

Israel's far-right government seeks to tighten its grip on power

Jean Shaoul

28 December 2025

The far-right government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is advancing a series of measures in the Knesset aimed at strengthening its powers as it continues its wars in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen and prepares for another offensive against Iran.

With his coalition of hard-right and ultra-religious parties trailing in the polls, the raft of new bills and regulations is Netanyahu's last opportunity to cement his rule before elections that must be held by the end of October 2026. These will take place amid highly febrile political tensions: five elections took place between 2019 and 2022 with voters split down the middle over support for Netanyahu.

A new law aims to curb the powers of the Supreme Court by removing its authority to determine which justices will hear a case before the High Court of Justice. Another seeks to split the attorney general's role into two as part of a broader effort to weaken the power of Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara, long a thorn in Netanyahu's side. Similar moves sparked mass protests across the country before the war on Gaza, with hundreds of thousands rallying against Netanyahu's "judicial coup".

Splitting the attorney general's powers would enable Netanyahu to appoint a loyalist to replace Baharav-Miara with the power to cancel his long-running and well-attested trial for corruption, bury the myriad investigations into the shady and corrupt dealings of his ministers and advisors, and purge prosecutors deemed "troublemakers".

Netanyahu has formally requested a pardon from President Isaac Herzog, following two requests for him to grant a pardon by US President Donald Trump. But, according to Israeli law, a pardon can only be considered after a conviction, a situation Netanyahu is determined to avoid.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has launched a five-year, \$900 million project to reconfigure the West Bank, occupied illegally by Israel since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

The plan includes relocating Israeli army bases, constructing infrastructure for dozens of new settlement clusters and paving roads. It is part of the government's broader agenda of establishing the de facto annexation of the West Bank that has included granting legal status to 19 settlements, deemed illegal under Israeli law, and two vacated nearly 20 years ago under

the disengagement plan led by former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

In the same vein, Avigdor Lieberman, leader of the right-wing opposition party Yisrael Beiteinu, has called for sovereignty over the Israeli settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, near Jerusalem, to "establish its status as an inseparable part of the State of Israel." The Knesset has also advanced legislation repealing the 1953 Jordanian law that restricts the sale and leasing of land to foreigners, aka settlers.

Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has introduced legislation to execute Palestinian prisoners, imposing the death penalty on those convicted of "terrorism" and enabling the prosecution of Hamas fighters accused by Israel of carrying out the October 7 attacks. Palestinian prisoners' rights groups have described this as an "unprecedented act of savagery".

Ben-Gvir, who also has overall charge of the prison system and the police, has turned them into a protection force for racist vigilantes that go on the rampage against the Palestinians within Israel and the West Bank. He has imposed a criminal regime of abuse, including torture, starvation and sexual assault, on Palestinians imprisoned in Israeli detentions centres.

Legislation in the pipeline will ban the provision of electricity and water services to any property registered in UNRWA's name and enabling the state to take possession of land classified as Israeli land used by UNRWA.

Another key measure is the highly controversial, ultra-Orthodox conscription bill that the religious parties, on whom the Netanyahu's coalition government depends, have demanded following the Supreme Court's ruling that their exemption from military service is unconstitutional. The new legislation would exempt ultra-Orthodox men pursuing full-time religious studies—the ultra-Orthodox community forms some 14 percent of Israel's population—from mandatory military service.

The religious parties have also demanded legislation aimed at increasing religious observance in the public sphere. A new bill will require public institutions to install mezuzot, small religious scrolls placed on doorframes, and oblige judges to pass exams in Jewish law, measures that the Knesset's legal counsel has warned could undermine freedom of religion and democratic principles.

Other bills include the revocation of retirement benefits from retired officers over political remarks, the removal of the ban on politically affiliated appointees for board members of government companies, and new restrictions on Israeli non-profit and human rights organizations' receipt of funding from a foreign political entity.

The High Court has nodded through yet another extension allowing the government additional time to answer journalists' requests for information. The Foreign Press Association (FPA), which filed a petition, said the situation was "beyond absurd" as it has deprived the world of a fuller glimpse of conditions in Gaza. New legislation is also being discussed that would dismantle existing media regulators and replace them with a new authority whose members are appointed by the government.

Discussions are under way on a highly controversial bill to establish a politically appointed probe into the failures surrounding the October 7 attack, an approach widely seen as a government whitewash. Opposition parties and bereaved families have demanded instead a state commission of enquiry, the highest level of public enquiry, whose make-up would be determined by the judiciary, anathema to the Netanyahu government.

The bill states that if either the coalition or opposition does not cooperate in the process or cannot settle on a candidate, the Knesset speaker will choose instead, giving the coalition effective control since opposition figures have pledged to boycott the politicised inquiry. Attorney General Baharav-Miara denounced the legislation, describing it as "tailor-made" for the "personal" needs of the government.

These authoritarian measures, like those replicated elsewhere as the ruling elites gear up for war, are part of a broader assault on the conditions of the Israeli working class that has seen its conditions wither under the cover of the war. They are implemented by a corrupt, far-right government that rules on behalf of Israel's oligarchs and whose ministers feather their own nests and those of their support base.

While Israel's National Insurance Institute has yet to publish its official poverty report for 2024, the latest by Latet, an Israeli anti-poverty advocacy group, released two weeks ago, reveals increasing poverty in a country with one of the highest rates of inequality in the OECD group of advanced economies. A record 39 Israelis featured in Forbes magazine's 2025 World's Billionaires list, the highest number since the ranking began.

Household expenses have risen dramatically since the war; almost 27 percent of households—more than 2.8 million people, including 1.8 million children—suffer from "food insecurity", a rise of nearly 29 percent in 2025.

Poverty is not confined to the traditional "disadvantaged population groups"; about a quarter of aid recipients are now the "new poor", pushed into hardship over the past two years, including the lower middle class and self-employed army reservists who have lost their businesses due to their lengthy

service. Two months after the so-called ceasefire, most reservists have still not returned to civilian life. Many won't have jobs to return to as more than 46,000 businesses went bankrupt during the war.

The report says that "many middle-class families are collapsing under the burden of the soaring cost of living, the plutocratic economy and the 'eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die' attitude". The more prosperous, educated middle class in Israel is considering emigration, while tens of thousands of families have already emigrated.

It describes in startling terms "a socioeconomic state of emergency" with impoverished senior citizens unable to buy medications or afford other treatments and abandoned to their fate. Many have been forced to take out loans and buy on credit, not for luxury goods but basic necessities.

According to a new report by the Israel Tax Authority, there has been a real terms rise in the average Israeli's tax burden of about 50 percent since 2014, while average income has risen only 38 percent in real terms, meaning that the government is collecting much more tax relative to wages.

Income is going down for almost everyone except reservists. While reserve duty was once seen as a service to the country, Israel now has a de facto mercenary force, many of whom follow their own rules and/or form vigilante groups with settlers who go on the rampage in the West Bank and Gaza.

The government secured resources for the war—calculated by *The Marker* at about \$34,000 per household—by purchasing tens of billions of dollars' worth of weapons on credit, to the extent that soon the government will have to take out loans to cover the interest payments on older loans. It has also channeled funds to the constituencies represented in the coalition—the settlers and ultra-Orthodox—while public transport, public services and higher education budgets have declined dramatically.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact