



The Sabra Report

Israel: Police and Anti-Judicial Reform Protesters Clash as Bill Advances

Raffi Berg, BBC, July 12th, 2023

Recap:

Protest leaders called for a Day of Resistance, blocking highways and converging on Ben Gurion airport, as the government's controversial judicial reform plan moved closer to law.

The Context:

- ✧ Benjamin Netanyahu began his sixth term as Israel's prime minister at the end of 2022 [1] with a goal to reform Israel's judiciary. Netanyahu and his supporters argue that, in the absence of a constitution, the Supreme Court often oversteps its role. Critics say Netanyahu is pushing to influence his own ongoing corruption trial, where he faces charges of fraud, bribery, and breach of trust.
- ✧ In March, Netanyahu was forced to back down amid widespread protests and mounting international pressure however, the Knesset voted Monday night to advance the bill that would strip the Supreme Court of the power to declare government decisions unreasonable – the first of three votes required for the bill to become law. The second and third readings are scheduled for July 24th [2]. Earlier this year, the High Court rejected Shas' Aryeh Deri's ministry appointments due to the reasonableness clause after Deri had misled the courts into thinking he would retire from political life in exchange for a suspended prison sentence for a tax fraud conviction.
- ✧ 300 members of the IDF's cyber and technology branches signed a letter saying they would refuse to show up for reserve duty when called [3]. Reservists from Israel's Shin Bet domestic security agency and the Mossad said they would follow suit. Last week in Jenin, Israel carried out its largest military operation in the area in 20 years to snuff out Palestinian terrorists [4].
- ✧ US President Joe Biden knocked the current Israeli government as "one of the most extreme" that he's ever seen and departing US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides said the US was working to prevent Israel from "going off the rails". The repeated US censures have sparked the coalition's ire with Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli alleging that the US is coordinating with Israel's opposition [5].

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Can Israel afford to lose the support of its reservists as it intensifies its military efforts?
- ✧ If everyone agrees there should be a better balance between the judiciary and Knesset, what should a compromise look like?
- ✧ Does America have the right to influence Israel's domestic agenda considering the support it provides economically, militarily and in the public arena?

Notes:

1. [Israel hit by huge protests as Netanyahu's judiciary overhaul moves forward](#), HALEY OTT, CBS, JULY 11th, 2023.
2. [Israeli protesters stage 'day of disruption' against controversial judicial overhaul](#), Hadas Gold, Amir Tal, Richard Allen Greene and Rob Picheta, CNN, July 12th, 2023
3. [Hundreds of IDF reservists swear off service in protest of judicial reforms](#), YONAH JEREMY BOB, Jerusalem Post, July 11th, 2023.
4. [Israel hit by huge protests as Netanyahu's judiciary overhaul moves forward](#), HALEY OTT, CBS, JULY 11th, 2023.
5. [In knock at government, US urges Israel to protect anti-overhaul protesters](#), JACOB MAGID, Times of Israel, July 12th, 2023.

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