between the nations; thwarting threats from Iran and its proxies; expanding the circle of peace; and the continued efforts to deescalate and stabilize the situation in Judea and Samaria," his office said in a statement.

**Netanyahu also briefed Biden** "on his intention to reach **wide public support for the rest of the reform during the summer recess,**" but reportedly told him that the **legislation** that is currently facing its final vote, **will pass.**

**Netanyahu also claimed that he and the president will meet in the fall,** although the **White House has a different read on the discussions.**

Biden told Netanyahu that there was a "need for the broadest possible consensus, and that shared democratic values have always been and must remain a hallmark of the U.S.-Israel relationship," and **that no meeting has been scheduled** although one is likely when **Netanyahu is in New York for the UN General Assembly in September.**

"That doesn't mean that... we have less concerns over these judicial reforms or less concerns over the extremist activities and behaviors of some members of the Netanyahu Cabinet," National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby told reporters. "Those **concerns are still valid.** They're disturbing. The president had a chance to reiterate... our concerns about all that in his phone call with the prime minister."

First published: 08:40, 07.1

**7.18.23 – Tu**

**Despite Democrat Squad boycott; President Isaac Herzog will address Congress**

**7.18.23 – Tu**

**Despite 'Squad' boycotts, bipartisan support for Herzog's US visit**

At a time of rising political tensions, President Isaac Herzog will visit the US and address Congress in a **joint session**, the second Israeli president to ever do so ; While the US-Israel relationship sees broad bipartisan support, **several progressive Democrats are upset and will boycott**

Emily Schrader|Yesterday | 09:10

**Following the announcement** that Israeli President Isaac Herzog would be visiting the United States and addressing both houses of Congress, **several anti-Israel members** of Congress who are a **part of the Squad**, a group of **progressive Democrats**, shared a slew of

posts on social media expressing their unhappiness that Herzog was invited to address a joint session of Congress.

US Reps. Cori Bush, Jamal Bowman, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar have all made statements confirming they will not be attending Herzog's speech.

"There is no way in hell I am attending..." Omar tweeted, and continued in all caps: "We should not be inviting the president of Israel – a government who under its current prime minister barred the first two Muslim women elected to Congress from visiting the country – to give a joint address to Congress," referring to the incident in 2019 when Israel denied entry to Omar and Tlaib.

While Omar says that the congresswomen were banned for "being Muslim" – in fact they were denied entry due to their support for the BDS movement, under an Israeli law that denies entry to the country of people who support the global boycott movement against Israel. Tlaib, in fact, was granted permitted to enter to visit her grandmother in the West Bank but chose not to "out of principle," proving that the entire charade was a PR stunt. Similarly Bush tweeted: "The Israeli government is responsible for enforcing an apartheid state and rampantly abusing the rights of Palestinians ... Congress should not be giving a platform to the president of a country that shows no respect for human rights. I will not be attending his joint address."

Herzog is not the head of state in Israel, the prime minister is, though it's unclear if Omar and Bush are aware of this fact based on their statements.

Members of the Squad of progressive Democrats have repeatedly voted against support for Israel, including voting against funding for the Iron Dome missile defense system to protect Israeli civilians from rocket fire, and accusing Israel of being an "apartheid state." They have also proposed legislation to commemorate the "Nakba" (Arabic for catastrophe), which refers to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and the Palestinian refugees who fled or were expelled as a result of multiple Arab states launching a war on Israel.

In the case of Omar, she has expressed support for the BDS movement against Israel, even stating that "I believe and support the BDS movement and have fought to make sure people's right to support it isn't criminalized." However she also simultaneously condemned sanctions against Iran and Venezuela, both countries hostile to the United States.

Ocasio-Cortez, known as AOC, who abstained from the vote on funding Iron Dome, previously submitted a proposal to block a \$735 million missile sale to Israel, which was defeated. Bush also has endorsed the BDS movement and voted against Iron Dome funding.

While social media usually skews anti-Israel when it comes to sheer numbers, Twitter users were seemingly unimpressed by the declarations from Omar and Bush. An Iranian-American researcher, Siamak Kordestani, commented: "Congresswoman, Arab Israeli

citizens have significantly more rights in democratic Israel than minorities have in most Middle Eastern countries. **You won't be missed. Sincerely, A refugee from Iran.**”

Jewish author Ben Freeman also replied: **“Repeating a lie doesn't make it true. Israel is not an apartheid state, but truth doesn't matter to you. History will judge you for what you are, congresswoman: a Jew-hater.”**

Overall, the speech is expected to be attended by a large bipartisan group of lawmakers in a **solid demonstration of support for Herzog** and the state of Israel as a strategic **ally to the United States**. The president's office has not commented on the intended boycott, but did issue a statement noting that the trip is meant “to strengthen the relations and the partnership between the US and Israel and to reflect the deep ties between the countries which are placed above all controversy.”

Herzog, who is **the second Israeli president to address US Congress** - the **first was his father, Chaim Herzog**, will meet with Vice President Kamala **Harris**, Secretary of State Antony **Blinken**, and National Security Adviser Jake **Sullivan**. His speech in the US Congress will **commemorate the 75th anniversary** of the state of Israel and is scheduled to take place on **Wednesday**.

**7.16.23** – Su

**US Representatives dubbed “the Squad” promote anti-Semitism in Congress**

**7.16.23** – Su

**US Rep. Pramila Jayapal Brands Israel a ‘Racist State’**

In a **video** that has gone viral, **US Representative Pramila Jayapal** makes **comments** after anti-Israel protesters disrupted a panel she was part of, at the **Netroots Nation conference in Chicago**.

Emily Schrader|10:17

In a video that has gone viral, US Representative Pramila Jayapal has **accused Israel of being a “racist state”** after anti-Israel protesters disrupted a panel she took part in at the **Netroots Nation conference in Chicago**. The protesters interrupted the event with **chants of “Free Palestine”** and **waving Palestinian flags**.

Ex-Israel envoy to US calls protests a 'dangerous **precedent**' smacking of '**white privilege**'  
In the one-minute clip, Jayapal can be heard stating, “As somebody who's been in the streets and participated in a lot of demonstrations, I want you to know that we have been **fighting to make it clear that Israel is a racist state, that the Palestinian people deserve self-determination and autonomy.**”

**Insinuating a conspiracy against anti-Israel views** that borders on an antisemitic dog whistle, she also added that “while we may have arguments with whether or not some of us on stage are fighting hard enough, there is an organized opposition on the other side – and it isn't the people that are on this stage.” Jayapal also **referred to the two-state**

solution as more disruptions of “free Palestine” and other unintelligible shouts from the crowd.

Jayapal is the Chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and is known for her anti-Israel positions and has previously opposed a resolution condemning the BDS movement. She has also been dubbed a “mentor” to the Squad – the term used colloquially to refer to anti-Israel members of Congress such as Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar.

Under the widely accepted and consensus definition of antisemitism according to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), statements that generalize the entirety of the state of Israel as a “racist endeavor” are fundamentally antisemitic and deny the right to self-determination of the Jewish people and only the Jewish people.

7.16.23 – Su

Saudi Arabia textbooks remove antisemitic content; Israel described as Zionist entity

7.16.23 – Su

No more 'monkeys' and 'pigs': Anti-Israeli content has been removed from textbooks in Saudi Arabia

Revolution by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is reflected in the education system, research reveals that the kingdom recently removed anti-Israeli and antisemitic content from textbooks

Itamar Eichner|07:29

Among other things, references to Jews as monkeys and pigs who worship the devil, and descriptions of them as traitors by nature and sworn enemies of Islam have been removed. Anti-Israeli materials also have been removed, including reports about the Zionists' use of women, drugs and the media in order to achieve their goals and conspiracies according to which Israel has plans to expand its borders from the Nile River in Egypt to the Euphrates in Iraq.

A new study, which examined changes made this year in the Saudi curriculum, in relation to the last five years, found a continuation of the trend of positive changes in textbooks with regard to anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic content. Progress also was made on gender issues, content was added against Hezbollah and the Iranian-backed Houthis and against the Muslim Brotherhood movement, as well as more tolerant content that promotes peace.

The research carried out by the international research and policy institute IMPACT-se in London, which investigates and analyzes the contents of textbooks in the world to encourage contents of peace and tolerance according to the standards of UNESCO, included an analysis of 301 textbooks published in the last five years by the Saudi Ministry of Education.

The most significant change that has been made is in the negative attitude toward Jews, with almost all the antisemitic examples in the books completely removed this year. For example, a song about the opposition to Jewish settlement in Palestine was deleted. A

task that asked the students to refute Zionist claims about their connection to Palestine was also removed. A high school history book no longer includes a lesson on the positive results of the first intifada and referring to Israel as a "fraudulent democracy." A blood libel accusing Israel of setting fire to Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969 was also removed from one of the books, as well as an example that claimed that Israel's reasons for starting the Six-Day War were its desire to take control of holy sites for Islam and Christianity in Jerusalem and oil wells in the Sinai Peninsula.

In several places in the textbooks, the terminology toward Israel was moderated and references were removed to "the Zionist enemy" and "the Israeli occupation." However, the textbooks still do not recognize Israel and do not teach about the Holocaust. The maps completely ignore the existence of Israel and do not mention its name, Zionism is still described as a European colonial and racist movement, and there are still places where it is described as the "Zionist entity"

"Although every textbook reform is important, the textbooks of Saudi Arabia have a special significance as the leader of the Sunni current in Islam," said Marcus Sheff, CEO of the research and policy institute IMPACT-se.

Eric Agassi, IMPACT-se vice president, added: "The changes that Bin Salman is making are extremely brave, unprecedented and are a sign of things to come. Saudi Arabia is no longer just a country. Her textbooks are distributed to Muslim communities around the world and are studied by tens of millions of students in mosques and other educational settings."

7.15.23 – Sa

Swedish activist backs off Bible burning in Stockholm

7.15.23 – Sa

Swedish activist backs off Bible burning in Stockholm

Swedish national Ahmed Alloush says he never planned to go through with the burning of holy Jewish texts and wanted to make sure authorities weren't selectively enforcing laws

Zeev Avrahami, Stockholm|Yesterday | 07:48

A gathering was held in front of the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm on Saturday, during which Ahmed Alloush, a 32-year-old Swedish national, planned to burn Torah and Bible books but didn't go through with his plan.

Swedish police approved Alloush's request "so that the applicant can express his opinions," a move that was condemned by Israeli leaders, senior officials in Israel, and rabbis. Alloush arrived with a bag containing a Quran and a lighter, but didn't burn any books during the gathering.



Alloush submitted the request to burn the holy books in response to the Quran burning in front of a major mosque in the Swedish capital two weeks ago, an incident that sparked a backlash in Sweden by the Muslim world.

The Swedes themselves didn't show much interest in Alloush's intent to burn the books and the gathering was mainly attended by journalists. Some Muslim citizens asked him to refrain from burning the books. In his appeal for the book burning, Alloush wrote that he decided to do it "in response to the burning of the Quran."

In front of the Israeli embassy, Alloush explained that he wanted to ensure that Swedish authorities weren't selectively enforcing laws regarding the burning of religious texts, referring to the Quran burning incident.

"It's not antisemitic or a hate crime," he said to those present. Swedish police said they didn't inquire into Alloush's possible motives due to Sweden's right to free speech.

The right to public demonstrations in Sweden is protected by its constitution. The police grant permission for gatherings to congregate as long as there is no threat to public security and the event can be conducted without major disruptions.

"We do not give permission for different actions. We give permission to hold a public meeting! That's an important difference." The police told the Associated Press news agency.

Prior to the event, President Isaac Herzog condemned Sweden's decision to allow the book burnings. "I unequivocally condemn the permission granted in Sweden to burn holy books. As the President of the State of Israel, I condemned the burning of the Quran, sacred to Muslims world over, and I am now heartbroken that the same fate awaits a Jewish Bible, the eternal book of the Jewish people."

"I strongly condemn the decision of the Swedish authorities to allow the burning of a Hebrew Bible in front of the Israeli Embassy in [Stockholm]," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tweeted.

Former prime minister Naftali Bennett said that "Burning a Jewish Bible expresses hatred and incitement, not freedom of expression. As an Israeli, as a Jew, as a human being, I call you: do not burn the Torah."

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir also joined the calls against the burning of sacred books in Sweden, and asked Foreign Minister Eli Cohen to use his authority in front of Sweden, "Who is facing radical Islam which is threatening to take over its country."

Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef sent a letter addressed to Sweden's King Carl Gustaf XVI, urging him to intervene and put an end to the book burning.

"I implore Your Majesty to intervene in this matter and prevent such an act from taking place. I must emphasize that our protest is not confined solely to the burning of the Holy Bible. We also vehemently condemn the recent act of burning the Quran in front of a mosque."

Last week, Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism Minister Amichai Chikli appealed to Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in a letter, requesting that he intervene to prevent the burning of the Bible, which he equated to Nazi book burnings.

However, the Swedish government did not intervene in the matter and Kristersson himself declared before the Quran burning incident that he would leave the decisions regarding such matters to the law enforcement authorities.

"In Sweden, there is a constitutional right to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom to demonstrate. Decisions to allow for demonstrations are taken independently by the Policy Authority," Kristersson said.

The Swedish Government deeply regrets when extremists and provocateurs try to sow division in our society, even when they are exercising constitutionally protected acts. The Government fully understands that people of various faiths are deeply offended by burning of Holy Books."

7.14.23 – Fr

Sweden approves activist Bible burning in front of embassy as freedom of expression

7.14.23 – Fr

Israeli officials rebuke Sweden for approving Bible burning in front of embassy  
Netanyahu calls decision 'shameful'; 'Permitting the defacement of sacred texts is not an exercise in freedom of expression, it is blatant incitement and an act of pure hate,' laments President Herzog; FM Cohen says lobbying to get book burning nixed  
Itamar Eichner, Kobi Nachshoni | 07.14.23 | 07:10

Israeli officials issued scathing criticism of Sweden on Friday following the Nordic country's approval of a local activist's plan to burn a Hebrew Bible in front of the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm, two and a half weeks after allowing another activist to burn the Quran in front of a major mosque in the Swedish capital, sparking immense anger toward Sweden in the Muslim world.

"I strongly condemn the decision of the Swedish authorities to allow the burning of a Hebrew Bible in front of the Israeli Embassy in [Stockholm]," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tweeted.

"The State of Israel views this shameful decision as a grave offense against the holy of holies of the Jewish people. It is important to respect the sanctity of holy books across all religions."

President Isaac Herzog tweeted, "I unequivocally condemn the permission granted in Sweden to burn holy books. As the President of the State of Israel, I condemned the burning of the Quran, sacred to Muslims world over, and I am now heartbroken that the same fate awaits a Jewish Bible, the eternal book of the Jewish people."

Permitting the defacement of sacred texts is not an exercise in freedom of expression, it is blatant incitement and an act of pure hate. The whole world must join together in clearly condemning this repulsive act.”

Israel's Ambassador to Sweden Zvi Nevo Kulman said in a tweet, “I utterly condemn the burning of holy books sacred to any religion, as an act of hate and disrespect, that has nothing to do with freedom of expression.”

The Israeli Foreign Ministry also joined in the condemnation. "Israel strongly condemns the intention to burn a Bible in front of the Israeli Embassy in Sweden. Burning holy books is an act of hatred and intolerance and has nothing to do with freedom of expression. We call on the authorities in Sweden to prevent the burning of holy books," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Lior Haiat tweeted.

Foreign Minister Eli Cohen instructed his ministry and Ambassador Kulman to take action to prevent the event.

"Burning a Torah scroll is a hate crime, a provocation and a severe affront to the Jewish people and the Jewish tradition. I call on the authorities in Sweden to prevent this disgraceful event and not allow the burning of a Torah scroll. I have instructed the Israeli Ambassador to Sweden, Ziv Nevo Kulman, and the Foreign Ministry to take all necessary measures to prevent this shameful event," said Minister Cohen.

Under the guidance of the foreign minister, Aliza Ben-Nun, head of the Diplomatic Corps, spoke with the Swedish ambassador to Israel and emphasized the severity with which Israel views the police approval for an attack on Jewish sacred texts.

Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef sent a letter addressed to Sweden's King Carl Gustaf XVI, urging him to intervene and put an end to the book burning.

"I write to you today with great concern and deep distress regarding an imminent event that has the potential to undermine the values of tolerance, respect, and religious freedom that we hold dear," he wrote. "I implore Your Majesty to intervene in this matter and prevent such an act from taking place.

I must emphasize that our protest is not confined solely to the burning of the Holy Bible. We also vehemently condemn the recent act of burning the Quran in front of a mosque. As people of faith, we firmly believe that two wrongs do not make a right. It is imperative that we uphold the principles of mutual respect and dignity, even in the face of disagreements or tensions between communities."

World Zionist Organization Chairman Yaakov Hagoel wrote: “Permission to burn the Hebrew Bible in front of the Israeli Embassy in Sweden is not freedom of expression but rather antisemitism. Eighty years since the cursed Holocaust, the signs we wanted to forget are once again reminding us to stand guard. I strongly condemn the burning of the Quran; it is not the way of the Jewish people. I call on the Swedish government to revoke this antisemitic decision to burn the Hebrew Bible.”

Robert Singer, Center for Jewish Impact Chairman: “I unequivocally condemn the decision to approve such an appalling act of burning a bible, let alone any religious text. This is not an example of freedom of expression but an act of legitimizing pure

**incitement and racism.** Swedish authorities must act immediately to prevent this incident and denounce it once and for all.”

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, rabbi of the Western Wall and holy sites: "I am shocked and horrified after the legal discussion surrounding the desire of an individual who labels himself a 'social activist' to set fire to the sacred Jewish scriptures as a symbol of Swedish freedom of expression, following his act of desecrating Islamic sanctities by cruelly burning the Quran.

"In the face of these heinous acts, the **Swedish authorities stand weakly**, murmuring **empty words about freedom** that are diminished **in the face of such terrible actions** - both those committed and those yet to come. This is not what freedom looks like; **this is what the loss of a moral compass looks like.**

I call upon the Swedish authorities and all those who hold dear the freedom of expression - it is not too late. I am not pleading for the sake of the sacred scriptures. They have been burned countless times by enemies of the Jews, yet no force in the world could destroy them. I am asking for your sake, for the sake of your souls and your culture. Extinguish the fire."

Last week, Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism Minister Amichai Chikli appealed to Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in a letter, requesting that he intervene to prevent the burning of the Bible, which he **equated to Nazi book burnings.** "As you may know, other than being the source and the root of Judaism and the Jewish people, the bible has served as an example of some of humanity's most core values, such as peoplehood, justice, truth, kindness, compassion, equality and peace among the nations and much more. The bible teaches us, as a core value, to love our neighbors as we love ourselves," he wrote.

"It is for this reason it is so disheartening to see that burning Torahs, and the human and **Jewish core values it represents**, in European capitals has not rescinded. Rather, the **reasoning has changed.** It began with an antisemitism and the **burning of Torahs in 1930s** Germany, and now it has been **replaced by 'freedom of expression'.** History, though, has taught us differently. As the great writer Heinrich Heine once wrote, 'those who burn books will in the end burn people'.

Therefore, I urge the Government of Sweden to take swift action and prevent this outrageous hatefilled initiative from taking place. Such bigotry has no place amongst the liberal democracies of the world, especially in Sweden which prides itself on its dedication to protecting its minorities' rights."

However, the government did not intervene in the matter and Kristersson himself declared before the Quran burning incident that he would leave the decisions regarding such matters to the law enforcement authorities.

Sweden's Foreign Minister Tobias Billström responded to Chikli, assuring him that the Swedish government strongly rejects all acts of antisemitism and of its commitment to combating antisemitism.

"First, let me assure you that the **Swedish** Government strongly **rejects all antisemitic acts.** Sweden is **committed to combat antisemitism**, as shown recently during our Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). We were proud to host

the International Malmö Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism in October 2021. Throughout these efforts we have worked in close partnership with Israel," he wrote.

However, he added that freedom of expression is a constitutional right and that decisions regarding such acts are deferred to local law enforcement authorities.

"In Sweden, there is a constitutional right to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom to demonstrate. Decisions to allow for demonstrations are taken independently by the Policy Authority.

The Swedish Government deeply regrets when extremists and provocateurs try to sow division in our society, even when they are exercising constitutionally protected acts. The Government fully understands that people of various faiths are deeply offended by burning of Holy Books."

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Ynet-News, July 13, 2023 – Thursday

7.13.23 – Th- - - News – Thursday

Netanyahu briefed Herzog messages to Biden, Harris, Blinken & Congress July 18

7.13.23 – Th- - - News Placed in July 13 spot – Thursday

Supreme Court agrees to hear arguments of opposition to oust PM, coalition outraged

7.12.23 – We- - - News Placed in July 12 spot – Wednesday

Some 250 reserve & veterans join opposition, Faithful IDF oppose their interference

7.12.23 – We- - - News – Wednesday

Lebanon seeks to determine land border with Israel through UN

7.12.23 – We- - - News – Wednesday

Israeli minister says Biden advised by members of the radical left

7.11.23 – Tu- - - News Placed in July 11 spot – Tuesday

Biden coordinated with former PMs Lapid and Barak to fuel demonstrations

7.11.23 – Tu- - - News Placed in July 09 spot – Sunday

US indicts Biden whistleblower as foreign agent for violating sanctions

7.10.23 – Mo- - - News – Monday

Knesset passes 1st reading of bill curbing Supreme Court, protests begin

7.10.23 – Mo- - - News Placed in July 10 spot – Monday

Hezbollah's provocations on the northern border shaping public opinion for war