

The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

Central Elections Committee Approves Israel's Final Vote Results. Nobody Won

Times of Israel, March 10th 2020

Recap:

The Central Elections Committee approved the final results of last week's Knesset elections, which gave no political party a clear path to forming a majority coalition.

The Context:

- ✧ The election was the third within a year after two previous votes failed to break the political deadlock and left the country with an interim government of limited powers. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has the backing of 58 MKs and his Likud party is the largest in the 120-seat Knesset.
- ✧ Blue and White, along with Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beytenu and the entire Joint List [1], were on the verge of securing a majority and the ability to form a government but suffered a setback when Meretz MK Orly Levy-Abekasis refused to sit in a coalition backed by the Arab-majority Joint List [2]. Meretz MKs called for Levi-Abekasis to give up her seat in light of the announcement [3].
- ✧ Relations between the Joint List – the third-largest party in parliament [4] – and other Jewish lawmakers are marred by mutual distrust. Tensions have been exacerbated by comments made by hardline Joint List members in support of violence against Israelis, as well as increasingly strident rhetoric about the Joint List, and the Arab Israeli community in general, from Jewish politicians [5].

Conversation Points

- ✧ How can the deep distrust between Israel's Arab and Jewish lawmakers be fixed?
- ✧ Why might cooperation, even limited cooperation, with the Joint List be preferable to the current political situation?
- ✧ Would a rotation agreement between Blue and White's Benny Gantz and Netanyahu solve the current political crisis?

Following International Seclusion, Israel's Corona Cases Reach 50

CTech, March 11th 2020

Recap:

In response to coronavirus pandemic, all Israelis returning from abroad are required to enter a 14-day home-quarantine. Non-citizens can enter the country only if they prove they have the ability to enter quarantine as well.

The Context:

- ✧ Until Monday, Israel's list of barred countries included China, Macau, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland and Egypt. All Israelis returning from these countries were required to enter home-quarantine, while non-Israelis coming from these countries were not allowed to enter at all.
- ✧ Israeli officials reported that 197,066 foreigners have voluntarily left the country in the past two weeks. Israel has also refused entry to over 400 foreign nationals since Friday [6]. El Al, Israir Airlines, and Arkia Airlines have already canceled many flights over the past month.
- ✧ US coronavirus cases surpassed 1,000 as states race to contain the outbreak [7] while Italy expanded a travel ban to the entire country and Spain closed all schools in and around its capital [8]. There are over 110,000 infected patients worldwide, of whom 62,303 have recovered and 3,831 have died [9].
- ✧ Israel's Ministry of Education has set up remote learning platforms as well as an emotional health hotline for those currently quarantined at home [10]. Israel also established a NIS 4 billion fund to help businesses hurt by the virus [11]. Despite the restrictions, Purim went on as usual with thousands celebrating in the streets [12].

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Will world measures be sufficient to contain the spread of the virus?
 - ✧ What might Israel's situation look like if these restrictions remain in place for a month, 6 months or a year?
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New Accelerator Catering to Bedouin Entrepreneurs Launches in Israel's Negev Desert

Algemeiner, February 26th 2020

Recap:

Startup Negev, a new tech accelerator catering to Israel's Bedouin minority, announced the launch of its first cohort of 25 entrepreneurs.

The Context:

- ✧ Bedouins are members of nomadic Muslim Arab tribes originating in North Africa and the Middle East. In Israel, most Bedouin communities live in townships and unrecognized villages in the country's Negev desert region, many of which lack modern infrastructure and basic services such as electricity and running water.
 - ✧ Bedouins find it difficult to get hired by local tech companies due to language and cultural barriers, a lack of the necessary network to land high-paying jobs, and the fact that many of them live outside of the country's metropolitan centers, where most tech companies are located.
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- ☆ As part of the program run by Israel's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, each participating project will receive a grant of between NIS 30,000 and NIS 50,000 to fund their projects.

Conversation Points:

- ☆ What are the benefits of Israel investing in its minority populations?
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Notes:

1. [In blow to Gantz, Geshet's Levy-Abekasis appears to doom minority coalition bid](#), Times of Israel, March 10th 2020
 2. Ibid,
 3. [Arab Party's Balad Faction Considers Backing Gantz for PM](#), Jack Khoury and Jonathan Lis, Haaretz, March 10th 2020
 4. [Israel's Gantz woos Joint List after reaching agreement with Lieberman](#), Middle East Eye, March 9th 2020
 5. [In blow to Gantz, Geshet's Levy-Abekasis appears to doom minority coalition bid](#), Times of Israel, March 10th 2020
 6. [Live Updates 76 Israeli Coronavirus Cases Confirmed, Hundreds of Schoolchildren Quarantined](#), Haaretz, March 10th 2020
 7. Ibid.
 8. [Italy expands lockdown, Israel tightens entry to halt virus](#), COLLEEN BARRY and ADAM GELLER, AP News, March 11th 2020
 9. [Startup Israel tackles coronavirus with chutzpah and innovation](#), Abigail Klein Leichman, Israel21c, MARCH 9th 2020
 10. Ibid.
 11. [Live Updates 76 Israeli Coronavirus Cases Confirmed, Hundreds of Schoolchildren Quarantined](#), Haaretz, March 10th 2020
 12. [Coronavirus doesn't stop Purim party for Israel's haredi Jews](#), Claire GOUNON, Yahoo.com, March 10th 2020
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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.

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