

Netanyahu Formally Charged With Fraud, Breach of Trust, Accepting Bribes

Israel's attorney general on Thursday formally charged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a series of corruption cases, throwing the country's paralyzed political system into further disarray and threatening the longtime leader's grip on power.

Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit charged Netanyahu with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three different matters, known as Cases 1000, 2000 and 4000. It is the first time a sitting Israeli prime minister has been charged with a crime. Mandelblit was set to issue a formal statement later Thursday.

Allegations against Netanyahu include claims he accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars of champagne and cigars from billionaire friends, offered to trade favors with a newspaper publisher and used his influence to help a wealthy telecom magnate in exchange for favorable coverage on a popular news site.

The indictment does not require Netanyahu to resign but is expected to raise pressure on him to step down.

Netanyahu has called the allegations part of a witch hunt, lashing out against the media, police, prosecutors and the justice system.

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This article originally appeared at World Israel News.