



[The Results from Israel's Fifth Election in Less than Four Years Highlight an Alarming Rise of the Extreme Far-Right](#)

This week, Israel held its fifth election in less than four years, with the projected results underlining a troubling rise of the extreme far-right. It is now anticipated that criminally-indicted former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will return to power as head of a new far-right coalition government. This is alarming on multiple fronts, as not only is Netanyahu under ongoing investigation for serious criminal charges with analysts pinpointing his blatant intentions to manipulate the justice system and attempt to dodge prosecution, but the new coalition is slated to include extremist and bigoted political figures such as Itamar Ben-Gvir and other heads of the Jewish supremacist Religious Zionism party. Some experts have outlined how their inclusion as potential ministers has already stirred controversy, with indications, for example, that the Biden administration is unlikely to engage with officials like Ben-Gvir. There is also understandable concern that a new Israeli coalition government which is comprised of this multitude of members with discriminatory and hateful viewpoints towards Palestinians will serve a destructive role in only fueling more violence and injustice.

Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich are two of the political figures expected to be involved in the new Israeli coalition government that have drawn particular distress from peace and social justice activists. Ben-Gvir is an extremist and Jewish supremacist who espouses Kahanist ideologies and is now set to become a minister in the soon-to-be new coalition government. He has been described as an extreme far-right provocateur, and has been convicted of inciting racism, destroying property, and supporting terror organizations. Ben-Gvir wants to expel what he deems to be “disloyal” Palestinian citizens of Israel, despite him offering no clear explanation as to what classifies one as such. Additionally, Bezalel Smotrich, leader of the Jewish supremacist Religious Zionism party, is also due to be a critical member of the new coalition government. Like Ben-Gvir, Smotrich holds radical and bigoted views, having advocated for a shoot-to-kill policy for the Israeli military against Palestinian protesters and even for the separation of Jewish and Arab mothers in hospital maternity wards. His hateful sentiment towards Palestinians also includes a belief that they are inferior to Jewish citizens of Israel.

Netanyahu himself is now anticipated to regain power despite facing a serious and ongoing criminal corruption trial, which also presents major concerns regarding his potential ability to manipulate and circumvent justice. He has been under fire and scrutiny for egregious charges of corruption which include breach of trust, deception, and receiving bribes. He rejected the widespread calls to step down after he was indicted, instead using his position of power as prime minister to lash out at law enforcement, the media, and the courts – claiming that they were conducting a “witch hunt” against him. Thus, now, observers again fear that he will use his position of authority to hinder the criminal trial and investigation. In fact, Smotrich has proposed a slew of new laws to strip the justice system of some of its powers and alter the criminal code.

This latest Israeli election highlights the unsettling rise of the extreme far-right and the growing support for these groups. Most troubling of all is the support they hold amongst even young Israelis. Polls indicate that an estimated 70% of Israeli youths aged 18 to 24 identify as right-wing. The results of the election are disturbing because they demonstrate the extent to which these bigoted and anti-democratic entities, whose leaders advocate for undermining justice and expelling Palestinians deemed “disloyal,” among other destructive things, have seen a rise in support. The extremist Religious Zionism slate, for example, is projected to win at least 14 Knesset seats compared with around 6 in previous rounds of elections.