



## Gov't OKs modified bill on judicial appointments, vows swift passage

Noa Shpigel, Jonathan Lis and Bar Peleg

The governing coalition said it plans to complete legislation changing the operating and composition of the Judicial Appointments Committee before the Knesset recesses for the Passover holiday in two weeks.

The government said in a statement late Sunday that it is accepting a softened proposal for changing how Supreme Court justices are selected, submitted by MK Simcha Rothman, who chairs the Knesset Constitution, Law and Justice Committee.

The new version of the amendment to the Basic Law on the Judiciary gives the coalition the power to fill the first two openings on the Supreme Court that become available in a given Knesset term. Any additional appointments to the court during the term, however, will be subject to the approval of at least one opposition member and at least one justice on the committee.

Protest leaders rejected the proposal and attacked the coalition, saying that the government "decided to divide our nation and carry out a hostile takeover of the Supreme Court. This isn't a softer proposal, but rather a declaration of war by the Israeli government against its people and Israeli democracy."

They slammed the proposed judicial overhaul as "the first stage in turning Israel into a dictatorship" and "a transparent attempt to numb the protest movement."



Levin, center, and Rothman, right, in the Knesset plenum on Monday.

The coalition plans to push through the judicial appointments legislation before the Knesset recesses for Passover, in early April. The rest of the judicial overhaul legislation, or at least most of it, will be paused until the summer. The coalition may move

forward with laws barring the attorney general from declaring a prime minister unfit to serve and permitting Shas party chair Arye Dery to return to the cabinet despite being disqualified by the Supreme Court due to his criminal convictions.

National Unity Party chair Benny Gantz said that if the proposed changes to the Judicial Appointments Committee are enacted, he will no longer discuss a compromise with the coalition. He called on jurists to withdraw their candidacy for the Supreme Court if

the proposal is passed. Opposition leader and Yesh Atid party chair Yair Lapid said: "This is not a compromise, it is a hostile political takeover of the judiciary."

Rothman presented his revised amendment to the Knesset committee Sunday.

The panel was preparing the legislation on the Judicial Appointments Committee ahead of the second and third of the three mandatory votes a bill must pass in the legislature to become law.

See **BILL**, Page 2

## Government seeks to extend Knesset term one year, to five

Chen Maanit

The government is advancing a proposal to extend the term of the present Knesset for an additional year, meaning the current coalition would hold power for five years, instead of four.

On Sunday, the Likud party told the chairman of the Central Elections Committee, Supreme Court Justice Noam Sohlberg, to set the date for the next Knesset election on November 2, 2027.

Knesset legal advisor Sagi Afek opposes the change, and Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara is also expected to object. The Knesset's term is set in the Basic Law on the Knesset—Israel's semi-constitutional laws.

Following Haaretz's reporting, the Likud issued a denial, claiming it is not planning on extending the government's term.

If the Knesset dissolves before the official end of its term, as happened in the previous Knesset—the law states the next Knesset's term will last until the next Jewish month of Heshvan after the end of four years since the previous Election Day. The Likud says that the election for the current Knesset took place on 7 Heshvan and that the law covers the entire month of Heshvan. Therefore, Likud officials argue, since the next election follows a four-year period since Election Day, the next Knesset election should be held in November 2027, which would be five years after the last one.

The Central Elections Committee has begun studying the issue following a request by attorney Binyamin Shorr.

On Sunday, Likud submitted its position to the committee, in favor of the idea. It noted that by law, the term extension may take between one month if "the end of four years from Election Day" falls in the month of Tishrei for the Knesset, and 12 months if the date falls in the month of Heshvan.

Likud argued that despite the law setting the Knesset's term at four years, "the legislature considered it in the public interest to extend the term of the Knesset elected after a Knesset whose term had been shortened by at most 12 months." Likud also claimed the calculation according to the civil calendar also leads to "the conclusion according to which the date of the election for the 26th Knesset will fall in the month of Sivan 5788."

The United Torah Judaism party submitted the identical position to the Elections Committee.

Afek opposes the extension of the Knesset's term. She submitted a legal opinion Sunday saying, "a thorough analysis of the language and purpose of the Basic Law on the Knesset indicates that the election date for the 26th Knesset falls on the third Tuesday of the month of Heshvan 5787-Sivan 5787." This is a year before Likud's preferred date.

Justice Ministry officials told Haaretz that Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara would present the same legal interpretation as Afek.

In response, Likud denied supporting legislation extending the Knesset's term: "The Knesset's terms will be determined by legal procedures, not by Knesset decisions as they were in the past."

Tactic in war on democracy **Gidi Weitz Page 3** • One day, multiple hazards **Yossi Verter Page 3** • Just Phase I **Editorial Page 5**



Herzl Halevi, left, with Yoav Gallant. Ariel Hermoni/Defense Ministry

## IDF becomes the main battlefield of the regime coup

Analysis **Amos Harel**

TV channels reported on Monday that Defense Minister Yoav Gallant recently warned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he would find it difficult to continue in his post if the coalition continued to forge ahead with its regime overhaul without obtaining

wide public consent. Gallant said this against the backdrop of the harsh responses of Israel's reserve force members to the coup, and concern that this could seriously impact the battle readiness of the IDF, especially in the air force. Netanyahu talked about

this at a meeting of coalition party leaders. He apparently disclosed this in an attempt to project a dual message, which will advance his plan to pass a more limited version of the proposed legislation. He wanted to signal to the right wing that he has no other choice but to give up some of his plan, while signaling to the left that he agreed to give in only under the pressure of the defense

minister, indicating that his proposal is genuine and reflects a true change.

What began as a legislative carpet bombing, using "shock and awe" tactics, is now being curbed as the self-imposed deadline set by the coalition approaches, with the Knesset session winding down in early April. Netanyahu, posing as the national mitigator, is trying to convince the opposition

and the protest movement that a compromise can be reached on the legislation, while still giving the government some critical advantages in determining the composition of the Supreme Court. Few people will fall into this trap, first of all because controlling the appointment of judges was the core of the plan from the very beginning. Second, there is suspicion that this is merely

an attempt to lull the public with the aim of passing the other laws, salami-style, after the protest movement wanes.

In the meantime, the IDF is reluctantly turning out to be the main battlefield between supporters and opponents of the regime coup. This is expressed not just by Gallant speaking to Netanyahu.

See **IDF**, Page 2

### Justice minister's ally

## Levin attended party hosted by ex-convict close to crime family

Chaim Levinson

Justice Minister Yairiv Levin visited this month the home of Rafi Chaim-Kedoshim, a criminal associated with a well-known crime family from the city of Herzliya and a prominent figure in the city's Likud branch.

Levin, who established a political alliance with Chaim-Kedoshim in the last elections, participated in a recent Purim party the latter had hosted together with Energy Minister Yisrael Katz. Levin and Chaim-Kedoshim were even seen hugging as the justice minister arrived at the party. In the past, Chaim-Kedoshim participated in several Likud events, at least one in the presence of the party's leader, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Chaim-Kedoshim is a second generation to the Kedoshim crime family and was previously sentenced to four years in prison. He was convicted, among other things, of acts of violence, kidnapping and extortion. In the trial of the crime boss Rico Shirazi it became clear that the two

are friends and work together.

In recent years, Chaim-Kedoshim has been trying to gain a foothold in the Herzliya municipality and has recruited the support of about 700 Likud members. Many of them are members of his family and their neighbors from the Neveh Israel neighborhood. This is how he took over the Likud branch in Herzliya in preparation for the elections in local municipalities that are scheduled for October.

A Likud activist from Herzliya told Haaretz that Chaim-Kedoshim "wants to take over the municipality by winning two seats and becoming deputy mayor." The activist further said that "this will enable him an easy pathway to deal with real estate and business licensing. This is how a crime family will penetrate both a local government and The Federation of Local Authorities in Israel. Everyone here is afraid of him."

In the vote for the Likud slate for the Knesset last August, Chaim-Kedoshim and Levin compiled a list of recommended candi-

dates for the party's central committee members. Levin tried, and succeeded, in ending up second on the slate, behind only Netanyahu. Chaim-Kedoshim sought to promote two candidates of his own. The first is the Likud Comptroller and a resident of Herzliya, Shay Galili, who is known as a frequent critic of Netanyahu. The other is Mati Yogeve, who was an MK on behalf of Likud for a few months and hoped to reenter the Knesset on the spot reserved for a woman on the slate. Yogeve is also the spouse of the chairman of the Herzliya municipality's workers' committee, Moti Yogeve.

While Levin achieved his goals, Galili and Yogeve did not. However, in Herzliya the deal between Levin and Chaim-Kedoshim did bring returns: the Likud faction's chairman at the time came in first place in the local elections. Galili came in fourth place and Yogeve in sixth place.

The number of votes Yogeve won in Herzliya alone was about a third of those she received in the national

See **LEVIN**, Page 2

## HAARETZ Online now

'Semites at every station' What a 19th-century survey of Western Russia revealed

'Israel is falling apart' Group of Israelis launch hunger strike outside PM's office



Emil Salzman

haaretz.com

## The ICC is going after Putin. What does that mean for Israel?

Sam Sokol

On Friday, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin, accusing the Russian president of war crimes due to his alleged involvement in abducting children from Ukraine to Russia.

The decision appeared to be a sign of the Hague-based international tribunal's newfound willingness to take action against leaders of powerful states. Israeli experts warn that this also raises the risk of action against Israeli leaders in the future.

Putin's warrant "heightens the risk for Israel's leadership," said Prof. Eliav Lieblich, an expert in international law at Tel Aviv University's Buchmann Faculty of Law. "They demonstrated the political will to go against the head of one of the most powerful states in the world which can respond in unlimited ways, including violence," he said – around the same time that Dmitry Medvedev, a former Russian president and current deputy head of the country's Security Council, threatened to strike the court with a hypersonic missile.

"If they can target Putin, they won't shy away from issuing a warrant against



The International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands.

Peter Dejong/AP

someone like Netanyahu," Lieblich continued, adding that "on a legal level, the court made it clear that it doesn't think that heads of nonmember states have personal immunity in front of the ICC."

Israel is not a member of the court, which, Jerusalem argues, means that the ICC has no authority to investigate crimes committed in the country. However, the ICC ruled in 2019 that it does

have jurisdiction in the Palestinian territories and in 2021 it approved a request to open legal proceedings against Israel and Hamas on suspicion of committing war crimes.

Despite this, Lieblich believes that the court currently has its hands full dealing with Russia, whose president was accused of being "responsible for the war crime of unlawful deportation of population and that of

unlawful transfer of population from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation."

Moscow has repeatedly denied accusations that its forces have committed atrocities in Ukraine. International law experts believe there is only a small likelihood that Putin will be tried because the ICC cannot hold trials in the defendant's

See **ICC**, Page 2

