



The Sabra Report

Israel Delays Controversial Judicial Reform Bill

Kevin Shalvey, ABC News, March 27th 2023

Recap:

Following another week of protests, Israel's judicial overhaul plan has been delayed until the Knesset's next legislative session. The Knesset's plan to override Supreme Court decisions and control judicial appointments triggered some of the biggest protests in Israel's history.

The Context:

- ✧ This weekend, concerns over national security prompted Defense Minister Yoav Gallant to publicly urge Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to back down from the reforms, prompting his ouster and setting off another round of mass protests and a general strike that grounded flights at Ben Gurion airport [1].
- ✧ The bill's supporters argue that the Supreme Court's unchecked intervention into political decisions is unreasonable. If passed, the bill will allow a simple Knesset majority to overturn Supreme Court rulings. Most Israelis believe that the Supreme Court should have the authority to strike down laws incompatible with Israel's Basic Laws, and that the current system for picking judges should be maintained [2].
- ✧ Opposition leader Benny Gantz said the decision was "better late than never" but that he would not compromise on the "basics of democracy" [3]. The White House also welcomed the delay as "an opportunity to create space for compromise." Security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir agreed to the delay on condition that the bill would return after the recess. He was also promised a National Guard under his ministry – a group critics liken to a militia – by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [4].
- ✧ The crisis, which is among the worst in Israeli domestic political history, coincides with escalating violence in the West Bank, a fall in the shekel's value and a deepening rift between Israel and its allies, notably the US, which was highlighted this week by President Joe Biden's refusal to host Netanyahu in Washington [5].

Conversation Points:

- ✧ How might the next Knesset session play out?
- ✧ What does the success of the protests say about the state of democracy in Israel?
- ✧ To what extent is Netanyahu's personal legal troubles influencing his push for the judicial reforms?

Notes:

1. [Israel government to delay disputed judiciary bill amid mass protests](#), Emily Rose and Steven Scheer, Reuters, March 27th, 2023
2. [Israel president urges consensus after judicial changes pass](#), ILAN BEN ZION, AP News, February 21st, 2023
3. [Israel government to delay disputed judiciary bill amid mass protests](#), Emily Rose and Steven Scheer, Reuters, March 27th, 2023
4. [To okay overhaul delay, Ben Gvir gets promise for 'national guard' under his control](#), Times of Israel, March 28th, 2023
5. [White House scales up 'concern' rhetoric, marking rare involvement in Israeli domestic affairs](#), Kevin Liptak, Jeremy Diamond and Phil Mattingly, CNN, March 27th 2023

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