

The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

Coalition Of Firsts: A National Religious PM, Most Arabs, Most Female Ministers

Times of Israel, June 3rd 2021

Recap:

A coalition formed by Yesh Atid's Yair Lapid and Yamina's Naftali Bennett spans the political spectrum with little in common apart from the desire to replace Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The deal could mean the end of Netanyahu's 12 years in office, although the coalition must now pass a vote of confidence before a new government and Prime Minister are sworn in [1].

The Context:

- ✧ Under a rotation arrangement, Bennett would serve as Prime Minister before handing over to Lapid in August 2023 [2]. The governing lineup comprises a patchwork of eight small and medium-sized parties [3].
- ✧ The coalition includes a record-breaking eight women who are likely to hold influential ministerial portfolios. There will be eight Arab MKs in the coalition, and although Ra'am is not the first Arab party to serve in government, it is the first time that one has played such a pivotal role in its formation.
- ✧ Netanyahu urged members of the Knesset "elected by votes from the right" to oppose the coalition [4] saying it will pose "a danger to the security of Israel and a danger to the future of the state," however, the security cabinet will have a clear majority of right-wing members.
- ✧ Bennett, whose position's lean right, proposed easing conditions for Palestinians. "My thinking is to shrink the conflict. We will not resolve it. But wherever we can [improve conditions] - more crossing points, more quality of life, more business, more industry - we will do so." Many Palestinians are skeptical that a change in Israeli government will improve their situation [5].

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Can this fragile coalition withstand pressure put on by Israel's right-wing parties?
- ✧ Does a coalition built solely on its antipathy towards Netanyahu stand a chance of long-term success?
- ✧ What might result by "shrinking the conflict" with Palestinians?

Isaac Herzog Elected 11th President of the State of Israel by Wide Margin

Gil Hoffman, Jerusalem Post, June 3rd 2021

Recap:

In the largest victory of any presidential election in Israel's history, Jewish Agency chairman Isaac Herzog will be the 11th President of the State of Israel. "I will be the President of everyone," Herzog said, addressing Israelis and Diaspora Jewry.

The Context:

- ✧ Israel's President is largely ceremonial but plays a key role in deciding who gets the mandate to form a government following elections. The president also has the power to pardon and grant clemency [6].
- ✧ An attorney by profession, Herzog is the grandson of Israel's first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, Isaac Herzog, and the son of former President, Chaim Herzog.
- ✧ Herzog is a former head of the Labor Party, a former opposition leader and former welfare & diaspora minister. In his 15 years in the Knesset, he became known as a soft-spoken and mild-mannered manager who declined to partake in political mudslinging [7].
- ✧ US President Joe Biden offered his "warm congratulations" to Herzog, with whom he has a personal relationship, saying he "demonstrate[s] [an] unwavering commitment to strengthening Israel's security, advancing dialogue, and building bridges across the global Jewish community [8]."

Conversation Points:

- ✧ How might Herzog's rapport with Biden boost Israel's relationship with the US?
- ✧ Why did Herzog win with such a strong majority?
- ✧ Would Netanyahu relax his grip on Israeli politics if Herzog absolved him of his legal troubles with a pardon?

145 House Democrats Urge Top Republican: Release Hold on Palestinian Aid Money

Ben Samuels, Haaretz, June 2nd 2021

Recap:

145 House Democrats urged the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to release its hold on \$75 million appropriated for Palestinian aid.

The Context:

- ✧ At least 2,000 Gazan housing units were destroyed, and another 15,000 partially destroyed, during the 11-day campaign between Hamas and Israel. The conflict began when Hamas launched, what ended up being, 4,000 Hamas rockets into Israel [9].
- ✧ The aid in question was allocated in 2020 with bipartisan support and signed into law by former President Donald Trump. The Biden administration has said the funds will go toward assisting Palestinian's grapple with the coronavirus and a failing economy. Republicans expressed concerns that aid to Palestinians could make its way to Hamas, the militant group that rules the Gaza Strip, although Democrats say the money would be tightly monitored [10].
- ✧ Biden also pledged to replenish funds for Israel's Iron Dome rocket defense system which saw heavy usage during the last bout of fighting [11].

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Seeing how Hamas has been able to rearm despite crushing blockades on the Gaza strip, what type of control do countries have over the flow of money sent to Gaza?
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Notes:

1. [Israeli Opposition Parties Strike Coalition Deal, Paving the Way for Netanyahu's Exit](#), Hadas Gold, CNN, June 3rd 2021
 2. [Benjamin Netanyahu Calls to Block Israel's Newly Formed Coalition](#), BBC, June 3rd 2021.
 3. ['No Difference': Palestinians React to Israeli Coalition Deal](#), Al Jazeera, June 3rd 2021
 4. [Benjamin Netanyahu Calls to Block Israel's Newly Formed Coalition](#), BBC, June 3rd 2021
 5. ['No Difference': Palestinians React to Israeli Coalition Deal](#), Al Jazeera, June 3rd 2021
 6. [Isaac Herzog Elected Israel's 11th President, With 87 Votes of Knesset's 120](#) Raoul Wootliff, Times of Israel, June 2nd 2021
 7. Ibid.
 8. [Biden Offers "Warm Congratulations" To Israel's Incoming President Isaac Herzog](#), Rebecca Falconer, Axios, June 2nd 2021
 9. ['Buildings Lie in Rubble': Democrats Call for Block On \\$75m In Palestinian Aid to Be Lifted](#), Memo, June 2nd 2021
 10. [House Democrats Press Key GOP Senator to Release Hold on Aid to Palestinians](#) Tal Axelrod, The Hill, June 2nd 2021
 11. Ibid.
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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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