

Netanyahu to form Israeli government of racists and fascists

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Seventy-five years after the UN vote to establish a homeland for the Jews on part of the Palestinian land administered under the British Mandate, Benjamin Netanyahu is set to form a government composed of the most reactionary forces in the country, including the fascistic and racist Religious Zionism Party, now the third largest party in the 120-seat Knesset.

It is a historical milestone in the crisis and rightward trajectory of the Zionist state.

Netanyahu's government will be made up of racists from the religious and ultra-nationalist parties pledged to Jewish supremacy and the implementation of measures synonymous with apartheid. Their vicious attacks on the Palestinians are aimed at driving them out of both Israel's internationally recognized borders and the lands it has illegally occupied since the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, in defiance of international law and countless United Nations resolutions.

One candidate in line for high office is Itamar Ben-Gvir, leader of the Jewish Power faction within Religious Zionism. Ben-Gvir, a virulent anti-Arab who regularly incites violence against the Palestinians, chanting "Death to the Arabs," has faced dozens of charges of hate speech.

He used to hang a portrait in his living room of the Israeli-American terrorist Baruch Goldstein, who in 1994 massacred 29 Palestinians and wounded 125 others while they were praying in Hebron, in what became known as the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre. He never forgave Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin for signing the Oslo Accords, which were presented as ushering in a mini-Palestinian state, saying in 1995, two weeks before Rabin was assassinated, "We got to his car, and we'll get to him too," after he stole a car ornament from Rabin's Cadillac.

Ben-Gvir is a self-proclaimed disciple of the American-born fascist Meir Kahane, whose movement was banned in Israel and declared a terrorist organization by the United States.

Religious Zionism's agenda includes Israeli rule over the West Bank, the expulsion of what it calls "disloyal" Palestinian citizens of Israel, who make up 20 percent of the

country's population, the demolition of the al-Aqsa Mosque to make way for the building of a Jewish Temple, the imposition of religious law and the destruction of the judicial system.

Last month, Yaakov Katz, editor-in-chief of the *Jerusalem Post*, called Ben-Gvir "the modern Israeli version of an American white supremacist and a European fascist." A government that includes him, Katz warned, "will take on the contours of a fascist state."

The Biden administration, despite its differences with Netanyahu, congratulated him on his victory. On Thursday, US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides called Netanyahu, tweeting soon after: "Good call just now with Benjamin. I congratulated him on his victory and told him I look forward to working together to maintain the unbreakable bond" between Israel and the US.

Europe's far-right leaders were quick to welcome his return to power.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky congratulated Netanyahu, tweeting that he hoped to open "a new page in cooperation" with the incoming government, a reference to the previous government's refusal to send Israel's Iron Dome technology and other advanced systems to Ukraine in an effort to maintain relations with Russia.

Those other bastions of right-wing reaction—Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi—likewise lost no time in congratulating Netanyahu.

Israel's open turn to the politics of Jewish supremacy and fascist terrorism thoroughly exposes the attempts to equate opposition to the Israeli state with anti-Semitism. Indeed, by embracing a program of ethnic cleansing, based on exclusivist conceptions of racial, religious and linguistic hegemony, and identifying this program with the Jewish people, the Israeli ruling class provides grist for the anti-Semitic mill internationally.

This week, more than 240 Jewish-American voters in Pittsburgh signed a letter denouncing the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which is closely aligned

with both Netanyahu and Donald Trump, for spending millions of dollars to back more than 100 Republican candidates who voted to overturn the 2020 election, including “lawmakers who have promoted the anti-Semitic ‘Great Replacement’ conspiracy that helped inspire the murder of eleven members of the three synagogues housed at Tree of Life,” which is located in Pittsburgh.

It is a tragic irony of history that the same type of “race and blood” nationalism that was used by German fascism to exterminate 6 million Jews is being employed today by the Israeli ruling class against the Palestinians, while playing into the hands of those who seek once again to stoke up hatred of “outsiders” and “cosmopolitans” to target Jewish people.

Within Israel itself, the stepped-up attacks on Palestinians will be accompanied by a mounting assault on the social and democratic rights of all workers, Jewish and Palestinian alike, as Netanyahu cracks down on political dissent on behalf of Israel’s plutocrats.

How is this to be explained? There is, of course, the bankruptcy of the nominal opposition, which is an international phenomenon. Netanyahu was able to capitalize on the failure of “progressive” forces in the Bennett-Lapid-led “government of change” to put forward any alternative to alleviate the social inequality that is one of the highest in the OECD group of advanced countries. That failure reflects the class position which prioritizes the interests of Israel’s oligarchs over those of the working class, both Jewish and Palestinian.

More fundamentally, the turn to openly racist policies is rooted in two major factors: the acute crisis of the Zionist state and the logic of Zionism itself.

The establishment of a homeland for the Jews on the twin bases of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians already living there and a capitalist state was always a reactionary utopia, as the Fourth International explained in 1947.

As the gap between rich and poor grew, due in no small part to the very economic policies required to carry out such a program, the state increased its reliance on right-wing settlers and extreme nationalist zealots, who provided the basis for the emergence of fascistic tendencies within Israel. Extreme nationalism was encouraged to divert growing anger over declining living standards and social inequality along reactionary lines.

It is disturbing that a section of the Jewish people, who have long been associated with progressive movements and were the victims of the worst crime in history, are supporting political parties that can only be described as fascist. This is a product of the toxic political environment in Israel, long a beachhead for American imperialism in the Middle East.

This reactionary outlook, however, is far from universally

accepted. The Israeli working class has repeatedly sought a way out of this terrible conflict and a path towards peace with the Palestinians. But to do so means renewing the socialist and internationalist culture in which Jewish workers and intellectuals played such a central role in a previous era.

In December of 1938, Leon Trotsky wrote with profound prescience:

It is possible to imagine without difficulty what awaits the Jews at the mere outbreak of the future world war. But even without war the next development of world reaction signifies with certainty the *physical extermination of the Jews...* Now more than ever, the fate of the Jewish people—not only their political but also their physical fate—is indissolubly linked with the emancipating struggle of the international proletariat. Only audacious mobilization of the workers against reaction, creation of workers’ militia, direct physical resistance to the fascist gangs, increasing self-confidence, activity and audacity on the part of all the oppressed can provoke a change in the relation of forces, stop the world wave of fascism, and open a new chapter in the history of mankind. [Emphasis in the original]

A new upsurge of the working class across the globe is beginning, pointing the way forward for Jewish and Arab workers alike in the form of a united struggle to overthrow and replace the Zionist state and the reactionary Arab bourgeois regimes, and forge the United Socialist States of the Middle East. This is the perspective fought for by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). It requires the building of sections of the ICFI in Israel and across the Middle East to provide the political leadership necessary to conduct this struggle against capitalism and for socialism.



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