



The Sabra Report

In Blow to Coalition, Anti-Overhaul Becher Wins Bar Association Vote

Jeremy Sharon, Times of Israel, June 21st, 2023

Recap:

The Israel Bar Association election attracted more attention than usual given the impact it will have on the government's judicial reform plan. More than 77,000 active Israeli attorneys were eligible to vote [1] and turnout was 78% higher than in 2019 [2].

The Context:

- ✦ Israel's judicial overhaul plan, which would allow the Knesset to override Supreme Court decisions and control judicial appointments, triggered some of the biggest protests in Israel's history. The bill's supporters argue that the Supreme Court's unchecked intervention into political decisions is unreasonable. 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.
- ✦ The election, usually of little national interest, took on particular significance since the Bar Association provides two of the Judicial Appointments Committee's nine members. The committee consists of two Cabinet members, three Supreme Court justices, two members of Knesset and two members of the Bar Association [3]. Five votes are enough to appoint judges to all civil courts except the Supreme Court, which requires the support of seven committee members.
- ✦ Amit Becher's win means two opponents of the government's plan will serve as committee members, preventing the government from securing control of the panel in its current form – and increasing its motivation to remake the committee entirely. Legislation to do so has already passed most Knesset hurdles and could be finalized within days. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced he would resume the judicial overhaul discussions after suspending them in March to enable compromise negotiations with opposition parties [4].

Conversation Points:

- ✦ In what ways will the election result reshape the government's judicial reform plan?
- ✦ How does Amit Becher's victory reflect the perspectives of Israel's legal professionals?
- ✦ Would the government maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the public if it unilaterally adjusted the committee?
- ✦ What potential compromises could address concerns on both sides of the argument?

Notes:

1. [Israel Bar Association elections expected to impact judicial reform](#), JNS, June 21st, 2023.
2. [High voter turnout reported in pivotal Israel Bar Association elections](#), MICHAEL STARR, Jerusalem Post, June 20th, 2023.
3. [Israel Bar Association elections expected to impact judicial reform](#), JNS, June 21st, 2023.
4. [Lawyers elect leader with clout in Israel's judicial crisis](#), Dan Williams, Reuters, June 20th, 2023.

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