



US “Strongly Urges” Compromise As Massive Protests Erupt Across Israel After Anti-Judicial-Reform Minister Fired

Description

Update (2045ET): Massive protests have erupted across Israel tonight after PM **Netanyhau fired his Defense Minister**, a day after he called on the Israeli leader to halt a planned judicial overhaul that has fiercely divided the country.

As a reminder, Netanyahu and his allies say the plan will restore a balance between the judicial and executive branches and rein in what they see as an interventionist court with liberal sympathies. But critics say the constellation of laws will remove the checks and balances in Israel’s democratic system and concentrate power in the hands of the governing coalition.

Gallant’s dismissal **signaled that Netanyahu will move ahead this week with the overhaul plan**, which has sparked mass protests, angered military and business leaders and raised concerns among Israel’s allies.

“The country is facing the greatest danger since the Yom Kippur War,” writes former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

“I call on the prime minister to withdraw Galant’s dismissal letter, suspend the reform and begin negotiations until after the Day of Independence.

Israel’s Consul General has resigned...

Resignation statement in full from the consul general of [#Israel](#) in [#NYC](#).
pic.twitter.com/dElivDnqpy

— Steve Herman (@W7VOA) [March 26, 2023](#)

Bibi later tweeted “we must all stand strong against refusal.”

Hundreds of thousands of Israelis took to the streets... in Tel Aviv...

??#BREAKING The police chief of the Tel Aviv district joined the demonstrations against Netanyahu pic.twitter.com/YoAr3qJO3S

— War Monitor (@WarMonitors) [March 26, 2023](#)

... and Haifa...

??One of the highways in Yafa pic.twitter.com/pZPTrxSzXg

— War Monitor (@WarMonitors) [March 26, 2023](#)

Not everybody is protesting...

It's so beautiful... pic.twitter.com/TXMMYfJwW8

— War Monitor (@WarMonitors) [March 26, 2023](#)

Haaretz reports that amid the unprecedented protests that erupted in Israel on Sunday night, **several Likud lawmakers and ministers call to stop the highly controversial legislative process of Netanyahu's judicial reform.**

Additionally, as Nadav Eyal notes, for the first time in history, Israel's main union, as well as leaders from the banks and the entire business sector, are about to **declare a general strike** demanding that the government stop the plan to overhaul the judicial system.

Netanyahu and Macron have much in common. Both are shaking the foundations of their corrupt regimes. pic.twitter.com/3saTWLe5A4

— Seyed Mohammad Marandi (@s_m_marandi) [March 27, 2023](#)

Finally, and more ominously, amid chatter across social media of the same, Iran has dropped the c-word:

Will there be a military coup in Israel?

Mutiny in the Israeli army following Netanyahu's decision to fire the defense minister — Barak David

— Iran Observer (@Iranobserver01) [March 26, 2023](#)

The situation is definitely escalating, as Joyce Karam summarizes...

UPDATE: [#Israel](#) in last few hrs

- Defense Min. Gallant fired
- Consul General in NY resigns
- Protests across Israel, > 500,000
- Roads blocked; Clashes w Police
- Universities cancel classes
- Netanyahu meeting head of Intel
- May pause Judicial Overhaul
- Knesset awaits

— Joyce Karam (@Joyce_Karam) [March 26, 2023](#)

Ratcheting up the pressure on Netanyahu, Washington has chimed in:

We are deeply concerned by today's developments out of Israel, which further underscore the urgent need for compromise.

As the President recently discussed with Prime Minister Netanyahu, democratic values have always been, and must remain, a hallmark of the U.S.- Israel relationship.

Democratic societies are strengthened by checks and balances, and fundamental changes to a democratic system should be pursued with the broadest possible base of popular support.

We continue to strongly urge Israeli leaders to find a compromise as soon as possible.

We believe that is the best path forward for Israel and all of its citizens. U.S. support for Israel's security and democracy remains ironclad.

Which follows a report earlier in the month of the U.S. State Department has been funding a left-wing organization in Israel that is helping to promote anti-government protest aimed at bringing down Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his judicial reforms. The Washington Free Beacon reported Monday that U.S. taxpayer funds have been granted to the Movement for Quality Government (MQG), which has participated in the protests that have rocked Israel for weeks. The protests began after Netanyahu, whose right-wing coalition won a commanding majority in recent elections, began tackling the decades-old problem of the judicial usurpation of power from the legislature.

And finally, as the crisis is worsening tonight, **Bibi has called the leaders of the ruling coalition parties to an emergency meeting on Monday morning.**

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Update (1415ET): In perhaps the least surprising geopolitical move of the day, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu fired his defense minister on Sunday

, a day after Yoav Gallant called for a halt to the planned overhaul of Israel's judiciary that has divided the country.

Netanyahu's office did not provide further details.

As we detailed below, Gallant, a senior member of Netanyahu's Likud party, became the **first to break ranks late Saturday by calling for the legislation to be frozen.**

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In a major development, **Israeli defense minister Yoav Gallant on Saturday called for Benjamin Netanyahu's government to halt its planned judicial reforms**, which have prompted enormous protests and are starting to disrupt the country's military.

"I see the source of our strength eroding...**The rift within our society is widening and penetrating the Israel Defense Forces,**" said Gallant in a televised evening speech. **"This is a clear and immediate and tangible danger** to the security of the state. I shall not be a party to this."

In addition to calling for a suspension of the reforms, Gallant also implored Israelis to stop their enormous protests, which raged even as he spoke.



Israeli defense minister Yoav Gallant delivering his remarks on Saturday evening
(Defense Ministry photo)

The coming week could bring high drama and even more upheaval, as the Knesset is expected to hold its final vote on the first aspect of the judicial overhaul: a measure giving the government more power over Supreme Court appointments.

Other reforms would allow the Knesset — Israel’s unicameral legislature — to override Supreme Court decisions with a simple majority vote. Others would end the court’s practice of applying a “reasonableness” test when evaluating laws and government actions.

Critics characterize the scheme as a step deeper into authoritarianism. **Some say the moves are in part designed to help Netanyahu terminate his ongoing prosecution** on corruption charges.

The past ten weeks have seen major public protests all across Israel. Saturday night’s crowds were reportedly the largest yet, estimated in the hundreds of thousands.

Tel Aviv, today. Estimated as the largest protest in the history of Israel
pic.twitter.com/2CEGz4cl2b

— Danel Lushi (@DanellLushi) [March 25, 2023](#)

Gallant said the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are feeling the effects: “The events happening in Israeli society are not staying out of the military. **Feelings of rage, disappointment and fear have reached heights we have never seen before,**” said Gallant.

More pressingly, **a growing coalition of Israeli service members — calling themselves Brothers in Arms — are committing to stop showing up** for duty in protest of the measures.

Some say they’ll stay home if the judicial reform passes, but others aren’t waiting — particularly among Israel’s reserve forces. On Friday, **two hundred Israeli Air Force reserve pilots signed a letter saying they will not report for two weeks.** Reservists are an essential part of Israel’s military, and especially its air force, which has been active in bombing targets across Syria, including the Damascus airport.

IDF chief of staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi has already sounded an internal alarm, saying **the dip in reservists reporting for duty is now so large that the the military is on the verge of curtailing some operations,** according to *The New York Times*, which quoted three anonymous Israeli officials. Two of those officials are **bracing for resignations from full-time service members.**



Palestinians would surely welcome the curtailing of IDF operations

Underscoring the divisions caused by the judicial proposal, **far-right national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir lashed out at his fellow cabinet member, urging Netanyahu to fire Gallant**, whom he condemned for “succumbing to the pressure of those [IDF members] who threatened to refuse [to report for duty] and are trying to stop the important reform.”

Similarly, **Israel’s communications minister** accused Gallant, a former navy commando, of “**giving wind to a military coup.**”

However, just minutes after Gallant concluded his remarks, **two of his fellow Likud party lawmakers endorsed his plea**, *Haaretz* reports. One is the chair of the Knesset’s security and foreign affairs committee, and the other is a person who rarely criticizes Netanyahu.

Israel’s agriculture minister and another Likud member reportedly favor a freeze as well. **If they went as far as to become “no” votes, that quartet would be sufficient to impede the legislation.**

On Friday — the day before Gallant’s speech — Netanyahu [told](#) reporters:

“Surrendering to [IDF] refusal is a terrible danger to the state of Israel...**The country cannot exist without the IDF. There will not be a nation, it’s very simple. All red lines have been crossed.** People who were responsible for the security of the country suddenly adopted this cynicism.”

Gallant [said](#) he had privately shared his views with Netanyahu, who asked him to delay going public with them. **Gallant cancelled plans to speak out on Thursday, but said he now felt compelled to take his message to all Israelis.**

Netanyahu ends another humiliating foreign trip, his own defense minister urges a halt to the govt anti-democratic legislative blitz while record numbers protest across Israel; police use water cannon and far-right Kahanists counter-demonstrate [@haaretzcom](#)
<https://t.co/4Z68IFoaAN> pic.twitter.com/b4azoVOtEK

— Esther Solomon (@EstherSolomon) [March 25, 2023](#)

by Tyler Durden

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