

# The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

## Rivlin Tasks Netanyahu With Forming Next Government After Unity Talks Fail

Raoul Wootliff, Times of Israel, September 25<sup>th</sup> 2019

### Recap:

President Reuven Rivlin tasked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with forming Israel's next government, after talks of a unity coalition between Likud and Blue and White failed.

### The Context:

- Netanyahu has 28 days to assemble a majority of at least 61 seats in the 120-seat Knesset with no clear path to do so. At least one ultra-Orthodox party refused to join a government with Blue and White [1]. Netanyahu's coalition currently has 55 seats.
- Rivlin conditioned giving Netanyahu the mandate on him returning the mandate, rather than calling new elections, if he is unable to form a majority. After failing to form a government following the previous elections in April, Netanyahu pushed through a vote to dissolve the Knesset, rather than allowing Blue and White head Benny Gantz to build a coalition.
- One of Gantz's preconditions to forming a coalition with Netanyahu is that he "will not sit in a government which has a Prime Minister against whom stands a severe indictment [2]." Netanyahu will undergo a hearing next week for corruption charges leveled against him. Rivlin proposed giving the Deputy Prime Minister full power in case Netanyahu cannot carry out his duties.
- A majority of the Israeli public would rather see Likud replace Netanyahu with another candidate instead of returning to the ballot for a third time [3].

### Conversation Points:

- What might a new coalition look like?
- Will Netanyahu relinquish control of his mandate if he is unable to forge a coalition?
- Should Rivlin have asked Gantz to form the government considering Netanyahu's failure to do so previously?

## Israelis Hold Most Unfavorable View of UN Compared to Other Countries

CBN, Emily Jones, September 24<sup>th</sup> 2019

### Recap:

Israelis dislike the United Nations (UN) more than any other country surveyed.

### The Context:

- The Pew study, which measured how favorably countries view the UN, included 34,904 respondents from 32 countries. The survey found that 65% of Israelis hold an unfavorable view of the UN, more than any other country on the list. Conversely, only 31% of Israelis view the UN positively.
- Israeli leaders have long accused the UN of anti-Israel bias. A particular sticking point is Agenda Item 7 in the UN Human Rights Council, a fixture exclusively devoted to resolutions condemning Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. Israel is the only country with a dedicated agenda item [4].
- 61% of countries polled have a positive view of the UN [5]. Russia is the second country with the least favorable view and the Philippines hold the most favorable position.

### Conversation Points:

- What might make Israelis view the UN more favorably?
  - Why do some countries view the UN more favorably than others?
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## Israel's Baseball Team Turned to Shlomo Lipetz For the Biggest Out in Program History

Nick Zaccardi, NBC Sports, September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019

### Recap:

For the first time in its history, Israel's baseball team qualified for the summer Olympics, which will take place in 2020.

### The Context:

- Baseball is returning to the Olympics after being dropped in 2012 and 2016. Cuba won the gold medal in 1992, 1996 and 2004, the United States in 2000 and South Korea in 2008 [7].
  - Under new International Olympic Committee (IOC) policies, the host country's Olympic committee can propose additional sports to be played alongside standard events. With the backing of Japan, 2020's host, the IOC approved baseball as an event at the 2020 games [6]. Baseball was last played at the Beijing Games in 2008.
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- The majority of Israel's national team players are Jewish Americans who received citizenship in order to play or Israelis who live in the United States. Among the former pros are Danny Valencia, 34, and Jeremy Wolf, 25 [8]. Athletes often switch nationalities to qualify for the Olympics, a controversial practice known as "passport swapping."

**Conversation Points:**

- Does the Israeli team represent Israel or the entire Jewish people?
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**Notes:**

1. [Netanyahu Is Chosen to Form Israel's Next Government](#), Isabel Kershner, New York Times, September 25<sup>th</sup> 2019
2. [Israel Election Results: President Rivlin Tasks Netanyahu With Forming Government as Unity Talks with Gantz Fail](#), Haaretz, September 25<sup>th</sup> 2019
3. [RIVLIN GIVES NETANYAHU MANDATE TO FORM GOVERNMENT](#), GIL HOFFMAN, Jerusalem Post, SEPTEMBER 25<sup>th</sup> 2019
4. [Israelis hold most negative view by far of UN in poll of 32 countries worldwide](#), Times of Israel, September 24<sup>th</sup> 2019
5. [United Nations gets mostly positive marks from people around the world](#), MOIRA FAGAN AND CHRISTINE HUANG, Pew Research, September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019
6. [In first, Israel qualifies for Olympic games in baseball](#), STUART WINER, Times of Israel, September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019
7. [For the first time - Israeli baseball team qualifies for Olympics](#), Ynet News, September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019
8. [In first, Israel qualifies for Olympic games in baseball](#), STUART WINER, Times of Israel, September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019

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**The Sabra Report** is a newsletter intended to stimulate conversation about Israel by recapping major events & providing context. Our conversation points are meant to encourage discussion amongst friends and family.

The Sabra Report is written by Irving Safdieh.

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