

Israel's Parliament Dissolves, Sets Fifth Election in 3-Plus Years

It's the moment we have all been waiting for ... and waiting and waiting.

After months of rumors followed by defections and most recently an announcement by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid that they would move to dissolve the Knesset, a vote on the issue passed this morning in the Knesset, 92 to 0.

Knesset members had already voted to set a date for the next election, scheduled for Nov. 1—Israel's fifth election in 3.5 years.

The voting followed cantankerous speeches by coalition and opposition members and was frequently interrupted by shouts from the plenary hall. Opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who was heckled during his comments, pounded the podium and said, "This is no way to run the Knesset."

Netanyahu, who has already begun his campaign, called the outgoing coalition a "failed experiment."

"This is what happens when you mix together a fake right-wing party and extreme leftist parties, mix with the Joint List—that's what you get," he said.

He also positioned himself head to head against Lapid, who is head of the the Yesh Atid (There is a Future) party, which is polling second to Netanyahu's Likud.

"That's exactly what the upcoming election is about. Will there again be a failed Lapid government here, dependent on the Muslim Brotherhood in common with supporters of terrorism,

or a broad and strong national government headed by us that will return pride, power and hope to Israel?" he said referring to the Arab parties in the Knesset. "Lapid can only form a government with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Joint List."

The former prime minister also said he has had time in the past year to reflect.

"I learned a lot, a lot. Everyone who listens to the citizens of Israel sees that something fundamental has gone wrong in the past year in our country," he said.

Ra'am leader Mansour Abbas—whose party became the first Arab party to serve in a coalition—said he would be willing to serve in another diverse coalition in the future.

"I'd give this coalition another mandate in the future to continue," Abbas said. "It's possible to work together. We didn't find that there was such a big [gap] between all of the parties."

Bennett announced yesterday that he would not run in the next election and handed over leadership of his Yamina party to Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked.

Bennett and Lapid will hold a small handover ceremony at the Prime Minister's Office this afternoon, Hebrew media is reporting, and Lapid will officially enter the role at midnight. {eoa}

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