

The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

Israeli Public Is Divided on Possibility of Coalition Majority Loss

Gil Hoffman, Jerusalem Post, May 3rd, 2022

Recap:

Israel's government is teetering on the brink of collapse after losing its one-seat majority. The coalition now holds just 60 seats.

The Context:

- ✧ The governing coalition was formed in June 2021, following four elections held in under two years. It includes eight parties spanning the spectrum of ideologies and, for the first time ever, an Arab party. The leader of the government's largest party, foreign minister Yair Lapid, will succeed Prime Minister Naftali Bennett in August 2023 [1].
- ✧ The Knesset returns from its spring recess on Monday with greater challenges than before due to Idit Silman's shift to the opposition. Silman defected following the government's plans to liberalize prayer at the Western Wall and allow chametz into hospitals on Pesach. Opposition leader and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quick to congratulate her [2].
- ✧ The coalition still holds 60 of the Knesset's 120 seats although its unity is fragile. A recent party for coalition politicians and their spouses was cancelled due to lack of signups. [3]. Netanyahu's opposition bloc holds 54 seats but, with the Arab Joint List's 6 Knesset members unlikely to support him, [4] it will be impossible for him to form a majority without the support of a coalition party [5].
- ✧ A new poll found that 35% of Israelis favor holding new Knesset elections, 28% prefer continuing with a minority government and 32% want a new government formed without elections.

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Can a minority government count on an opposition party to provide support on key issues?
- ✧ What is the likeliest outcome of this latest impasse?

Egypt, Israel Expand Economic Ties

AI Monitor, April 30th, 2022

Recap:

Recent meetings between Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi – the first between Israeli and Egyptian leaders in years – have boosted diplomatic ties after decades of “cold peace” [6].

The Context:

- ✦ Egypt was the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979 following decades of conflict. Egypt plays a central role in preventing escalation in Palestinian territories.
- ✦ In 2021, trade between Egypt and Israel reached \$330 million, an increase of 63% from 2020, with a major driver being the Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ). The QIZ was established by the United States (US) Congress in 1996 to build economic ties between Egypt and Israel. The program allows products jointly manufactured by Egypt and Israel duty-free entry into the US. There are 1,124 companies registered under the QIZ protocol and exports hit \$1.2 billion in 2021, comprising 37% of Egypt’s total exports to the US.
- ✦ On Monday, Air Cairo launched a direct flight between Tel Aviv and Sharm el-Sheikh, marking the first time an Egyptian airline operated from Israel's Ben Gurion Airport to Egypt. The first flight was "filled to the brim" with 170 Israelis [7]. In 2019, more than one million Israeli tourists visited Egypt [8].

Conversation Points:

- ✦ What lessons can America apply to other conflict zones following its success with the QIZ?
- ✦ Why does tourism serve as a bridge to forming strong diplomatic relations between nations?

Buoyed By Aliya, Israeli Population Up To 9.5 Million Ahead Of 74th Independence Day

Judah Ari Gross, Times of Israel, May 1st, 2022

Recap:

The population of the Jewish state stands at 9,506,000 on the eve of Israel’s 74th anniversary.

The Context:

- ✦ In 1948 Israel’s population numbered 806,000. Since then, 3.3 million people immigrated to Israel, with almost half arriving since 1990. The population is expected to reach 11.1 million by 2030, and 13.2 million by 2040.
- ✦ Jews represent 74% of the population, Arabs 20%, and other groups constitute the balance. Last year’s immigration numbers were the largest to reach Israel’s shores in 20 years with a considerable percentage coming from Ukraine and Russia.

- ✧ Overall, the Israeli population rose by 1.9%, adding a total of 176,000 people to its numbers.

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Where will Israel see most immigrants coming from in the upcoming year?
 - ✧ What are Israel's biggest opportunities and challenges for growth over the next decade?
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Notes:

1. [Israel's coalition government loses its majority as right-wing lawmaker quits](#), Elliott Gotkine and Michael Schwartz, CNN, April 6th, 2022
2. Ibid.
3. [Israel's coalition pep rally canceled due to lack of pep](#), GIL HOFFMAN, Jerusalem Post, MAY 3rd, 2022
4. [Israel's coalition government loses its majority as right-wing lawmaker quits](#), Elliott Gotkine and Michael Schwartz, CNN, April 6th, 2022
5. [As coalition teeters, snap polls show gridlock could continue after new election](#), Times of Israel, April 6th, 2022
6. [Inaugural direct flight between Tel Aviv and Egypt's Sharm el-Sheikh takes off](#), Times of Israel, April 17th, 2022
7. [First-ever direct flight between Israel, Egypt takes off](#), JERUSALEM POST, May 3rd, 2022
8. [Two Israeli Music Festivals Are Coming to Egypt Sparking Outrage](#), EGYPTIAN STREETS, April 15th 2022

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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