

Israel's 37th Government

**What you need to know
about the most far-right
government in Israel's
history**

The coalition agreement

Israel's 37th government was sworn in on 29 December 2022, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The government is made up of four right-wing political parties:

- **Likud**, led by Benjamin Netanyahu
- **The Religious Zionist Party (RZ)**, led by Bezalel Smotrich
- **United Torah Judaism (UTJ)**, led by Yitzhak Goldknopf
- **Shas**, led by Aryeh Deri

NB: Religious Zionism is a union of three parties: Religious Zionism Party, Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power), led by Itamar Ben Gvir and Noam, led by Avi Maoz.

The government has 64 of 120 Knesset seats, which translates into an election win of approximately 53%.

To form the government, a coalition agreement was signed between the four parties and crucially, agreed between Netanyahu and each party.

There are several worrying elements of these agreements as well as general statements made by new MKs and Ministers.

On Palestine

Coalition agreements include the legalisation of dozens of outposts – which are currently illegal under Israeli law – turning them into Israeli settlements in the West Bank.



There is a planned overhaul of Israeli mechanisms for controlling the occupied Palestinian territories, which will be done by transferring the powers of the current administration of Palestinian civilian life in the West Bank from the military, directly to a junior minister from Bezalel Smotrich's party.

The Israel Antiquities Authority and the Council for the Preservation of Israel Heritage Sites will be transferred to the authority of the Minister of Heritage from Otzma Yehudit (Itamar Ben Gvir's Jewish Power party) and used to reinforce the Jewish-Zionist narrative, while erasing Palestinian identity from the area.

Ministers from Otzma Yehudit will be granted authority over the Planning and Agricultural and Settlement Development Authority, the Green Patrol and the National Unit for Enforcing Planning and Construction Laws – bodies that greatly influence settlement and outpost expansion and restrict Palestinian construction in the West Bank.

“For now - the occupation is permanent. I want to continue to extend sovereignty over the territories where I can extend sovereignty.” - MK Tzvika Fogel, Otzma Yehudit (quoted January 2023)

The Police

In his role as Minister for Interior Security, Itamar Ben Gvir will now be in charge of the Israeli police – including the Israeli border police. In other words, he will have control over policing in all territory controlled by Israel including East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

As Minister for Interior Security, Ben Gvir will have more power than his predecessors – the police commissioner will now be his.

Ben Gvir will have expansive powers previously belonging to the commissioner and additional control over police investigative policies.

During the coalition negotiations, there was an attempt to add a disclaimer that the police must not be politicised – as is true for Israeli Secret Services – Ben Gvir refused.

These changes are problematic for many reasons, not least because it puts into question the ability of the police to independently investigate government members.



The Justice System

Many political campaigns, both internally in the Likud and aimed at the general public, have been centred on questioning the legitimacy of the Israeli court system and the powers held by the supreme court.

Perhaps most significant is the Legislation of the Supreme Court Override Clause – this will allow the government to take votes to overrule Supreme Court decisions.

The government will also turn the office of the legal advisor into a political appointment by elected officials. This significantly weakens review of the government and fundamentally alters the checks and balances essential to Israel's system of governance.

Benjamin Netanyahu continues to face trial having been indicted on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three separate cases.

His son, Yair Netanyahu recently said in a radio interview that state prosecutors who were involved in the decision to charge his father need to be tried for treason, and if found guilty, sentenced to death. His father distanced himself from these comments.

Minister Aryeh Deri, leader of Shas, has admitted to being guilty of different charges of bribery, corruption and tax fraud. However, the coalition agreed to amend the Basic Law, which prevents people with criminal convictions from serving as government ministers.



Equal rights and representation



Currently, it is illegal for businesses in Israel to discriminate. However, Netanyahu signed an agreement with Bezalel Smotrich which will make it legal for business owners to discriminate on the basis of their faith.

This has been predominantly aimed at allowing religious business owners to reject LGBTQ customers, and may carry far broader consequences. Netanyahu has distanced himself from this, but it's been made clear this clause remains in the agreements.

Avi Maoz, leader of Noam, will be put in charge of the new "National Jewish Identity Department" and of part of the education syllabus. Avi Maoz is a staunch opponent of LGBTQ rights, as well as women's rights.

There is currently a clause in Israel law under which charges of 'racial incitement' can prevent someone from running for office – this will now be revoked.

Noam party have also compiled internal lists of LGBTQ media professionals as well as feminists – which were recently leaked to the press.

Maoz recently said he would seek to roll back a Health Ministry ban on so-called conversion therapy, allowing "psychological consultations for those who don't want to be gay."

"I am a proud homophobe" - MK Bezalel Smotrich, RZP, Minister of Finance (quoted 2016)

Non-Orthodox Jews

Several ministries have been created with a focus on Jewish identity. The representatives in this government focus on Orthodox and Charedi Jewry with little to no representation of secular, liberal or reform Jews.

The current Law of Return is the law which grants Jews in the diaspora the right of Aliyah – the right to Israeli citizenship. This law has for years allowed Jewish refugees – including most recently refugees from the Russia-Ukraine war – to move to Israel.

Aliyah and Integration Minister, Ofir Sofer, argues that the “Grandchild Clause” in the Law of Return ought to be amended without legislation changes. According to him, the vast majority of Jewish olim who made Aliyah from Russia and Ukraine in 2022 were not considered Jewish according to Halachic law.

Diaspora Minister Amichai Chikli has stated he will not focus on the women of the wall or reform Jewish struggles – but rather on BDS.

One of the demands made by United Torah Judaism was the elimination of any government support for Reform Judaism – the form of Judaism that many in the diaspora practice.

