

# AMERICAN FRIENDS OF LIKUD

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## **AFL Leadership Mission to Israel, JUNE 7-10, 2020**

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## **Netanyahu and Gantz seek post-election leverage**

**The final, but not yet certified, results in the Israeli election left Benjamin Netanyahu 3 seats short of a 61 seat majority. Neither Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu nor Blue and White leader Benny Gantz have a clear path to a governing coalition.**

- With another political deadlock likely, both sides sought to increase their leverage ahead of coalition talks.
- Blue and White, with the tacit support of the Joint (Arab) List, floated the possibility of passing legislation, once the new Knesset is sworn in, to prevent any prime minister from continuing to serve if indicted for serious criminal offences. Blue and White later clarified that the law would not apply retroactively, but rather for the next Knesset – potentially preventing Netanyahu from staying on as prime minister after a fourth election.
- Meeting with his right-wing and ultra-orthodox allies yesterday, Netanyahu claimed he had won the election, saying: "The nation's decision was clear: 58 mandates for the Zionist right wing camp and 47 mandates for the Zionist left wing camp". Netanyahu added that Gantz "was trying to steal the election."
- A number of Blue and White parliamentarians claimed on social media yesterday that Likud had approached them to defect, but that they had rejected the offer.

The law being proposed by Blue and White is likely a "trial balloon" to apply pressure on

Netanyahu and remind him that the anti-Netanyahu forces hold the majority in the Knesset. Likud lawmakers blasted the initiative as undemocratic and a possible coup that “the people” would not stand for.

- It is unclear, however, what Blue and White’s end goal is. A national unity government with Likud would almost certainly still involve Netanyahu serving with Gantz as Prime Minister in a rotation agreement. Blue and White made clear even before Netanyahu was officially indicted that this is a non-starter.
- Netanyahu has already begun delegitimising any cooperation with the Joint List, calling them “terrorist supporters” yesterday. The most likely path to a Gantz government would be to form a minority government with the outside support of the Joint List – a politically sensitive step for some Blue and White Knesset members.
- Joint List leader Ayman Odeh blasted Netanyahu for his comments yesterday, saying: “Anyone who repeats the lie that Netanyahu won is coming out of the assumption that there are only 105 Knesset members and is wiping out 1.8 million [Arab] citizens.”
- Netanyahu’s efforts to secure the 3 defections he needs to form a government look remote at present. In comments yesterday Netanyahu alluded to the need for national unity, raising the possibility – which he consistently rejected during the campaign – of a grand coalition with Blue and White.
- Avigdor Lieberman still holds the keys to any likely coalition government with the seven seats he won in the election.
- For most of the political establishment, the option of a fourth election is no longer theoretical, although lawmakers and analysts made clear that the post-election process will take weeks to play out.

### Key Dates

**10 March:**

Official election results presented to Israel’s President Reuven Rivlin.

**10-17 March:**

President Rivlin likely to begin consultation meetings with party leaders.

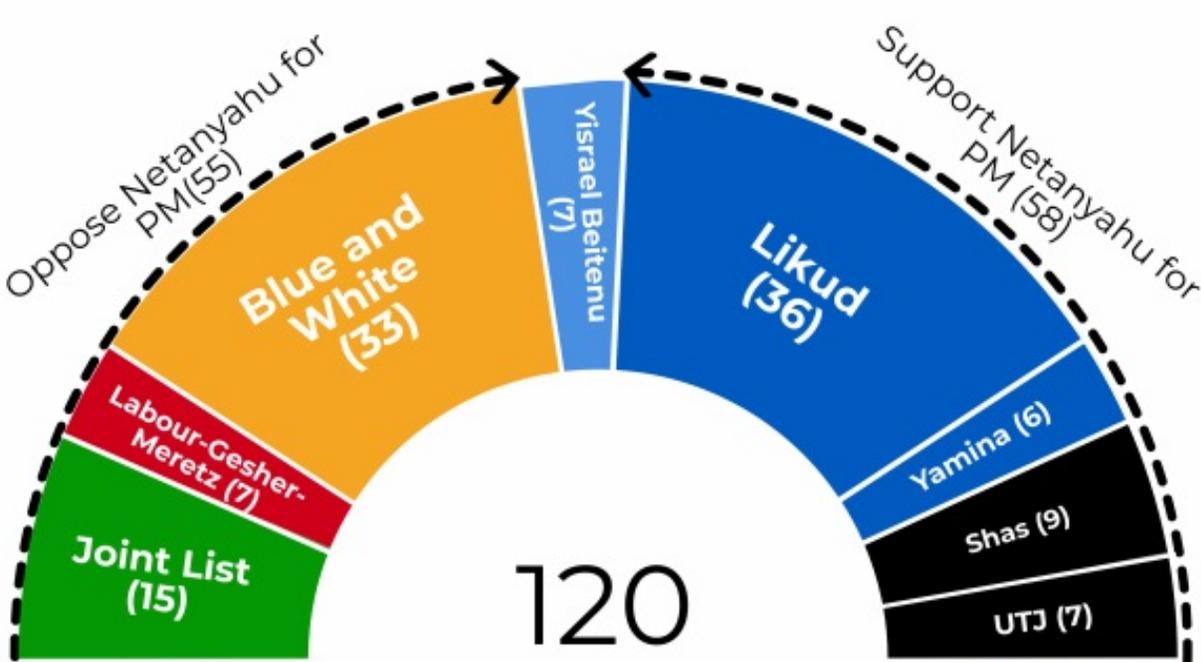
**17 March:**

Deadline for President Rivlin to ask a party leader to form a Government. That leader will then have 28 days (plus an additional 14 day extension) to form a governing coalition.

**17 March:**

Netanyahu’s criminal trial for bribery, fraud and breach of trust opens in the Jerusalem District Court.

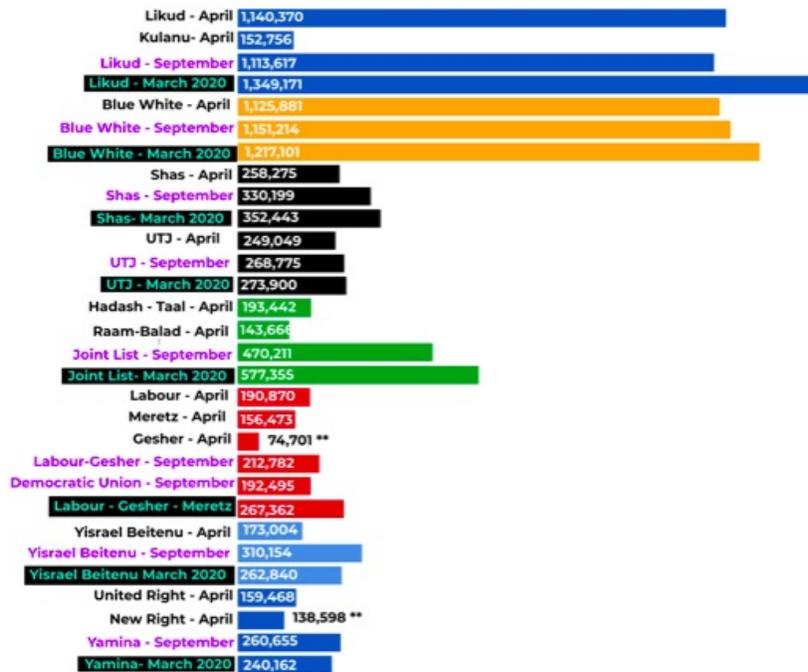
### Final Results



The story of Israel's last three elections: Blue and White got 1.217m votes, best ever, but Likud did better with 1.349m up from 1.113m in September

### Total Votes Per Party

April 2019 vs September 2019 vs March 2020



\*\*New Right and Gesher did not pass the electoral threshold in April

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