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SPOTLIGHT

# The Post-Election Situation in Israel

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None of the political blocs in Israel secured the parliamentary majority required to form a government. Unless an agreement is reached between the Jewish and Arab opposition parties, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will remain in power.

**What were the election results?**

With all votes counted, the ruling Likud party remains the strongest in the Knesset, contrary to most pre-election polls, having secured 27 seats out of the chamber's 120. Its coalition partners, which comprise two far-right parties and two religious parties, secured either 6 or 7 seats, giving the bloc supporting Netanyahu a total of 53 seats. The party of his main rival, Gadi Eisenkot, won 21 seats and, together with the three parties of the Zionist opposition, control 48 seats. Arab parties achieved record-high support, with the Joint List alliance winning 11 seats, whilst the conservative and Islamist Ra'am party won 8. Two newly formed right-wing populist parties failed to clear the 3.25% threshold, which influenced the final distribution of seats between the blocs. The election was characterised by very high turnout—77.9%—which strengthens the popular mandate of the elected parties while also cementing a high level of internal polarisation.

**What do the results mean?**

Although the current right-wing religious coalition has lost its parliamentary majority, Netanyahu and Likud have retained their position as the dominant political force in Israel, despite the political fallout from the 7 October 2023 attacks. This confirmed the party's campaign message, which focused on aspects of national security and anti-Arab rhetoric, used to mobilise the electorate, even on election day. The current ruling camp is also characterised by greater cohesion than the opposition. The weaker-than-expected result for the political faction represented by Eisenkot has scuppered its chances of taking power. If the current results hold, it would be necessary for it to reach an agreement with all the Arab parties, something which the right-wing opposition parties reject, whether it would include Ra'am joining the coalition or the Joint List supporting a minority government.

**What are the possible scenarios going forward?**

In the current post-election landscape, Netanyahu could build a majority and retain power by winning over some opposition MPs or persuading selected parties to form a government of national unity with him. Another option that would be favourable from Netanyahu's perspective would be to call another election. At the same time, following the announcement of the results, Netanyahu and his political camp launched a smear campaign targeting the Arab electorate and its representatives, accusing them of electoral fraud and abuses, as well as of using funding from Qatar and Turkey. This delegitimization campaign is also intended to foil any chances of an agreement between these parties and the Jewish opposition, and may lead to internal unrest. Unless the opposition parties change their current positions, the most likely scenario remains a political stalemate and another general election in early 2027.

**What do the elections mean for the situation in the region?**

The electorate's steady support will be interpreted by the ruling camp as an expression of backing for continuing a regional policy based on the use of military force. It cannot be ruled out that Netanyahu will seek to exploit a possible renewed confrontation with Iran (reportedly planned during the campaign period but halted by the U.S.) to pressure opposition MPs and persuade them to join a coalition in a government of national unity. The protracted process of forming a government and uncertainty about the shape of

the future administration, or about the calling of further elections, will stall negotiations on the situation in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, and Syria. Also, settler violence in the West Bank may intensify. The stance of the United States will play a significant role, both in the context of developments on the front of the war with Iran and in exerting pressure on political forces from both blocs within Israel itself (for example, in favour of a unity government).

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